General Education Assessment

2013-14

U.S. History

University in the High School Program

The University at Albany, SUNY

Prepared by Steven Doellefeld, Ph.D., MBA, Associate Director of Assessment

Institutional Research, Planning & Effectiveness

September 2014
Background

In 2013-14 the University at Albany assessed the degree to which students were achieving student learning outcomes in the Foreign Language, Natural Sciences, and U.S. History General Education categories. As with previous assessments, the assessment of General Education courses offered through the University in the High School (UHS) program were conducted at the same time. While traditionally a representative sample of classes from a particular general education category has been selected by IRPE and the General Education Committee, given the poor response rate in recent years the decision was made to sample the entire population for the UHS instructors. The UHS office provided materials electronically, and IRPE redacted instructor information.

A total of 25 courses offered through UHS in 2013-14 met the U.S. History General Education requirement, with respondents noting enrollments ranging from 5 to 60. Thirteen of the instructors sampled responded. All 13 respondents returned the beginning of semester forms with indications of class activities, as well as submitting a syllabus. Ten instructors submitted end of semester quantitative data. The data contained in this report represents 10 classes, with a total enrollment of 237 students.

Figure 1: Aggregated Performance on U.S. History Learning Objectives
U.S. History courses enable students to demonstrate:

1. knowledge of a basic narrative of American history (political, economic, social, and/or cultural), including an awareness of unity and diversity in American society;
2. knowledge of representative institutions in American society and how they have shaped and been shaped by different groups;
3. an understanding of the relationship(s) between America and other parts of the world;
4. an understanding of various tools and approaches used in interpreting U.S. history.

Figure 2: U.S. History Learning Objective 1

Figure 3: U.S. History Learning Objective 2
In excess of 85% of assessed students either met or exceeded expectations in all four learning objectives in this category—and in excess of 90% of students either met or exceeded expectations in three of the four categories. Taken as a whole, these figures are similar to or slightly lower than performance in the 2009-2010 General Education Assessment in this category, as shown in Figure 6, below.
Figures 7-10 break down the results by learning objective, and taken in toto, we see some similarities when comparing 2014 results to 2010.

1) Students will demonstrate knowledge of a basic narrative of American history (political, economic, social, and/or cultural), including an awareness of unity and diversity in American society.
2) Students will demonstrate knowledge of representative institutions in American society and how they have shaped and been shaped by different groups.

![Figure 8: Comparison of Results for U.S. History Learning Objective 2, 2010 & 2014](image)

3) Students will demonstrate an understanding of the relationship(s) between America and other parts of the world.

![Figure 9: Comparison of Results for U.S. History Learning Objective 3, 2010 & 2014](image)
Figure 10: Comparison of Results for U.S. History Learning Objective 4, 2010 & 2014

Comparison of UHS population to on-campus UAlbany population

In the U.S. History General Education category, comparisons of performance between the UHS and on-campus populations demonstrate results that we’ve noted in previous reports for other General Education categories – that UHS students consistently outperform our on-campus population, as shown in Figures 12-15, below.

When students who “Exceeded” and “Met” expectations are combined, the percentage of on-campus population trails behind in all 4 categories, with a range between 7 and 12 percentage points, as shown in Figure 11.
In all 4 categories, the percentage of UHS students who “did not meet” the learning objectives was 2% or less, while in the on-campus population, this number was between 6% and 10%.
2) Students will demonstrate knowledge of representative institutions in American society and how they have shaped and been shaped by different groups.

Figure 13: Comparison of Results for UHS and On-campus Populations on U.S. History Learning Objective 2

3) Students will demonstrate an understanding of the relationship(s) between America and other parts of the world.

Figure 14: Comparison of Results for UHS and On-campus Populations on U.S. History Learning Objective 3
It is important to note that the majority of students who enroll in University in the High School courses tend to be highly motivated and high performing. In fact, only juniors and seniors with an overall average of B or better are allowed to enroll in UHS classes. One could reasonably expect students who have a high average overall to perform well in these classes. In addition, on-campus students taking courses meeting this General Education requirement may be doing so only to fulfill the General Education requirement, and thus might not be highly motivated to take the class, which could provide another partial explanation of any differences in performance that may exist across these populations.

We also recognize that the UHS courses cover the same material as the on-campus offerings, but do so in a year-long format rather than the standard semester format. Additionally, the typical UHS course meets every day, not a few times a week, and always with small class sizes. All of these factors could contribute to explain the high performance of UHS students relative to their on-campus counterparts.
Recommendations:

1) IRPE needs to work closely with UHS to improve the response rate and quality of the data submitted by instructors. Sample videos and an online FAQ document that outline the General Education Assessment process and the use of the assessment forms were available to UHS instructors, but there is no evidence that any of the respondents actually used these resources to improve the quality of their submission. We strongly urge UHS administrators to continue to encourage UHS instructors to avail themselves of these resources.

2) It is possible that UHS instructors are merely copying the high school grades into the General Education Assessment forms rather than keeping 2 grade books—one with the “high school” grade, and one with the “college” grade. Moreover, review of the assessment materials appears to show that instructors need to pay more attention to separating out the performance of students in the class by learning objective. Most have simply inserted the same numbers into each category. As we have done in past years, IRPE continues to recommend that the UHS office issue a memo explaining the process and directing instructors to the IRPE produced videos and FAQ for more information.

3) IRPE recognizes the challenges in getting a good response rate from such a small population of courses, and also recognizes that one or two large classes can skew the results of the entire study. It is likely that we will continue to sample the entire population in the future, in the hopes that that effort – coupled with regular reminders from the UHS administration will result in a better response rate and a more robust data set.

Process notes

- This year the UHS office collected all the requested materials and scanned the sample documents into PDF format before sending them to IRPE electronically. The names of the instructors were redacted from the forms, which were then coded. While this was a labor intensive endeavor for the IRPE office, it saved a substantial amount of paper, as well as additional copying time and paper when the material is be made available to the General Education Assessment Committee. IRPE has developed forms in PDF format that instructors can submit through our website, and they will be encouraged to use this method in the future.