STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT REPORT

Submitted by: Brian Doyle  
Date: Fall, 2014

Briefly describe where and how are data and documents used to generate this report being stored:

There are two specific sources for written data for this report. We had two junior majors enrolled in TRS 451: Faith in the Modern World which included numerous written assignments, including a research paper. This course was taught by Brian Doyle. The graduating senior was enrolled in TRS 499: Senior Seminar and two independent studies, one with Brian Doyle and the other with Brian Flanagan. All papers written by majors are collected by the department. The senior thesis was evaluated by the theology faculty (Doyle, Flanagan, and Porter) and her honors thesis committee (Gammack and Rector). A conversation was held to assess the success of the student and her development. The data are stored in the office of the chair of the department. Most is found electronically and is saved to the computer of the chair. Hard copies of materials are in locked filing cabinets.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

List all of the program’s learning outcomes: (regardless of whether or not they are being assessed this year)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Outcome</th>
<th>Year of Last Assessment</th>
<th>Year of Next Planned Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students will be able to articulate an understanding of the relationship between the moral and spiritual dimensions of the self and the individual’s role in establishing a just community.</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>2014/15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students will develop and synthesize an awareness of the dialogue between faith and reason</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>2014/15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students will demonstrate an ability to employ elementary scriptural, historical, or doctrinal source materials appropriately.</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>2014/15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students will demonstrate respect for the dignity of the human person and for the condition of human diversity through engagement with diverse religious traditions</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2015/16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students will practice civil engagement through discussion of religious differences and the possibility of pluralism</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2015/16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students will demonstrate a global and historical perspective by examining a wide range or religious traditions in their cultural contexts.</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2015/16</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Describe how the program’s outcomes support Marymount’s Mission, Strategic Plan, and relevant school plan:

As a liberal arts school in the Catholic tradition, theology and religious studies stand at the heart of our academic mission. Dr. Shank named theology as one of the important areas of the strategic plan and the liberal arts core as it reflects our Catholic Identity. The LAC requires two courses in TRS. All students take TRS 100: Theological Inquiry and then any of the other courses to fulfill the requirement. Half of the students elect a moral theology course to fulfill that requirement for the LAC.

Provide a brief description of the assessment process used including strengths, challenges and planned improvements:

For the first year, we have a graduating senior who took TRS 100 as a freshman. While she was not a TRS major at the time, she took the Honors section and kept her papers and exams. While this is only one student, it provided (finally) a student whose work we can assess over four years and the entire program.

Another strength of our process is that our faculty are dedicated to the process of assessment more than in previous years. While not a specific aspect of this report, the faculty that teach TRS 100 (full time and adjunct) meet once a year to assess the classes and collaborate with assignments, experiences, and pedagogy. This fall meeting demonstrates the faculty’s desire to assess things well and on a regular basis. We have certainly seen improvement in the learning of our students in their advanced TRS classes as a result of the introductory class experience.

Our greatest challenge continues to be our low number of majors. In the previous year’s report, we used the senior theses of the students who finished their internships in December and walked in May of 2014. We decided to do this because their course work and assessable material was completed in May of 2013. This decision, however, has left us with a significant lack of data for this report. Of course, this is one of the reasons we will apply to move to a two year assessment cycle. TRS should not be a large major but we continue to struggle to attract majors. As the retention rate of the university improves, we should be able to attract more majors in that they will have their first experience of TRS in their first year and not their third as is the case with many of our transfers.

We continue to assess TRS 100 against core objectives and the upper level classes according to our related, yet different, program objectives.

Describe how the program implemented its planned improvements from last year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Planned Improvement</th>
<th>Update</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students will be able to articulate an understanding of the relationship between</td>
<td>Develop a rubric for service learning for use in Moral theology classes in which it is</td>
<td>We are using a rubric developed by Campus Compact used at many institutions including</td>
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</table>
### Academic Year: 2012-13

**Program:** Theology and Religious Studies (TRS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>the moral and spiritual dimensions of the self and the individual’s role in establishing a just community.</strong></td>
<td>required.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Catholic Universities. It is attached as an appendix to this report.</strong> We have had three different moral theologians in the past three years (one left, then a term, now a tenure track) so we have lacked some consistency at the level of faculty but the rubric has assisted us in consistency of the class - especially the service learning component.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Students will develop and synthesize an awareness of the dialogue between faith and reason.</strong></td>
<td>Develop course on Faith and Doubt</td>
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<td><strong>This syllabus is completed but has not been submitted as the department has proposed a course on Sacraments to balance our course on The Mystery of the Church. The course on Sacraments was a recommendation of our outside reviewer for our program review. Before presenting that course, however, we developed the Church class to include spring break abroad. Now that the Study in Rome aspect of the Church class is set, we have moved on proposing Sacraments. We will fit Faith and Doubt into the teaching cycle next year. The proposed syllabus for Faith and Doubt is attached as an appendix.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Students will be able to employ elementary scriptural, historical, or doctrinal source materials appropriately.</strong></td>
<td>Increased emphasis on writing in biblical classes</td>
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<tr>
<td>**In consultation with the dean, TRS added two Writing Intensive courses last year. One in Religious Studies (American Religious History) and one in the Church History sequence (Early Christianity). Both of these are at the 300 level. We have decided, as a department, to have all of our WI courses at the 300 level and allow the 200 level classes to continue to serve the core more (30-35 students). Thus there are no biblical classes that are WI (all are at the 200 level) however,</td>
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</table>
Prove a response to last year’s University Assessment Committee review of the program’s learning assessment report: *List each recommendation and provide a specific response to each*.

1. Why are the remaining 3 outcomes not listed in the executive summary?
   
   I missed that the committee wanted to see outcomes not assessed. The three outcomes not assessed are pertinent to religious studies. We have not had a major writing a thesis in religious studies in several years.

2. The program is encouraged to continue work on a service learning rubric. Existing measures are connected to LOA and performance standards are identified.
   
   It is attached as an appendix to this report.

3. Since most students are meeting most LOA standards, the program may want to consider raising some standards.
   
   With such a few number of majors, it would be embarrassing to have many students not meeting the highest standards. Most of the students that struggle to meet the standards never declare TRS as a major. We have had students who struggled with certain outcomes in the past few years but they often excelled at the other and thus were balanced out. Moreover, if a senior thesis does not meet a high standard, it is returned to the student to be completed again. This has happened twice in the past five years. The assessment reports would reflect the second submission since the grade is replaced.

4. The suggestion that the program develop a curricular map is to be encouraged. Providing a holistic view of where information is introduced and reinforced, as well as measured, may be beneficial to taking actions to achieve actual improvement.
   
   We did this for our program review. It has not been updated since 2010 so the department will do that updating this academic year. We expect some modifications as new courses come online and our new moral theologian develops new courses. The map from program review is an appendix to this report.

5. The committee encourages the program to act on students’ suggestion for more synergy with Campus Ministry.
   
   Drs. Doyle and Flanagan have met with the new director of Campus Ministry to investigate this. Dr. Garces-Foley works with CMA on the interfaith luncheon/lecture each year. Dr. Flanagan has presented at a Dollar Dinner sponsored by CMA. However, we are careful to protect the distinction of academics from student service because our students often ignore or are ignorant of this distinction and want to major in Campus Ministry or retreats or mass. Theology is an academic discipline. The department is working closely with the Director of Community Engagement in its service learning.
Learning Outcome 1: Students will be able to articulate an understanding of the relationship between the moral and spiritual dimensions of the self and the individual’s role in establishing a just community.

Is this outcome being reexamined?  ☐ Yes  ☑ No

If yes, give a brief summary of previous results (including trends) and any changes made to the program.

### Assessment Activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome Measures</th>
<th>Performance Standard</th>
<th>Data Collection</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Explain how student learning will be measured and indicate whether it is direct or indirect. | Define and explain acceptable level of student performance. | Discuss the data collected and student population | 1) Describe the analysis process.  
2) Present the findings of the analysis including the numbers participating and deemed acceptable. |
| **Senior Seminar Paper (direct)** and papers from TRS 451: Christian Faith in the Modern World | Articulating role of theology in justice. This means, in at least 70% of the issues raised, students were able to argue how theology contributes to the establishing of a just community | One senior’s thesis and the papers of two juniors in TRS 451. | The one senior thesis paper this year was an analysis of the impact of liberation theology upon the politics and theology of rural Peru. The student’s thesis was done with the Honor’s program, her TRS major and her Politics major. She went to Peru for two months for research. Her paper demonstrated fantastic achievement of this outcome as it was the specific focus of her study abroad and her paper. The two students enrolled in TRS 451 were assigned papers on Catholic Social Teaching. One paper was excellent, the other was not as strong but met the standard after a rewrite. |
| Exit Interview with senior (indirect) | Discuss relationship of individual and community in a manner appropriate to graduates in theology. | Interview during exam week. | Our senior not only wrote her thesis on social justice but she is spending the next year as a volunteer for the Mercy Volunteer Corps. Her application for this program demonstrated great depth in the learning of the relationship of faith, theology and justice. |
**Interpretation of Results**

**Extent this Learning Outcome has been achieved by students (Use both direct and indirect measure results):**
Our senior has achieved this outcome. Her senior thesis combined a search for justice with a moral theology. In the past, our students also achieved this outcome with great success.

**Program strengths and opportunities for improvement relative to assessment of outcome:**
The program requires a moral theology class and we have found our majors to be successful in these classes. Two of their curricular options include service learning in which all have excelled. Our senior became certified as an intake counsellor for women who have experienced sexual trauma. Her passion for this work was related to her service learning experience.

**Discuss planned curricular or program improvements for this year based on assessment of outcome:**
As stated in previous reports, all sections of TRS 100 now include a unit on social justice or moral theology so as to better prepare students for their upper level TRS classes that deal with these issues more specifically. Our new moral theologian has published and worked with justice related activities. He is employing our service learning rubric this academic year.
**Learning Outcome 2:** Students will develop and synthesize an awareness of the dialogue between faith and reason

Is this outcome being reexamined?  
[ ] Yes  
[ ] No

If yes, give a brief summary of previous results (including trends) and any changes made to the program.

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**Senior Seminar Paper** (direct) and papers from TRS 451: Christian Faith in the Modern World (direct)  
Students were expected to articulate a theory arguing about the coherence of Christian faith and the gift of human reason. Acceptable standards included recognizing tensions and addressing them with respect to tradition of faith in a rational/scientific world. Superior levels provided a solution to tensions of faith and reason.  
One senior’s thesis and the papers of two juniors in TRS 451.  
The senior thesis was written for both the TRS program and for her major in Politics. In this interdisciplinary way, the paper did an excellent job synthesizing faith and reason. Most importantly, the student used political theory and socio-ethnographic research in the examination of the faith of people in Chulucanas, Peru.  
The two juniors in TRS 451: Faith in the Modern World, wrote papers that named an obstacle to Christian faith and addressed this obstacle in defense of people of faith. Both chose science as the obstacle, one concentrated on evolution and the other on cosmology. Both papers demonstrated deep thought and an ability to relate to worldviews quite foreign to their own.

**Exit Interview of senior** (indirect)  
Students discussed their relationship of faith and reason in appropriate and interview during exam week.  
The senior found the ability to dialogue between faith and reason to be the most important skill she learned in the program.
**Interpretation of Results**

**Extent this Learning Outcome has been achieved by students (Use both direct and indirect measure results):**
This outcome can be considered the primary outcome of the major and our role in the Liberal Arts Core. This issue is raised in most if not all classes taught by the department. Certainly all theology classes wrestle with this issue. Most religious studies classes address this issue indirectly if not directly. Not surprisingly, then, this outcome has been achieved by the majors in an impressive nature.

**Program strengths and opportunities for improvement relative to assessment of outcome:**
The data from this year demonstrates that this is the strongest aspect of the TRS program. The exams and papers of majors, even in lower level classes, provide evidence of an ability to synthesize arguments and cogently engage them. One sophomore major wrote an excellent paper assessing the contribution Sigmund Freud has made to the understanding of Christian faith. It demonstrated comprehension, analysis, and an ability to apply learning to specific issues.

**Discuss planned curricular or program improvements for this year based on assessment of outcome:**
The new course being presented, Faith and Doubt (see appendix), will delve more deeply into this specific outcome. It will build on the interest and questions raised in TRS 100 and the rest of the TRS curriculum.
## Outcome and Past Assessment

**Learning Outcome 3:** Students will be able to employ elementary scriptural, historical, or doctrinal source materials appropriately

Is this outcome being reexamined?  [ ] Yes  [x] No

If yes, give a brief summary of previous results (including trends) and any changes made to the program.

### Assessment Activity

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| Explain how student learning will be measured and indicate whether it is direct or indirect. | Define and explain acceptable level of student performance. | Discuss the data collected and student population | 1) Describe the analysis process.  
2) Present the findings of the analysis including the numbers participating and deemed acceptable. |
| Senior Seminar Paper (direct) and papers written by majors from TRS 251: Theology of the Old Testament, and TRS 270: Christ in Christianity | Students must be able to use primary source material critically and cite them appropriately. Acceptable level includes demonstration of knowledge of the development of theological texts within their historical context. Superior level includes critical engagement of these texts appropriate to graduate level work. | Senior Seminar Paper (direct) and papers written by majors from TRS 251: Theology of the Old Testament, and TRS 270: Christ in Christianity | The senior paper for this year did contemporary liberation theology so the use of biblical material was minimal. What was included was done well and appropriately.  
Majors (2) enrolled in TRS 251 wrote exegesis papers. One from a pericope from Genesis. The other from 2 Samuel (The Oracle of Nathan). Both used secondary sources well to analyze biblical texts.  
There was one major in TRS 270. She did a good job using historical and doctrinal material in her argument for the heterodox position of Arius at the Council of Nicaea (Dr. Flanagan used a Reacting to the Past game in his class). She led several students to heresy but did so using learning from the program. All kidding aside, she met this objective well, especially for a sophomore. |
| Exit Interview with senior (indirect) | Student discussed her perceived growth in | Interview during exam week. | The senior explained that the department’s critical approach to the scriptures was freeing and challenging at |
**Academic Year**: 2012-13  
**Program**: Theology and Religious Studies (TRS)

| understanding the Bible and Christian Tradition. | the same time. In her interview she expressed an interest in learning biblical Greek. CUA is the only institution in the area that teaches koine Greek (most teach Classical). It is only at the graduate level. We don’t expect interest from other students. |

**Interpretation of Results**

**Extent this Learning Outcome has been achieved by students** *(Use both direct and indirect measure results)*:

This is a specific emphasis of the TRS curriculum. A biblical class is required of all majors as is two systematic courses and one in church history. All of these courses now require papers with careful citation. All majors write shorter research papers in earlier classes. The Religious Studies courses, which are also required of all the majors, include examinations of the scriptures of the world religions. These students, then, have also read critically material from the Hebrew Bible, the Koran, the Upanishads, and other sacred texts.

**Program strengths and opportunities for improvement relative to assessment of outcome**:

Our great strength with this outcome is the emphasis the critical use of the Bible has within TRS 100. Students do at least one unit on the New Testament and one on the Old Testament. Nearly all the sections read one gospel in its entirety with the students writing a critical paper on a related topic.

This year’s senior was the first to take TRS 100 as a freshman and provides us some data throughout her advancement through the program. The real opportunity in front of us now is to trace our graduates from TRS 100 through their senior seminar. Assessment of the senior seminar papers should now also be an assessment of TRS 100 for majors.

**Discuss planned curricular or program improvements for this year based on assessment of outcome**:

No specific improvements are planned for this outcome beyond the collect of more and better data. Having one student finishing the program this year, especially when she was an outstanding graduate, is not enough to make many changes to this outcome’s assessment.

**Appendices**: Rubrics, survey questions, or other relevant documents and information.