

## Explorations Assessment Annual Report, 2021 - 2022

The Explorations Working Group met on Thursday, May 12 to conduct our annual Assessment Meeting. In attendance were Todd Berryman, Liz Gron, Lars Seme (Convener), and Gabby Vidal-Torreira. Terri Bonebright and Julie Brown were absent.

In the Fall of 2021, Explorations offered 29 total sections, averaging 11 students per section. Of these 26 were taught by those students' CNSA advisor, one by a faculty member not on CNSA, one by a member of the Office of Academic Success, and one by the Vice-President for Diversity and Inclusion. This is similar to our composition of CNSA/non-CNSA led sections in the past few years. A single section of Explorations was taught in the Spring for a newly enrolled student; a section of Explorations II was also taught in the Spring for students who did not successfully complete Explorations their first semester. There were four total students in Explorations II. Both Spring classes were taught by Ms. Julie Brown, from the Office of Academic Success.

After being taught remotely, Explorations—like all of Hendrix's courses—returned to in-person instruction in Fall 2021. The only major curricular change was the creation of a new Odyssey assignment, which was required to be used in all sections, and replaces a menu of options for covering Odyssey that had been used previously.

### Student Assessment Plan:

For the Fall 2021 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.

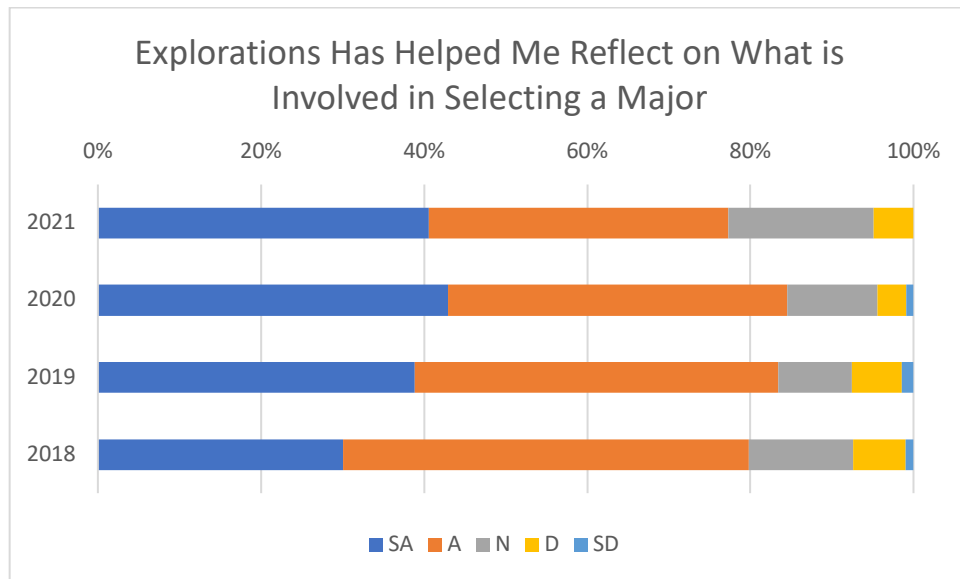
These goals were rewritten two years ago to place the emphasis on student-focused outcomes, though the themes of the two goals remained the same – PLG1 is primarily about students' abilities to learn how to navigate Hendrix and PLG2 about their ability to reflect on their experiences during their first semester.

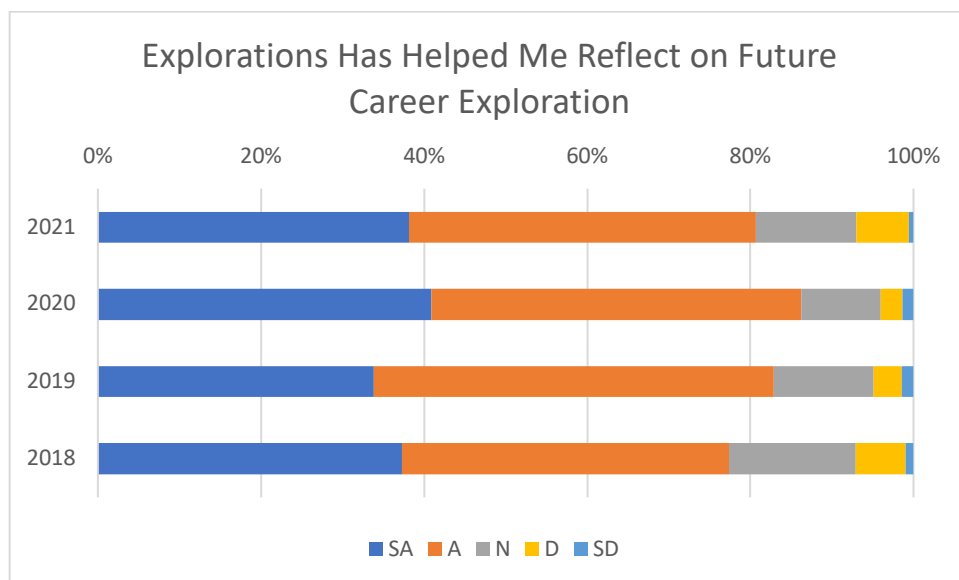
Indirect assessment information was collected for both goals from student feedback forms, but direct assessment information was collected only for the second learning goal. We had previously

assessed a similarly themed version of PLG 2 in 2019-2020, and the direct and indirect assessment data was collected in the same way this year.

*Indirect Assessment*

Two questions on the end-of-course student feedback forms speak directly to PLG2. Each of these is scored on a Likert scale from *Strongly Agree* to *Strongly Disagree*. We had 60% of enrolled Explorations students submit feedback. This is below the last two years – 76% in 2020 and 73% in 2019 – and similar to 2018 (64%), which was the first year we went online with feedback forms. We have included 2018-2020 data as well for comparative purposes. (The questions were worded slightly differently on pre-2021 student feedback forms but cover the same topic. See the Appendix A for precise wording.)





Across both questions, the indirect data shows that our students believe that they are achieving PLG 2, and that this belief is fairly consistent across multiple years. We did have a small drop in the total number of students answering either “Strongly Agree” or “Agree” on the choosing a major question (it had always been above 80% previously, though now slipped into the high seventies). This pattern is born out in the rest of the indirect data – even on questions not directly related to PLG 2. We have included a year-over-year summary of all Likert-scale type questions on the Student Feedback forms in an appendix to this document.

It appears that there may be a small amount of compression in this year’s data – we have as many or more students who rate their experience at the top end as we have at the past, but maybe, especially on the Major Exploration question, fewer students in the “Agree” category.

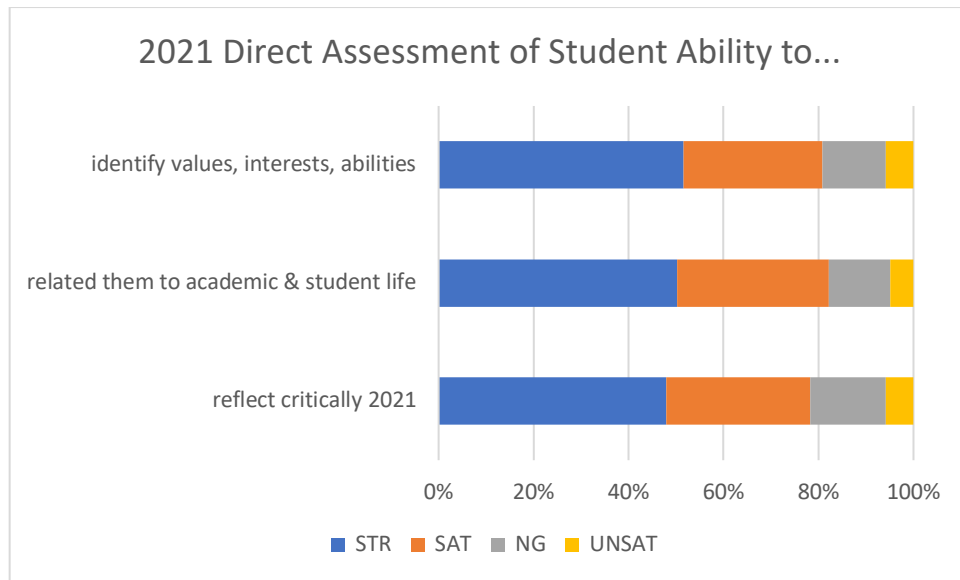
### *Direct Assessment*

At the end of the semester, instructors were asked to assess their students’ achievement of Program Learning Goal 2, using the completed reflection journal written by each student throughout the semester as the evidence to support their assessment. Each student was rated on a scale of achievement of “Strong,” “Satisfactory,” “Need Growth,” and “Unsatisfactory” on three aspects of the learning goal which follow the Odyssey “What? So What? Now What” model:

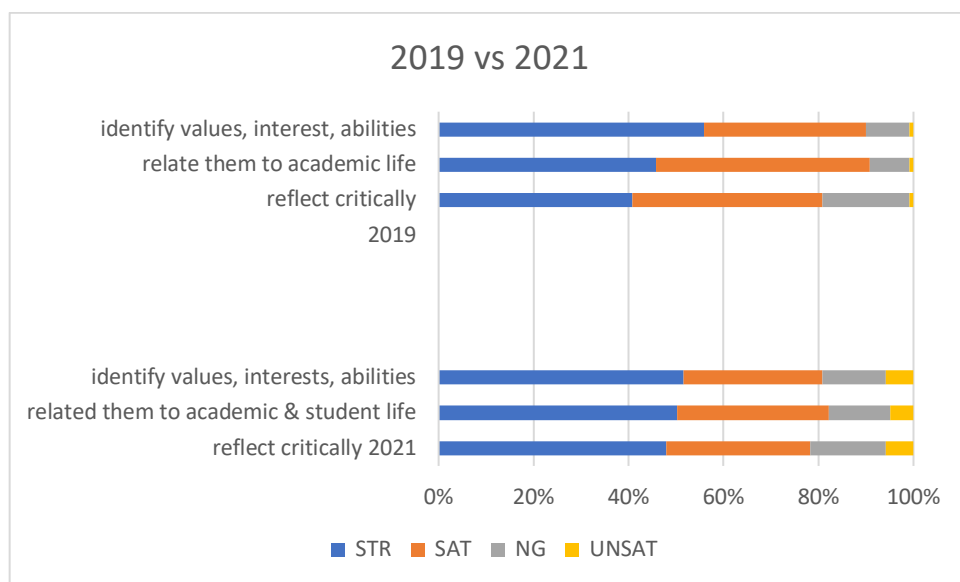
- does the student demonstrate that they can identify their values, beliefs, and interests?
- can the student then connect those to their current experiences as a Hendrix student in a meaningful way?
- is the student able to reflect on those experiences and talk about how they will influence their future decision making?

The rubric that instructors use – as well as information given to students about the journal assignment make the What/So What/Now What connection explicit.

We also used this assessment instrument in Fall 2019 as well, and also show that data below for comparison.



Comparison to Fall 2019



As we saw in the indirect data, in general instructors rate their students as being successful in achieving PLG 2, with more than 80% rated as “Strong” or “Satisfactory” in the first two categories, and nearly 80% on the last. As presented by the indirect data, note that the percentage of students rated “Strong” is about as high or higher this year than in 2019, but the total of “Strong” and “Satisfactory” is a bit smaller in each category. The self-reported student indirect and instructor assessed direct data seem to be telling the same sort of story.

### *Analysis*

The data supports a conclusion that students are achieving the intended goal. About 80% of students rate Explorations as having helped them reflect on their future selves. Instructor assessment confirms this data. There are some minor differences this year compared to previous, and the Working Group will continue to watch to see if a trend develops—faculty notes that we had a slightly higher percentage of highest achieving students, but also more who struggled to successfully complete PLG2. Overall, it appears that about 80% of our students are achieving PLG2, and this supports a claim that the course is working well.

## **Changes, Updates and Future Plans:**

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. Instead, we plan to focus on updating and improving our assessment tools themselves.

### *Student Feedback Form -- Timing*

As noted above, our response rate on the student feedback forms was low this year (about 60%, compared to 75% previously). Explorations has its final class meeting about two weeks before Thanksgiving, which means that under the current system, it is not possible for instructors to carve out time in class for students to fill out the feedback forms. The Working Group will investigate if there can be a change in the feedback calendar for Explorations. If not, and especially if this year proves not to be a one-off aberration, we will need to determine a way to improve the response rate for our course.

### *Revisiting the Learning Goals – Are they sufficient?*

We also discussed whether a third goal should be added, focusing on preparing students to think about their post-Hendrix lives. Though this topic comes up in the course, there are at least two issues with it becoming an explicit learning goal: (1) many students spend their first semester simply getting used to their new environment, and it can be disconcerting to those who do not yet have a firm post-college plan to have explicit places to talk about life after Hendrix; it is possible that the

reflection accomplished by the current PLG2 hits the right mark here. (2) also, it is far from clear how such a learning goal could be assessed in any meaningful way. Students could potentially tell us if they *think* they are prepared to begin making these plans, but until they actually do make them, it is not obvious how Explorations could know if our efforts are successful – and even if we did create an instrument given, say, to juniors or seniors, whether we could disaggregate the contributions made by Explorations from advising, Odyssey experiences, later course work, and growth in student maturity. Though we may return to this later, it is not our sense that such an additional goal is needed at this time.

### *Direct Assessment of PLG1 – Updating the Assessment Instrument*

PLG1 is primarily about student navigating the Hendrix community – finding resources, figuring out what skills are likely to lead to success in the classroom, and so on. Last year, we slightly reworded PLG 1, and did change the wording of the student feedback forms somewhat. As we will assess PLG 1 next year, we will wait until then to look deeply at the results of these changes to the feedback form. However, we did direct assessment of PLG1 through an end-of-course ungraded “quiz,” which student took on the final day of class and then individual instructors evaluated according to a rubric (the quiz is included as Appendix B). We are rethinking the details and logistics of this choice.

The quiz as used last year was open-ended; students were presented with scenarios and asked to write brief responses and individual section’s instructors then evaluated their answers. Though this has some positives – there are situations that can be handled appropriately in various ways – it can make assessment more difficult. In addition, we could make the quiz fit more naturally into the course if it were presented as a pre-survey given to students in the first week (or even in their first meeting with their advisor, before classes have started) and then again on the last day of class. Instructors could use the results from their section to individualize to the specific needs and knowledge gaps of their own students and would thereby feel more authentic to the course itself. If the quiz is structured in an objective way—either with a single right answer for each question, or perhaps a ranking of worst to best answers – we could then assess in a meaningful way student growth in knowledge of how Hendrix works, though again we recognize that while we might be able to determine that, say 15% more students have a good understanding of Odyssey, we cannot directly know how much of that growth is primarily due to their exposure to Odyssey in Explorations.

The Working Group plans over this summer to attempt to create a new survey, which will be used at the beginning and end of the semester.

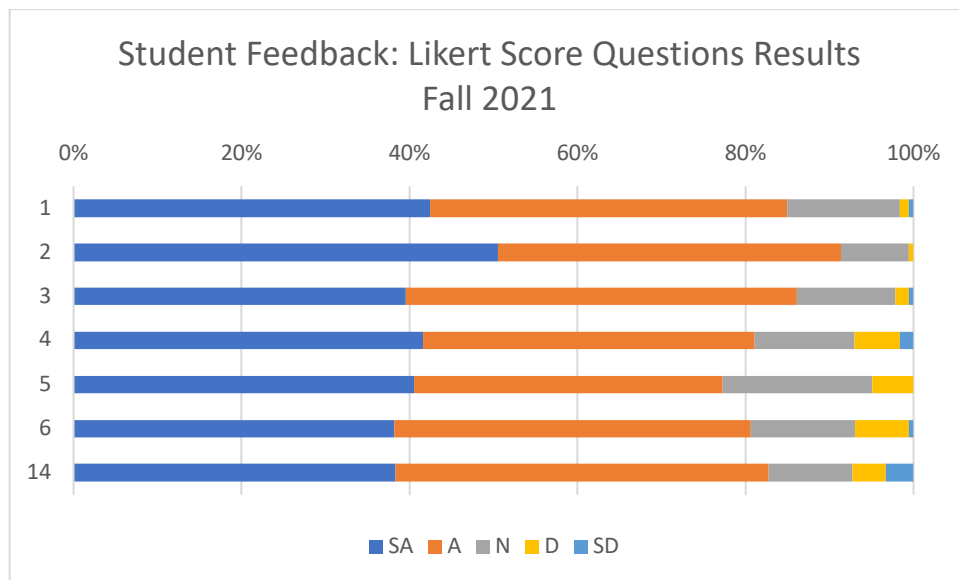
# Appendix A

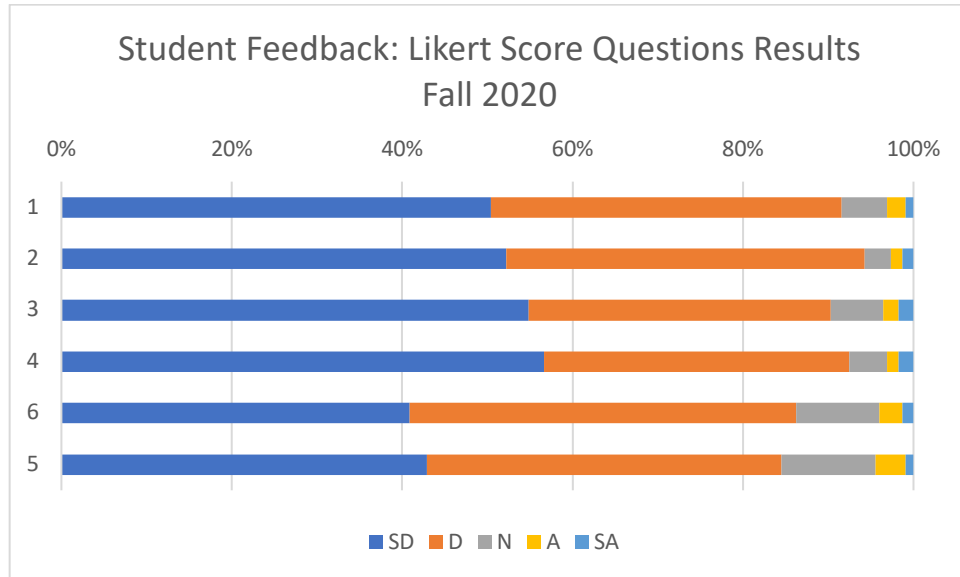
## Fall 2021 Student Feedback Summary

For the 2021 Fall semester, we slightly reworked the student feedback form. The questions are listed below:

Each of these is answered on a Likert scale of Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree

- 1 - Explorations has helped me recognize the skills needed to make a successful transition to Hendrix
- 2 - Explorations has helped me recognize available campus resources that can help me while at Hendrix.
- 3 - The learning goals for Explorations were clearly articulated throughout the course.
- 4 - It was clear to me how course assignments contributed to the learning goals.
- 5 - Explorations has helped me reflect on what is involved in selecting a major
- 6 - Explorations has helped me reflect on future career exploration.
- 14 - Overall, I found Explorations to be a positive experience





Fall 2020 Questions:

- 1 - Explorations has increased my understanding about how to navigate the Hendrix experience.
- 2 - Explorations has increased my understanding of Hendrix's general education requirements
- 3 - Explorations has increased my awareness of the resources available on campus.
- 4 - Explorations has helped me to understand what is expected of a Hendrix student, both inside and outside the classroom
- 6 - Explorations has helped me reflect on what is involved in selecting a major
- 5 - Explorations has provided me with tool and resources that I can use to consider my talents and interests and then relate to future career and vocational exploration

We have listed #6 and #5 in inverted order here, since they map well on to our current #5 and #6.

In general, our student feedback rated the course lower than last year. Obviously, one year does not make a trend, and it is possible that our students graded us on a benevolent curve last year, taking into account our trying to make Explorations work remotely.



## Appendix B

### PLG1 Direct Assessment Questions (Fall 2020)

As mentioned in the main narrative, we used an open ended ungraded “quiz” on the final day of Explorations to assess PLG1. The questions are as follows:

- 1.You are interested in taking the course HIST 123. How would you figure out which Learning Domains, if any, this course will satisfy?
- 2.Where might you turn for information about creating a budget for an Odyssey Proposal you are working on?
- 3.You miss a day of class unexpectedly (illness, alarm didn't go off, etc). How might you learn about what was covered/discussed in class that day?
- 4.You have a take-home exam or quiz in a class. Is it acceptable to use your notes to complete the exam or quiz?
- 5.Another student in your dorm constantly leaves a mess in a common area, and you and your roommate want to address this. Briefly, describe the steps you might take.
- 6.List at least one goal of that the Odyssey requirement intends to help you accomplish:
- 7.You are considering changing your Spring semester course schedule. Who should you talk to accomplish this?
- 8.It is the Spring of your sophomore year. How do you determine which Collegiate Center (i.e. Learning Domains, Capacities, Odyssey) requirements you have already fulfilled?