

Data-based Decisions – 2 main projects based on Assessments

1. Creation and Development of a Sophomore-Level Methods Course (2013-2019 project)

A. **Identifying the Concern.** In 2013, faculty, librarians, and students reported problems with students being underprepared for their HIST 4990 research capstone course. As a result, the department surveyed HIST 4990 instructors and students and instituted a shared rubric to assess skills against our learning outcomes. After a discussion at the 2014 retreat, the department voted to create a sophomore-level methods course (HIST 3000), which is a model that is embraced by many history departments in the United States.

B. **Creating HIST 3000** – new course created in spring 2015

C. **Assessing HIST 3000**

Multiple assessment tools used to gauge success of course

--exit surveys from 2015-16

--written reflections from students and professor in spring 2017

--discussion among faculty at 2017 retreat

--students who have completed HIST 3000 helped write the HIST 4990 Senior Capstone syllabus in Fall 2017 and will write a reflection in December 2017

--Meeting of HIST 3000 and HIST 4990 instructors to discuss success of new methods courses in meeting History Learning Outcomes.

D. **Initial Conclusions**

- IDEA scores – average to above average marks on “Progress on Relevant Objectives”
- Student exit surveys report improved knowledge of library and research skills, but they suggest that more fine-tuning of the historical process parts of the class may need to feature in future sections.
- Librarians and HIST 4990 instructors report better Historical Skills than in the past
- Spring 2017 written reflections show that students report more confidence in historical research and analysis
- Oral assessment shows marked improvement in student performance over three years, but problems linger especially in mastery of historiography.

E. **Still to be completed--**

- Department head 3-year review of IDEA forms and enrollment figures (2020-2021)

2. Assessing Student Learning in the Major (2019-present)

A. **Identifying the Concern.** The Department gathered assessment data from 2010-2020, and then augmented this material with external reports on the best practices in history as well as with university materials from AAA and Civitas. Armed with this information, the Department spent 2019-2020 overhauling the History and History Teaching majors and minors in order to reduce complexity in the curricular path, to emphasize learning outcome mastery, and to make the major more accessible and transparent. This required eliminating the pre-majors and bringing the History and History Teaching majors more in line with each other.

B. Assessing HIST 4990. The department also began a new process for assessing the effectiveness of the major.

- Fall 2019 – developed a new rubric that was more streamlined and that identified core competencies for all majors from our learning outcomes.
- Spring 2020 – developed a new set of instructions for students in HIST 4990 that involved the creation of 5-minute videos about their research findings, uploaded to Canvas, and then reviewed/graded using our rubric by random teams of faculty from the department. This involved students from all HIST 4990 courses, thereby standardizing the assessment procedures as an "exit" assessment of skills.

C. Initial conclusions.

- First semester of the new system was somewhat derailed by COVID, so faculty feel that initial conclusions may be better gathered in fall.
- We did identify continuing struggles in a couple of skills areas (again, very preliminary data).

D. Scheduled for 2020-2021.

- Faculty will discuss initial results in fall 2020 at a faculty meeting. We will focus on areas where students seem to be struggling and brainstorm ways to improve these skills earlier in the major.
- Faculty will review the rubric and process for HIST 4990 in spring 2021.
- Faculty will consider other points of assessment within the major through our biennial assessment project (last done in 2018).