**August, 2009 Assessment Committee Feedback: Ford**

**Assessment Committee Contact Person: Beth Lincoln**

**Plan also reviewed by: Melissa Mercer-Tachick**

Thank you for the hard work that went into your assessment plan. As we carefully reviewed your Steps, it became clear just how much thought and effort went into your work. There were some real strengths in your work, and we celebrate these with you!

In general, there were a few themes that the Assessment Committee noticed. First, it is most helpful when the progression from Step 2 to Step 3 and Step 3 to Step 4 are clear. That is, after you have articulated your learning goals, the clearest proposals are explicit in how the courses/experiences in Step 3 directly support the learning goals. And Step 4 should take full advantage of all of the places in Step 3 where data might be collected. Second, make strategic use of both direct and indirect measures[[1]](https://docs.google.com/a/albion.edu/Doc?docid=0AUaAHaCO2ORDZGh0bWJ0NXJfNGY3eDNzdmRu&hl=en" \l "_ftn1" \o "" \t "_self), and think about whether data can be collected at the beginning, during the program of study, and at the end. This gives a richer sense of where and when your work contributes strongly to learning goals and where improvements might be made. Third, make your plan manageable! All data need not be collected annually; some can be done every other year. And you may choose not to measure for all of your learning goals right now. Make claims that you can (a) intellectually, ethically stand behind and (b) find resources to measure.

Please feel free to contact either of us with questions about your feedback. We want to help your assessment plan be successful in collecting relevant data to inform your work! We will be happy to work with you toward timely completion revisions to the first four steps, submission of preliminary findings, and/or completion of this iteration of data collection.

Comments specific to your plan:

Step 1 is complete.

The goals in Step 2 are phrased not as student learning outcomes, but as program mission.  What is needed is what should students who complete this program be able to know/think/do?  Some of the goals in this plan could be reworded into learning outcomes (for example, Students will enhance their understanding of historical and current events through…) and others (such as enhancing our understanding of Gerald Ford) may be omitted here.  All the goals should flow from your mission statement.

Step 3 should be linked to Step 2.  Which learning goals are addressed in each of the listed program outcomes?

Step 4: Without outcomes, these are difficult to evaluate.  However, overall GPA’s and course grades are at best indirect assessment measures and need to be accompanied by more specific direct and indirect measures.  Satisfaction surveys are also indirect.  As in step 3, these measures should be tied to the specific program components and learning outcomes that they are designed to assess.

As learning outcomes are developed, they should be evaluated to make sure that they are measurable and not vague (“fuzzy”).  Measures need to be devised specifically for each outcome.  These can be course assignments such as test questions or paper that are evaluated for assessment purposes using a rubric shared by all doing the assessment.  Please see the footnote on page 1 for other ideas of direct assessments.

Please remember that you do not have to assess everything every year, but can select a few of your data collection methods to use each semester or year.  A timeline showing how these will rotate is useful.  Also, assessment should not mean much extra work for you or the students; you can tailor classroom assignments to also measure attainment of student outcomes.

We look forward to reading the revisions of your plan and how the data collection and analysis has gone, and to learning how you have used the data.

[[1]](https://docs.google.com/a/albion.edu/Doc?docid=0AUaAHaCO2ORDZGh0bWJ0NXJfNGY3eDNzdmRu&hl=en" \l "_ftnref1" \o "" \t "_self) *In assessing student learning, there are direct and indirect sources of evidence. Direct evidence is clear and convincing information about student learning, such as: tests, examinations, papers, projects, assignments, field experience assessments, and portfolios. These are particularly strong sources of evidence especially when accompanied by articulated standards (such as a rubric). On the other hand, with indirect evidence there is room for other factors to affect the outcomes either positively or negatively. Examples of indirect evidence include: retention, graduation, and placement rates (may be impacted by economic conditions or college policies); surveys of students and alumni (may indicate feelings about college experience); grades (standards and even content may differ across instructors and institutions).*

**Fall 2009**

**Ford Institute:**  
I've finished reviewing your program's assessment report for fall 2009 on Google Docs, and want to commend you for your excellent work.  You responded to all the feedback on steps 1-4 in a thoughtful manner, and your list of assessment measures is thorough and extensive.  Please remember that you do not have to assess everything every year; assessment should not be burdensome to be useful.  Using existing assignments for the purposes of assessment as you do is a great idea, and you are to be further commended because they are such interesting assignments!  Your responses to the assessment measures carried out to date include suggestions for further refinement of scoring rubrics and changes in assignments to help students attain a higher level of proficiency, both of which are appropriate for improving your program.  
  
Overall,the Ford Institute is well on its way to an exemplary assessment program.  I look forward to reading the results of further efforts next semester.