

Annual Assessment Report

Department: Religious Studies


Academic Year: 2018-2019

Date of Submission:

Department Chairs: Helen Rhee and Caryn Reeder

I. Response to the previous year PRC's recommendations

<p>Item: Increasing student sample size for assessment</p>	<p>Response: In the 2017-2018 academic year, the RS department set up a Google Team Drive to collect departmental records, minutes, agendas, and student work for assessment. As part of this drive, we have begun to collect student work to expand our student sample size for assessment.</p>
<p>Item: Rebuilding the Religious Studies Department community</p>	<p>Response: The Religious Studies department has faced significant personnel changes over the past two years with the departure of Tremper Longman and Bruce Fisk, the arrival of Sandra Richter, and Holly Beers's move into a tenure track position. These personnel changes were accompanied by serious disruptions in the 2017-2018 academic year (Thomas Fire, Monted to Debris Flow, and the associated evacuations). Therefore, during the 2018-2019 academic year, the department worked to rebuild a sense of community within the department. This included events with current and former students (see part III below) and the development of the Google Team Drive. In addition, we devoted time during department meetings to allow each department member to share on their own teaching, research, and community involvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holly Beers discussed her goals as a teacher, which include giving students larger frameworks for understanding the details, beauty, complexity, and challenge of the New Testament. Charles Farhadian shared on his sabbatical. Caryn Reeder discussed strategies for creating a hospitable learning environment for students and supporting struggling students.



Helen Rhee shared on the research she planned to carry out on her sabbatical in spring 2019

Sandra Richter inspired us to consider the significance of archaeology for reading and interpreting the Old Testament.


Telford Work shared on his time volunteering with Lights On, a jail ministry, with students.

Sameer Yadav addressed his research agenda for the John Templeton grant during his academic leave.

Bill Nelson will share during the coming academic year, as unfortunately his presentation on the history of the RS department at Westmont was delayed by other concerns in spring 2019.

Notes: The first item here came from the PRC recommendations in response to the RS department 2017-2018 Annual Report. The additional item reflects a significant strand of departmental work for the 2018-2019 academic year.

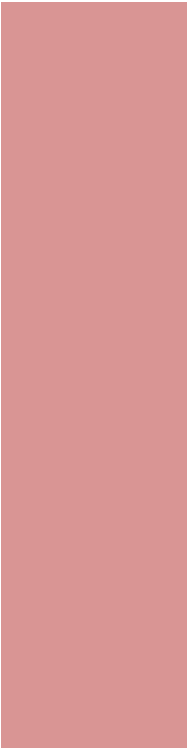
II A. Program Learning Outcome (PLO) assessment



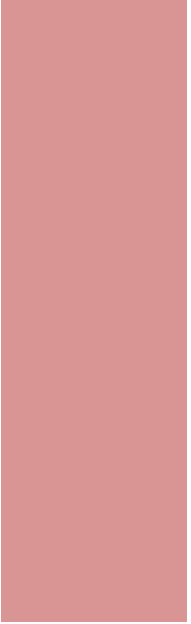
Program
Learning
Outcome

Closing the
Loop
Activities

(1) As a department, we will continue our conversation



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Indirect Assessment Methods	
Major Findings	
Recommendations	
Collaboration and Communication	

III. Follow-ups

Program Learning Outcome or Key Question	<p>Supporting our majors and minors</p> <p>RS 6 Year Report Action Plan (2017), item 1: Help students “connect head and heart,” nurturing Christian faith as a full life experience in the Holy Spirit rather than merely intellectual or emotional. Initiatives include faith conversations in classrooms, internships, and/or focused department events and chapels.</p> <p>Key question 1: How do we build a robust major that attracts more students?</p> <p>Key question 3: How do we balance academic rigor with the development of Christian affections, spirituality, and practice?</p>
Who was involved in implementation?	All department members engaged in this work. Holly Beers, Caryn Reeder, and Sandra Richter organized events.
What was decided or addressed?	In our 2017-2018 Annual Report, we noted our departmental conversations concerning our shrinking body of majors over the past decade. During the 2018-2019 academic year, we held several successful events for our majors, minors, and graduates to encourage a sense of community in the department, as well as address the perceived disconnect of RS classes from the Christian life.
How were the recommendations implemented?	<p>(1) 23 October 2018: We held a dinner for majors, minors, and interested students. Three professors shared reflections on the connection of their academic work with their own faith. All attendees engaged in a thoughtful dialog around these issues.</p> <p>(2) Department chapel in 2018: The department chapel, held together with the Philosophy Department, included brief messages from three professors on spiritual disciplines (scripture, prayer, and Sabbath).</p>

- (3) 17 November 2018: We hosted a gathering at the Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting in Denver. Four current professors, two former professors, and seven Westmont graduates attended.
- (4) 20 March 2019: We held a dinner for majors, minors, and interested students. Students submitted questions for professors to address (see Appendix C). The conversation was broad, with participation from all professors in attendance.
- (5) 2 April 2019: Sandra Richter hosted a gathering for the RS seniors at her home to celebrate their upcoming graduation.

Collaboration and Communication

All department members engaged in this work, discussing possibilities at department meetings and attending and participating in events. Caryn Reeder, Holly Beers, and Sandra Richter organized events. Student participation was high at the various gatherings. Students enjoyed and benefited from faculty testimonies, and we look forward to continuing such events in the future.

Program Learning Outcome or Key Question

Biblical Languages: Hebrew and Greek
 RS 6 Year Report Action Plan (2017), item 2: Strengthen Hebrew language instruction and the biblical languages minor
 Also see RS Annual Report 2017-2018

Who was involved in implementation?

The professors who teach biblical language classes: Holly Beers, Bill Nelson, Caryn Reeder, and Sandra Richter

What was decided or addressed?

(1) Following on our initial work in 2017-2018, we continued to evaluate the effectiveness of our current offerings, including the Hebrew Mayterm in 2018. The biblical languages professors met in September 2018 to discuss the biblical languages program his

(5) March 2019: Bill Nelson, Caryn Reeder, and Sandra Richter met to work out a plan for the Hebrew offerings in 2019-2020.

Collaboration and Communication

Holly Beers, Bill Nelson, Caryn Reeder, and Sandra Richter were all involved in conversations, planning, and course development in 2018-2019. The meeting in September 2018 was reported to the full department, and a record of the notes was made available in the RS Google Drive. The full department also looked at Sandra Richter's HB 101 course proposal.

IV. Other assessment or Key Questions related projects

Project
Who is in
Charge
/Involved?

Community space for Porter Center
Caryn Reeder and Telford Work

Major
Findings

A community space for Porter Center has been a long-standing need for all three departments in the building, and it would support a multiplicity of departmental goals. By encouraging faculty/student interactions and allowing for informal RS conversations, faculty will be able to inspire students to further study in RS, address the connection of RS classes with the life of faith, and more.

After years of discussion and requests to the administration, Porter Center is still without community space. We seriously pursued the option of a project to develop the current wildlands of ferns between the two Porter Center entries into a level, graveled area with patio furniture. Unfortunately, this idea, presented as an Eagle Scout project by Ben Work, was deemed unworkable as it would require extensive fencing.

So, in the interests of finding some corner of space for gatherings and student engagement, we will turn our attention this year to refurbishing an empty office in Porter Center as a small common room. While the building may have need of office space for adjunct faculty in the N

V. Adjustments to the Multi-year Assessment Plan (optional)

Proposed adjustment	Rationale	Timing
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VI. Appendices

- A. RS GE Review Document 1: What do we want from our students in twenty years?
- B. RS GE Review Document 2: Senior Survey 2018
- C. RS student questions
- D. Biblical languages discussion