

**Assessment Trend Report**  
**Student Learning Outcomes in IN 140 University Seminar**

November 14, 2009

The goal of this report is to evaluate the assessment of student learning outcomes in IN 140 University Seminar. The report addresses four key questions to evaluate the quality of our assessment processes.

**(1) How have we sustained the assessment effort over a multi-year period of time?**

How many years have you completed an annual assessment report?

\_\_x\_\_ 2006    \_\_x\_\_ 2007    \_\_x\_\_ 2008    \_\_x\_\_ 2009

The IN 140 University Seminar program developed assessment plan in 2006 and started data collection and analysis in 2006. The program has a strong tradition of assessing student learning over four years. Its assessment has been sustainable and undergone review.

**(2) How do we systematically and comprehensively collect and analyze data about student learning?**

The faculty coordinator for University Seminar oversees the collection of University Survey data and student artifacts used to assess student learning in University Seminar. The primary systematic data collection is a Moodle course constructed specifically to facilitate the collection of student ethical reasoning essays and service learning reflections directly from all sections. Other indirect data such as student survey administered to all sections, syllabi audit, and SIR scores are also collected to assess student learning. For example, the 2008-2009 University Seminar Assessment Report indicates that it has collected and examined 38 ethical reasoning artifacts from across 20 sections of University Seminar.

Rubrics are developed to analyze the data systematically collected, but Artifacts collected so far are used to assess Goal 1— use ethical reasoning to analyze and reflect on issues that impact their personal lives as well as their local, national, and/or global communities. While ethical reasoning, reflection, and writing has been voted by the faculty as the three threads running through University Studies Sequence, the program believes that University Seminar is solely responsible for Goal 1 and has not collected any data that directly assess Goal 2 and Goal 3.

However, the Assessment team has been fully aware of such insufficiency and is making deliberate and systematic effort in improving direct assessment. The trend has become clear that the Assessment is moving from sole reliance on indirect assessment methods to a combination of both direct and indirect assessment methods.

**(3) How do we use the analysis to improve curriculum and pedagogy and to inform decisions about budgets and strategic priorities?**

The annual assessment reports make recommendations about improving curriculum and pedagogy:

- Defining the program as an academic program
- Removing the original goal 4 to a new course
- Refining First Week experience
- Refining Writing Prompts for Ethical Essays

Generally the program director writes the report in June and delivers the report in July to instructors through emails and online posting at the Seminar website. Once distributed, the program director follows up by email to begin the process of generating conversation and discussion among instructors about the results of our assessment efforts. More formal discussion takes place among seminar instructors at the first Seminar meeting in September. Over the year, various workshops are held in which information and data in the report is deployed. For example, at the spring faculty workshop in 2008, instructors met to review a range of actual students "artifacts" from the previous semester. In other workshops and meetings, instructors met to discuss the construction of writing prompts that best facilitate and "invite" students to engage in ethical reasoning. Various meetings and workshops for seminar instructors over the course of the year are used to discuss and workshop how to implement the improvement plans, how to improve the teaching of student artifacts, and how to improve assessment. Instructors as a group take joint ownership of the assessment of student learning and use assessment findings to inform their teaching.

Numerous faculty workshops have been given by the Director of University Seminar to clarify the concepts in the learning outcome goals. As a result of the University Seminar Assessment, the curriculum has been tremendously reformed to improve student learning. Assessment has made clear the important role that writing prompt formation can play in "directing" students in the desired direction. Not only the goals are clearer, measurable now but also the

faculty has the common language to talk about how to improve their teaching. For example, after the initial incorporation of an ethical reasoning overview during First Week (fall 2008), faculty meetings and discussions led to substantial revisions to how to deliver this element of the First Week experience. The time was shortened to avoid “overkill” during First Week, a time when students are already engaged in a host of activities and events as they acclimate to campus life. Also, rather than using a common single reading, instructors reached a consensus that having individual instructors identify case studies or readings relevant to their chosen topics and using them in smaller breakout sessions to engage students in ethical reasoning would be more effective. This is one example of how assessment efforts and resulting conversations have caused the faculty to review and revise practices. These are crucial to their efforts to encourage student engagement in ethical reasoning, particularly in light of the fact that Seminar is taught by faculty across the University.

**(4) How do we evaluate, modify, and continue to improve the student learning assessment process in this program?**

A review of the University Assessment Reports from 2007 to 2009 has suggested that systematic effort and significant improvement have been made to the assessment process of University Seminar through revising learning outcome goals. Since 2007, the Assessment Team has significantly revised the learning outcome goals by eliminating goals that are not measurable and goals that fit better into a different course. For example, the Self-Study Assessment Team determined, through conversations with all faculty involved, the original goal “adjust to college life both academically and socially,” was not measurable, eliminated it in 2007, but later reworded and reinstated in the curriculum in 2008. The faculty also voted to eliminate the original goal 4-- develop effective communication skills that can be applied in academic and social contexts— from the curriculum because such an essential skills need to be taught with more time in an independent course. In addition, the University Seminar faculty also voted to clarify and refine the language in learning outcome goals. For example, Goal 1-- develop and utilize critical and moral reasoning skills— was revised into something clearer, positive, and specific: “use ethical reasoning to analyze and reflect on issues that impact their personal lives as well as their local, national, and/or global communities.”

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**Evaluation from Focus Visit Leadership Team (includes Academic Deans, Program Leaders, and Focus Visit Report Writers)**

**Rating: Green**

Academic program	Goal 1 (multi-year)	Goal 2 (data collection)	Goal 3 (Use assessment to improve)	Goal 4 (improve assessment)	Total
<b>IN 140 University Seminar</b>	3	2	3	3	11

Based on the four questions/criteria, the Focus Visit Leadership Team rates the IN 140 University Seminar as Green concludes that University Seminar has established a strong tradition of assessing student learning. While continuing to use assessment to improve curriculum and pedagogy and review its assessment process, the program needs to develop a more comprehensive data collection and analysis.