

## IWU Assessment Reports 2023-2024

### **Biology**

During the fall 2021-spring 2023 cycle, the Department of Biology assessed the effectiveness of the Biology 390 course, which serves as the heart of the Showcasing Evidence of Experience and Development (SEED) program within the Department of Biology. The SEED program emphasizes 1). reflection on student experiences as a part of the Biology program and 2). anticipation and preparation for a career after completion of the Biology program. In order to gauge student satisfaction with the Biology 390 course, outgoing seniors were asked to complete a questionnaire while all Biology majors were asked to respond to a survey. Overall, students appeared to be satisfied with the both the SEED program (as well as the curriculum overall); a number of seniors discussed a desire for faculty to place a greater emphasis on assisting students attain their career goals. In the future, the Department of Biology intends to make more efforts to help students realize their goals, including making students more cognizant of the various resources available to them. The faculty also intend to further refine our assessment of the program to further determine if there are deficiencies in the program that could be addressed.

### **Educational Studies**

Based on a previous assessment cycle, the Educational Studies department conducted a 2-year assessment cycle which focused upon future teachers' capacity to differentiate instruction in a K-12 classroom. The assessment process included two distinct measures. The first assessment tool was the student teaching performance evaluation which was administered while observing student teachers instruct K-12 students. The second assessment tool was students self-reporting on their capacity to differentiate instruction on an anonymous senior exit-survey. The results of these assessments were utilized to guide curricular changes to EDUC 340/345, the course in which students learn to differentiate instruction prior to student teaching. The results indicate the 2023 cohort of students did outperform the 2022 cohort, which suggests the curricular changes were effective. New changes were made to the course in 2022-23 and our department will evaluate if those changes also had an impact on the 2024 cohort's capacity to differentiate instruction. Our department also has a fall meeting set to brainstorm ways to recruit cooperating teachers who can also provide instruction and modeling on how to differentiate instruction.

### **Political Science**

Several years ago the political science faculty adopted a list of nine specific learning outcomes under the three broad headings of knowledge, values, and skills. Each year we have assessed our students' mastery of one of these learning outcomes. This year we elected to assess whether our students "*Know the processes, institutions, and contexts that shape politics at local, national, transnational, and international levels.*"

We used papers written in PSCI 210, our team-taught seminar on democracy. This seminar involves two papers: one that runs only a few pages, and the second (the one assessed here) that typically runs about 10-12 pages with multiple sources expected, drawing on scholarly literature. Students are asked to pick a country that went through a transition into or away from democratic practice and to explain that

transition, situating it historically and within some of the theoretical literature we read in class. Early in the semester, the students were provided a guidance document that provided instructions for the assignment. The students were also provided with a detailed grading rubric, which the lead instructor used to grade the papers. For assessment purposes, we created a simplified tool that focused on four elements:

- demonstrate an ability to describe the processes involved in this case of democratic / authoritarian transformation
- demonstrate an understanding of the role of key entities / institutions (may include parties, elected officials, courts, civil society groups, news media)
- demonstrate an ability to place the case in a meaningful historical context
- demonstrate an ability to integrate the descriptive elements of the paper with the theoretical elements

Of the 10 papers evaluated, no student achieved mastery on any of these dimensions. This is, perhaps, not surprising, given this is a sophomore-level course, so we probably cannot expect truly high-level work here. By far, the most frequent marking (about one quarter of the papers) of “not present” occurred on the fourth dimension, demonstrating an ability to integrate descriptive material with theoretical material. While the grading rubric explicitly asked students to attempt this task, this is a difficult task for younger students. We think this is important, and we will collectively work to teach this skill. Basically, our students need to learn to apply theories to evidence even when the instructors do not present this specific evidence in class.

### **Theatre Arts**

This year a total of 92 students (first year through seniors) presented work for assessment. Tom Quinn was designated to assess BFA Acting, Curt Trout assessed the BA in Theatre Arts and also assessed BFA Design/Technology, and Scott Susong assessed the BFA Music Theatre degree. Each used the specific degree track’s program level rubric. In doing so, a rubric composite number score was identified for each student. (Students were identified in the recorded data only by an “audition” number.) The individual composite scores were averaged into a class cohort common number. This allowed us (before averaging) to see if there were individuals or groups performing at rates ahead of or behind the expected cohort target. The goal is to apply the program level rubrics in a systematic and holistic manner, in an effort to capture overall performance in the degree by grade level as a big picture snapshot of our success with specific learning goals in each degree.