Assessment Plan: Humanities & Integrated Studies
Updated F2014

Student Learning and Academic Goals:

- To learn to compare ideas to consider alternative ways of thinking;
- To synthesize and make connections between ideas and topics and to advance new ideas as a result;
- To analyze topics in-depth and use findings to formulate new concepts or reach new conclusions;
- To connect and integrate ideas across disciplines in order to posit or advance a new or alternative idea or explanation.
- To become an engaged learner

Methodology:

This assessment plan utilizes a three-part approach, involving institutional data, direct student learning outcomes, and indirect assessments of student engagement levels to understand

1. Who are ISP students?
2. What do ISP students learn?
3. What are the long-term effects of ISP participation?

This information will be analyzed and compared to the data for first-year students who participated in traditional stand-alone courses at UND in order to gain a clear picture of the effects of participation in the ISP interdisciplinary learning community.

The following data will be used to analyze student learning and engagement and to make comparisons between ISP and non-ISP students at UND:
• Direct assessment of student learning (critical and creative thinking, integrative thinking): ISP Rubric (included below).
• Student demographics, high school GPAs,
• Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) data
• First semester GPAs
• Fall-to-fall retention rates
• National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) data;

The assessment director will gather the information and conduct annual faculty norming sessions using the ISP Rubric. Data analysis will be provided both by the assessment director and by UND’s Office of Institutional Research.

The data collected and analyzed will be applied to address the three questions guiding the program review to better understand who ISP students are, what ISP students learn, and what the long-term effects of ISP on student learning and engagement are. Since several key campus-wide surveys were found to be essential to this study (especially the NSSE), it was determined that this study will take place every three years in concert with the collection of data from those instruments.

Who Are Integrated Studies Program Students?

To understand the impact of participation in this interdisciplinary learning community, first the similarities and differences between the students and their peers at UND must be understood. To determine who ISP students are when entering ISP, five years’ worth of institutional data were analyzed, specifically information on gender, hometown, high school grade point average, and self-reported CIRP data that provide metrics on students’ high school experiences and academic expectations in college. Some
information from these data is also important for determining the level of academic success that can be expected from students in their undergraduate career (Pasque & Murphy, 2005; Shapiro & Levin, 1999; Smith, 1991).

**What Do Integrated Studies Students Learn?**

Integrated learning, of which interdisciplinarity is a subset (Larder & Malnarich, 2009, p. 32), “posits that truth is not the *act* of ultimately establishing knowledge, but rather the *activity* of its provisional progress” (Welch, 2011, p. 3). By being exposed to the ways that different disciplines consider an issue and by learning to compare the different approaches of those disciplines, students can begin to form a more complete and meaningful perspective and make more informed decisions. Additionally, integrating ideas from multiple disciplines helps students create a context for their own learning. Integrating ideas in an interdisciplinary learning environment more accurately reproduces a real world environment where individuals take in various pieces of information from interdisciplinary sources and combine or integrate it in different ways to reach conclusions.

Therefore Integrated Studies Program has developed four specific direct learning goals:

1. To learn to compare ideas to consider alternative ways of thinking;
2. To synthesize and make connections between ideas and topics and to advance new ideas as a result;
3. To analyze topics in-depth and use findings to formulate new concepts or reach new conclusions;
To connect and integrate ideas across disciplines in order to posit or advance a new or alternative idea or explanation.

The careful development of these goals by ISP faculty was guided by ongoing assessment feedback gathered from the assessment process developed by Boix Mansilla for assessing integrative work (Boix Mansilla, 2004, 2007). Assignments incorporate these goals, and student work is assessed according to them. It is essential to any assessment experience to establish and articulate to students clear learning goals against which they are continually evaluated.

Work in ISP classes involves a great deal of oral processing through seminar discussions and oral exams. Students are expected to hone their intellectual skills by responding to and discussing integrative questions and topics within a learning community setting. Since the goal of assessment is to provide an authentic look at students’ direct learning process, faculty members decided to analyze that learning in its organic setting. The seminar style of ISP classes, it was felt, provides the best setting for this data collection. Therefore, to monitor students’ learning, a series of authentic assessment activities are put in place throughout each semester. Called “checkpoints,” these experiences require that students read and prepare a significant document or book and participate in an intense oral discussion of that work with three fellow students for 40 minutes without faculty participation until the end of the checkpoint exam.

Four of these checkpoint experiences are scheduled over the course of the semester. Students self select into groups of four a week ahead of the checkpoint and are given the text they will be responsible for preparing and discussing. They are encouraged to meet together ahead of time to study and discuss the new work, and they are given copies of the
rubric that will be used to evaluate them. Of course they have also been presented with the overall learning goals of the program. During the checkpoint, students engage in a seminar discussion of the work without feedback, input, or assistance from faculty. They have experienced seminar discussions with their classmates in groups of 10 to 20, with faculty interaction and facilitation. However, in a checkpoint experience, the discussion becomes much more intense and is guided entirely by the students in the group.

Faculty monitor the checkpoint and record the types of student responses according to the following rubric, developed over several years with some guidance from the Association of American Colleges and Universities’ guidelines for assessing critical thinking and integration (AAC&U, 2010). This rubric also contains assessment points for topics other than critical and creative thinking and integration, providing faculty and students with information on a student’s progress in other key areas for academic success including text preparation, listening, and overall participation:

**Student Evaluation/Checkpoint Rubric, Integrated Studies Program**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic Skills</th>
<th>Level 1 Inactive</th>
<th>Emerging</th>
<th>Level 2 Exploratory</th>
<th>Emerging</th>
<th>Level 3 Integrative/Insightful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparing Materials</td>
<td>Little evidence of text preparation</td>
<td>Evidence of text preparation</td>
<td>Evidence of more than just text preparation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>Little participation</td>
<td>General observations on assigned materials</td>
<td>Active/specific participation using assigned texts and other materials</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Relevance</td>
<td>No evidence of connecting materials to personal experiences</td>
<td>Makes multiple connections to person experiences/may not advance discussion or be relevant</td>
<td>Connections between material and personal experiences are relevant and advance discussion/analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using Texts/Materials</td>
<td>Few references to assigned text</td>
<td>Multiple, general references to</td>
<td>Multiple/significant specific references to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Skills</td>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>Emerging</td>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>Emerging</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
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<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecting/Integrating</td>
<td>No connections across disciplines</td>
<td>Occasional, observational connections across disciplines; may notice contrasts</td>
<td>Frequent and/or thoughtful connections across disciplines; notes contrasts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extending Discussions</td>
<td>Little extension of others’ comments</td>
<td>Begins to explore others’ comments; does more than agree/disagree</td>
<td>Considers others’ comments and works to integrate those ideas with other discussed issues/texts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesizing/Projecting</td>
<td>Does not attempt to synthesize ideas</td>
<td>Explores conflicting info/ideas and works to synthesize differences</td>
<td>Synthesizes conflicting info/ideas and introduces new topic as a result</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyzing/Applying</td>
<td>Little or no exploration of topic or text or drawing of larger conclusions</td>
<td>General/surface exploration of topic/text; begins to reach larger conclusions</td>
<td>Explores topics in-depth and uses findings to draw conclusions/formulate new insights</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Carmichael, LaPierre, Magness, 2012).

**What Are Some Long-Term Effects of Participation in the Integrated Studies Program?**

To determine the long-term results of ISP participation, three sets of external data were collected and analyzed:

- First semester GPAs (2008-2012);
- Fall-to-fall retention rates (2008-2011);
These particular metrics were chosen because of the strong evidence that these data sets can articulate correlations between outcomes and academic success. First semester GPAs have long been found to give the first indication of continued success in college (Krumrei-Mancuso, et al., 2013; McPherson & Schapiro, 2008). Retention rates are important to the value of a department or program as it makes arguments for its validity and for continued funding. In addition, students can only be successful at an institution if they are retained and continue that education. The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is the best-known national project for measuring the extent to which students engage in practices that have been linked with positive learning outcomes, personal development, student satisfaction, and academic persistence. The recent work of many scholars (Astin 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005; Kuh, Cruse, Shoup, Kinzie, & Gonyea, 2008) indicates that students who are actively engaged in academic and co-curricular activities gain more from their college experience and are more academically successful than students who are not as engaged.

Data in these three areas will be collected as available and analyzed by the Assessment Coordinator. Results will be compared between ISP and non-ISP students at UND to determine if ISP students are meeting the unit's learning and engagement goals and to compare the progress and success of ISP students with their peers at UND. The results will inform the development of future curriculum and course offerings.

References


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Lardner, E. and Malnarich, G. (2009). When faculty assess integrative learning:
Faculty inquiry to improve learning community practice. *Changes Magazine,* September/October, 29-35.


Bloomington, IN: Indiana University.


Pasque, P.A., & Murphy, R. (2005). The intersections of living-learning programs and social identity as factors of academic achievement and intellectual

faculty in student learning and engagement. Paper presented at the 2004 Annual Meeting of the Association for Institutional Research, Boston, MA.


Humanities & Integrated Studies Assessment Plan
Updated 2013

Overview
Since the institution of the previous assessment plan, the faculty and staff of Humanities & Integrated Studies (H&ISP) have undertaken a full revision of their assessment process. Analysis of the previous plan and outcomes occurred over a series of semesters in assessment retreats and in regular faculty meetings. Several assessment mechanisms were considered, two were selected, and after working with these chosen methods, they were refined and are now fully in place.

All faculty and staff contributed to the development of the new assessment process. All faculty members participated in primary data collection, and analysis has been spearheaded by one faculty member.

Learning goals in Humanities & Integrated Studies involve the development of Critical and Creative Thinking skills. The majority of students in H&ISP classes are first-year students.

Direct Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

Essential Studies Assessment
Since the primary mission of Integrated Studies is to offer an alternative Essential Studies experience for students, the first set of assessment tools provides direct assessment of student learning in the area of Critical and Creative Thinking, the Essential Studies goal of all of our courses.

Work in H&ISP classes involves a great deal of oral processing through seminar discussions and oral exams. Students are also expected to hone their intellectual skills by providing written responses to integrative questions and topics. To provide the most thorough analysis of the movement in direct learning, and to fully analyze student learning as it is exhibited in both oral and written work, the faculty felt it was necessary to capture data at various times throughout the semester. With such a large number of ISP students, it was also decided that taking a random sample of many assignments across the semester would provide a more complete picture of student learning.

Additionally, faculty were concerned with creating a false assessment environment. The previous use of pre- and post-test writing, it was felt, established an artificial construct that led to faulty data collection. Since the goal of assessment is to provide an authentic look at students’ direct learning process, the faculty consider it essential to analyze that learning in its organic setting. The seminar style of H&ISP classes, it was felt, provides the perfect, authentic setting for data collection.
Therefore, at the beginning of each semester, a random set of 25% of enrolled students is selected. Faculty privately designate six seminars for analysis: one in each subject area (Humanities, Social Science, Science), pre and post midterm.

During these seminars, faculty privately assess the pre-selected students using a Likert scale rubric that addresses evidence of critical and creative thinking. The critical and creative thinking goals are taken from UND's Essential Studies rubrics for assessing this goal area. The results of these assessments are filed for each student. (See attachment) The rubric specifically looks for evidence of students' ability to:

- Make connections
- Draw conclusions
- Take risks with ideas and thinking
- Raise ideas that move beyond topics

In addition to collecting data during these set seminars, the selected students' work in oral exams and on the written final exam is also evaluated using the same rubric. This data is added to the seminar assessments, so that faculty are able to trace the learning outcomes for each student in the selected group across the entire semester.

The data are then compiled, and independent sample t tests conducted to compare the pre- and post-midterm mean scores for critical and creative thinking in each discipline area to determine to what extent students are making progress in the learning outcomes.

As overall trends become evident, faculty are able to pinpoint the pieces of the learning goals that need to be more fully addressed in instruction. Given the fluid and ongoing nature of the unit’s curriculum development, curricular changes can be instituted within the semester or by the next semester (depending on timing, etc.).

This year the faculty will be gathering empirical evidence to test the quality of the rubric by determining if it measures what it is intended to measure (validity) and provides for consistency in scoring (inter-rater and intra-rater reliability).

Assessment data collected contributes to the revalidation of all H&ISP courses as Essential Studies courses, so the results of this assessment are processed, published, and evaluated by an outside group every three years. Additionally, the results are published in the unit's Annual Report.

It is felt that this cross-semester analysis of student learning provides the most authentic and complete look at students' learning development and provides the most helpful and specific information for determining curricular and pedagogical revision.
Since the majority of students in H&ISP classes are first-year students, it is not expected that full growth in any of the learning goals will be achieved, but that forward movement or improvement will be the overall trend.

**Indirect Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes**

Measuring student engagement and also student perceptions of learning are essential to understanding the success of the unit’s pedagogical approaches. Both of these are assessed in an ongoing fashion, and data collected is compared against peer groups within the university and with peer institutions.

**Student Engagement**

Over the past two years, the results of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) have been analyzed, comparing H&ISP student results with UND student results and with peer institution results at both the first year and senior year. Results clearly show that H&ISP first-year and senior students score higher in all six of the benchmark areas of the NSSE. This indirect assessment result indicates the success of H&ISP pedagogies and practices and has been addressed in public forums on campus and nationally. It is also the subject of upcoming publication.

Faculty intend to continue monitoring the NSSE data and running statistical comparisons among these groups of students.

Since rates of student engagement correlate with success in undergraduate learning and accomplishment, it is believed that monitoring this data is essential to monitoring the effectiveness of the unit’s pedagogies, as well as it is to representing the success of the unit in terms of providing an excellent choice for undergraduate learning.

**Student Perceptions of Learning**

Various methods of assessing students’ perceptions of their own learning are utilized and will continue to be utilized in H&ISP classes. The use of student letters addressing Essential Studies goals has proven quite enlightening and helpful to faculty as they consider curricular issues.

Students spend two seminars discussing Essential Studies goals, considering their meaning and value. Then the students are given an assignment to write a letter to a friend or family member explaining these goals and where they feel they have or haven’t met these goals in their H&ISP coursework. They spend one seminar with
other classmates considering this and brainstorming specific ideas about it. They write the letters separately and turn them in to H&ISP faculty for no grade.

Student responses have been eye-opening and indicate that they can very specifically identify where they have improved and which assignments, readings, or other learning experiences in their classes contributed to this growth.

Since H&ISP has been conducting this study for almost 25 years, they have a vast amount of indirect assessment that can be considered. It is the plan for this data to be analyzed over the next two years to see what kind of overall picture of student learning can be drawn when looking data that stretches through three decades (1980's – 2000's).

In addition to these letters, indirect assessment has also been collected through a longitudinal study of perceived student learning outcomes. There is no plan to continue this study. However, a new study of student retention rates will begin next year and will utilize data from Institutional Research regarding comparative retention rates between ISP students and non-ISP students.

**Integrative Learning**

To measure students' integrative abilities, the new AAC&U rubric on integrative learning will be applied to selected course artifacts from both first and second semester.
Humanities & Integrated Studies Assessment Plan
Updated 2011

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Learning goals in Humanities & Integrated Studies involve the development of Critical and Creative Thinking and the development of the ability to apply integrated analysis to the consideration of topics and problems. The majority of students in H&ISP classes are first-year students.

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**Integration Ability**

The second programmatic goal of H&ISP classes involves the ability of students to develop interdisciplinary integration skills. Integrated Studies pedagogy values the development of students' abilities to consider the ways in which each discipline thinks about and responds to ideas. Beyond that, it is necessary for individuals to be able to consider issues from several of these perspectives or disciplines simultaneously, thereby integrating the ideas and bringing them to bear on the issue.

This is not an ability that students have had much exposure to and, as primarily first-year students, may not have the conceptual ability to yet become proficient. Integrative thinking requires more refined development of analytical thinking and of the ability to hold contrary notions simultaneously while applying them to a third issue. This is sophisticated work, and the goal of H&ISP is simply to introduce the concept, provide ongoing opportunities to develop the abilities, and to see some forward movement in students' abilities to accomplish this kind of learning.

Specifically, it is felt that growth in integrative ability can be determined by assessing three areas: integration, application, and curiosity.

A final exam was developed that would specifically address the three programmatic goals of integration, application, and curiosity. This exam would present the students with a new piece of information – a film or an essay to prepare for the exam. The exam would ask for, in essay form, three things:

1. To discuss information from the course that helped them understand the essay or film
2. To discuss how the information in the essay or film helped them reconsider previous readings & conclusions
3. To discuss what questions they now have and what they still want to know as a result of reading this essay or viewing the film.

This portion of curricular assessment is slated to be in place beginning in Fall 2011 and will be used and analyzed each semester. A random sample of 25% of responses will be evaluated.

**Indirect Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes**

Measuring student engagement and also student perceptions of learning are essential to understanding the success of the unit’s pedagogical approaches. Both of
these are assessed in an ongoing fashion, and data collected is compared against peer groups within the university and with peer institutions.

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**Student Perceptions of Learning**

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In addition to these letters, indirect assessment has also been collected through a longitudinal study of perceived student learning outcomes. There is no plan to continue this study. However, a new study of student retention rates will begin next year and will utilize data from Institutional Research regarding comparative retention rates between ISP students and non-ISP students.