Assessment Report/ Integrated Liberal Studies Program
Update 2009

       The core of our assessment procedures in ILS involves an annual survey of students enrolled in our certificate program. In part because of the emphasis on writing and critical thinking in ILS, we have received a large amount of feedback on the program, the vast majority of it very positive. Our students consistently stress the importance of interdisciplinary perspectives as a way of engaging a rapidly changing world; as well as the ways ILS draws connections between the "classics" and contemporary problems, particularly those involving the nature of citizenship in a democratic society. While a significant number of our students have urged us to make ILS into a major, we're resisting that, concentrating instead on strengthening those aspects of the programs which meet student needs. The most important initiatives to emerge from assessment have been a concentrated attempt to make sure the different courses in the program relate clearly to one another; and an expanded role for the student organization, Le Salon, in providing a regular flow of information between faculty and students. With the these goals in mind, we established a series of extracurricular activities (organized this year around the Darwin Bicentennial) designed to encourage dialog between faculty with appointments in the History of Science and the biological sciences and those in the social sciences and humanities. These events—including the visit of Darwin biographer Janet Browne, a discussion of the role of evolution in the educational system connected with a showing of the film A Flock of Dodos, and a theatrical performance (all supported with ILS gift funds)—have led to a much greater degree of communication between faculty and certificate students. Both students and faculty would like to develop a "gateway" course for juniors, which would provide a foundation for the senior capstone courses. If we can work out the funding and staffing issues, we'll implement such a course.