

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

ASSESSMENT PROJECT

MAY 2009

Background:

The Department of History joins with other departments in the College of HASS to develop more systematic plans for assessment and evaluation. However, there is one major difference in History's project: we are also tied into a state-wide assessment project under the direction of the Utah System of Higher Education, a project that is likely to serve as a model for assessment throughout the state in the coming years.

THE STATE-WIDE UTAH SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION PROJECT:

Prof. Norman L. Jones serves as Co-PI (with William Evenson and Teddi Safman of the Utah System of Higher Education) on a \$150,000 grant from the Lumina Foundation for Education to study "Exploring Tuning in the Utah System of Higher Education, in two disciplines at two-three levels, with nine credit-granting Utah System institutions."

Utah is one of three states in the nation to participate in this first-of-its-kind project, designed to create specific learning outcomes for specific disciplines. The object is to create a statewide benchmark for what students, parents, employers, state leaders and others can expect graduates to know upon earning a degree in certain fields. Presently, the State of Utah is working with Physics and History departments to systematize the "Tuning" process.

A *Deseret News* story on the project (April 13, 2009) provides some of the background to the effort. Spencer Jenkins, of the Utah System of Higher Education stated that Utah was chosen to participate in the pilot study because of an already advanced method of articulation. The common course numbering system, which spans across the state's nine public colleges and universities, helps to keep the course objectives streamlined.

William Evenson of the USHE added that Tuning "will help us with accountability because we will be much clearer about what our graduates know. And as far as transparency, it will let students know what is expected of them when they're looking at taking a particular course or signing up for a particular major."

(source: <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/print/705297253/Utah-developing-new-learning-standards.html>)

THE NATION-WIDE LUMINA FOUNDATION PROJECT: TUNING USA

Lumina Foundation has initiated Tuning USA, a faculty-led pilot project designed to define what students must know, understand and be able to demonstrate after completing a degree in a specific field. Tuning USA methodology is based on similar work to increase the transparency around what a degree represents under Europe's Bologna Process. Lumina's hope is that European experiment will help refine American thinking on the quality of higher education.

Tuning harmonizes higher education programs and degrees by defining *curricula learning outcomes* by subject area. These outcomes are linked to national and international Qualifications Frameworks that underlie much of the Bologna Process (defining the learning, skills, and competencies that different university degrees

represent). Some 145 universities in 33 countries in Europe have engaged in Tuning projects, and 182 universities in 18 Latin American countries have followed suit.

Each academic discipline establishes concrete learning outcomes—knowledge, the application of acquired knowledge, reasoning capacities, and skills—that qualify students to receive degrees in their chosen fields. While the phrasing of these outcome statements can vary, all institutions must observe the agreed-upon reference points and templates. For each learning outcome, faculty in the discipline can establish performance criteria or definitions of what a student must demonstrate to attain that outcome. Each school or department in the discipline designs its own curricular program, delivery methods and assessments to help students attain the agreed-upon learning outcomes. The reference points and templates are developed through surveys and field testing with faculty members, students, employers, previous graduates, and faculty in other disciplines from the same institution. The product of the Tuning process is a public statement of learning outcomes and attainment criteria for each discipline.

(source: http://www.luminafoundation.org/our_work/tuning/O_and_A-Bologna_and_Tuning.html)

THE INTERNATIONAL ASSESSMENT PROJECT: THE BOLOGNA PROCESS

The Bologna Process, named for the city in which it was launched in 1999, is an effort to promote transparency, coordination and quality assurance among the various higher education systems in Europe. The Bologna Process seeks to create a more seamless higher education system that:

1. Awards comparable degrees based upon defined, criterion-referenced learning outcomes,
2. Promotes college access and student mobility,
3. Embraces the need for increased degree attainment,
4. Ensures educational quality.

Bologna is not a government mandate or treaty-based initiative. It is not one program or project, but a set of independent-yet-interconnected initiatives that engage national higher education systems, universities and other stakeholders. The Bologna Process is enabling higher education reform in 46 countries throughout Europe. Bologna's influence stretches beyond Europe as other countries monitor the process and implement its developments.

(source: http://www.luminafoundation.org/our_work/tuning/O_and_A-Bologna_and_Tuning.html)

Work on assessment in the History Department, Spring of 2009:

(Coordinator of the assessment project in the department: Prof. Daniel J. McInerney)

1. Creation of a “learning outcomes” document for the discipline of History
 - See Attachment 1
 - Note: the document created by the History department is being used as the model for ALL History departments in the State of Utah.
2. Creation of a “learning outcomes rubric”
 - See Attachment 2 (attachment 2A, Section 1; attachment 2B, Section 2)
 - the rubric was used in Spring 2009 with 24 students who completed the department’s senior capstone course, HIST 4990: Senior Thesis
3. Completion of the “learning outcomes rubric”
 - See Attachment 3
 - 10 of the 24 student theses were blind-reviewed by other faculty members
 - admittedly, the department employed a basic method “inter-rater reliability” (and certainly needs to understand this process in a more refined manner).
4. Completion of an “essential skills” survey
 - See Attachment 4
 - The survey examines the key skills (or competencies) for academic disciplines. Respondents evaluate which skills they believe are important in History *and also* evaluate how well the History Department’s program develops those skills.
 - The survey was put before different audiences:
 - freshmen & sophomores in 2000-level History survey classes
 - juniors and seniors in 3000- & 4000-level History courses
 - History faculty
5. Participation in the Lumina Foundation’s national conference, “Tuning Educational Structures USA,” Chicago, April 6-7, 2009
 - in attendance: Profs. Norman L. Jones and Daniel J. McInerney
6. Participation in the Utah System of Higher Education’s “Discipline Team Meeting on Tuning,” Regents Office, Salt Lake City, May 14, 2009.
 - in attendance: Prof. Daniel J. McInerney
7. Participation in the Association of American Colleges and Universities’ national conference, “VALUE: Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education,” May 14-16, 2009, Portland, OR
 - in attendance: Prof. Daniel J. McInerney
8. Participation in the Utah System of Higher Education’s “Discipline Team Meeting on Tuning,” Regents Office, Salt Lake City, June 2009.
 - in attendance: Prof. Daniel J. McInerney

Work on assessment that the History Department will complete by December 2009:

The Utah System of Higher Education, in conjunction with the Lumina Foundation, has outlined the following goals for the remainder of 2009:

May through October:

States organize additional subject-area team meetings. Lumina may send representatives to observe, and a Lumina consultant will attend one in-state meeting.

November:

State teams deliver draft explanations of the processes they followed, reports on field testing, agreed reference points for subject areas, draft profiles of subject areas by institution, mapping of subject areas to employment fields/professions and an assessment of the process that includes next steps. Second meeting of the eight participants from the four states who attended the December 2008 meeting, Lumina representatives and consultants.

November/December:

States submit final reports. Lumina will determine next steps.