

**Assessment Report**  
**Department of Religious Studies**

**May 31, 2005**

We have been collecting data for six years. I evidently failed in my 2004 Assessment Report to make clear that we have been collecting significant data since 1999. In that report, I was stressing that our final plans (The Capstone Seminar) were complete. The data consists of an assessment examination, a research paper written in the student's area of concentration, and a written evaluation of the Department. Beginning this Spring Semester all three of these assessment tools were incorporated into REL 498 (Senior Seminar in Religious Studies). Prior to this Spring Semester all graduating seniors were asked to take the examination, submit a paper, and an evaluation. This process began in 1999, and most graduating seniors fulfilled this request. Now REL 498 is required of all graduating seniors, and thus, we have a 100% participation.

Analysis of the materials collected over a period of six years reveals that the students as a whole have accomplished what we expected of them. The examinations and papers were in general quite good, though there were a few that left a great deal to be desired.

The following actions have been or soon will be taken as a result of our findings.

**Goal #1:** A general knowledge of Religions and Methodologies for studying religions.

**Action:** (1). Require REL 101 of all majors. This course deals with methodologies and involves a general survey of several religious traditions.

(2). Institute distribution requirements. Majors will be required to take at least one course from three different areas in religious studies.

Both of these actions will be implemented in the coming academic year.

**Goal #2:** An in-depth knowledge of one area of Religious Studies.

**Action:** This has been our most successful goal. We will continue to stress it and will supplement our regular courses with individually designed research projects. This has already taken place.

**Goal #3:** The ability to do research in an area of Religious Studies and write about it with precision and clarity.

**Action:** To give more emphasis to a research paper in all our 300 – 400 level courses. This is already being done.

One complaint that surfaced in the evaluations was the difficulty of contacting someone in the Religious Studies Department. Our previous secretary was not always available at the stated times. We now have a new secretary who is very diligent about always being in the office at the stated times. Since our secretary is part-time, she is not there all day, but she is very careful to be in the office at the appointed hours. This has already resulted in better communication with the students.

We will continue to analyze the six years of data that we have collected, as well as each year's new data, and we will make further improvements in the future.

Submitted by,



Dr. Derwood C. Smith, Chair