

Explorations Assessment Annual Report, 2020 – 2021

The Explorations Working Group met (virtually) on Monday, May 3, 2021 to conduct our annual Assessment Meeting. In attendance were Todd Berryman, Julie Brown, Liz Gron, Lars Seme (Convener), and Gabby Vidal-Torreira. Terri Bonebright was absent. Gabby replaces John Sanders, who retired from the College at the end of last semester.

In the Fall of 2020, Explorations offered 29 total sections, averaging 11 students per section. Of these 25 were taught by those students' CNSA advisor, two by faculty members not on CNSA, one by a member of the Office of Academic Success, and one by a member of the Athletic Department. This is similar to our composition of CNSA/non-CNSA led sections in the past few years.

There were no major curricular or other changes to Explorations for the Fall of 2020, with the exception that all sections were taught remotely due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Student Assessment Plan:

For the Fall 2020 semester, the learning goals were:

Program Learning Goal 1: Upon completion of the course, students will be able to articulate the skills and resources necessary to make a successful transition to academic and student life at Hendrix.

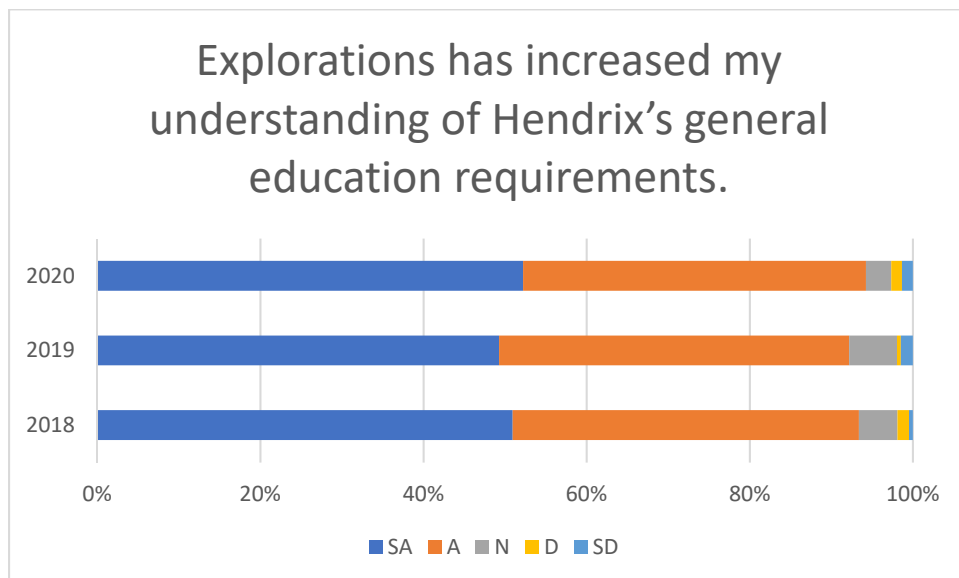
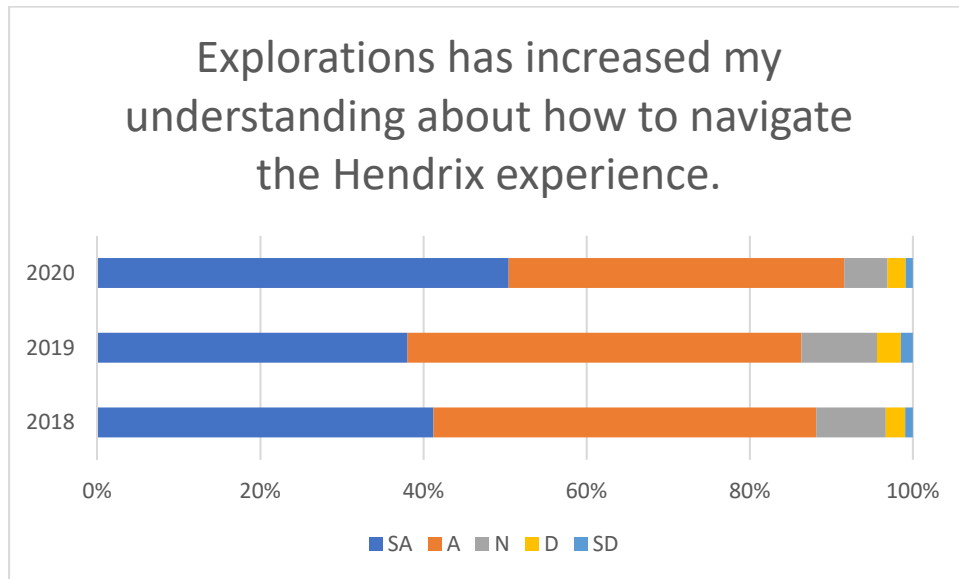
Program Learning Goal 2: Upon completion of the course, students will be able to reflect critically on their values, interests, and abilities as they relate to academic and student life at Hendrix.

These goals were rewritten at the end of last year, and utilized for the first time this semester. Previously, they had been 'course focused,' rather than student-outcome focused, though the themes of the two goals remained the same – PLG1 is primarily about students' abilities to learn how to navigate Hendrix and PLG2 about their ability to reflect on their experiences during their first semester.

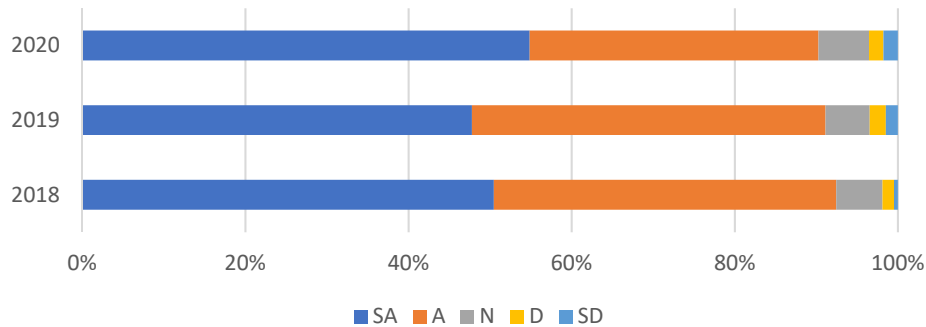
Indirect assessment information was collected for both goals from student feedback forms, but direct assessment information was collected only for the first learning goal. For this assessment year, we are only assessing PLG1, but will use the other information gathered to inform our assessment of PLG2 next year.

Indirect Assessment

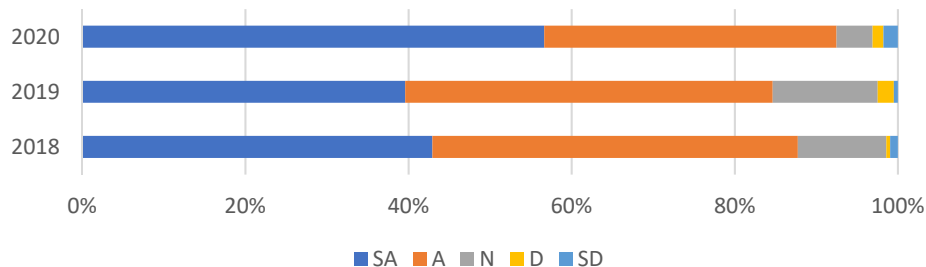
The first four questions on the end-of-course student feedback forms speak to PLG1. Each of these is scored on a Likert scale from *Strongly Agree* to *Strongly Disagree*. We had 74% of enrolled Explorations students submit feedback. This is in line with last year (73%) and above 2018 (64%), which was the first year we went online with feedback forms. We have included 2018 and 2019 data as well for comparative purposes.



Explorations has increased my awareness of the resources available on campus.



Explorations has helped me to understand what is expected of a Hendrix student, both inside and outside the classroom.



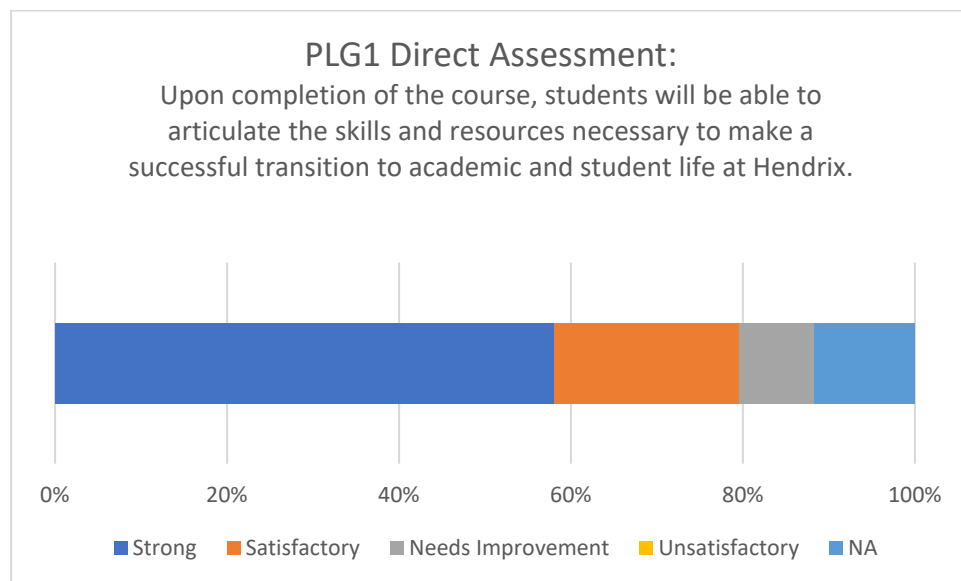
Frankly, this is remarkable, and a testament to the strength of our instructors and EPAs this year. Despite being online and therefore nothing more than faces in a box on a screen, students indicate that they “Strongly Agree” that they figured out how Hendrix works at a much higher rate than either previous year. Combining “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” also indicated higher success on each question, except for #3, about Campus Recourses, where we fell only marginally below 2018 and 2019 – though still about 90% of students indicated that they had better awareness of resources (many of which they have never experienced in person!) thanks to Explorations.

To temper this slightly, we should remember that we are also asking students if they understand how Hendrix works before they have experienced it in its fullest, in-person form. It is certainly possible that students believe themselves to be more informed and prepared than they found themselves when they actually arrived on campus.

Finally, we recognize that these questions do not exactly match up with PLG1, which asks students to “articulate” skills and resources necessary to succeed. We have used the same feedback form for five or six years at this point. We kept the same questions through the transition from paper and pencil forms to online in part to see if there was any significant difference (there was not), and as we rewrote the Learning Goals recently, should have rewritten the feedback forms prior to this year. However, in discussions this summer, we determined it was useful to have the same questions this year so that we could compare our performance to the pre-Covid years. We will discuss some potential changes to indirect assessment later in this document.

Direct Assessment

At the end of the semester, instructors were asked to assess their students’ achievement of Program Learning Goal 1. To accomplish this, students were given an ungraded “quiz” during the last week of class where the questions were focused on the skills and resources we hoped they had learned and developed over the semester. Scenarios were described in the quiz and students were asked to list which resource(s) or skill(s) might be useful in determining a solution. A rubric was given to instructors and each instructor rated each student on a scale of *Strong*, *Satisfactory*, *Need Growth*, and *Unsatisfactory*, using the quiz responses as their evidence.



As can be seen, more than half of students were rated “Strong,” and nearly 80% as either “Strong” or “Satisfactory.” This matches pretty well with the students’ own self-assessment as indicated by

indirect assessment. Our instructors are telling us that they believe – with evidence – that students are mostly figuring out how to navigate Hendrix.

Analysis

The data supports a conclusion that students are achieving the intended goal. More than 80% of students rate themselves as being able aware of the skills and resources necessary to be successful (subject to issues around the disconnect between the details of PLG1 language and the language of the feedback questions), and the indirect information seems consistent from year to year. Likewise, our instructors concur in rating nearly 80% of students as either “Satisfactory” or “Strong” in their achievement of PLG1. Explorations is accomplishing this goal.

Changes and Updates:

We believe that the data supports leaving the curricular part of the course alone, and we plan no major changes to the student experience in the classroom for the coming year. However, as noted above, we are still endeavoring to become more precise in the wording of our learning goals and their methods of assessment. To that end, we have the following changes:

1. Slightly reword PLG1, replacing the word “articulate” with “recognize.” Even given the mismatch between the student feedback and the current PLG1, we see that “articulate” does not capture exactly what we hope – and is somewhat difficult to measure. We want students to know what sorts of things increase their likelihood of being successful at Hendrix. We believe that this matches up well with what is asked and assessed on the quiz.
2. Rethink our method(s) for indirect assessment of PLG1. As noted, the questions that map on to this goal are years old and not truly in sync with the language (even the “recognize” version) of this goal. It is past time to rethink the entire end-of-course feedback forms, and we plan to do so over the summer. This rethinking will also include a discussion of whether the feedback forms are the most appropriate place for indirect assessment data for PLG1.
3. Finally, a question was raised in our assessment meeting about our assessment calendar., which currently has us formally assess the two goals in alternating years. Explorations recruits instructors through a voluntary processes which is closely tied to faculty appointed to CNSA. This could lead to a number of instructors serving Explorations every other year (as they might be appointed to CNSA in year 1, then have too many advisees to be appointed in year 2, then appointed in year 3, etc) and could lead to some instructors’ sections constantly only directly assessing one or the other PLG. During the years 2016 – 2021, there are 48 distinct instructors who taught the course more than once. Of these, 7 have a pattern of one on/one off. At this point, this does not seem a high enough percentage to warrant rearranging our assessment calendar, but we will monitor this in the coming years and adjust if necessary.