Department of History and Social Sciences

Assessment Report
2010-2011

Mission/Purpose
The History and Social Sciences faculty are dedicated to teaching its students how to understand, appreciate, and practice the conventions and methodologies of History, Political Science, and Anthropology and use those practices to effectively communicate historical and social-scientific knowledge.

I. Goals and Student Learning Outcomes, With Any Associations and Related Measures, Achievement Targets, Findings, and Action Plans

A. Goal: Address the major educational issues of the region
Address the major educational, social, cultural, and economic issues of the region and in doing so promote a positive image of the institution and the area

1. Outcome: Demonstrated skill in historical methodologies.
History majors will demonstrate familiarity with the methodological conventions of the historical profession, evidenced by their performance in research, citation, and expository writing exercises.

a. Measure: Department will offer specialized instruction in historical methods.
The history department will continue to offer HY 300, Historical Methodologies, and will require it of all history majors. Majors will complete HY 300 in either the second semester of their sophomore year or the first semester of their junior year. HY 300 achieves two basic ends, both of which are mechanical: (1) To give students the basics in historiography and historical methodology, (2) To teach formal term paper construction by requiring each student to research, organize, and write a formal term paper. The “mechanical” skills that this class covers work in concert with content courses required of history majors, preparing them for the capstone projects they will design and complete in HY 400.

Source of Evidence: Curriculum/syllabus analysis of course to program

1. Achievement Target:
Completion of HY 300 with a grade of C or better or the course's capstone assignment will indicate that students have satisfied this requirement. Students with grades of D on the capstone assignment will be advised to re-take the course.

2. Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Met
All students who met the performance standard have been encouraged to continue on with their course work. All students who earned a D have been encouraged to re-take the course in 2011-2012.

b. Measure: History majors will produce capstone projects.
All history majors will produce capstone assignments in HY 400, Senior Seminar, which is the capstone course required of all history majors. The department's first seven SLO's are the seven elements in which it assesses students' performance in HY 400.

Source of Evidence: Capstone course assignments measuring mastery
1. **Achievement Target:**
   Students in HY 400 will demonstrate through successful application (i.e. with a score of "C" or better) of the skills learned in HY 300 to their capstone projects.

2. **Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Partially Met**
   HY 400 students satisfied this target in 2010-2011, but the target was flawed (too weak). However, the requirements will be heightened for 2011-2012, and a new and stricter rubric will be applied.

3. **Action Plans:**
   **Curriculum changes**
   The newly-redesigned curriculum should, within three years, have led to a significant improvement in this measure (if not total success). Faculty will track this admittedly hard-to-measure goal through annual evaluation of each student's portfolio of written work. The first samples will be collected this fall.
   - **Established in Cycle:** 2009-2010
   - **Implementation Status:** In Progress
   - **Priority:** High
   - **Implementation Description:** A broad-based, properly-sequenced history major will yield more well-rounded generalist history graduates.
   - **Completion Date:** 08/27/2014
   - **Responsible Person/Group:** History faculty
   - **Implementation Notes:**

   **Stricter rubric and heightened standards in HY400**
   HY400 Supplemental Grading Rubric-2011-2012
   - **Established in Cycle:** 2010-2011
   - **Implementation Status:** In Progress
   - **Priority:** High
   - **Responsible Person/Group:** Instructor of record
   - **Implementation Notes:**

2. **Outcome: Broad, general knowledge of American and western history.**
   History graduates will demonstrate a broad-based, generalized knowledge of American and Western history.

   a. **Measure: Departmental Exit Exam**
   Graduating seniors will attain a score of at least 75% on an approved examination that assesses a broad range of historical knowledge. At present, there are two approved exams for history majors at the University of West Alabama: (1) the departmental exit exam and (2) the Praxis exam required of teacher certification candidates. The Praxis is administered to Teacher Education candidates through the College of Education. A passing score on either test satisfies the examination requirement for history majors.
1. **Achievement Target:**
   Ninety percent of graduate seniors will attain a score of at least 75% on the departmental exit exam.

2. **Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Met**
   This goal has been met. Every graduating senior in 2010-2011 passed the departmental exit exam.

3. **Outcome: History curriculum and course offerings will be restructured.**
   The history curriculum and course offerings will be revised in order to prescribe a logical and legible progression from the freshman- to senior-level work, ensuring that B.S./B.A. graduates are prepared to enter graduate or professional school (if they so desire). As of Spring 2010, the department only offered three 300-level courses while all other upper-level courses numbered at the 400-level. This is inappropriate, and the courses will be resorted and renumbered to allow for appropriate curricular offerings at the 300-level.

   a. **Measure: Portfolios for history majors**
      The history department will begin maintaining writing portfolios for all history majors. These portfolios will include at least two sample papers (chosen by the students themselves) from each declared history major's major-field courses. Faculty advisers and the department chair will evaluate these portfolios annually, and, when necessary, students will be steered toward the University's writing proficiency program and/or into additional history courses. Beginning with the Spring 2014 cohort in HY 400 (the first for which faculty will have four years’ worth of work in the portfolios), they will assess that portfolio as part of HY 400 in order to judge students' progress through the curriculum. This evaluation will indicate whether curricular changes have led to significant improvement in students' performance in HY 400 specifically and in the program generally.

   Source of Evidence: Portfolio, showing skill development or best work

1. **Achievement Target:**
   Existing 400-level course offerings will be classed as courses of either "subject" or "time," and the latter will be renumbered as 300-level courses.

2. **Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Met**
   This goal was met. The department can now offer a healthy mix of 300- and 400-level courses.

4. **Outcome: Value judgements and comparative assessments concerning empirical data.**
   History majors will demonstrate their ability to make value judgements and comparative assessments about empirical data used in historical investigation.

   a. **Measure: History majors will produce capstone projects.**
      All history majors will produce capstone assignments in HY400, Senior Seminar, which is the capstone course required of all history majors. The department's first seven SLO's are the seven elements in which it assesses students' performance in HY 400.

   Source of Evidence: Capstone course assignments measuring mastery
1. **Achievement Target:**

   50% of the final project grade in HY 400 looks at the work students did, and this encompasses an assessment of their use of empirical data (primary source material). In this measure, which contributes to that 50%, the instructor looks at the quality and relevance of the materials used. To determine a satisfactory performance here, the instructor looks to see whether (1) the student has, in fact, made use of primary materials and (2) whether he/she has done so properly.

2. **Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Partially Met**

   All students who participated in HY 400 in 2010-2011 satisfied this requirement. However, a stricter rubric will be applied to this measure in 2011-2012 in order to spur even stronger student work.

3. **Action Plans:**
   **Stricter rubric and heightened standards in HY400**
   HY400 Supplemental Grading Rubric-2011-2012
   **Established in Cycle:** 2010-2011
   **Implementation Status:** In Progress
   **Priority:** High
   **Responsible Person/Group:** Instructor or record
   **Implementation Notes:**
   8/29/2011 A new rubric has been prepared for use beginning in Spring 2012. It will not be used in Fall 2011 because HY 400 was canceled due to unusually low enrollment.

   **Students' understanding of assignments' purpose**
   By building SLO statements into the existing "Course Objectives" section of syllabi, faculty will better demonstrate the broader purpose of the assignments they make. An SLO statement for a 100-level course will be far simpler than one for a 300-level course, but the point is the same: to explain to students that course-levels are not arbitrary, but rather are intended to prepare them for the assignments that they'll complete at successive levels of the curriculum. Further, it will be explained to them that all courses in the history curriculum are preparing them for the work they'll do as graduating seniors in HY 400. SLO syllabi will be used first in Fall 2011.
   **Established in Cycle:** 2010-2011
   **Implementation Status:** In Progress
   **Priority:** High
   **Implementation Description:** SLO statements should be included on all syllabi in Fall 2011; they will be mandatory beginning in Spring 2012.
   **Responsible Person/Group:** All history faculty
   **Implementation Notes:**
   8/29/2011 Instructors will devote more attention to explaining the purpose, rather than just the mechanics, of the writing and research assignments in history courses. This is not to change the character of the assignments themselves, but rather to illuminate the intellectual processes involved therein. Faculty have found that students are uniformly ignorant of the purpose of writing assignments, due solely to the fact that most of them haven't ever encountered this type of work at the high school level.

4. **Outcome: Value judgements and comparative assessments of secondary source materials.**

   History majors will demonstrate their ability to make value judgements and comparative assessments of secondary source materials, which include, but are not limited to, journals, monographs, and electronic media.
a. Measure: Portfolios for history majors
The history department will begin maintain writing portfolios for all history majors. These portfolios will include at least two sample papers (chosen by the students themselves) from each declared history major's major-field courses. Faculty advisors and the department chair will evaluate these portfolios annually and, when necessary, students will be steered toward the University's writing proficiency program and/or into additional history courses. Beginning with the Spring 2014 cohort in HY 400 (the first for which we'll have four years’ worth of work in the portfolios), faculty will assess that portfolio as part of HY 400 in order to judge students' progress through the curriculum. This evaluation will indicate whether curricular changes have led to significant improvement in students' performance in HY 400 specifically and in the program generally.

Source of Evidence: Portfolio, showing skill development or best work

1. Achievement Target:
Incorporate at least four major assignments (of at least 500 words each) or exams (of at least 500 words each) that require value judgements and comparative assessments of secondary source materials into all 300- and 400-level courses.

2. Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Met
Every course offered in 2010-2011 included at least two analytical book review assignments and at least two exams that required essay-style responses.

b. Measure: Department will offer specialized instruction in historical methods.
The history department will continue to offer HY 300, Historical Methodologies, and will require it of all history majors. Majors will complete HY 300 in either the second semester of their sophomore year or the first semester of their junior year. HY 300 achieves two basic ends, both of which are mechanical: (1) To give students the basics in historiography and historical methodology and (2) To teach formal term paper construction by requiring each student to research, organize, and write a formal term paper. The "mechanical” skills that this class covers work in concert with content courses required of history majors, preparing them for the capstone projects they will design and complete in HY 400.

Source of Evidence: Curriculum/syllabus analysis of course to program

1. Achievement Target:
40 possible points are awarded in student's HY 300 capstone assignments for "Body/Text” in their papers. A score of 30 points or better in that portion of the assignment will indicate a satisfactory performance on that element.

2. Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Met
Faculty are satisfied that the 30 point threshold is a fair and accurate benchmark for this measure.

c. Measure: History majors will produce capstone projects.
All history majors will produce capstone assignments in HY400, Senior Seminar, which is the capstone course required of all history majors. The department's first seven SLOs are the seven elements in which students' performance in HY 400 are assessed.

Source of Evidence: Capstone course assignments measuring mastery
1. Achievement Target:
50% of the final project grade in HY 400 looks at the work students did, and this encompasses an assessment of their use of secondary source materials (materials that are the result of previous scholars’ investigations). Most often, these are peer-reviewed books, journal articles, and like. As with empirical data, the instructor will look to see whether the student has (1) actually conducted serious research and identified appropriate secondary material, (2) whether he/she has handled that material properly with regard to documentation and analysis.

2. Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Partially Met
All students who participated in HY 400 in 2010-2011 satisfied this requirement. However a stricter rubric will be applied to this measure in 2011-2012 in order to spur even stronger student work.

3. Action Plans:
Stricter rubric and heightened standards in HY400
HY400 Supplemental Grading Rubric-2011-2012
Established in Cycle: 2010-2011
Implementation Status: In Progress
Priority: High
Responsible Person/Group: Instructor or record
Implementation Notes:
8/29/2011 A new rubric has been prepared for use beginning in Spring 2012. It will not be used in Fall 2011 because HY 400 was cancelled due to unusually low enrollment.

Students' understanding of assignments' purpose
By building SLO statements into the existing "Course Objectives" section of syllabi, faculty will better demonstrate the broader purpose of the assignments they make. An SLO statement for a 100-level course will be far simpler than one for a 300-level course, but the point is the same: to explain to students that course-levels are not arbitrary, but rather are intended to prepare them for the assignments that they’ll complete at successive levels of the curriculum. Further, it will be explained to them that all courses in the history curriculum are preparing them for the work they’ll do as graduating seniors in HY 400. SLO syllabi will be used first in Fall 2011.
Established in Cycle: 2010-2011
Implementation Status: In Progress
Priority: High
Implementation Description: SLO statements should be included on all syllabi in Fall 2011; they will be mandatory beginning in Spring 2012.
Responsible Person/Group: All history faculty
Implementation Notes:
8/29/2011 Instructors will devote more attention to explaining the purpose, rather than just the mechanics, of the writing and research assignments in history courses. This is not to change the character of the assignments themselves, but rather to illuminate the intellectual processes involved therein. Faculty have found that students are uniformly ignorant of the purpose of writing assignments, due solely to the fact that most of them haven't ever encountered this type of work at the high school level.

6. Outcome: Organize and conduct original historical research.
History majors will demonstrate the ability to organize and conduct original historical research outlining an array of primary and secondary source materials.
a. Measure: Portfolios for history majors
The history department will begin maintain writing portfolios for all history majors. These portfolios will include at least two sample papers (chosen by the students themselves) from each declared history major’s major-field courses. Faculty advisers and the department chair will evaluate these portfolios annually and, when necessary, students will be steered toward the university's writing proficiency program and/or into additional history courses. Beginning with the spring 2014 cohort in HY400 (the first for which we’ll have four years’ worth of work in the portfolios), will assess that portfolio as part of HY400 in order to judge students’ progress through the curriculum. This evaluation will indicate whether curricular changes have led to significant improvement in students’ performance in HY400 specifically and in the program generally.

Source of Evidence: Portfolio, showing skill development or best work

1. Achievement Target:
   Research papers will be required in all 300- and 400-level courses.

2. Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Not Met
   This target was not met in 2010-2011. While all 300- and 400-level courses required significant written work by students, they did not all require research papers as such.

3. Action Plans:
   Encourage research paper assignments
   History faculty members will be encouraged to include research paper assignments in all 300- and 400-level courses in 2011-2012.

   Established in Cycle: 2010-2011
   Implementation Status: In Progress
   Priority: High
   Implementation Description: Department chair will meet with faculty members to encourage them to adopt research paper assignments in 2011-2012. The reason that this has not happened is that library holdings, while they’ve improved dramatically in recent years, are not yet broad enough that students can easily complete research papers without traveling to the nearest major research library. However, students can still do significant research with the holdings that we do have.
   Responsible Person/Group: Department Chair.
   Additional Resources Requested: None. The department chair, along with the senior faculty members, will continue to maintain and expand a list of online repositories that students may avail themselves of for research paper assignments.

   Implementation Notes:
   8/29/2011 Faculty will be encouraged to mandate research paper assignments in all 300- and 400-level courses. This should be the departmental norm by 2012-2013.

   Students' understanding of assignments' purpose
   By building SLO statements into the existing "Course Objectives" section of syllabi, faculty will better demonstrate the broader purpose of the assignments they make. An SLO statement for a 100-level course will be far simpler than one for a 300-level course, but the point is the same: to explain to students that course-levels are not arbitrary, but rather are intended to prepare them for the assignments that they’ll complete at successive levels of the curriculum. Further, it will be explained to them that all courses in the history curriculum are preparing them for the work they’ll do as graduating seniors in HY 400. SLO
sylab will be used first in Fall 2011.

Established in Cycle: 2010-2011
Implementation Status: In Progress
Priority: High
Implementation Description: SLO statements should be included on all syllabi in Fall 2011; they will be mandatory beginning in Spring 2012.
Responsible Person/Group: All history faculty
Implementation Notes: 8/29/2011 Instructors will devote more attention to explaining the purpose, rather than just the mechanics, of the writing and research assignments in history courses. This is not to change the character of the assignments themselves, but rather to illuminate the intellectual processes involved therein. Faculty have found that students are uniformly ignorant of the purpose of writing assignments, due solely to the fact that most of them haven't ever encountered this type of work at the high school level.

b. Measure: Department will offer specialized instruction in historical methods.
The history department will continue to offer HY 300, Historical Methodologies, and will require it of all history major. Majors will complete HY 300 in either the second semester of their sophomore year or the first semester of their junior year. HY 300 achieves two basic ends, both of which are mechanical: (1) To give students the basics in historiography and historical methodology, (2) To teach formal term paper construction by requiring each student to research, organize, and write a formal term paper. The "mechanical" skills that this class covers work in concert with content courses required of history majors, preparing them for the capstone projects they will design and complete in HY 400.

Source of Evidence: Curriculum/syllabus analysis of course to program

1. Achievement Target:
   HY 300 requires students to produce completed abstracts and outlines for their capstone assignments. Each element is worth fifteen points. Scores of 10 points or better in each element will indicate satisfactory performance.

2. Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Met
   Faculty are satisfied that the 10 point threshold is a fair standard by which to measure students' ability to identify potential source material.

c. Measure: History majors will produce capstone projects.
All history majors will produce capstone assignments in HY 400, Senior Seminar, which is the capstone course required of all history majors. The department's first seven SLO's are the seven elements in which faculty assess students' performance in HY 400.

Source of Evidence: Capstone course assignments measuring mastery

1. Achievement Target:
   50% of the final project grade in HY 400 looks at the quality of the research that students performed, and a score of 30% will indicate an acceptable score in that component. Students' primary and secondary research are judged separately; this is an overall assessment of those things taken together.

2. Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Partially Met
   All students who participated in HY 400 in 2010-2011 satisfied this requirement. However, a stricter rubric will be applied to this measure in 2011-2012 in order to spur even stronger student work.
3. **Action Plan:**

   **Stricter rubric and heightened standards in HY400**
   
   HY 400 Supplemental Grading Rubric-2011-2012
   
   **Established in Cycle:** 2010-2011
   
   **Implementation Status:** In-Progress
   
   **Priority:** High
   
   **Responsible Person/Group:** Instructor or record
   
   **Implementation Notes:**
   
   8/29/2011 A new rubric has been prepared for use beginning in Spring 2012. It will not be used in Fall 2011 because HY 400 was cancelled due to unusually low enrollment.

7. **Outcome: Produce written work that critically interprets historical data.**

   History majors will demonstrate the ability to produce written work that critically interprets and clearly explains historical data obtained through their own research.

   a. **Measure: Portfolios for history majors**

   The history department will begin maintain writing portfolios for all history majors. These portfolios will include at least two sample papers (chosen by the students themselves) from each declared history major’s major-field courses. Faculty advisors and the department chair will evaluate these portfolios annually and, when necessary, students will be steered toward the University's writing proficiency program and/or into additional history courses. Beginning with the Spring 2014 cohort in HY 400 (the first for which we'll have four years’ worth of work in the portfolios), faculty will assess that portfolio as part of HY 400 in order to judge students' progress through the curriculum. This evaluation will indicate whether curricular changes have led to significant improvement in students' performance in HY400 specifically and in the program generally.

   Source of Evidence: Portfolio, showing skill development or best work

1. **Achievement Target:**

   All students in HY400 will be employing primary source material (a.k.a. historical data) in their capstone assignments.

2. **Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Partially Met**

   This was met. All students in HY 400 utilized primary material in their projects, though some did a far better job of this than others. However, the instructor (Dr. Riser) feels that the bar should be raised. For 2010-2011, students were simply required to use primary source material, but in 2011-2012 a strict rubric will be used to assess the significance, relevance, and scope of primary source materials utilized by students in HY 400. This measure will be marked as "partially met,” and Dr. Riser will use the new rubric in 2011-2012.

3. **Action Plans:**

   **Implement higher standards in HY 400**

   Instructor will introduce a stricter rubric into HY 400 for purposes of assessing student performance in each discrete aspect of the course.

   **Established in Cycle:** 2010-2011
   
   **Implementation Status:** Finished
   
   **Priority:** High
   
   **Implementation Description:** Instructor will notify students of new requirements and will provide a rubric to them in advance.

   **Completion Date:** 05/01/2012
Responsible Person/Group: Instructors of record for HY 400.

Students' understanding of assignments' purpose
By building SLO statements into the existing "Course Objectives" section of syllabi, faculty will better demonstrate the broader purpose of the assignments they make. An SLO statement for a 100-level course will be far simpler than one for a 300-level course, but the point is the same: to explain to students that course-levels are not arbitrary, but rather are intended to prepare them for the assignments that they'll complete at successive levels of the curriculum. Further, it will be explained to them that all courses in the history curriculum are preparing them for the work they'll do as graduating seniors in HY 400. SLO syllabi will be used first in Fall 2011.

Established in Cycle: 2010-2011
Implementation Status: In Progress
Priority: High
Implementation Description: SLO statements should be included on all syllabi in Fall 2011; they will be mandatory beginning in Spring 2012.

Responsible Person/Group: All history faculty
Implementation Notes: 8/29/2011 Instructors will devote more attention to explaining the purpose, rather than just the mechanics, of the writing and research assignments in history courses. This is not to change the character of the assignments themselves, but rather to illuminate the intellectual processes involved therein. Faculty have found that students are uniformly ignorant of the purpose of writing assignments, due solely to the fact that most of them haven't ever encountered this type of work at the high school level.

b. Measure: History majors will produce capstone projects.
All history majors will produce capstone assignments in HY 400, Senior Seminar, which is the capstone course required of all history majors. The department's first seven SLO's are the seven elements in which it assesses students' performance in HY 400.

Source of Evidence: Capstone course assignments measuring mastery

1. Achievement Target:
50% of students' final grades for the HY 400 projects has to do with how well they present their work; 1/3 of that will be judged to determine the quality of their written analyses and whether they have, in fact, engaged that material critically.

2. Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Partially Met
2010-2011 saw the strongest group of students ever in HY 400. Not one single student failed to perform as faculty asked them to do, and for that faculty were glad. However, it's not clear that faculty were asking enough of them, and a stricter rubric will be applied to all elements of HY 400 in 2011-2012.

3. Action Plans:
Strictly rubric and heightened standards in HY 400
HY 400 Supplemental Grading Rubric-2011-2012
Established in Cycle: 2010-2011
Implementation Status: In Progress
Priority: High
Responsible Person/Group: Instructor or record
Implementation Notes:
8/29/2011  A new rubric has been prepared for use beginning in Spring 2012. It will not be used in Fall 2011 because HY 400 was canceled due to unusually low enrollment.

Students' understanding of assignments’ purpose
By building SLO statements into the existing "Course Objectives" section of syllabi, faculty will better demonstrate the broader purpose of the assignments they make. An SLO statement for a 100-level course will be far simpler than one for a 300-level course, but the point is the same: to explain to students that course-levels are not arbitrary, but rather are intended to prepare them for the assignments that they'll complete at successive levels of the curriculum. Further, it will be explained to them that all courses in the history curriculum are preparing them for the work they'll do as graduating seniors in HY 400. SLO syllabi will be used first in Fall 2011. Established in Cycle: 2010-2011
Implementation Status: In Progress
Priority: High
Implementation Description: SLO statements should be included on all syllabi in Fall 2011; they will be mandatory beginning in Spring 2012.
Responsible Person/Group: All history faculty
Implementation Notes: 8/29/2011  Instructors will devote more attention to explaining the purpose, rather than just the mechanics, of the writing and research assignments in history courses. This is not to change the character of the assignments themselves, but rather to illuminate the intellectual processes involved therein. Faculty have found that students are uniformly ignorant of the purpose of writing assignments, due solely to the fact that most of them haven't ever encountered this type of work at the high school level.

8. Outcome: Demonstrated ability verbally to explain the significance of their own historical research.
History majors will demonstrate the ability to verbally explain the significance of their own historical research.

a. Measure: History majors will produce capstone projects.
All history majors will produce capstone assignments in HY 400, Senior Seminar, which is the capstone course required of all history majors. The department's first seven SLOs are the seven elements in which it assesses students' performance in HY 400.

Source of Evidence: Capstone course assignments measuring mastery

1. Achievement Target:
50% of students' final grades for the HY 400 projects has to do with how well they present their work; 1/3 of that will be determined according to how well they are able to describe and present that research in oral presentations to the entire class.

2. Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Partially Met
The verbal presentations are still relatively new in the HY 400 class, but the 2010-2011 cohort performed exceptionally well in this element. However, the new supplemental rubric will be applied beginning with 2011-2012 to ensure that students maintain that level of enthusiasm and effort in years to come.
3. **Action Plan:**
   Stricter rubric and heightened standards in HY400
   HY 400 Supplemental Grading Rubric-2011-2012
   **Established in Cycle:** 2010-2011
   **Implementation Status:** In Progress
   **Priority:** High
   **Responsible Person/Group:** Instructor or record
   **Implementation Notes:**
   8/29/2011 A new rubric has been prepared for use beginning in Spring 2012. It will not be used in Fall 2011 because HY 400 was canceled due to unusually low enrollment.

9. **Outcome: Demonstrated ability to assess historical events through time.**
   History majors will demonstrate the ability to assess historical events and developments through time and across sub-field boundaries.

   a. **Measure: Portfolios for history majors**
      The history department will begin maintain writing portfolios for all history majors. These portfolios will include at least two sample papers (chosen by the students themselves) from each declared history major's major-field courses. Faculty advisors and the department chair will evaluate these portfolios annually and, when necessary, students will be steered toward the University's writing proficiency program and/or into additional history courses. Beginning with the Spring 2014 cohort in HY 400 (the first for which we'll have four years’ worth of work in the portfolios), faculty will assess that portfolio as part of HY 400 in order to judge students' progress through the curriculum. This evaluation will indicate whether curricular changes have led to significant improvement in students' performance in HY400 specifically and in the program generally.

      Source of Evidence: Portfolio, showing skill development or best work

1. **Achievement Target:**
   At least four rigorous, formal writing assignments in each course across the curriculum will prepare students to undertake longer-form work by the time they participate in the capstone seminar. Each course will include multiple writing assignments as well as essay exams. 100- and 200-level courses will require approximately 5,000 words per course; 300-level courses will require approximately 7,000 words per course; 400-level courses will require approximately 10,000 words per course.

2. **Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Met**
   Students completed at least four such assignments and produced the desired total word count, in each course offered in 2010-2011.

   **Action Plans:**
   **Students' understanding of assignments' purpose**
   By building SLO statements into the existing "Course Objectives" section of syllabi, faculty will better demonstrate the broader purpose of the assignments they make. An SLO statement for a 100-level course will be far simpler than one for a 300-level course, but the point is the same: to explain to students that course-levels are not arbitrary, but rather are intended to prepare them for the assignments that they'll complete at successive levels of the curriculum. Further, it will be explained to them that all courses in the history curriculum are preparing them for the work they'll do as graduating seniors in HY 400. SLO syllabi will be used first in Fall 2011.
Established in Cycle: 2010-2011  
Implementation Status: In Progress  
Priority: High  
Implementation Description: SLO statements should be included on all syllabi in Fall 2011; they will be mandatory beginning in Spring 2012.  
Responsible Person/Group: All history faculty

Implementation Notes:  
8/29/2011 Instructors will devote more attention to explaining the purpose, rather than just the mechanics, of the writing and research assignments in history courses. This is not to change the character of the assignments themselves, but rather to illuminate the intellectual processes involved therein. Faculty have found that students are uniformly ignorant of the purpose of writing assignments, due solely to the fact that most of them haven't ever encountered this type of work at the high school level.

b. Measure: History majors will produce capstone projects.
All history majors will produce capstone assignments in HY 400, Senior Seminar, which is the capstone course required of all history majors. The department's first seven SLO's are the seven elements in which we assess students' performance in HY 400.

Source of Evidence: Capstone course assignments measuring mastery

1. Achievement Target:  
50% of students' final grades for the HY 400 projects has to do with how well they present their work verbally and in written form; 1/3 of that turns upon how well students have explained their work, whether they've gone beyond static assessments of historical events, and whether they've appreciated the evolutionary nature of historical development.

2. Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Not Met  
Speaking generally, this is probably where are UWA students are weakest. Indeed, it is the only element that any student failed to satisfy. Of the nine students in HY 400 in 2010-2011, seven satisfied this requirement and did so perfectly; the other two failed miserably.

3. Action Plans:  
Confidence building exercises  
Students must be encouraged to do a better job of explaining historical change "through time." The enhanced HY 400 rubric will be applied, and instructors will develop new exercises that are designed to build students' confidence in this area. It really is more a matter of confidence than of competence, and students should be encouraged to move beyond their comfort zone.

Established in Cycle: 2010-2011  
Implementation Status: In Progress  
Priority: High  
Responsible Person/Group: HY 400 instructors.

Implementation Notes:  
8/29/2011 Small, low-pressure writing and research courses will be introduced at the lower levels to familiarize students with the discrete tasks involved in historical analysis.

Students' understanding of assignments' purpose  
By building SLO statements into the existing "Course Objectives" section of syllabi, faculty will better demonstrate the broader purpose of the assignments.
they make. An SLO statement for a 100-level course will be far simpler than one for a 300-level course, but the point is the same: to explain to students that course-levels are not arbitrary, but rather are intended to prepare them for the assignments that they'll complete at successive levels of the curriculum. Further, it will be explained to them that all courses in the history curriculum are preparing them for the work they’ll do as graduating seniors in HY 400. SLO syllabi will be used first in Fall 2011.

Established in Cycle: 2010-2011
Implementation Status: In Progress
Priority: High
Implementation Description: SLO statements should be included on all syllabi in Fall 2011; they will be mandatory beginning in Spring 2012.
Responsible Person/Group: All history faculty
Implementation Notes:
8/29/2011 Instructors will devote more attention to explaining the purpose, rather than just the mechanics, of the writing and research assignments in history courses. This is not to change the character of the assignments themselves, but rather to illuminate the intellectual processes involved therein. Faculty have found that students are uniformly ignorant of the purpose of writing assignments, due solely to the fact that most of them haven't ever encountered this type of work at the high school level. them haven't ever encountered this type of work at the high school level.

II. Goals and Other Outcomes/Objectives, With Any Associations and Related Measures, Achievement Targets, Findings, and Action Plans

A. Goal: Address the major educational issues of the region
Address the major educational, social, cultural, and economic issues of the region and in doing so promote a positive image of the institution and the area

1. Objective: Provide adequate attention to students.
History survey courses will be capped in order to ensure that students receive the proper amount of attention. Likewise, this will afford instructors greater opportunities for one-on-one interaction and for fostering the type of teacher-student relationships that are part of the University's stated mission.

a. Measure: Cap survey courses
The maximum seat caps in history courses will be set at 25.

Source of Evidence: Administrative measure - other

1. Achievement Target:
Cap survey courses at 25 students per instructor per course.

2. Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Not Met
This target has not been met. Caps in the larger classrooms have been lowered to 40 and in smaller classrooms to 30, but this is not satisfactory progress. Until we have more instructional staff, we will fail to reach this goal.

3. Action Plans:
Reduce size of history survey courses
We not only failed to meet this goal, but our survey classes have grown larger over the past year, even with an overall increase in the number of sections offered.
Established in Cycle:  2009-2010
Implementation Status:  In Progress
Priority:  High
Implementation Description:  Double the number of survey courses offered, thus allowing the department to reduce class sizes to more appropriate (and productive) levels. Until teaching ranks are increased, the department will repeatedly fail to meet this goal.
Responsible Person/Group:  Administration
Additional Resources Requested:  Two full-time Lecturers
Budget Amount Requested:  $80,000.00
Implementation Notes:
8/29/2011  In 2011-2012, the department will continue its efforts to increase the ranks of teaching faculty, thus enabling it to increase the number of sections of lower-level history courses and in turn reduce the size of individual sections.

Hire a new Assistant Professor of Early Modern European History
Hire a new Assistant Professor of Early Modern European History (i.e. European history before 1700)
Established in Cycle:  2010-2011
Implementation Status:  Planned
Priority:  Medium
Implementation Description:  Submit faculty staffing plan
Additional Resources Requested:  Salary = $61,870 (includes benefits)
Budget Amount Requested:  $61,870.00
Implementation Notes:
8/8/2011  Along with the general request for new faculty to serve majors and share the burden of service courses (see 2010-2011 staffing plan in document repository), the department has a specific need for a specialist in Early Modern European History. There are a lot of gaps in coverage, actually, and that's to be expected at a regional university. It really isn't feasible to maintain a "complete" department in any field. However, the most glaring void in the department has to do with pre-modern Europe. U.S. is fairly well-covered, as is Europe since 1600. Europe from antiquity through the Renaissance and Reformation, however, is the broad area of history that most needs filling.

Hire two new Ph.D.-holding Lecturers in History
Hire two new Ph.D. Lecturers in history.
Established in Cycle:  2010-2011
Implementation Status:  Planned
Priority:  High
Implementation Description:  Submit faculty staffing plan
Additional Resources Requested:  Salary (non-US History lecturer) = $40,439 (includes benefits) Salary (US History lecturer) = $40,439 (includes benefits)
Budget Amount Requested:  $80,878.00
Implementation Notes:
8/8/2011  (from the 2010-2011 Staffing Plan) The introductory survey courses have grown so large (55 students in a course is not unusual) that it's become extremely difficult to give students the attention they need.

Further, there is far greater demand for the history surveys than the department is able to satisfy at current staffing levels. There will always be attrition over the course of a term, but faculty are beginning each term by turning away scores of students who need to satisfy their basic curriculum requirements.
The department will need to be able to offer four additional introductory surveys each term to comfortably satisfy current demand (and allowing classes to max out at 50). It will need to be able to offer eight to ten additional survey sections per term to reduce class sizes to a more appropriate level (i.e. 25 to 30 students per course) and give room for growth.

Two full-time Lecturers will get the department very close to its goal.

2. **Objective: Provide students with new services and program offerings to meet their needs**

The Department of History and Social Sciences will provide students with new programs and services to meet their needs by increasing departmental offerings as needs are determined.

a. **Measure: Investigate the addition of new programs**

Through the use of surveys, focus groups, departmental discussions, and conversations with students, the Department of History and Social Sciences will investigate the addition of new programs to include new majors and/or minors.

Source of Evidence: Administrative measure - other

1. **Achievement Target:**

The addition of an anthropology minor and a political science major are currently being investigated. If 51% of survey respondents are in favor of one or both of the additions, plans will begin to implement the additions.

2. **Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Partially Met**

Faculty have found that students are very interested in having the option of minoring in anthropology and majoring in political science. The department is moving forward with this.

3. **Action Plans:**

**Political Science Major proposal**

Work with Dr. Mark Griffith on a concrete curricular structure for a political science major. This will need to include proposed course descriptions, draft job advertisements, and a major track. These will be carried through the College and University Academic Councils, and will then have to be approved by the Alabama Commission on Higher Education.

**Established in Cycle:** 2010-2011

**Implementation Status:** In Progress

**Priority:** High

**Responsible Person/Group:** Drs. Rob Riser and Mark Griffith.

**Additional Resources Requested:** At least one new political science faculty member.

**Implementation Notes:**

8/29/2011 Faculty will begin preparing our proposal in 2011-2012. It should be ready for presentation to the University Academic Council in Spring 2012.

**Propose Anthropology minor program to the college and university-wide academic councils.**

The department will propose to adopt the new minor in anthropology that Dr. Ashley Dumas has developed.

**Established in Cycle:** 2010-2011

**Implementation Status:** In Progress
III. Other Plans for Improvement

A. Develop graduate-level courses in Political Science
   Develop graduate-level courses in political science to close the gap in the M.A.T. Social Science track
   Established in Cycle: 2010-2011
   Implementation Status: In Progress
   Priority: High
   Additional Resources Requested: faculty
   Budget Amount Requested: $0.00
   Implementation Notes:
   8/29/2011 Though still limited by the slim ranks of political science faculty, the department will catalog new graduate-level political science courses that M.Ed. and M.A.T. students may pursue on the Social Science certification track.

B. Divide History and Social Sciences Department
   Finalize the split between the Department of History and Social Sciences and the new Department of Behavioral Sciences
   Established in Cycle: 2010-2011
   Implementation Status: Finished
   Priority: High
   Budget Amount Requested: $0.00

C. Hire new Assistant Professor of Political Science
   Hire new Assistant Professor of Political Science so that a political science major can be offered.
   Established in Cycle: 2010-2011
   Implementation Status: Planned
   Priority: High
   Implementation Description: This will allow us to offer a political science major.
   Responsible Person/Group: Dr. Rob Riser
   Additional Resources Requested: Salary = $61,870 (benefits included)
   Budget Amount Requested: $61,870.00
   Implementation Notes:
   8/8/2011 There will not be a political science major at UWA until there is a second political scientist on faculty. The preliminary structure for a major can and has been determined; specific course offerings, a launch date, etc. cannot be determined until the second faculty member is in place.

D. Implement pre-professional course for COLA majors
   Implement pre-professional course for COLA majors
   Established in Cycle: 2010-2011
   Implementation Status: On Hold
   Priority: High
   Budget Amount Requested: $0.00

E. Introduce seminar-style undergraduate history courses
   Introduce seminar-style undergraduate history courses
   Established in Cycle: 2010-2011
   Implementation Status: On Hold
Priority: Medium
Implementation Description: Introduction of these courses is dependent upon staffing additions
Additional Resources Requested: Additional faculty
Budget Amount Requested: $0.00
Implementation Notes:
8/8/2011 Recognizing the adage that "data" is not the plural of "anecdote," it cannot be denied that our students are not only ill-prepared for college but that they too often approach their major studies meekly and passively. Seminar-style courses, which are completely dependent upon independent study and what students themselves bring to the table (literally), would serve to prepare them for the independent work they'll have to do as seniors. Seminars—especially if they could be directed toward sophomores—could be structured very broadly and would be designed to force students to "do" history, but faculty would still guide them (lightly), and acclimate them to what it is that historians actually "do." Ideally, the department would run multiple seminars concurrently, both accommodating students' tastes and also forcing them to move beyond the parochial and time-wasting examples they learn as students in local K-12 school systems.

F. Launch a certification program in Public History
Launch a certification program in Public History
Established in Cycle: 2010-2011
Implementation Status: Finished
Priority: High
Additional Resources Requested: Printing and postage = $1000 faculty
Budget Amount Requested: $1,000.00

G. Launch the portfolios
Begin collecting sample papers from history majors.
Established in Cycle: 2010-2011
Implementation Status: In Progress
Priority: High
Implementation Notes:
8/29/2011 The department chair will begin assembling portfolios on history majors in 2011-2012.

H. Restructure MAT Social Science track
Restructure MAT Social Science track
Established in Cycle: 2010-2011
Implementation Status: On Hold
Priority: High
Budget Amount Requested: $0.00

IV. Analysis Answers
A. What specific strengths did your assessments show? (Strengths)
The real strength in the history major program is the degree of faculty agreement about SLO's and the curricular changes instituted over the past three years. This level of agreement augurs well for the future. Faculty believe that the true test of the changes instituted will be of several years' duration, and faculty are excited to see how this all unfolds. The WEAVE summary lists "successes" and "failures," but that is somewhat misleading, simply because the program changes have not been in place long enough to have yielded real results. The faculty look at this as a four-year process, and they have completed only one year. Additionally, this year's assessment is misleading because the department had a very odd group of seniors in HY 400. It was a far larger group than normal, and they were far more talented and curious than the average student. So while the
department met or partially met most of the SLO-related goals, it would be foolish to draw too many conclusions from this year's results.

B. **What specific weaknesses or challenges did your assessments show? (Weaknesses)**
Because the department is one year into a four-year long departmental program, it is not dismayed by the weaknesses here (things listed as "not met" or "partially met"). Students are not yet writing and researching at the level faculty would like to see. In all honesty, this year’s assessment is deceiving because of an unusually large and exceptionally enthusiastic group of students in HY 400. That group was able to satisfy nearly everything faculty asked of them, but they really aren’t a normal group. So what faculty want to see is a "normal" group that performs at the level of the exceptional students in 2010-2011. For years, faculty have been working to improve students’ performance in the seven SLO's identified here. All of them were areas where student performance was spotty at best, and faculty recognized that more than one year’s effort would be required to change things. What they found most frustrating was students' inability to successfully organize and execute research projects, and they believe that these seven elemental SLO's will help them focus on areas where students' competence and confidence need to be reinforced.

C. **What plans were implemented?**
Faculty began collecting materials for new portfolios which will allow them to track history majors' development as writers and researchers. By the end of this year, faculty will have two years’ worth of material and will be able to actually "do" something with these portfolios. They will be able to judge students' progress and make recommendations to students if necessary. Also, the things learned from these portfolios will indicate where faculty may need to make curricular changes or course content revisions. In the longer term, these portfolios will become part of the process of HY 400 and portfolio evaluation may replace the Exit Exam. The cohort that participates in the Spring 2014 HY 400 will be the first for which there is a four year-long record. While HY 400 will have a sole instructor-of-record, all history faculty members will evaluate student projects, and the senior thesis project and the portfolio will be assessed to determine whether or not the student passes (and thus graduates). UWA has also entered into an agreement with the Alabama Historical Association to begin publishing the state's official historical journal, the Alabama Review. With the Review here on campus, students will have a unique opportunity to "see" history being made, and faculty think this will be an invaluable experience for them.

D. **What plans were not implemented?**
Survey course sizes were not reduced because of lack of new faculty. This is solely contingent upon funding. Without additional funds to employ additional instructors, classes will continue to be large, which limits the faculty’s ability to work with and develop students.

E. **How will assessment results be used for continuous improvement?**
This is year one of four-year plan to improve the history major, so the chief purpose of this year’s assessment is to produce something to compare next year’s to. The department doesn’t simply want to assess cohorts against a set of seven SLO's; it will assess the SLO's against the student performance over time. Additionally, it will impose stricter requirements in its capstone course, and faculty will also begin building in various SLO elements into their syllabi (where appropriate).