

To: Helen Bergland, Pui-Yan Lam, Liping Zhu

Degree/Certificate: Bachelor of Arts

Major/Option: History

Submitted by: Ann Le Bar

Date: 13 November 2015

Part I – Program SLO Assessment Report for 2014-15

Part I – for the 2014-15 academic year: Because Deans have been asked to create College-Level Synthesis Reports annually, the template has been slightly modified for a) clarity for Chairs and Directors, and b) a closer fit with what the Deans and Associate Deans are being asked to report.

1. **Student Learning Outcome:** The student performance or learning objective as published either in the catalog or elsewhere in your department literature:

“5. articulate how historical training can be applied in various careers.”

2. **Overall evaluation of progress on outcome:** Indicate whether or not the SLO has been met, and if met, to what level.

_____ SLO is met after changes resulting from ongoing assessments, referencing assessment results from the previous year to highlight revisions;
__x__ SLO is met, but with changes forthcoming;
_____ SLO is met without change required

3. **Strategies and methods:** Description of assessment method and choices, why they were used and how they were implemented.

Because a student’s understanding of what careers lay before her and how she will best prepare for them is not easily, and certainly not quantitatively, assessable, the History department opted for a pre-test/post-test survey with 2 essay questions. The survey was given to students in the 2 sections of Hist. 290 taught in this academic year. Hist. 290 is the required introductory course for History majors and the one course in our curriculum that directly addresses career preparation. The two essay questions were: 1) Describe 3 specific jobs in education or federal, state, or local government that are commonly held by historians, and how your historical training is relevant to each position. 2) Describe 2 specific jobs outside of education or federal, state, or local government that are commonly held by historians, and how your historical training is relevant to each position.

In the first section of Hist. 290 where the survey was implemented (Winter 2015), students took it as a homework assignment and had several days to complete it. Due to time constraints, these students were only given the survey once at the end of the quarter. In the second section (Spring 2015), students completed both the pre and post-surveys during class time.

4. **Observations gathered from data:** Include findings and analyses based on the strategies and methods identified in item #3.

a. Findings:

A total of 21 students completed the survey over two quarters.

Responses on the Pre-test given in Spring 2015 suggest that students were not aware of many specific career paths open to people with a History BA or higher degree. The pretests also reveal that students were not able to distinguish between careers in the public sector and in the private sector. Specifically, 8 of the 10 students who took the pre-test were unable to accurately list 3 history-related careers in the public sector, even though the essay question prompts them by stating “jobs in education or federal, state, or local government.” Their answers included: “public historian” – which is a general term for all historians working outside of education; “curator of documents”; “docent”; “record keeper”; “government”; “education”; “historian”; “museum official”; “government advisor”; “clerk”; “teacher”. When asked for 2 jobs “outside of government and education,” 7 of the 10 students had difficulty. Some could list only one such job; others listed vague or non-existent jobs. Their answers included: “private museum”; “preservationist”; “museum official”; “archival work” – usually this is under auspices of federal or state government; “working at a pawn shop.” Most significantly, 9 of the 10 students could not precisely articulate specific, career-applicable skills and content gained in the History BA program. To the question, “how your historical training is relevant,” some students said nothing; the majority offered “convey information,” “convey knowledge,” “know history,” “look at the past,” “research.”

Responses on the Post-test from the same group of students showed substantial improvement in ability to identify specific careers in education and government. Only 3 of the 9 students were unable to accurately list 3 history-related careers in the public sector, offering instead one or more non-existent careers such as “museum guide”; “state park”; “teacher”; “archives”; “elective official.” However 6 of the 9 still had difficulty when asked for 2 jobs “outside of government and education.” Likewise, 8 of the 9 students were only slightly better able to precisely articulate specific, career-applicable skills and content gained in the History BA program.

Responses on the Post-test given in Winter 2015 to 11 students showed in general a good grasp of specific career paths open to History BAs and how to prepare for them. Only 4 of the 11 were unable to identify 3 specific careers in the public sector and only 3 of the 11 had difficulty identifying 2 in the private sector. Most notably, all 11 respondents were able to describe how specific, career-applicable skills and content gained in the History BA program would apply in various careers.

b. Analysis of findings:

Tentatively, we conclude that the SLO, “articulate how historical training can be applied in various careers,” is satisfactorily met through the content provided in Hist. 290. By the end of the course, students are aware of careers and can discuss the skills that are needed in them. However, the variation in post-test results between Winter and Spring quarters means that the instructors in 290 need to collaborate to improve the consistency in how we teach about career preparation. We also need to administer the survey in the same manner across sections.

5. What program changes will be made based on the assessment results?

- a) Describe plans to improve student learning based on assessment findings (e.g., course content, course sequencing, curriculum revision, learning environment or student advising).

Faculty members teaching Hist. 290 will collaborate on assignments, content, for teaching about career preparation for History BAs.

The History Department is currently in the process of updating our curriculum and our student learning outcomes to reflect the standards outlined by the American Historical Association in a recent multi-year research project.

Career preparation will be one of the objectives we discuss, in light of the above assessment findings. Possibly, we will introduce career preparation to students in additional courses beyond Hist. 290; for example, also in the Capstone.

- b) Provide a broad timeline of how and when identified changes will be addressed in the upcoming year.

We expect the curriculum revision to take place over two academic years; career-preparation and other learning outcomes will be clarified and updated in a January 2016 History Faculty retreat. By the end of this academic year, the Undergraduate Curriculum committee will work the results of the retreat into a new document, with recommendations for how SLOs should be met in specific required and elective courses in the curriculum. Implementation of the new SLOs in our courses will take place during academic year 2016-17.

6. Description of revisions to the assessment process the results suggest are needed and an evaluation of the assessment plan/process itself.

Administering the pre-test post-test survey in the same manner in all sections of Hist. 290 and possibly also in other required courses, such as the capstone.

PART II – CLOSING THE LOOP FOLLOW-UP FROM THE 2013-14 PROGRAM ASSESSMENT REPORT

PLEASE NOTE: The College-Level Synthesis report now includes a section asking Deans to summarize which programs/certificates have demonstrated “closing-the-loop” assessments and findings based on the previous year’s assessment report.

***Working definition for closing the loop:** Using assessment results to improve student learning as well as pedagogical practices. This is an essential step in the continuous cycle of assessing student learning. It is the collaborative process through which programs use evidence of student learning to gauge the efficacy of collective educational practices, and to identify and implement strategies for improving student learning.” Adapted 8.21.13 from <http://www.hamline.edu/learning-outcomes/closing-loop.html>.*

1. **Student Learning Outcome(s)** assessed for 2013-14:

“2. develop writing proficiency on historical topics;” specifically writing mechanics.

2. **Strategies implemented** during 2013-14 to improve student learning, based on findings of the 2012-13 assessment activities.

Intensive focus on writing mechanics in Hist. 390. Hist. 390 is the required research methods course for our B.A. The Fall and Spring quarter 2014-15 sections of Hist. 390 used the same course design and pedagogy: students improve a paper written for an earlier class by adding additional primary source evidence, articulating a clear thesis, and engaging the relevant historiography. Students submit and revise 3 drafts of the paper during the course of quarter. Improving writing mechanics is one of the major requirements for passing the course. (See attached grading rubric for Hist. 390).

3. **Summary of results** (may include comparative data or narrative; description of changes made to curriculum, pedagogy, mode of delivery, etc.): Describe the effect of the changes towards improving student learning and/or the learning environment.

(See attached assessment report from Michael Conlin.) Beyond the grades students earn in Hist. 390, the department does not have a method for precisely gauging students' improvement in writing competency. In Fall 2014, 3 out of 14 students did not receive passing grade (2.0 or higher) in the course. In Spring 2015, 2 out of 10 did not receive 2.0 or higher. The more intensive focus on writing mechanics, particularly the intensive professor and peer critiques each student gets, definitely improves their abilities to write competently; some students need to take Hist. 390 more than once before that learning occurs.

4. What **further changes to curriculum, pedagogy, mode of delivery**, etc. are projected based on closing-the-loop data, findings and analysis?

The History Department is currently in the process of updating our curriculum and our student learning outcomes to reflect the standards outlined by the American Historical Association in a recent multi-year research project. Writing proficiency will remain one of our most important objectives. One of the likely curricular changes we will make will be to designate numerous "writing intensive" courses in our major and require that students pass more than one of them as part of degree requirements.