College of Liberal Arts
Assessment Report Summary – 2014
Covers assessment data collected from 2013-2014

Department of Anthropology

Anthropology BA
The Anthropology department worked hard to revise their learning objectives. The resulting objectives are exceedingly well developed. The undergraduate objectives are broken down by UULO, and demonstrate best practices in their construction.

The undergraduate program developed two excellent pre-post assessments, one of which was administered at the 100 level, the other of which was administered at the 400 level. At the 100 level, each item was quantified in a manner that allowed quick and effective analyses of student knowledge in key areas. The 400 level analysis was a t-test between the pre- and post-tests. The t-test showed significant improvement in the post test.

Program faculty discussed the assessment results and determined that students were meeting department benchmarks. Faculty worked to investigate whether the data warranted any instructional changes. Some small changes were made, along with adjustments to assessment instruments, including the addition of more formative measures.

Anthropology MA/PhD
The graduate level objectives demonstrated excellent differentiation between the MA and PhD levels. Further, the objectives were well written and demonstrate best practices.

The graduate program utilized a number of assessment instruments including rubric-scored student work samples and pre-and post-tests. Analyses showed that students were on track, and proved useful to faculty in the identification of problem areas.

Department faculty had regular discussions throughout the year focusing on assessment results. Individual faculty addressed issues in their courses as they were identified. Programmatic changes were discussed with all faculty. The assessments identified in the current report were relatively new; therefore, faculty intend to use this cycle as a baseline for future comparison.
Department of Interdisciplinary Studies
No reports were submitted for the Asian Studies, B.A. or the Women's Studies B.A. degrees. The three programs that did submit reports all had well-written, measurable learning objectives.

Multidisciplinary Studies, B.A./ Social Sciences, B.A.
Measures used to assess these programs included a capstone project scored by a committee, a capstone presentation, a portfolio, an essay, and a pre- post-survey. Analyses indicated that students generally met program benchmarks, though some students had difficulty understanding how assignments built upon one another.

Faculty made minor changes based on assessment results. Specifically, assignment sequences were standardized across course sections and a checklist was created to help students understand how assignments were related to one another.

Latin American Studies, B.A.

Department of World Languages and Cultures
The Department of World Languages and Cultures assesses programs on a rotating cycle. All reports submitted for this cycle had well-written, measurable learning objectives.

Classical Studies Minor
Classical Studies students were assessed using exams including embedded questions, and translation assignments. Students generally met program benchmarks. Further, analyses of previous semesters showed an increase in student learning over time.

Program faculty felt that changes made in the previous assessment cycle were working well. No changes were warranted for this cycle.

Romance Languages, B.A./ Italian Studies Minor
These programs were assessed using a variety of instruments including exams, composition assignments, presentations and research assignments. Analyses indicated that students performed above the program benchmarks. Further, course data improved from previous semesters.

Program faculty previously adopted new textbooks based on assessment data indicating areas of weakness. Additionally, some minor changes to instruction
were made. Program faculty felt that these changes resulted in the desired improvement in student learning.

Spanish B.A. (General and Professional tracks)
The learning objectives for the Spanish degrees are particularly well written. They are separated into goals and objectives, and use language that demonstrates best practices.

Students were assessed using a number of instruments including online exercises, audio recordings, compositions, exams, presentations and projects. Each measure was carefully analyzed to determine where students were excelling and where they needed interventions.

Several minor changes were made as discoveries about student performance were uncovered. For example, students weren’t participating in online exercises because another assignment was taking too much time. Faculty elected to reduce the extra assignment because the online exercises were found to be more valuable for student learning and assessment.

Department of English

Creative Writing, M.F.A./ Creative Writing, Ph.D.
The learning objectives listed in both Creative Writing reports differed from those in their respective assessment plans. The program assessment coordinator was alerted to the discrepancy and advised to investigate the matter when revising the assessment plan for the next cycle.

Student progress was measured by collecting information about professional activities. Student awards, publications, and job placement data were used as benchmarks.

Faculty members felt that students achieved a sufficient level of success; therefore, no program changes were suggested.

English, B.A.
The learning objectives for the English B.A. program meet all of the requirements for excellent LO’s at UNLV. They are well written, measureable, and reasonable in number. Additionally, this program took the extra step of listing in which courses students achieve each objective.

This program used student work samples to assess the learning objectives. Papers were collected from sophomore-level courses and senior-level courses. Each paper was scored by at least two evaluators using a rubric designed by
English faculty. Faculty discovered that students generally met the benchmarks for acceptable student work. One interesting discovery was that the senior-level papers tended to be quite a bit shorter in length than the sophomore-level papers. This was due to the development of the sophomore-level course, which was revamped to meet UNLV requirements for a Milestone course.

Faculty discussed their assessment data and determined that they needed to create a better course sequence for their students. The adjustments would create a more coherent sequence of courses, where students move from shorter and simpler writing tasks in early courses in the sequence to longer, more complex, more research-intensive tasks in senior-level courses.

**English, M.A.**
The learning objectives listed in both English graduate reports differed from those in their respective assessment plans. The program assessment coordinator was alerted to the discrepancy and advised to investigate the matter when revising the assessment plan for the next cycle.

The English M.A. program assessed student learning through the use of research papers, oral exams, student professional activities such as presentations, publications and awards, and theses. Analyses indicated that students generally met programmatic benchmarks. As a result, faculty determined that no program changes were necessary.

**English, Ph.D.**
The learning objectives listed in both English graduate reports differed from those in their respective assessment plans. The program assessment coordinator was alerted to the discrepancy and advised to investigate the matter when revising the assessment plan for the next cycle.

The English Ph.D. program assessed student learning through the use of research papers, oral exams, student professional activities such as presentations, publications and awards, and dissertations. Analyses indicated that students generally met programmatic benchmarks. As a result, faculty determined that no program changes were necessary.

**Department of History**
All learning objectives in the Department of History were well written and measurable.

**History, B.A.**
Students in the History B.A. program were assessed through the use of several instruments including student accomplishment records, essays, and key
assignments. Analyses of the assessment data indicated that students were progressing through their programs at an appropriate pace and were meeting benchmarks. It was noted that one of the assessment instruments (a new self-reflection essay) was not performing in the way that faculty had hoped it would. This will be addressed by revising the manner in which the assignment is presented to students.

Faculty were satisfied with the assessment results and planned no major changes. However, faculty did note that they were discussion a new capstone course, including appropriate assessment methods.

History, M.A.
History M.A. students were assessed using comprehensive exams and student progress reviews. Faculty identified several concerns about the comprehensive exams. Areas of concern included:

1. Exams come too late in the program to help identify struggling students.
2. Although most M.A. students passed their exams, they rarely excelled, even when prior performance in course work was superior.
3. Preparation for exams and the nature of the exams themselves were not as consistent or uniform as desirable.
4. Students did not always clearly understand how best to prepare for the exams.
5. Students often put off taking the exams, which delayed time to graduation.

The issues were addressed in the following ways: intensified efforts were made to educate students through the Department website and faculty advisors about the preparation needed for taking the comprehensive exams. A new comprehensive exam preparation course was implemented, which required a complete reading list. Students were also encouraged to keep a daily log of their progress preparing for comps and to schedule regular meetings with the members of their committees.

History, Ph.D.
History Ph.D. program faculty assessed student learning through the use of comprehensive exams, an external review of the program, and student professional accomplishments.

Analysis of the comprehensive exams indicated that students generally met the benchmarks set for the assessment instrument. The Ph.D. program underwent an external review in 2007. That report praised the quality of teaching, the quality
of the scholarship of the faculty, the opportunities afforded graduate students for professional activities, strong placements in public history and strong graduate mentorship and training. Among the recommendations in the external reviewers’ report were that graduate students receive improved funding and more pre-professional training, that the two track system (western U.S. history and cultural/intellectual history) be reevaluated, and the need for new faculty hires to fill in crucial gaps in the Department. There was also concern that the Graduate Coordinator not be overburdened.

Faculty addressed the external review recommendations by improving student funding, adding a course to increase pre-professional training, and hiring two new faculty members. Graduate faculty discussed all of the assessment results and determined that more data is needed before more programmatic changes can be made.

**Department of Philosophy**

**Philosophy, B.A.**

The Philosophy department has done an excellent job with their learning objectives. Each goal is broken down into its component learning objectives, and some of those learning objectives are further broken down. These learning objectives are held up as an example for other departments on campus.

The department focused on one goal and its related learning objectives. The selected learning objectives were measured using a pre-post essay assignment, which was scored using a rubric. Students were informed of the learning objectives being assessed. Analyses of pre and post data indicated that student learning increased satisfactorily over the course of the semester.

Faculty discussed the assessment results, and determined that they would be useful in designing future assessment measures. Review of the assessment results revealed that some students did not take an exit survey, which would normally be part of the assessment data. Steps were taken to ensure that students take the survey moving forward.

**Department of Political Science**

All learning objectives in the Department of History were well written and measurable. The Graduate programs have done a nice job of differentiating between Masters and Doctorate objectives.

**Political Science, B.A.**
The Political Science undergraduate program assessed student learning through the use of a senior exit survey, which was designed to address each of the key learning objectives for the department. Analyses showed that nearly all of the responding students agreed or strongly agreed that the program fulfilled each of the target areas. An open-ended question revealed that students felt that particular courses were frequently unavailable. Further, some students desired more opportunities for career development.

Faculty addressed student concerns by offering as many courses as possible within the scope of current resources. Also, a professor in residence was hired to meet the needs of the students.

Political Science, M.A./Political Science, Ph.D.
Graduate programs in Political Science used comprehensive exams and thesis/dissertations to assess student learning.

**Department of Psychology**

Psychology, B.A.
The learning objectives for the Psychology B.A. were well written and measurable. They reflect best practices for excellent learning objectives.

This program used several assessment instruments to assess student learning. They included several pre- post-tests, a research paper, an oral presentation scored by a rubric, and an exit survey. Each measure was carefully analyzed to discover areas of strengths and weakness.

Based on the results, the one weakness in terms of test or rubric performance was the low scores for Sensation & Perception and Developmental Psychology (compared to the other tests and the satisfactory cutoff score). Department faculty engaged in discussions as to how to address this situation. For example, faculty considered whether the test questions were fair, but if so, why were students not able to answer them well? The department hired two new faculty who have expertise in test design, and will help to consider the questions raised by the assessment results.

The Graduating Senior Exit Survey revealed that, relative to other aspects, students rated psychology advising somewhat low. Department faculty made plans to have more interaction with the advising center to ensure that they are informed of department curriculum changes and opportunities that are available for students. Increased communication between the department and the advising center will hopefully improve students’ experience with advising.
Psychology, Ph.D. - Clinical Track
The Clinical Track learning objectives are very well written, focusing on competencies. Each competency is broken down into its component objectives, which are measurable.

Students were assessed using annual evaluations, theses/dissertations, comprehensive exams, and alumni surveys. Analyses indicated that students progressed appropriately, securing internships and employment. All students progressed well with respect to practicum competencies; no student received a competency rating as below expectations. All students but 1 demonstrated adequate classroom achievement; 1 student will be retaking a cognitive psychology course.

Faculty communicated with APA, their accrediting body. The APA accrediting board did not recommend any changes. Faculty continued to monitor student progress following an overhaul of competencies several years ago.

Psychology, Ph.D. - Experimental Track
The learning objectives for the Experimental Track reflect appropriate benchmarks for a doctoral program of this nature.

Student learning in the Experimental Track was measured by theses/dissertations, student publications, students’ teaching evaluations, and presentations. Analyses indicated that students generally progressed appropriately and met the benchmarks established by program faculty.

The major change indicated by the annual assessment was the need to develop procedures to encourage students to finish the program’s main milestone (dissertation) before the established deadlines. After a discussion of this issue, in the Spring 2013 semester, program faculty felt that many students encountered writing difficulties that significantly delayed their projects. To enhance students’ writing abilities, a professional writing workshop was proposed as an addition to the program’s professional seminar. In the Fall 2013 semester, this workshop was implemented and offered to both incoming and returning students.

Department of Sociology

Sociology, B.A.
The Sociology B.A. report has done an excellent job with their learning objectives. Each goal is broken down into its component learning objectives, and some of those learning objectives are further broken down. These learning objectives are held up as an example for other departments on campus.
Students in the program were assessed using exams and surveys administered throughout the program: one for students during their internships, and a senior exit survey. The survey scores indicated that students were generally satisfied with the program. These results were stable over time. The exam scores were lower than expectations. Faculty indicated that this has been an ongoing issue, and it was believed to be an artifact of the assessment instrument.

Faculty discussed the assessment results and determined that the assessment tool used for the 101-level students needed to be revised. Further, the curriculum needed to be standardized across sections. The department organized a one-day GA/PTI retreat focused on providing non-faculty instructors with an instructional and educational foundation to academic assessment, good teaching practices, changes in online education, and Core Sociology course revisions.

**Sociology, M.A./Sociology, Ph.D.**

The learning objectives for the Experimental Track reflect appropriate benchmarks for a graduate program of this nature.

The assessment instruments used were coursework, comprehensive exams, field research, theses and professional papers. Students generally met the benchmarks set by the department. Faculty mentored students to ensure that they progressed through the program appropriately.

Faculty determined that no changes were necessary; however, some adjustments were made to course offerings in order to maximize student progress.