**Department of History**

**Outcomes Assessment**

**Learning outcome assessment procedures**

The Department of History is a leader within the University and in the state of Utah in relation to assessment and the establishment of learning objectives. For several years the department has been involved in a state-wide “History Tuning” project in collaboration with the Lumina Foundation. Working with all the History departments at accredited 2-year and 4-year colleges in Utah, we have established learning objectives for the discipline. Our process in Utah is in line with the American Historical Association’s own faculty-led project “to articulate the disciplinary core of historical study and define what a student should understand and be able to do at the completion of a history degree program.”

Department learning objectives fall into three categories: Historical Knowledge, Historical Thinking, and Historical Skills. In each category, we have identified four to eight objectives that capture critical aspects of historical learning. Faculty members identify a small subset of these objectives for each course they teach. Department learning objectives appear on each syllabus in the department, and faculty members make explicit reference to them in the course of the semester.

Two courses constitute the core of History Department learning outcome assessment: HIST 3100, The Historian’s Craft, a methodology course, and HIST 4990, the Senior Seminar, which is the capstone course in the major and gives students the opportunity to exercise their skills as historians to the fullest. HIST 3100 is a mid-term assessment of the acquisition of historical thinking and historical skills. Since it was added to our curriculum several years ago, it has significantly improved the quality of the research that students do in their capstone course. HIST 4990, which has been part of our curriculum for many years, functions exceedingly well as an end of program assessment.

The History Department has also developed an assessment instrument for HIST 5100, Internship in Public History, which is periodically assessed by faculty members who oversee internship projects.

Upon completion of HIST 3100, students are asked to take a survey to assess its effectiveness. After completing HIST 4990, students take another survey that assesses both courses. Finally, graduating seniors take a senior exit survey, with questions based on learning outcomes, to help us assess how effectively our students attained the objectives we seek to promote.

**Outcomes assessment feedback**

We have used information from OBIA and senior exit interviews to explore how to streamline the major to facilitate a faster time to completion. This information was then used by the Undergraduate Committee in conversation with the Strategic Planning Committee to propose changes to the major, specifically to reduce the number of credit hours required to complete the major together with eliminating the geographic distribution requirement for both lower and upper division courses. This was then put to the department for a vote and passed. The outcomes will be evaluated in the coming years to see if this was an effective change.

Assessment of the effectiveness of 3100 in providing the necessary skills for students to complete their capstone course, Senior Seminar, has been examined through student evaluations, conversations with the professors teaching the capstone courses, and student discussions with the Academic Advisor. The faculty who have taught 3100 have also created a shared “box” of materials for other faculty who rotate into the teaching of the course, and together with student evaluations of the course, they have tweaked the contents to make the materials more relevant and effective. The result of these assessments has resulted in an improved baseline among the papers and projects produced in the capstone courses, and better evaluations in the exit interviews conducted by the department upon graduation.

Discussions continue in the Undergraduate Committee about making the capstone experience more flexible for students who desire skills that can serve them in other professional areas besides an academic track. This is connected as well to the internship program that the department has and the development of a stronger public history component in the department. A subcommittee was formed to create a plan to expand the internship program and initiatives have been undertaken to develop the relations needed to create more internships and to free up faculty to oversee the program. Outcomes will take some time to assess as this program is still in progress.

In sum, the department has taken great strides in assessment. We continue to seek ways to tighten and close our feedback loops. One of the tasks in the department’s roadmap action plan was the formation of a committee to map out our assessment cycle in detail. The committee will identify and implement best practices to aid the department in arriving at a complete and robust assessment process.