

Department of African and African American Studies Student Based
Outcomes Assessment Plan
Adopted: April 1, 2008

Preamble

The mission of the Department of African and African American Studies (AAAS) at Indiana State University is to provide a high-quality educational experience for all those students who enroll in our courses. Our particular focus, however, is to provide for AAAS majors and minors an experience which will not only lead them to an understanding of the field of African and African American Studies and the connections between African and African American history and culture. In all AAAS courses we also foster the fundamental skills of critical thinking, reading, and writing. We intend to deepen the students' understanding of the complex, multicultural world in which they live and to stimulate effective participation in contemporary society.

The AAAS Department's Plan for Assessment of Undergraduate Student Outcomes is designed to measure the extent to which we have achieved the above goals, and to provide substantive information which will guide us both in improving our performance in areas where we may fall short, and in addressing the changing goals of students who choose specialization in AAAS as the main focus of their undergraduate careers. The main elements of the plan are focused on assessing our success in fostering student achievement through several specific steps.

Objectives¹

- I. AAAS majors should develop "strong analytical, communication, quantitative, and informational skills"

- II. AAAS majors should receive "hands-on experience with the inquiry practices" of the discipline

- III AAAS majors should develop intercultural knowledge and collaborative problem-solving skills

¹ Quoted sections within the "objectives" section derived from "Our Students' Best Work: A Framework of Accountability Worthy of Our Mission" (Washington, DC: American Association of Colleges & Universities, 2004), pp. 5-6.

IV. AAAS majors should develop "a pro-active sense of responsibility for individual, civic, and social choices"

V. AAAS majors should develop "habits of mind that foster integrative thinking and the ability to transfer skills from one setting to another"

Methodology

In order to assess the progress of each cohort of students, the following data shall be collected in the portfolio of each AAAS major:

1. If available, the student's relevant standardized test scores (e.g. SAT I verbal, ACT, etc.) at the time of his/her admission to the university.
2. A sample or samples of work from AFRI 113, 212, 222, 312, and 486 (It is recognized that there are practical difficulties in obtaining this data from all students; some students place out of these courses or declare their major after completing them, etc.)
3. A standardized, in-class writing assignment administered in AFRI 486. This writing sample can be excluded or included as part of the formal curriculum and grading of AFRI 486 at the instructor's discretion. The assignment shall be created by the program curriculum committee in consultation with the Department. This writing sample is intended to provide baseline data on the in-class writing, analytical, reading, and interpretive skills of each cohort of graduates at the beginning of their upper-level coursework.
4. An example of at least one other assignment, preferably research based, from AFRI 486, to serve as baseline data of students' abilities regarding assignments requiring revision and research.
5. Samples of work, preferably both take home and in-class assignments (essays and exams), from 300 and 400 level courses.
6. A list of all AAAS courses taken. If feasible, this list will include grades received.

7. A report from a standardized exit interview conducted during the semester in which the student intends to graduate.

The following data will also be collected by the program curriculum committee:

8. Graduation/retention rates of declared AAAS majors, including GPA figures (within major and overall),

Portfolio Review

During the fall semester, the program curriculum committee shall review the portfolios of all majors who graduated during the previous academic year to gauge the **progress of the cohort** based on the goals outlined in this document and other goals that seem relevant to the department. Given the changing nature of AAAS as a discipline, the committee and department shall retain the option to consider outcomes and factors not listed in this document.

There will be variation in the data collected in each portfolio, particularly based on the timing in which a student enrolls in AFRI 486. As a general guideline, items 1 and 2 shall be used as baseline data to determine the general abilities and training of the cohort as a whole before embarking on upper-level work. If the data are sufficient, we can also use these items to help assess the effectiveness of our 100 and 200 level AAAS program.

The committee will focus on the improvement (or lack thereof) demonstrated in the work collected from the students' upper-level courses. The list of courses will help the committee to see the range of students' experiences within the major. The exit interviews provide a powerful tool for learning the students' perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of our program.

Item 8 will help us determine our effectiveness in improving student retention, a vital university goal.

Use of data

The most important role of this committee is to report our findings to the overall department and relevant departmental committees. Preferably, this report should be made in the fall at a departmental meeting and the data should be made easily available to all faculty members. The data can be effectively used by individual professors to

understand weaknesses of our students and program and address them, as appropriate, within their classes. Further, the data should be used by the department to help make decisions on a variety of issues, both in terms of the need for change and knowledge of areas in which our current policies seem to be highly effective. When appropriate, the committee shall make specific recommendations to the department. However, the recommendation of specific changes is not viewed as the primary purpose of this committee.

The committee may use the data to help determine nominations for student awards. Otherwise, the data are not intended to be used to evaluate individual students. The data is not to be used for the evaluation of individual faculty members.

The annual reports will be made available to university administrators and NCATE officials. The findings will be made available to the general public as appropriate.

FERPA Statement

In recognition of students' right to privacy as well as the FERPA law, all student portfolios shall be kept confidential.