

## Religious Studies 2013 Annual Assessment Report

*This form is intended to facilitate reporting program outcomes assessment to accrediting agencies, Board of Trustees, Strategic Planning Committee, and other internal or external audiences.*

*The department mission statement, PLO's, curriculum map and multi-year action plan should to be posted on the departmental website.*

**Department: Religious Studies**

**Date: 11/20/2013**

**Department Chair: Charles Farhadian (prepared, and delayed, by Telford Work)**

### I. Program Learning Outcome (PLO) assessment

Program Learning Outcome	Who is in Charge	Direct Assessment Methods	Indirect Assessment Methods	Major Findings	Closing the Loop Activities
Hermeneutical competence	Maurice Lee	RS-180 essay 4/13	RS-180 focus group self-assessment 4/13	Proficiency levels: 5 students @ 3, 3 @ 3+, and 1 @ 4- on our rubric (scale 0-4). This meets our expectations. Self-assessment: 3.6, range 3-4.	Preaching activities in two upper-division courses joined other exercises strengthening and demonstrating hermeneutical competence.
Theological Judgment	Maurice Lee	Same.	Same.	Proficiency levels: 7 @ 3, 2 @ 3+, meeting expectations. Self-assessment: 3.2, range 3-4.	These preaching activities also strengthened and demonstrated theological judgment.
Ecclesial Engagement	Maurice Lee	Same.	Same.	Proficiency levels: 5 @ 3, 4 @ 3+, meeting expectations. Self-assessment: 3.4, range 3-4.	These preaching activities also joined other exercises strengthening and demonstrating theological judgment. The department also initiated a regular annual RS-190 internships and practica course with adjunct faculty Kelly Soifer, which is enrolling students at rates far beyond previous enrollments. The course has recently been re-submitted for Serving Society GE credit.

**Discussion** We noted that the hermeneutical competence levels were not below the other two outcomes, as they had been in spring 2012.

This makes 2012's findings an anomaly compared to years previous and the year since. Self-assessments for hermeneutical competence were highest of the three. The department is supportive of preaching assignments that involve all three PLOs.

## II. Follow-ups

Program Learning Outcome	Who is in Charge	Major Findings	Closing the Loop Activities
Hermeneutical Competence	Telford Work	Slightly lower assessment results in 2012 suggested that we watch this area more closely and address a possible deficiency in graduates' hermeneutical competence.	Students prepared, researched, and preached particular biblical texts in 2013's RS-180 senior seminar. Students also researched and preached on biblical texts in RS-125. Direct assessment in 2013 did not find a discrepancy between this PLO and others.
Ecclesial Engagement	Telford Work	<p>2012 annual report response asked us to discuss the ecclesial engagement instrument and its implementation.</p> <p>We followed up by giving a section of the senior CUPA survey to a focus group of Senior Seminar students. Compared with all graduating seniors, results showed stronger church participation, Bible study and prayer, discussion of spiritual topics with people outside Westmont, non-academic Christian reading, financial sacrifice for reasons of faith, small group participation, and befriending for reasons of faith.</p>	Our majors' responses on the ecclesial engagement section of the 2013 CUPA survey reflect levels between "Good" (3) and "Superior" (4) on our departmental assessment rubric. This matches the other direct and indirect assessments of this and prior year graduating majors.
<p><b>Discussion</b> The 2013 CUPA survey of seniors discussed Christian practices; church involvements figured prominently in students' answers of the activities that most clearly demonstrated Christian commitment. Its results among our graduating seniors confirmed our assessment findings, both direct and indirect, from RS-180 exit interviews and final projects over the past few years. The department is satisfied with our current instrument.</p>			

**III. Other assessment-related projects (optional)**

Project	Who is in Charge	Major Findings	Action
2011-12 Focus	Telford Work	From 2012 report response: Will higher interest in upper-division biblical studies affect future course offerings or hiring?	The department secured Holly Beers as full-time replacement for Caryn Reeder while on sabbatical, to protect RS GE, Greek, and upper-division NT curricula and is taking enrollments and enthusiasm into account in approaching 2014-15 sabbatical coverage.
2011-12 Focus	Telford Work	From 2012 report response: No concrete figures were included in the 2012 annual report.	Concrete figures are included in 2013 results above.
2012 Next Steps	Telford Work	From 2012 report response 'next steps': The department was to assist in the assessment of Christian orientation and affection ILO.	Telford Work and Maurice Lee served as assessment specialists on 2012-13's CUPA assessment activities.
GE ILOs	Telford Work, Maurice Lee	2013 CUPA report details findings of a student body-wide assessment of Christian understanding, practices, and affections.	Fisk incorporated church-specific assignments on relevant NT texts and reordered classroom tasks to promote active student processing of material. Work added more in-class hermeneutical exercises with Bible passages and hymns, introduced many in-class discussions for students to process content more actively, added new topics on the church for better ecclesial engagement, and is modeling more theological judgment coming to conclusions over disputed issues. Nelson and Longman are being more explicit in how they already do the latter. Beers is incorporating more structured small-group discussion.
<p><b>Discussion</b> The department discussed findings in spring 2013 and fall 2013 meetings, as well as suggested recommendations. The department has been tasked with considering RS Department-specific suggested recommendations from the CUPA report, and supports</p>			

the recommendation that Doctrine be taken after biblical studies GE courses.

#### IV. Adjustments to the Multi-year Action Plan (optional)

Proposed adjustment	Rationale	Timeline	Expected Outcome
<b>Discussion</b> No changes seem necessary. PRC has questioned our strategy of evaluating all outcomes in that year's seminar for four years now, but it has been efficient and helpful to evaluate all three, for both latitudinal and longitudinal comparisons and given the low marginal investment of time since each final project is being read and evaluated anyway.			

#### V. Appendices

##### A. Prompts or instruments used to collect the data:

Prompt for the final summative assignment in RS 180, Senior Seminar, Spring 2013:

*For four years, you've been working to this point, your last assignment as an RS major. Bringing all your education, your biblical study skills, your theological analysis, your knowledge of the world around us, and your understanding of the Church, you will preach a sermon related to violence to the rest of the class. Your sermon should thoughtfully, insightfully, ethically, morally, and imaginatively explain the meaning and significance of your chosen text or topic, and provide a message for the Church today.*

Prompt for the final assignment in RS 180, Spring 2011:

*An "epistle," in the spirit of the New Testament genre, calling a specific church congregation or denomination to more sustained and serious ecumenical involvement. The epistle should support its case with scriptural, theological, historical, and missional reasons, in a persuasive and sophisticated form. 10 pages.*

##### B. Rubrics used to evaluate the data

For both direct and indirect assessment, we used the same RS Department Assessment Rubric as last year (rev. 2012) (Adobe Acrobat document), attached.

##### C. Relevant assessment-related documents/samples

Assessments of graduating seniors' final summative assignment, RS-180, spring 2013:

Hermeneutical competence	Theological judgment	Ecclesial engagement
3	3+	3
3+	3	3+
3+	3	3
3	3	3+
3	3+	3
3+	3	3
4-	3	3+
3	3	3+
3	3	3

Focus group responses and seniors' CUPA survey responses (Excel spreadsheet, attached).

Graphs comparing RS majors' and seniors' CUPA survey responses on Christian commitment (Word document), attached.