

College of Letters and Science Assessment Report

(Due back to your Academic Associate Dean by May 1, 1998)

Department or Program Name:

Abstract: (This should be a brief summary of no more than 300 words that can be used in the College's report to the Provost's Office. The abstract should indicate the focus of assessment activities during the 1997-98 academic year. It should indicate what actions the department or program is taking to change its program as a result of the assessment. It should indicate whether the assessment was of the Undergraduate Major, the Graduate Program, or both.)

Assessment Tools Used: (Using the attached chart, please specify which assessment activities have taken or will take place in your department or program. Indicate also the year when these activities took place or will take place. If you used other tools, please describe them.)

Direct Indicators

	Undergraduate Major	Graduate Program
National Exams	_____	_____
Local Exams	_____	_____
Capstone Course(s)	1998-99	_____
Embedded Testing	_____	_____
Student Portfolios	1998-99	_____
Review theses & dissertations	1997-98	1998-99
Performance Evaluations	_____	_____
Pre and Post Testing	_____	_____

Indirect Indicators

	Undergraduate Major	Graduate Program
Student Surveys	1997-98	1998-99
Exit Interviews	1997-98	1998-99
Alumni Surveys	1997-98	1998-99
Employer Surveys	_____	1998-99
External Reviews	_____	1998-99

Department of Afro-American Studies

Abstract: Assessment activities during 1997-98 academic year have been focused on data gathering (e.g., learning the whereabouts and career paths of alumni and graduates), devising or developing measurement entities and instruments (e.g., once survey and interview data are collected how can we best utilize them for maximum program improvement). That part of the plan is on-going; indeed, we expect to make these a permanent feature of self-assessment.

Interim
A

Interim conclusions: as a result of the assessment project the Department of Afro-American Studies is solidifying its bridge relationship with the Department of English (e.g. we have collaborated with English in the recruitment of graduate students of color, in the recruitment of a post-doctoral lecturer, in the submission of strategic hire and program linkage proposals, and in shifting the per cent affiliation of Professor Nellie McKay, who is the key bridge faculty member in the bridge arrangement, to a fifty-fifty split between the two Departments); we continue to evaluate the appropriate timing for launching bridge arrangements with other L&S departments. Secondly, we updated our TA orientation procedures in a way that better meshes the traditional disciplinary training of our TA's and the multi-disciplinary nature of our curriculum. We have also begun a nation-wide canvass of former students and graduates and of local community users of our resources better to reach beyond the campus. Much remains to be done. Some of the enticing avenues already opened up include: receiving and evaluating the already solicited commentaries from student majors, alumni, as well as Area faculty, respectively, about how well the current curriculum has benefitted them in their current positions or accomplishes the specific Area goals and overall departmental goals. We anticipate establishing a newsletter as a device both to disseminate information to our graduates and to gather information on an on-going basis about our entire program.

Narrative: (This should be a report, up to two pages in length, giving the details of the assessment plan and assessment activities.)

(See Attached.)

ASSESSING THE UNDERGRADUATE MAJOR IN AFRO-AMERICAN STUDIES

IMPLEMENTATION REPORT (5/5/98)

The Department of Afro-American Studies did not (as planned) focus the first stage of our assessment on any single one of our major areas (History, Culture, and Society). We are progressing with development of plans for assessing the areas separately once we have completed this stage of what has become an attempt to assess how the three areas cohere and work together. This initial assessment plan, developed by Professors Nellie McKay, Craig Werner, and William Van Deburg, was circulated among the rest of the faculty. This document reflects the implementation activities launched since the establishment of our assessment plan.

The original plan called for the appointment of an Assessment Committee consisting of the Department Chair, the chair of one of the three areas being assessed, one additional faculty member from the Area being assessed, and one member from each of the other two Areas. Now in the process of gathering information on each course offered within each Area, this committee will evaluate existing requirements for Area majors and, where appropriate, make suggestions for altering requirements. In accord with existing Department policy, such suggestions were to be submitted first to the Curriculum Committee and then to the Executive Committee for further action.

In evaluating each area (separately and together), the Assessment Committee is attempting to evaluate how well the existing curriculum meets some specific goals: how well are we providing the knowledge base concerning the African-American experience. How well are we doing in placing such knowledge in the context of both American and trans-Atlantic experience? How firm an understanding of the methodologies of the mainstream discipline(s) most closely connected with the students' area of concentration are we providing? And are we fully developing the ability of students to communicate their knowledge effectively orally and in writing?

As anticipated, we found that no individual course can accomplish all of these goals and that the Assessment must focus on how well the Area of Concentration as a whole realizes them. Or indeed, how well the three areas synergize to accomplish these educational goals. As part of the implementation plan, the Assessment Committee is assembling (in Departmental files) a comprehensive set of materials regarding the experience and feedback from majors and alumni within the three areas is being gathered and evaluated.

These materials include:

- ** A list of student majors by Area and a list of those who have completed majors in a given area within the last five years;
- ** A comprehensive list of the courses taken by each of these students;
- ** Syllabi, exams and other handout material from each course;
- *** A random sample of student work submitted in each class during the period of assessment;

***A sample of written work from senior majors in the Area of Concentration who takes a class in the Department during the period of assessment;

***A sample of interview data compiled from telephonic, survey mailing, and in person compilation of graduate alumni assessment of their experiences in the Department and evaluation of preparational qualities of departmental course work for their current work or studies.

In addition, an effort was launched (but not completed) to ask all senior majors in an Area to write an assessment of their experience as an Afro-American Studies major. The Assessment Committee sought input from faculty members in the area, asking them to articulate their feelings about how well the current curriculum realizes the specific goals of the Area and the overall goals of the Department.

When the work of the Committee is complete, the Committee will report its findings in writing to the Chair of the Department. This report will include specific recommendation on an appropriate time period for undertaking area by area examination, a time period for implementing recommended changes (especially those that involve trans-disciplinary changes throughout the curriculum, if such changes are then approved by the curriculum committee and the executive committee. It remains our expectation that individual area assessment should occur at intervals of approximately four years, allowing us to establish a reasonable rotation between and among the three Areas of concentration and the Honors curriculum. Since the time of the submission of the Department's assessment plan, we have entered into serious proposals for inter-departmental strategic hiring with several other programs and departments which, if approved, would also have substantial impact on the rate and character of our assessment of the impact of the Department on students, majors, graduates, and the campus.