SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSESSMENT PLANNING 05-06

Social Science Faculty currently use a variety of assessment devices in the classroom that have potential for being developed into a form useful for systematic program assessment. Included are:

- Essay tests and other written exam elements
- Oral presentations
- Oral exams
- Portfolios
- Posters
- Graphic tests and displays
- Course embedded questions (e.g. though questions) and assignments (e.g. library assignments)
- Situational assessments (e.g. role-playing)
- Research teams
- Performance reviews
- Group projects
- Individual projects
- Debate
- Student journals
- Capstone courses and experiences
- Experiments (provided through course materials or student produced)
- Grading, and the attendant distributions created, also provide a source of information

The college also provides data that could be worked with to examine program outcomes. These include:

- Retention ratios
- Completion ratios
- Capacity analysis
- Enrollment reports
- Student outcome reports
- Student Follow-up studies

The division work on assessment planning suggested two possible areas that would provide information on student learning that could be developed and refined into meaningful assessment tools. One area includes assessment that is already being done. The other would include information that it would be desirable to have systematically collected.

Information already being collected:

- Job performance information for graduates of professional technical programs is collected casually, but could be systematically collected.
- Many courses include writing assignments that could provide information on student development of communication skills such as written expression and listening.
- Assessment devices (e.g. prospective exam items) could be developed that help determine the degree to which course content literacy has been achieved and Social Science methodological approaches have been understood.
- Competencies such as critical thinking and problem solving are already assessed in limited ways using existing evaluation devices, but this could be enhanced by inclusion of such devices in a manner that would provide program-wide indicators of student performance on these competencies over a term, or sequence of courses.
- Social Science concepts can often be related to individual experience, beliefs, and thinking processes. Class discussions and existing evaluation tools give some indication of the degree to which students examine their perspectives, but a means of systematic assessment of course elements, such as formative discussions would be a valuable tool.

Information that would be desirable to collect:

- Social Science concepts often relate directly or indirectly to diversity and multi-cultural concepts. A means of assessing the degree to which students' awareness of such concepts (e.g. social inequalities or social differences) has been raised and the skills needed for respectful communication have been developed would be an asset.
- Approaching issues with multidisciplinary thinking is also often an intended outcome for Social Science courses. A means of assessing this perspective development would be useful.
- Many of the Social Science offerings are, of course, offered in other institutions in the state and nation. Comparative data that give an indication of how well our students perform after having had the course content delivered through our courses (e.g. a sequence in a given discipline) versus similar courses in another institution would be a very useful benchmark.
- Comparison of the performance of students who go through our Social Science programs to those who attend elsewhere (e.g. start at a four year institution) at the completion of their general education requirements and/or at graduation would also provide a useful general index of the effects our programs have on students' academic performance.