Anthropology and Sociology

The focus of our assessment activities was evaluating the SIP rubric as an instrument to assess SIPs and to evaluate student learning by applying the rubric to current SIPs. We compared the rubric scores by the adviser and a second reader of select SIPs and established that item scores varied slightly, but overall scores were fairly consistent. In addition, we decided to increase the use of the SIP rubric, because it provides structure to our conversations of student learning in the context of SIP projects.

Art and Art History

Art and Art History evaluated a range of programmatic elements this year, including the annual assessment of learning outcomes identified in our Assessment Plan, methods for advising and communication with students at all levels, especially seniors, and program/workload assignments within the department. Efforts to better align the evaluation of learning outcomes in the two distinct majors, Studio Art and Art History, included the development and revision of rubrics and assessment plans. This work will continue into the following year. Additional changes to methods for advising and communication with students are a result of this year's work. Ongoing assessment for satellite programs, such as the Kalamazoo College Community Studio, continues to be assessed by responsible faculty and staff as part of funding guidelines associated with the grant. As a result of this assessment and input from student participants, the Community Studio changed locations within the Park Trades building. The new location promises to increase learning outcomes for students as well as the overall visibility, success and efficacy of the program.

Biology

The Biology Department's 2013-2014 Assessment Report focuses on two expected outcomes for our students. First, we expect students who have completed our program to have competency with laboratory and field skills, especially those appropriate to their area of interest. Second, we expect students who have completed our program to be adept at generating hypotheses, designing experiments, and effectively collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data. In order to assess our progress in helping students meet these objectives, we have considered three years worth of data collected from the "SIP mentor survey." This survey is a 15-part questionnaire that is sent to all mentors who advise Biology SIP students during the summer, and many of its questions address the outcomes stated above. We have learned that the external mentors of our SIP students are generally very pleased with the preparation of our students, both in terms of technical and conceptual skills. We have also learned that if our students have a general weakness, it is in conducting statistical analyses and in solving problems without assistance. We plan to further explore potential gaps in our students' Biology education through some modified SIP mentor survey questions, and we anticipate finding ways to eliminate such gaps during ongoing Departmental conversations about our curriculum.

Chemistry

No Report

Computer Science

No Report
Economics and Business

The Department of Economics and Business took a close look at the results from the First Destination Survey, both 2013 and 2014. The numerical results show high levels of success in courses, perhaps especially so in oral communication, analytical problem-solving skills, and preparation for life after K. The Department noted lower scores on second language proficiency. Due to recent changes in the Department’s SIP program, special attention was given to questions related to the SIP experience. Unfortunately, poor response rates and ambiguity in questions did not allow the Department to draw solid conclusions at this point. These are issues that we will pursue in future assessment activities.

English

In the 2013-14 academic year, the English Department underwent an external review, our first since 2000. Given the significant changes in our departmental staffing, the curricula of our two emphases within the major (Literary and Cultural Studies; Writing), and the College curriculum, this review offered an important opportunity for us to inspect our work critically and to be examined by external reviewers. During the entire 2013-14 academic year, this external review served as our work on assessment.

Among other things, we used the review to focus on the current imbalance between Literary and Cultural Studies (LCS) and Writing (W) majors and potential ways to restructure and invigorate the LCS portion of the major. (We have significantly more W majors than LCS majors, a trend English Departments are seeing nation-wide and that we at K have been experiencing since at least 2000.) As a result of external feedback, we have devoted this academic year to studying how other English departments nationwide create curricular coherence, seeking student feedback on key issues (survey and focus groups), and developing potential models for the 2016-17 academic year.

German

The approach taken by the German Studies Department in 2014 was to analyze our students’ performance in each discrete area of linguistic performance (speaking, listening, reading and writing) on the Goethe-Institute exams by entering their scores from the years 2009-2014 into an Excel spreadsheet, broken down into the four key skill categories. The principal difference is that this year, instead of considering only cumulative scores as we did in the past, we took a closer look at each test category with a view to analyzing student performance across each test level (B1, B2 and C1—benchmarked to the Common European Framework of Reference for Foreign Languages). Our goal was to discover if patterns in student performance would emerge—either persistent strengths or areas where improvement was needed—and to learn what we could from these patterns to inform our ongoing curricular planning. What this analysis taught us about our students' strengths and weaknesses at various proficiency levels is that we need to focus at the upper level of our major curriculum on both complex reading materials (we already do this, to some extent—but these results tell us we need to redouble our efforts in this regard) AND on authentic auditory and visual materials (film, media, etc.), and employ the latter in a Content-Based Instruction framework.

History

History's assessment program for 2013-14 had to be put on hold when our efforts to develop a new set of major/minor requirements failed to bear fruit. Once we have the new requirements in place, we will proceed with our original plan to revise our assessment document to accord with the new requirements.
Mathematics

Following the Mathematics Assessment Plan, our 2013-14 work focused on assessment of learning outcome #3, "Attain mastery of fundamental skills in the discipline." Our "New Majors Exam" (also known as the "Sophomore comprehensive exam") is a primary assessment and advising instrument for use with prospective math majors. Extensive departmental discussion and review of our students’ performance on these exams led to four important results: (1) Creation of a list of learning outcomes for each of the four core courses for the major (Calculus I, Calculus II, Calculus III and Linear Algebra); (2) Development of a bank of questions for the exam in which each item is keyed to one of the learning outcomes; (3) A complete overhaul of the new majors exam so that each item addresses one of our core learning outcomes; (4) Proposal of a new policy which establishes a specific deadline for when a student must complete the exam to qualify as a math major.

Music

Using direct measures (compiling trends across three quarterly evaluations of student instrumental/vocal performance) and indirect measures (surveying the effectiveness of those assessments in the eyes of both students and faculty), the music department determined that students who engage consistently in lessons are indeed improving their technical and expressive skills, but that the quarterly evaluation instrument that shows this (a form filled out by the members of a small faculty jury) could be made easier to use and could contribute more directly to that ongoing learning. The music department will seek to close the loop by updating its form to reflect these findings.

Philosophy

External Review in 2014-15

Physical Education

Because the PE Department serves 100% of the student body, we must provide several activities that address, teach, and affirm a healthy, active, and fit lifestyle. This year's assessment activities affirmed the effectiveness of our efforts on the First Destination Survey, but we will continue to increase our efforts with new class offerings, the elimination of some which are no longer relevant, and more effective teaching of the classes we currently offer.

Physics

The Physics Department has a number of assessment activities ranging from the class level to the department level. Tools used during 2013-2014 include: (1) administration of the major field test in Physics to all senior majors and comparison with previous years’ results as well as with those taking the exam nationally; (2) written exit questionnaires from senior physics majors; (3) pre- and post- testing in both terms of the introductory physics sequence (Physics 150 and 152) using nationally recognized tests of conceptual understanding; (4) the Lawson Test of Scientific Reasoning, now administered to most students intending to major in the sciences; (5) a basic math skills test, also used at Univ. of Michigan, administered at the beginning of Phys 150, and new this year, (6) the MPEX survey (Maryland Physics Expectations Survey) a pre- and post- course survey designed to probe attitudes, expectations and experiences in introductory physics courses. We have been assisted by one of our seniors, who conducted SIP research this last year (IRB approved methods) that included administration and analysis of the MPEX survey, contact interviews with some students, and analysis of other data. Analysis of
various results show significantly improved learning (as measured by pre- and post-testing) in our lower level courses after conversion to “studio” format in which class and lab activities are combined and traditional lecturing is minimized. Unfortunately, increased learning has been accompanied by lower course evaluations and expression of frustration by many students. Recent efforts toward further revision appear to be successful, in that improved learning has been maintained while overall student satisfaction has returned to more normal levels. Further details are available in the full report, and in a recent SIP on the subject.

Political Science

We looked at our senior questionnaire and identified some places for improvement around SIP procedures, departmental cohesion and cohort-building. We noted the problem of drawing conclusions from a small sample of respondents and have identified a way to ensure that students complete the survey.

Psychology

The Department of Psychology’s main assessment activities in 2013-1014 were: (1) administration of the ETS psychology field exam as our comprehensive exam in Winter quarter; (2) multiple departmental discussions of our seniors’ SIP projects in Fall and Winter, culminating in observation of their presentations at the Michigan Undergraduate Psychology Research Conference (at K College) that enabled us to make comparisons with students from other Michigan colleges and universities; (3) administration of a survey to our seniors in Spring Quarter; (4) a day-long departmental retreat in June to review and evaluate our programs in June.

ETS scores dropped, we believe because we made the exam voluntary, and in response this year we re-established it as a graduation requirement. We were satisfied with the high quality of Psychology SIPs, which we believe reflects preparation in the team-taught junior year Methods course and close supervision by one of the Methods profs. The senior survey (82% response rate) showed very high ratings (over 4 out of 5) on faculty knowledge of the field, faculty accessibility, quality of teaching, concern for student personal development, fairness in grading, research & scholarship; seniors gave lower ratings on course advising (3.8), grad school advising (3.5), career advising (3.1). On achieving the department’s learning objectives, seniors gave high ratings (over 4 out of 5) to knowledge of psychology’s main fields, depth knowledge in one or more fields, experimental and statistical methods, familiarity with ethical guidelines for research, APA writing style, poster preparation, research talk, and ability to think critically; they gave lower ratings (3.8) to knowledge of qualitative research methods. At our retreat and program review we decided to create a sophomore methods course for all new majors, developed & team taught by Drs. Fletcher and Liu, to focus on the formulation of research projects, basic statistics & SPSS, survey methods, literature search strategies, and APA writing style. It is being taught for the first time this year.

Religion

The assessment plan for the Department of Religion has three tiers of assessment; each year we assess one of three categories (Attitudes, Knowledge or Skills) in order to reflect on the structure of our major and thus improve it for the future. For the 2013-2014 academic year, the Department of Religion assessed the "Knowledge" of our 2013-14 juniors and seniors by analyzing class distribution and the Spring 2014 Junior Seminar research prospectuses. We learned that there is room for improvement in regards to our student's class distribution and the placement of their research plans in the appropriate
subfields. To improve, we plan to hold a required meeting with our sophomores after Major Declaration Day to stress the importance of taking advantage of the diversity of approaches to religious studies within the department; and we plan to require that our students meet with their potential SIP advisors earlier in the research prospectus writing process to discuss potential primary and secondary sources that will help them better understand the subfields in which their research is embedded and will help them better shape their research project.

**Romance Languages**

**French**

The French section (in particular, our colleague Violène Cuvilleir) carefully researched all of the commercially-available French language tests currently available in the U.S. and Europe. Since it appeared to be too expensive and logistically difficult to have students take an official version of one of these tests, we produced an unofficial version (based on commercially available test preparation books for this test, the TCF). We administered it to 20 students in an advanced French literature / culture class in the winter of 2014. We found that most of our Senior majors placed into the top half of those tested, but that there were several Sophomores in the top half as well. Although it might be possible to tease out some of the factors influencing ranking (GPA, general linguistic aptitude, GPA in the major, number of French classes taken, participation or non-participation in study abroad, etc.), we realized in retrospect that what we most wanted to learn was how to improve the content of our on-campus courses, and that this test was not designed to yield that sort of information. (To give one example, the grammatical structures and idioms were so randomly-chosen [a feature characteristic of this kind of test] that *one* question representing a broad grammar point is not a strong enough indicator that our teaching of that grammar point is faulty and could be improved.) As a result of this test, we realize we need to take a different approach, and we plan to begin this year by trying to better understand student motivation (i.e., which aspects of learning French are those that attract students to French courses, and how can we offer course elements that fulfill those motivations but also encourage students to do better on *other* important aspects of learning French that they seem to value less). We are quite excited about this new direction of inquiry, and have begun to create a questionnaire (a combination of forced-choice and open-ended questions) that will help us better understand the student populations we have in our classes today.

**Spanish**

**No Report**

**Theatre**

**No Report**