



## 2008-2009 Assessment Plan Report

### PROGRAM ASSESSMENT REPORT AY 2009-2010

**Report Date:** August 30, 2010

**School/College:** Arts and Sciences

**Department/Program:** Asian Studies

**Person completing the Report:** John Nelson

1. **Overview Statement:** Briefly summarize the assessment activities that were undertaken this academic year, indicating:
  - a. which program learning outcomes were assessed this year.
  - b. who in your department/program was involved in the assessment of the above learning outcomes

Following the general guidelines for assessment conducted throughout the entire university, we assessed the second program learning outcome. It reads: **Students will be able to analyze both a specific region of Asia and an Asia-related topic using interdisciplinary perspectives and methods, including information in either Chinese, Japanese, or Tagalog.**

The person in charge of assessment is the same as the author of this report. Until fall 2010, I was the current director of the Asian Studies program at USF. The three professors who actually participated in collecting data on the second assessment goal were: Steve Roddy, Uldis Kruze, John Nelson.

#### 2. **Please Answers the Following Questions for Each of the Student Outcomes Assessed:**

##### a. **What did you do?**

Describe clearly and concisely how you assessed the learning outcomes that were evaluated this year (e.g., measures, research methods, etc.). [please use bullet points to answer this question]

- First, I identified courses in which Asian Studies majors were enrolled and which contributed to our curriculum through cross-listings. These consisted of History of Japan Since Perry, Japanese Culture, Japanese Religions, and Religion and Globalization.



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- I contacted the instructors for those courses--all of whom are affiliated with Asian Studies--and informed them of the requirement to assess the second program learning outcome, and asked for their cooperation.

- Next, we collaborated on the best way to assess the outcome, concluding that a combination of embedded questions and guidelines for essays were likely to produce the kind of response that could be identified and assessed, following the rubric I had devised. In particular, students were advised to use primary language materials as sources in their final papers.

- I read each term paper (3), essay (3), or exam essay question (1), and kept notes about how each document met or fell short of the second program learning outcome. (These notes are available on request but are not included with this report.)

- In about half of the examples, it was a matter of subjective interpretation on my part to determine how an answer or essay met or fell short of the program outcome, especially the second part which asks for some proficiency in an Asian language to be part of the assignment. In other cases, it was easy to assess whether multiple disciplinary approaches used by the student to address the issue or question at hand.

- Finally, I used the rubric grid to determine the classification for that particular document, ranking it from “very poor” to “superior.”

### **b. What did the faculty in the department or program learn?**

Summarize your findings and conclusions as a result of the assessment indicating strengths and weaknesses in student learning demonstrated by this assessment.

#### Strengths

It became apparent that this learning outcome is problematic. Only two students out of seven demonstrated any ability in interdisciplinary methods for researching and presenting information on a given topic. This can hardly qualify as a “strength” but at least part of the learning outcome was addressed.

#### Weaknesses

One faculty member commented this outcome may not be appropriate for all majors:

“In my opinion, the Asian Studies faculty at USF needs to reconsider this learning outcome for their students. I would rephrase this learning outcome to apply only to “capstone projects” where a faculty member can require the student to develop an



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interdisciplinary perspective and also use, to some extent, primary sources in an Asian language. To require this as a learning outcome for all Asian Studies majors is to add an additional burden for that student in disciplines that do not require either an interdisciplinary perspective or the use of foreign languages or the use of foreign language primary sources. This may be more appropriate for the Masters level, or for a Capstone project that in reality is more of a Directed Reading or Directed Study. In short, this learning outcome should only be required of Asian Studies majors who are writing or producing their Capstone Project.”

Uldis Kruze, History, USF, May 28, 2010

I appreciate Prof. Kruze’s comments and look forward to fine-tuning this program goal. On the other hand, I think it is entirely possible that the very modest requirements of this second learning goal can be met at various stages in a student’s academic career as a major in Asian Studies. Since intermediate proficiency is required for the major, it seems reasonable that they would want opportunities to demonstrate their skills in class assignments.

One of the challenges for an interdisciplinary program like Asian Studies is to achieve its program goals without having control over course content offered by specific academic disciplines. Thus, some of the weaknesses for Asian Studies program assessment were not the students’ fault. Instructors affiliated with the program did not (or could not) create assignments that addressed both dimensions of the outcome.

c. **What will be done differently as a result of what was learned?**

Discuss how courses and/or curricula will be changed to improve student learning as a result of the assessment. Include a discussion of how the faculty will help students overcome their weaknesses and improve their strengths.

I think it will be necessary for the program to revise the second learning outcome, along the lines recommended by Prof. Kruze. Without an explicit use and emphasis of interdisciplinary methodologies, we will be hard pressed to provide evidence in future assessments about the second program learning outcome.

After two years of assessment, the “weaknesses” and “strengths” of student performance in regard to the second program learning outcome remains dependent on faculty course design. Since I am no longer directing the program, I can now make recommendations to emphasize opportunities for integrating multidisciplinary methods and primary language materials. I feel strongly that both of these skills are central to the integrity of the Asian Studies major. They also distinguish it from International Studies, Theology and Religious Studies, and Latin American Studies.



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With greater faculty awareness about the need to demonstrate this program goal, I believe it is feasible to achieve.

3. **Attach a copy of the components of the department/program assessment plan that have been modified since its initial submission:**
  - a. Program Mission
  - b. Program Learning Goals
  - c. Program Learning Outcomes
  - d. Program Learning Rubrics aligned with outcomes
  - e. Curriculum map that shows the courses that pertain to the outcome

There have been no changes in any of these items since their initial submission.

**Please return to: Provost Office by June 1, 2009**

**You can send your replies as either a Word attachment (to: [marin@usfca.edu](mailto:marin@usfca.edu)) or as a hard copy to: Provost Office, Lone Mountain Rossi Wing 4<sup>th</sup> floor.**

**If you have any questions, please contact: William Murry, Director of Institutional Assessment ([wmurry@usfca.edu](mailto:wmurry@usfca.edu) or x5486).**