

**Liberal Studies
Report on P1 (Social Sciences) Assessment**

June 2008

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Outline

I. Introduction

II. Assessment Materials Summary

- a. Syllabi
- b. Student Work Samples
- c. Faculty and Student Surveys

III. Assessment of Learning Goals through Syllabi, Student Samples, and Faculty and Student Surveys

IV. General Comments

- a. Syllabi
- b. Student Work Samples
- c. Faculty Surveys
- d. Student Surveys

V. Conclusions

- a. P1 Strengths
- b. P1 Recommendations
- c. Assessment Recommendations

VI. Appendix

I. Introduction

This report assesses the extent to which the Social Sciences Perspectives (P1) component of the Liberal Studies Program meets the general goals of the Liberal Studies Program and the specific goals of the P1 component of the program. The team used class syllabi, student work samples, and responses to faculty and student surveys in our assessment.

II. Assessment Materials Summary

Syllabi Review

- 1) Tally the total number of syllabi which address each learning goal and objective listed below. Total number of syllabi reviewed = 20
(Note: A Liberal Studies course does not have to address every learning goal and objective.)

Review of Student Work

- 2) When reviewing student work, use the general holistic rubric below to analyze how well the student met the objective and break down the number of student work products into the following categories. Total number of student products reviewed = 54

1- Unsatisfactory: Student work reflects a level of mastery below that expected of a college graduate.

2- Meets expectations: Student work reflects a level of mastery consistent with that of a college graduate.

3- Exceeds expectations: Student work reflects a level of mastery above that expected of a college graduate.

Review of Faculty Surveys

- 3) Using the survey data provided, report the results (if any) addressing each goal. Total number of faculty responses = 18

Review of Student Surveys

- 4) Using the survey data provided, report the results (if any) addressing each goal. Total number of student responses = 67

III. Assessment of Learning Goals and Objectives through Syllabi, Student Work Samples, and Faculty Survey

Overarching Learning Goals of the Liberal Studies Program	# of Syllabi Addressing Each Goal	Student Work Samples Average Level of Mastery as Described Above	Faculty Survey Data Results Addressing Each Goal
Demonstrate the ability to locate, analyze, and evaluate information	Eighteen syllabi address this goal.	Unsatisfactory - 18 Meets Expectations - 14 Exceeds Expectations - 5	This learning goal was not represented in the faculty survey.
Demonstrate the ability to synthesize information	Twelve syllabi address this goal.	Unsatisfactory - 13 Meets Expectations - 21 Exceeds Expectations - 5	This learning goal was not represented in the faculty survey.
Demonstrate the ability to interpret and use numerical, written, oral and visual data	Seventeen syllabi address this goal.	Unsatisfactory - 16 Meets Expectations - 19 Exceeds Expectations - 10	This learning goal was not represented in the faculty survey.
Demonstrate the ability to read with comprehension, and to write and speak clearly, coherently, and effectively as well as to adapt modes of communication appropriate to an audience	Eighteen syllabi address this goal.	Unsatisfactory - 8 Meets Expectations - 26 Exceeds Expectations - 4	This learning goal was not represented in the faculty survey.
Demonstrate the ability to critically analyze arguments	Sixteen syllabi address this goal.	Unsatisfactory - 12 Meets Expect - 21 Exceeds Expectations - 6	This learning goal was not represented in the faculty survey.
Demonstrate the ability to recognize behaviors and define choices that affect lifelong well-being	Ten syllabi address this goal.	Unsatisfactory - 11 Meets Expectations - 26 Exceeds Expectations - 7	This learning goal was not represented in the faculty survey.

Primary Learning Goals for All Perspectives Courses	# of Syllabi Addressing Each Goal	Student Work Samples Average Level of Mastery as Described Above	Faculty Survey Data Results Addressing Each Goal
To promote love of learning and to cultivate an active interest in the Liberal Studies	Fourteen syllabi address this goal.	<i>Unable to Assess</i> ¹	This learning goal was not represented in the faculty survey.
To build on the Core's foundation through practice and refinement of areas of academic emphasis	Fourteen syllabi address this goal.	Unsatisfactory - 2 Meets Expectations - 52 Exceeds Expectations - 0	All of the respondents reported that they assessed this goal, whether formally (76%) or informally (59%). Class discussions or debates (82%), exams/tests/quizzes (53%), writing assignments (53%), group activities (29%), oral presentations/student lectures (18%), service learning activities (12%), attendance at a lecture/reading/presentation of a visiting artist/performer/writer (12%), laboratories (6%), portfolios (6%), and/or visits to a gallery/museum (6%) were all reported as means of assessment for this learning goal.
To provide students with a broadened world view and knowledge base	Twelve syllabi address this goal.	Unsatisfactory - 23 Meets Expectations - 17 Exceeds Expectations - 9	All respondents reported that they formally (82%) or informally (65%) assessed this goal. Class discussions or debates (100%), exams/tests/quizzes (76%), writing assignments (65%), group activities (41%), oral presentations/student lectures (18%), attendance at a lecture/reading/presentation of a visiting artist/performer/writer (18%), service learning activities (12%), creative projects (12%), laboratories (6%), and/or visits to a gallery/museum (6%) were all reported as means of assessment for this learning goal.

¹ Based on student work submitted, we were unable to determine if students were meeting this goal on any level.

Primary Learning Goals for All Perspectives Courses (continued)	# of Syllabi Addressing Each Goal	Student Work Samples Average Level of Mastery as Described Above	Faculty Survey Data Results Addressing Each Goal
To provide experiences in the arts, humanities, and social sciences from which connections between disciplines can be revealed	Thirteen syllabi address this goal	Unsatisfactory - 16 Meets Expectations - 20 Exceeds Expectations - 9	Most respondents reported formal (47%) and/or informal (53%) assessment of this goal, while some reported non-assessment (29%) of this goal. Class discussions or debates (100%), exams/tests/quizzes (58%), writing assignments (42%), group activities (25%), service learning (17%), attendance at a lecture/reading/presentation of a visiting artist/performer/writer (17%), oral presentations/student lectures (8%), and/or visits to a gallery/museum (8%) were all reported as means of assessment for this learning goal.
To provide an introduction to the challenges of living in a global society	Twelve syllabi address this goal.	Unsatisfactory - 23 Meets Expectations - 8 Exceeds Expectations - 5	Most respondents reported formal (50%) and/or informal (50%) assessment of this goal, while some reported non-assessment (17%) of this goal. Class discussions or debates (100%), exams/tests/quizzes (60%), writing assignments (47%), group activities (27%), oral presentations/student lectures (13%), service learning activities (7%), and/or attendance at a lecture/reading/presentation of a visiting artist/performer/writer (7%) were all reported as means of assessment for this learning goal.

Primary Learning Goals for All Perspectives Courses (continued)	# of Syllabi Addressing Each Goal	Student Work Samples Average Level of Mastery as Described Above	Faculty Survey Data Results Addressing Each Goal
To create opportunities for reflection on values, and for discussing differences in values in a critical yet tolerate manner	Fourteen syllabi address this goal	Unsatisfactory - 13 Meets Expectations - 22 Exceeds Expectations - 13	Most respondents reported formal (81%) and/or informal (56%) assessment of this goal, while 6% reported they did not assess this goal. Class discussions or debates (88%), writing assignments (81 %), exams/tests/quizzes (50%), group activities (38%), oral presentations/student lectures (19%), attendance at a lecture/reading/presentation of a visiting artist/performer/writer (19%), service learning activities (13%), and/or visits to a gallery/museum (6%) were all reported as means of assessment for this learning goal.
To afford opportunities to make career or disciplinary choices	Twelve syllabi address this goal	<i>Unable to Assess¹</i>	Most respondents reported formal (24%) and/or informal (59%) assessment of this goal, while 41% reported they did not assess this goal. Class discussions or debates (100%), exams/tests/quizzes (27%), writing assignments (27%), group activities (18%), oral presentations/student lectures (9%), service learning activities (9%), creative projects (9%), visits to a gallery/museum (9%), and/or attendance at a lecture/reading/presentation of a visiting artist/performer/writer (9%) were all reported as means of assessment for this learning goal.

¹ Based on student work submitted, we were unable to determine if students were meeting this goal on any level.

Learning Objectives for P1 Courses	# of Syllabi Addressing Each Objective	Student Work Samples Average Level of Mastery as Described Above	Faculty Survey Data Results Addressing Each Objective
Students will understand the systematic study of observational and analytic methods and findings of those disciplines that focus on the interpersonal functioning and institutional creations of human beings.	Fourteen syllabi address this goal.	Unsatisfactory - 11 Meets Expectations - 18 Exceeds Expectations - 8	Most (76%) of the respondents reported that they formally assessed this objective, while 29% said they informally assessed this objective and 12% said they did not assess this objective. Exams/tests/quizzes (87%), class discussions or debates (80%), writing assignments (80%), group activities (40%), oral presentations/student lectures (20%), attendance at a lecture/reading/presentation of a visiting artist/performer/writer (20%), service learning activities (13%), and/or a creative project (7%) were all reported as means of assessment for this learning objective.
Students will focus on the scientific study of the mental and behavioral characteristics of individuals or groups or on the description of explanation of political, economic, or legal institutions	Fourteen syllabi address this goal.	Unsatisfactory - 10 Meets Expectations - 23 Exceeds Expectations - 12	The first part of the second liberal studies social sciences learning objective emphasizes a focus on the scientific study of mental and behavioral characteristics of individuals or groups. Most (65%) of the respondents reported that they formally assessed this objective, while 47% said they informally assessed this objective and 2% said they did not assess this objective. Class discussions or debates (87%), exams/tests/quizzes (73%), writing assignments (60%), group activities (33%), oral presentations/student lectures (13%), service learning activities (13%), attendance at a lecture/reading/presentation of a visiting artist/performer/writer (13%), and/or visits to a gallery/museum (7%) were all reported as means of assessment for this learning objective.

			<p>The second part of the second liberal studies social sciences learning objective emphasizes a focus on the description and explanation of political, economic, or legal institutions. Most (61%) of the respondents reported that they formally assessed this objective, while 17% said they informally assessed this objective and 28% said they did not assess this objective. Exams/tests/quizzes (85%), class discussions or debates (77%), writing assignments (77%), group activities (38%), oral presentations/student lectures (31%), attendance at a lecture/reading/presentation of a visiting artist/performer/writer (23%), and/or service learning activities (8%) were all reported as means of assessment for this learning objective.</p>
<p>Students will understand inquiry into basic social scientific concepts such as mind, behavior, class, society, culture, freedom, government, property, equality, and rights.</p>	<p>Fourteen syllabi address this goal.</p>	<p>Unsatisfactory - 11 Meets Expectations - 19 Exceeds Expectations - 13</p>	<p>All of the respondents reported that they formally assessed the third liberal studies social sciences learning objective, which emphasizes an inquiry into basic social scientific concepts such as the mind, behavior, class, society, culture, freedom, government, property, equality, and rights. Exams/tests/quizzes (100%), class discussions or debates (83%), writing assignments (83%), group activities (39%), oral presentations/student lectures (28%), attendance at a lecture/reading/presentation of a visiting artist/performer/writer (17%), service learning activities (11%), a creative project (6%), and/or a visit to a gallery/museum (6%) were all reported as means of assessment for this learning objective.</p>

IV. General Comments

General Comments Concerning Syllabi

Based on the number of Liberal Studies course sections offered for the spring 2008 semester, roughly 77 syllabi should have been submitted. Our analysis is based on the 20 syllabi that were submitted (response rate = 26%). Unless multiple sections were listed on a single syllabus, we did not assume that each instructor used the same syllabus for multiple sections.

About 70 percent of the syllabi submitted represented the P1 learning goals and objectives clearly.

Only one syllabus explicitly shows how each course objective matches perspectives goals and related assignments (refer to the Appendix).

General Comments Concerning Student Work

Although there were roughly 77 Liberal Studies course sections offered during the spring 2008 semester, we received only 15 sets of submissions of student work (response rate = 20%). Not all faculty who submitted student work submitted examples of above average AND average AND below average work as they were requested to do.

We were unable to use student work samples to determine if two of the primary learning goals for all perspective courses were being met: (1) “To promote a love of learning”; and (2) “To afford an opportunity to make career choices.”

We were asked to evaluate a variety of different types of student work (i.e., written assignments based on readings or movies, class reflections, multiple choice tests, and a copy of discussion boards from an on-line course). For the most part, while the individual course assignments could be generally inferred, we were not given the specific assignments’ descriptions.

Differences were noticed between assignments that were provided from upper level P1 courses and those from the lower level courses. The upper level courses appeared to require integration of material, both from within the course and from other areas, as opposed to requiring a response to something provided. The activities for the upper level perspective courses were much more applied in the sense that students were expected to read a case or participate in a negotiation and then reflect on the exercise and its relevance to course material. With a very few exceptions, the lower level Liberal Studies courses appeared to present material to the students and the students merely reflected on how they felt about the reading and did not seem to take the next steps of applying it to other situations, their lives, or assessing it in relation to course material.

The material submitted varied drastically. For example, material from on-line courses was different from those from in resident courses due to the natures of the material available from on-line courses and the types of students that take on-line courses. Careful discussions were submitted from the on-line courses but these were not available for resident courses. As stated above, some faculty submitted multiple choice tests, others submitted essay tests, and still others submitted papers. The variation in work made it increasingly difficult to find common ways in which the goals were accomplished.

We were asked to evaluate student work relative to that expected of a college graduate. Most of the student work submitted was from 100- and 200-level courses. Therefore, we would expect to find work reflecting a level of mastery below that of a college graduate.

General Comments Concerning Faculty Surveys

P1 Social Sciences faculty were asked to fill out an anonymous survey about their teaching and assessment methods in the spring semester of the 2007-2008 academic year. Eighteen faculty filled out the survey, accounting for roughly 23% of the 77 Liberal Studies course sections offered. Overall, faculty responses on the survey indicate that the day-to-day teaching and assessment methods in P1 Social Sciences courses meet the learning objectives and goals for the P1 Social Sciences portion of the Liberal Studies Program.

Course Information:

- Half of the respondents reported teaching only one section of the course. The remaining respondents reported teaching two (28%) or more (22%) sections of the course.
- Half of the respondents reported that they are tenured or on a tenure track. Most of these respondents were either assistant (22%) or associate (17%) professors. Most non-tenure track respondents were either full time visiting (22%) or part time adjunct (17%) professors.
- The majority (83%) of respondents reported their course was taught primarily face to face (83%).
- The majority of the respondents reported that they lectured at each class meeting (67%) or on a weekly basis (28%).
- The majority of the respondents reported that they engaged in discussion at each class meeting (72%) or on a weekly basis (22%).
- The majority of the respondents reported that they had small group activities on a monthly (44%) or weekly (28%) basis.
- The majority of the respondents reported that they had class activities on a weekly (44%) or monthly (17%) basis.
- The majority of the respondents reported that they never used laboratory/hands-on learning (72%) or debate (56%) activities.
- All respondents reported they emphasize critical analysis of arguments in their course. Other areas of emphasis reported by respondents include: moral reflection (61%), cultural diversity (56%), oral communication (44%), service learning (11%), and other (17%) – including written communication and the scientific method.

General Comments Concerning Student Surveys

Students enrolled in P1 Social Sciences courses during the spring semester of the 2007-2008 academic year were asked to fill out an anonymous survey about the course. Sixty-seven students filled out the survey (Note: Response rate could not be determined). Most (88%) students reported taking the course to satisfy a liberal studies requirement. Other reasons reported for taking the course include personal interest (21%) or satisfaction of a major or minor requirement (22%). Overall, student responses on the survey indicate that the day-to-day teaching and assessment methods in P1 Social Sciences courses meet the learning objectives and goals for the P1 Social Sciences portion of the Liberal Studies Program.

Assessment of Liberal Studies Program Overarching Learning Goals:

- These learning goals were not represented in the student survey.

Assessment of Perspectives Course Learning Goals:

- The majority (68%) of the student respondents reported that they agreed or strongly agreed that the course satisfied the first P1 social sciences learning goal. The remaining respondents disagreed (16%) or strongly disagreed (16%).
- The majority (80%) of the student respondents reported that they agreed or strongly agreed that the course satisfied the second P1 social sciences learning goal. The remaining respondents disagreed (13%) or strongly disagreed (7%).
- The majority (89%) of the student respondents reported that they agreed or strongly agreed that the course satisfied the third P1 social sciences learning goal. The remaining respondents disagreed (4%) or strongly disagreed (6%).
- The majority (77%) of the student respondents reported that they agreed or strongly agreed that the course satisfied the fourth P1 social sciences learning goal. The remaining respondents disagreed (13%) or strongly disagreed (10%).
- The majority (82%) of the student respondents reported that they agreed or strongly agreed that the course satisfied the fifth P1 social sciences learning goal. The remaining respondents disagreed (9%) or strongly disagreed (9%).
- The majority (86%) of the student respondents reported that they agreed or strongly agreed that the course satisfied the sixth P1 social sciences learning goal. The remaining respondents disagreed (6%) or strongly disagreed (7%).
- The majority (67%) of the student respondents reported that they agreed or strongly agreed that the course satisfied the seventh P1 social sciences learning goal. The remaining respondents disagreed (24%) or strongly disagreed (9%).

Assessment of P1 Social Sciences Learning Objectives:

- The majority (85%) of the student respondents reported that they strongly agree or agree that the course satisfied the first P1 social sciences learning objective.
- The majority (91%) of the student respondents reported that they strongly agree or agree that the course satisfied the second P1 social sciences learning objective.
- The majority (93%) of the student respondents reported that they strongly agree or agree that the course satisfied the third P1 social sciences learning objective.

V. Conclusions

Based on our review of the P1 data provided, we list the strengths of and offer recommendations for the P1 Social Sciences component of the Liberal Studies Program.

Strengths

Some of the assignments require the analysis of information, emphasizing the question "what do you think?" and the application of course material to current life experiences.

Looking at the P1 category as a whole, student work reveals, with two exceptions, that all of the goals and objectives are being met. Moreover, instructors report using a wide variety of methods to assess how well students are meeting these goals and objectives.

As demonstrated in the student survey results, students feel the Liberal Studies goals and objectives are being met.

Recommendations

The goals of "the love of learning" and "affording career choices" were not reflected in the student work we received and we have only limited information about if/how faculty are assessing these goals. Perhaps a suggested wrap-up assignment or assessment would be good for these courses. This would also help with program assessment in the future.

Student work reflected a generally unsatisfactory level of understanding of "the challenges of living in a global society". Only 50% of faculty formally assess this goal. Because these courses are global in nature, instructors may assume that the course itself is the global application. However, this was not clear from the materials we were given. Instructors should consider explicitly addressing this goal at some point during the semester.

A clear link between assignments and the goals/objectives would be helpful for students in understanding how the assignment relates to their Liberal Studies education. It would be useful to include a sentence about the goal of the assignment in relation to Liberal Studies somewhere in the syllabus. The Appendix is an example of how one faculty member explicitly related the Liberal Studies goals and class assignments.

Some of the assignments submitted from lower level courses asked questions in a manner such that the exploration of the topic was guided and students did not find and integrate material on their own. Allowing students to do their own exploration may help reach the goals/objectives as well as teach students necessary research skills for upper level courses.

Assessment Recommendations

Provide separate analysis for upper level perspectives courses and lower level liberal studies courses. We have differing expectations of courses in these two categories.

The university may consider reevaluating the Liberal Studies Program goals and objectives within an assessment framework. Some of the written goals are not clear, thus making it hard to evaluate if the students are meeting the goals. For example, "to promote a love of learning" is hard to assess and may best be determined from alumni surveys. Other goals are very broad; almost any assignment would satisfy the goal of "Demonstrate the ability to interpret and use numerical, written, oral and visual data".

Help the instructors make better and/or more appropriate choices about the student work they will be submitting. Notify them at the beginning of the semester that they will be submitting work. Explain the process, pointing out the benefits to instructors and students. Ask the instructors to include a copy of the assignment and to indicate the student's class level with the student work they submit. Also ask the instructors to submit a separate syllabus for each section they are teaching. Emphasize that instructors should fill out a separate faculty survey for each section they are teaching and ask them to include the course and section number in the survey.

Some of the faculty and student survey questions are double-barreled and should be separated into individual survey questions. For example, in the student survey, respondents are asked to indicate their level of agreement with the following statement: "This course created opportunities for reflection on values and for discussing differences in values in a critical yet tolerant manner." This should be separated into two questions: (1) "This course created opportunities for reflection on values" and (2) "This course created opportunities for discussing differences in values in a critical yet tolerant manner."

VI. Appendix

Course Objectives, Corresponding Perspective Course Goals, and Related Assignments:

<i>Course Objectives: Upon completion of Evaluating Health Claims: Fact or Quack, the student will be able to:</i>	<i>This objective meets the following Perspective Course Goal(s):</i>	<i>Related Assignments</i>
1. Describe the characteristics of responsible consumer decision-making, including appropriate assertiveness and skepticism that allows one to master the complexity of the health marketplace.	To provide students with a broadened worldview and knowledge base.	Online Discussions Online Quizzes
2. Describe marketing tactics employed by food advertisers, dietary supplement promotion, mail-order promotion, infomercials, multilevel marketing, and telemarketing.	To provide students with a broadened worldview and knowledge base.	Online Discussions Online Quizzes
3. Describe the physical and financial harm caused by food faddism and quackery.	To provide students with a broadened world view and knowledge base; to create opportunities for reflection on values, and for discussing differences in values in a critical yet tolerant manner.	Online Discussions Online Quizzes
4. Define terms and concepts related to consumer health.	To provide students with a broadened world view and knowledge base; to build on the Core's foundation through practice and refinement of areas of academic emphasis.	Online Discussions Online Quizzes Product Portfolio

5. Describe licensure and certification processes for health professionals.	To provide students with a broadened world view and knowledge base; To build on the Core's foundation through practice and refinement of areas of academic emphasis.	Online Discussions Online Quizzes
6. Perform ethical analysis of current consumer health issues.	To build on the Core's foundation through practice and refinement of areas of academic emphasis; to create opportunities for reflection on values, and for discussing differences in values in a critical yet tolerant manner.	Literature Critique Assignment Product Portfolio
7. Create a Consumer Product Portfolio displaying critically evaluated products.	To build on the Core's foundation through practice and refinement of areas of academic emphasis; to create opportunities for reflection on values, and for discussing differences in values in a critical yet tolerant manner.	Product Portfolio
8. Discuss the elements involved in choosing qualified health professionals.	To create opportunities for reflection on values, and for discussing differences in values in a critical yet tolerant manner.	Online Discussions Online Quizzes
9. Describe alternative medicine and its use in various cultures.	To provide students with a broadened world view and knowledge base; to provide an introduction to the challenges of living in a global society.	Online Discussions Online Quizzes
10. Describe existing consumer laws, agencies, and strategies.	To create opportunities for reflection on values, and for discussing differences in values in a critical yet tolerant manner.	Online Discussions Online Quizzes

11. Critically evaluate health information available from credible and non-credible sources.	To create opportunities for reflection on values, and for discussing differences in values in a critical yet tolerant manner; To provide an introduction to the challenges of living in a global society	Literature Critique Assignment Product Portfolio
12. Discuss strategies for being an effective consumer advocate.	To provide students with a broadened world view and knowledge base; to provide an introduction to the challenges of living in a global society; to create opportunities for reflection on values, and for discussing differences in values in a critical yet tolerant manner.	Online discussions Online quizzes
13. Describe influences on consumer behavior.	To create opportunities for reflection on values, and for discussing differences in values in a critical yet tolerant manner.	Online discussions Online quizzes
14. Demonstrate online etiquette and good communication skills.	To provide students with a broadened worldview and knowledge base; To provide an introduction to the challenges of living in a global society.	Online discussions Online quizzes Peer review of group members