

Assessment Report

Religious Studies Program

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Pursuant to the program self-study of 2008, as well as the Joint Review of the BA/BS in Religious Studies completed earlier this year, the Program has made significant progress in developing a broad strategy for assessing student learning. The goals of the program are both ambitious and diverse. We want to help students examine a variety of the world's religious traditions; understand at least one tradition in depth; become familiar with manifestations of religion in such things as texts, rituals, social institutions, and personal expression; understand different methodological approaches to religion; and assess scholarly literatures on religion by conducting their own research into the subject, and presenting their conclusions clearly in speech and writing. To determine how closely our efforts meet these goals, we have started an exit survey for all graduating majors. Although we still have only a small number of responses, it is clear from our data that one of the concerns majors have is whether they will have access to desired courses, and we see that we should make some effort to gather information from affiliated departments (on whom we are heavily dependent) and make relatively reliable two-year projections. We have also learned that majors are uncertain how to make the transition from undergraduate to graduate work. The program has begun to collect data from an alumni survey to better inform majors about possible career paths, and it is about to publish its first newsletter, which is designed to facilitate contact between alumni, current majors, and Religious Studies faculty. Finally, we are developing an assessment strategy for our capstone course sequence, a rigorous three-course requirement for all majors resulting in a senior thesis. Individual student evaluations demonstrate broad student support for this sequence, but we need more precise ways of assessing how it meets program goals. On March 11, the Religious Studies Steering Committee met to discuss this issue, and we have formed a faculty sub-committee that will make recommendations about the proper way forward. In short, we have a program of exit surveys, alumni surveys, and now a developing program for the capstone sequence already in place. Our plan is to make all the data available to Religious Studies faculty in annual reports, and to provide a more focused assessment of the capstone sequence to faculty who regularly teach these courses.