**Annual Assessment Update**

**History Department 2011-2012**

**Step 1) Mission:**

**“The mission of the History Department is to foster creative and analytical thinkers who are interested in questions of how human societies change over time. History students learn to discern the institutional, ideological and material conditions that shape the ways in which people interact with one another, whether in the context of a given society or across societies. They learn that prevailing historical explanations are themselves subject to questioning and refashioning, and they become aware of how different explanations influence present-day perceptions. By analyzing primary and secondary sources and by communicating the results of their analysis in compelling, cogent prose, students also learn to become active participants in the writing and critiquing of history itself.”**

**No changes were made to the mission this past year.**

**Step 2) Learning outcomes**

**No changes.**

**Step 3) Program components**

**Yes. The History Department has not implemented its portfolio assessment plan. Analogous to Albion College not implementing “the pledge” because it was an administrative nightmare, the portfolio plan has perhaps been too ambitious given that the History Department has lost two tenure track positions in the recent past. One of those positions is filled by a visiting professor, who does not assume the departmental and college-wide chores that tenure-track faculty perform. In the meantime, the remaining five tenure-track faculty members are fulfilling the responsibilities that recently were shouldered by seven. In view of this, our default assessment has been the capstone history seminar that each major is required to take. These courses are numbered 370 to 402. The seminars are writing and research intensive. Students critically examine both secondary and primary sources. The evaluation of a student’s performance in the history seminar is a key assessment of that student’s achievements in the discipline.**

**Step 4) Data Collection methods**

**The Department has initiated efforts to collect data regarding student program participation and student advancement to graduate programs and post-Albion College careers. For example, as in the past, the history department has several students participating as FURSCA scholars for 2012 summer. At the Elkin Isaac Honors Symposium, the Department sponsored nine history papers and two additional interdisciplinary presentations. History 2012 graduates have been admitted to graduate programs at Western Michigan University, Brandeis University, Loyola University (Chicago), the University of Scotland (Edinburgh), Northeastern University (Boston), the University of Michigan, and the University of Pittsburgh. In addition, the Department has been well represented among Albion College elementary and secondary education students, who have majored or minored in history. Their achievements have been showcased by the education department’s public programs during 2011-2012.**

**Step 5) Analyze and Interpret the data.**

**One of our history majors participated in the 2010-11 ACM Newberry Library Seminar program. This year, the student’s research project was recognized as the best student research project in the humanities. At least seven of our majors completed honor’s theses this spring. One of the history theses was awarded a Jenkins Prize at the Honors Convocation. Another thesis, which was interdisciplinary and directed by a member of the history department, also won a Jenkins Prize. The number of history students writing theses, presenting at the Elkin Isaac Honors Symposium, and participating in the Newberry Library program is an indicator that the Department is motivating students to challenge themselves to go beyond the basic major. The number of history students entering graduate school and entering the field of teaching speaks well of rigor of the history major.**

**Step 6) Use of data for decision making, strategic planning, etc.**

**The Department concluded at the end of the 2011-2012 academic year that 2012-2013 should include a re-examination of the History major. The downsizing of the department and the downsizing of the College contributed to this consensus. Periodic re-examination is wise and the current circumstances give added urgency to this mission. Re-examination and possible revision of the portfolio assessment plan will be part of the larger exploration of the History Department.**