

Summary Report for Calendar Year 2009

It is clear from program assessment reports that almost all AHSS programs are successfully engaged in meaningful and appropriate assessment exercises and, perhaps more importantly, that they are actively engaged in both department and college-wide discussions of how we do program assessment at UALR. All of the reports submitted showed a commitment to using assessment data to effect curricular changes and improvements. Two programs did not submit reports this year, the BA Theater program and the MA Public History program. The BA Theater curriculum underwent substantial revisions over the past academic year, and a new assessment plan was submitted to reflect these changes. Changes to the organization and structure of the MA Public History program were approved by the Graduate Council in late March 2010. A new assessment plan will be drafted, and implemented for the 2010-2011 assessment cycle. A new BFA Art program will become operational in Fall 2010. The assessment plan for this new program will be reviewed, and likely approved, by the AHSS assessment team in April 2010.

Written feedback was provided to each report-writer by a sub-committee comprised of three members of the AHSS Assessment Team (each subcommittee evaluated five or six reports). This method of evaluating reports promotes collegiality across the College, but it also provides much more useful feedback to report-writers. Several report-writers revised their reports based on this feedback.

General Comments and Recommendations

Overall the AHSS Assessment Team is pleased with the changes that have been made to the process of writing and evaluating program assessment reports. The AHSS assessment team has made great strides in recent years in raising the quality of assessment reports and placing a greater value on assessment activities. There has been concern in the past that no one beyond the level of AHSS deans paid much attention to assessment, and that assessment therefore was something of a meaningless exercise. We were particularly gratified, therefore, that the Higher Learning Commission noted, during its recent accreditation visit, that assessment was a strength across the university.

Summary

All AHSS programs have effective and in many cases innovative assessment strategies that reflect their commitment to assessment and almost all strive to use their assessment data to engage in discussions with their colleagues about how they deliver their programs. Overall, the following strengths and areas of concern have been identified:

Strengths:

- ❖ Most programs are eager to use assessment data in meaningful ways within their departments;
- ❖ assessment takes many forms across the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences. Many programs have moved to a portfolio method of assessment, but other assessment tools include standardized tests, capstone papers, exit interviews, employer surveys, and faculty focus groups;
- ❖ many programs are striving to increase stakeholder involvement, particularly amongst faculty and students;
- ❖ several programs make effective use of outside experts in evaluating their students and programs, which significantly enhances stakeholder involvement. It has been suggested that more departments utilize outside evaluators from time to time.

Areas of concern:

After several years of discussion and debate, and a complete overhaul of assessment plans across the college, the AHSS assessment team believes we are in very good shape with regard to assessment. All AHSS programs are engaging in assessment activities that are appropriate and effective. AHSS assessment team subcommittees provide collegial and useful feedback to report-writers, which inevitably results in higher-quality assessment reports. In their reviews of individual reports, sub-committee members identified some minor concerns with individual reports but, in most cases, those concerns were conveyed to the appropriate parties and addressed. Overall, however, there are no major concerns with how AHSS programs do assessment or use assessment data.

Appendix A: AHSS Assessment Team, 2009-2010

Maira Maguire, team leader (History)
Andrew Deiser (DISLS)
Betty Freeland (Rhetoric and Writing)
Rolf Groesbeck (Music)
Yslan Hicks (Theater Arts)
Angela Hunter (Philosophy and Liberal Arts)
Jacek Lubecki (Political Science/International Studies)
Terry Richard (Sociology/Anthropology)
Marjorie Williams-Smith (Art)
Roger Webb (Psychology)
Brad Minnick (English)