School of Liberal Arts, IUPUI

2010-2011 ACADEMIC YEAR ASSESSMENT REPORT

Introduction

The School of Liberal Arts at IUPUI is a large, diverse and dynamic school. With 11 departments and more than 30 centers, institutes, and programs, the School is the only one of its kind in the IU system. The School enrolls nearly 1,700 undergraduate majors, 340 graduate students, and has more than 220 full-time faculty members. We award degrees in sixteen undergraduate majors, and most departments offer graduate degrees and/or certificates; students may also choose a Ph.D. program in Philanthropic Studies or Economics. New programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels are under development. A new Chinese Studies major was recently approved. A BA in Medical Humanities and Health Studies and a PhD in Health communications are two of the most recent new programs being formulated.

Many departments and programs in the School of Liberal Arts participate in national accrediting programs that have long specified agreed upon learning outcomes. Other programs have generally followed the Principles of Undergraduate Learning as a framework for what their students are expected to know and be able to do at the completion of their fields of study.

This year the School collected the core student learning outcomes from each degree and certificate for all undergraduate and graduate departments. Certain commonalities exist across the many programs, of course, but the diversity and breadth of teaching and learning in the school means that we are in pursuit of many and varied learning outcomes. The following general statements of learning outcomes at each level of degree summarizes across the many programs. As students move into higher levels of learning, greater levels of mastery are expected.

Student Learning Outcomes in the School of Liberal Arts

An Associate of Arts (AA) degree in the School of Liberal Arts (SLA) is designed to fulfill a set of desired learning outcomes for the general education of a university undergraduate in the 21st century. This degree reflects IUPUI's Principles of Undergraduate Learning (http://academicaffairs.iupui.edu/plans/pul/).

Students completing the Associate of Arts degree should:

- **Know** through an introductory level about their place and time in society and culture from a variety of perspectives (such as anthropology, economics, history, philosophy, political science, religious studies, sociology, and science), and through having an introduction to a second language.
- **Understand** methods and modes of inquiry specific to areas of knowledge in arts and humanities , natural sciences, and the social sciences, the interdisciplinary nature of knowledge, the components of a multicultural society, and the global society and processes of globalization
- **Be able to**
  o Demonstrate good written and oral communication skills
  o Demonstrate effective skills and interactions with individuals and within groups
  o Begin to integrate content materials to applications in the workforce
  o Propose solutions to problems based on their content area of study, either through individual or team member work

A Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree in the School of Liberal Arts (SLA) includes at least two components: **General Education** courses (required and elected) and courses in **a declared major** (required and elected). Both components reflect IUPUI's Principles of Undergraduate Learning. Detailed articulation of Student Learning Outcomes for individual degrees and certificates are part of the SLA's department and program websites (http://liberalarts.iupui.edu/).

Students completing the Bachelor of Arts degree should:

- **Know** about their place and time in society and culture from a variety of perspectives (such as anthropology, economics, history, philosophy, political science, religious studies, sociology, and science), and through having a second language
- **Understand**, appreciate, and respect the variety and complexity of other societies and cultures—across time and place—as the basis for successful interaction in the global context of the 21st century
- **Be able to**
  o Find, analyze, evaluate, summarize, and apply information, drawing effectively on a variety of information sources and tools
  o Pose general as well as particular questions and propose creative solutions to those problems in different contexts—working independently and as members of teams
  o Communicate effectively in English to peers and professionals making effective use of a variety of communication modes, methods, and technologies, and have functional competency in one other language
  o Exercise ethically sound judgment in personal and professional situations and demonstrate responsible behavior as leaders as well as being able to work effectively in group or team projects

A Master of Arts (MA) degree in the School of Liberal Arts (SLA) reflects IUPUI's Principles of Graduate and Professional Learning (http://academicaffairs.iupui.edu/plans/graduatePrinciples.cfm). Detailed articulation of Student Learning Outcomes, including their assessment, for individual graduate degrees and certificates are part of the SLA's department and program websites (http://liberalarts.iupui.edu/).

Students earning a <u>Master of Arts</u> degree in the School of Liberal Arts will:

Know the fundamental concepts, terms and theories in their chosen field of study

Understand how to apply these concepts to important questions in their field

Be able to
   o Discuss contemporary issues in a specialized field of study
   o Explain the interconnections between variants within the discipline of study
   o Complete research with faculty supervision
   o Give presentations at professional meetings, symposia and other fora
   o Plan and conduct research in a specialized field of study
   o Be prepared to continue on to doctoral level study in the discipline and/or to enter the workforce in the specific area of study, applying theoretical and practical skills to tasks through a base in critical thinking skills

A Doctorate of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree in the School of Liberal Arts (SLA) reflects IUPUI's Principles of Graduate and Professional Learning. Detailed articulation of Student Learning Outcomes for particular graduate degrees and certificates are part of the SLA's department and program websites (http://liberalarts.iupui.edu/).

Students earning a <u>PhD</u> in the School of Liberal Arts will:

Know the ethics and practices of the discipline of study, how to respond to human diversity and to real-place settings, and the importance of critical reflection and how it can be used through research and/or work applications

Understand leadership capacity through theory to practice, the link between staying abreast of the latest developments in the field through professional development and membership in professional organizations, and global perspectives of communities of practice

Be Able to
   o Display proficiency in the discipline and engage in academic scholarship
   o Apply theory and research through employment in real-work settings and be able to disseminate this research through scholarly writings and presentations
   o Construct meaningful collaborations with local, national and international communities of practice
   o Promote an inclusive environment that promotes academic rigor and innovative methodologies for practice and learning

Data on Student Learning

Departments and programs across the school vary in the quality and extent to which they gather data on student success in achieving desired learning outcomes. As noted above, those programs governed by professional associations with credentialing requirements are more accustomed to thinking in terms of systematically requiring students to demonstrate particular learning outcomes.   As part of the campus wide initiative, all full time faculty in the School of Liberal Arts submit data on achievement of key PULs in each of their classes each semester. These data will hopefully provide opportunities for reflection on areas of success and need for improvement.

Other data sources include the annual Graduating Student Assessment Survey. As the name implies, students are asked to self report about a variety of indicators of student satisfaction with their experiences in the School of Liberal Arts. Instructions on the survey explicitly indicate that their responses to the survey will help the School to assess its programs. The survey has four parts: general items related to academic services, faculty mentoring, academic advising, and an opportunity for open ended student reflection. For our purposes, the most important element is the first one.

Graduates are asked to rate their level of mastery on a variety of learning outcomes based upon the PULs. Though these are not direct measures of student learning, they do capture the students' assessment of their own learning. Students are queried on their ability to express their ideas effectively in writing, orally and visually. They are asked to assess how they view the effectiveness of their communication, the ability to express their opinions clearly and to employ analytical skills to comprehend, interpret and analyze ideas and facts. As this sampling of questions indicates, the survey gathers data on the students' own assessment of their acquisition of the PULs and other important learning outcomes.

The most recent data are from Spring 2011.Two hundred twenty one graduating seniors completed this portion of the survey. Though a full analysis of these data is beyond the scope of this report, students generally report high levels of perceived competence across the PULs. For example, seven questions in the survey capture PUL 1 Core Communication and Quantitative Skills and its sub elements. Summing the two responses indicating the highest levels of proficiency (well and very well) the majority of elements assessing PUL 1 show very high levels of perceived proficiency (80% or greater). However, responses to questions tapping into PUL 1(5) making effective use of information resources and

technology are slightly lower with 75% reporting high levels of proficiency for effective use of information resources and 72.4% reporting effective use of information technology. Similarly, 82% of graduating seniors report that they have high levels of proficiency on PUL 2 Critical Thinking.

Graduating seniors generally report high levels of proficiency (80% or more) across the remaining PULs, though slightly lower levels of proficiency are reported for PUL 3 Integration and Application Knowledge. Sixty percent chose the two highest responses for the question regarding PUL 3(1) enhancing my personal life while 71.5% report high levels of proficiency in PUL 3(3) furthering the goals of society. Lowest levels of proficiency are reported for elements relating to the visual arts and communication.

Seventy percent of graduates report high proficiency in PUL 6(2) exploring, understanding and cultivating appreciation for beauty in art while 73% report high proficiency in PUL 1(1) expressing ideas and facts to others effectively in visual formats. This is perhaps not surprising given the greater emphasis of the liberal arts upon oral and written communication as opposed to visual.

Data from a single point in time cannot tell us a great deal about the ongoing successful acquisition of our students. But comparing them across time can help us to identify areas of strength and weakness. Attention to these trends will help us focus greater attention upon elements in which students believe that they are less proficient. Student assessments of their own acquisition of learning outcomes are one important source of information, but they are not sufficient. To fully assess student learning in the School of Liberal Arts direct data are needed.

Direct Measures: Some Key Programs

Moving forward it will be important for faculty and departments to gather evidence of achievement of student learning outcomes that they have identified for their various programs and to employ those data to enhance and improve their programs of study. At this time, departments and programs vary significantly in how systematically they gather such information and feed it back into planning for future student learning. Three programs (all of which offer multiple sections of core courses) stand out at this time as doing exemplary work in this regard. Though there is certainly more to do, the Spanish Program (in the Department of World Languages and Culture), the Writing Program (Department of English) and the Speech Program (Department of Communications) have thoughtful processes in place to clearly identify learning outcomes, systematically assess outcomes across multiple sections and feedback findings into future teaching of those courses to respond to improve student learning.

The Writing Program, Department of English

English W131 is part of the core general education requirements for every IUPUI undergraduate. Students are provided a detailed explanation of the goals and expected outcomes for the course that is intended to guide all of their writing assignments. Students prepare a writer's statement for each draft to explain the rhetorical concerns related to their papers. As students shape and revise their drafts throughout the semester, instructors provide feedback to help students self-assess their writing and learning in the course. They employ rubrics to respond to drafts, giving students feedback on multiple criteria.   At the conclusion of the semester, students write a retrospective essay to accompany their final portfolio. This provides an opportunity to reflect on their experiences with writing, their perceived growth and remaining challenges.

 All W131 instructors employ a common grading guide that clearly defines program expectations for "Passing," "Better than Passing," and "Below Passing." Instructors meet at the conclusion of the semester to share student work and calibrate their grading to assure consistency across the program in the assessing of learning outcomes. They reflect on the semester's teaching and learning experiences, using that reflection as a basis for revising syllabi and grading guides when necessary. In this way, instructors employ assessment to improve student learning in the future.

In addition, the Writing Program has collected a random sample of student papers from final portfolios over the past several years and asked a group of program instructors to read, assess, and discuss papers from the sample. They have used this ongoing program assessment to develop workshops and to refine the curriculum.

This process of assessing student learning outcomes reflects the commitment of the Writing Program faculty to the core importance of critical thinking, reflection, and written communication. Identifying the strengths and challenges in the teaching and learning process, the program revises the curriculum and grading guides as necessary. The next step is for faculty to capture and save more of the data from the grading rubrics so that they might be even more systematic in their assessment endeavors.

Similar approaches are taken in the other core writing courses (W130, W132, W231, and the honors courses), which also fulfill general education requirements specified by various programs across campus.

Speech Communication, Department of Communication

Much like Elementary Composition, most IUPUI students are required to take R110 Speech Communication.   Thirty faculty members teach this course in a given semester.   All sections employ a common text.

Steven Le Beau, The R110 Director and his faculty have identified ten learning outcomes, based in the PULs which they incorporate into nearly all speech assignments. Faculty members have prepared a bank of potential assignments that instructors may choose among for their courses. So, not all assignments are exactly the same, but a common rubric is used by all faculty and it is included in the syllabus. Each speech is graded on these ten learning outcomes.

The program has placed a special emphasis on training faculty and assuring consistency across the many sections and instructors. Videos of speeches from previous semesters are employed to train new instructors. Faculty reflection and student performance are used as evidence by the R110 coordinator and the faculty to improve the curriculum and enhance teaching strategies in future semesters. Like the Writing Program, the Speech program has focused upon providing consistent and detailed feedback to students about their proficiency in the agreed upon learning outcomes. Were the faculty to capture and examine these scores for each element in the rubric, they would be even better placed to assess the success of the program and improve upon it where necessary.

Spanish, Department of World Languages and Cultures

Acquisition of skills in a second language and appreciation and understanding of cultures beyond our own are important elements of the PULs that are directly addressed by the World Languages and Cultures Department in the School of Liberal Arts. The Director of the Spanish Program, Marta Anton, and the faculty in Spanish have actively engaged in developing a careful method of student assessment.

The study of a second language is one of SLA programs for which an external professional body has defined expected levels of proficiency. The Spanish Program employs these standards established by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) to assess student learning. These guidelines set standards for novice, intermediate, advanced, and superior levels of proficiency in Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing in a second language. Appropriate outcomes are identified for the beginning and intermediate sequence of courses. For example, by the end of the beginning program, students are expected to have reached the "intermediate low" level of communicative

competence in the four language skills and by the end of the intermediate program students are expected to have reached the "intermediate mid" level of communicative competence.

The ACTFL standards translate clearly into rubrics for assessment across the four areas. Faculty members assess student learning throughout the semester to identify and work to correct student deficits. The entry course to the major (third-year Spanish- S313 Spanish Composition) and the capstone are two key moments to assess student learning within the major. Students in the Spanish Capstone create a portfolio of work. The portfolio is composed of a selection of projects, reports, papers and compositions from each of their courses in the major.   Capstone students also produce a reflective essay which gives the student the opportunity to reflect critically on what they have learned through the courses and the readings in the major, focusing specifically on the interrelated nature of the various components of the discipline: language, linguistics, literature and culture.

The Capstone portfolio, project and presentation are assessed by three Spanish faculty members using a common rubric. Content knowledge in the subject areas and language proficiency are weighted equally. Students in the Capstone are expected to have reached an advanced level of language proficiency as established by ACTFL. Students are assessed as being below minimum expectations (Grade of F), meeting minimum expectations (C), exceeding minimum expectations (B) and far surpassing minimum expectations (A). Students not meeting minimum expectations must repeat the Capstone. Given this very high level of attention to assessment, the Spanish program is well placed to capture and analyze data on student learning and employ this information to improve student outcomes as they work toward language proficiency.

Conclusion

The School of Liberal Arts, as noted earlier, is a large and diverse School teaching courses of study that span a large array of fields of inquiry. Our courses have been designed to address the core learning principles embodied in the PULs and we have begun assessing students on the primary PUL for each class we teach. Some programs are effectively undertaking ongoing assessment of student learning and feeding knowledge gained from this assessment back into the students' curriculum. Other departments are still working to figure out how best to gather systematic data on student learning now that we have all laid out clearly what we expect our students to know and be able to do at the conclusion of their courses of study. In all cases, the next obvious step is to capture the data we already employ in

assessing learning and assigning student grades in a way that will help us more clearly demonstrate student learning on the desired outcomes. The School of Liberal Arts is made up of a faculty dedicated to student learning and student success. As we strive to incorporate a systematic collection of evidence that will help our ability to measure how students meet or do not meet student learning outcomes, we will do an even better on-going evaluation of our teaching and tailor learning techniques to the strengths and weaknesses of our students and toward the outcomes we want them to master.