

August 2008

Annual Report Form

Please answer the following questions in the body of an e-mail and return to rculbert@iusb.edu by May 31, 2008. CC a copy of the report to your department faculty and to your dean.

a. Program Name – Graduate Liberal Studies

b. Report prepared by – Ken Smith

c. Who is the current assessment contact for your program? Ken Smith, Program Director, 3123 Wiekamp Hall

d. Should assessment information be sent to anyone else in your department? No

1. What are the program's educational goals? (Please take goals directly from your program's assessment plan, and highlight any changes made this year.)

Learning goals for MLS graduate students, unchanged from the previous report:

1. Develop graduate level reading and research skills and be able to present scholarly and/or creative work through oral, written, and artistic expression.
2. Think critically with a tolerance for ambiguity and recognition of a diversity of perspectives.
3. Appreciate the disciplines of the liberal arts and sciences and be able to draw upon and employ them in an interdisciplinary manner.
4. Enhance personal and professional growth and potential.
5. Nurture an ongoing self-reflective and self-directed intellectual independence.
6. Foster an ethic of social engagement and citizenship.

2. What assessment techniques did the program use? (Please take assessment techniques directly from your program's assessment plan and highlight any changes made this year.)

The program employs one direct measure and three indirect measures.

One direct measure

Review of graduating students capstone work (MLS Project and Public Intellectual Portfolio) along with advising and curriculum records.

Three indirect measures

Graduate exit survey asking three questions:

- a. How well did you achieve each of the departmental goals [using scale of *exceeded expectations, met expectations, did not meet expectations*].

- b. What aspects of your education in this program helped with your learning and why were they helpful?
- c. What might the program do differently that would help you learn more effectively, and why would these actions help?

Campus-wide graduate student alumni survey. (not applicable this year)

External review every five years. (not applicable this year)

3. What has your program done with assessment information this year? (i.e. communicated results to faculty, staff, alumni and students, made changes in the curriculum, made changes in the budget, added new courses. . .)

Assessment takes place in two kinds of meetings. A subcommittee attending to end of program assessment meets at least once a year to review the final projects and portfolios in light of the program goals. The whole faculty reviews the broad patterns of accomplishments and weaknesses in its regular meetings as we discuss the policies for the two capstone tracks and the results we see in the tracks themselves.

Early in the year the assessment committee studied the first group of students to complete the new public writing track, along with the other graduates on the traditional project track. We found that the materials available to us were not sufficient to evaluate whether students had achieved some portion of the learning goals. To some degree the faculty members could report on what they had witnessed, but the assessment committee's main conclusion was that the goals had to be revised to match the materials we were collecting for evaluation, or else we had to start collecting other kinds of evidence. How, for example, are we to measure "tolerance for ambiguity"? The assessment committee now passes that problem on to the wider faculty for a solution.

The whole faculty's assessment deliberations this year turned toward issues of quality. Based on the performance of students in classes and on final projects, we took up a concern for the weakest members of each cohort. Are they adequately prepared to take on the program? Should they have been admitted at all? Should they have some particular course or preparation early in the program to help them achieve at a higher level? Are some students not adequately prepared for the final thesis-like project? How should the program respond to these questions? We considered, for example, one-credit courses on the tools necessary for doing well in graduate school: Critical Writing, Quantitative Methods, and Qualitative Methods. We also changed the 3 credit introductory course into a 4 credit program by adding a 1 credit Information Literacy requirement in the first semester. This change strengthens the preparation for research on the graduate level, and we are very pleased to have this new course taught by a reference librarian.

We've recently come to see the value of placing assessment materials on our web site, so we will be including that in the Fall 2008 redesign of the site, as we bring the new campus template online.

We also experimented with co-sponsoring public events with other campus departments and programs, thereby having appropriate events we can invite students and alumni to attend. We hope to deepen the graduate school experience by these sorts of changes.

4. After reflecting on assessment activities in your unit, as a result of assessment what are two issues you would like to address?

We need to return to the mismatch between our learning goals and the materials available for judging the success of the students, as well as the questions raised by the performance of the weaker students.