

**Assessment Findings and Curricular Improvements  
School of Theology and Religious Studies  
Undergraduate Programs  
2017**

**Assessment Measures**

The School of Theology and Religious Studies uses the following measures to assess learning outcomes in the following three areas:

**BA in Theology & Religious Studies**

- Capstone seminar grades, course evaluations, and enrollment totals
- Pass rates and rubrics for comprehensive examinations
- Faculty and student review of undergraduate major

**Certification in Pastoral Ministry**

- Grades, course evaluations, and enrollment totals for CPM-only courses
- Internship supervisor ratings of students performance
- Job placement rates
- Director review of program

**TRS 201: Faith Seeking Understanding**

- Grades and course evaluations totals for TRS 201
- Review of course by faculty and other instructors

**Assessment Findings  
BA in Theology & Religious Studies**

The School of Theology and Religious Studies (STRS) analyzed course grades, evaluations, and enrollment data in TRS 495 Capstone Seminar for a five-year period (Fall 2009 through Fall 2013).

During this period, enrollment in the senior seminar surged from 2 in 2008 to 13 in 2013. This is a reliable indicator of a growth in the number of majors. Student opinion of the senior seminar (TRS 495) was low in 2008 and 2009 (instructor 5.0 and 5.0) as was the course rating (6.0 and 4.83). Yet this saw enormous improvement in 2011 and 2012, with instructor ratings of 8.38 and 8.44. Course rating was higher too though it has some work to do at 7.0 and 6.78. This past year – switching to a new seven pt. scale – the instructor rating was 6.5/7 and the course 5.92/7.)

Over the past five years 68 students have taken comprehensive exams as part of their BA in TRS. Of the 68, all 68 have passed their comprehensives, including 8 who did so with distinction. The

Undergraduate Program has just begun using a more refined assessment instrument for Comprehensive exams, one which asks professors to rate each answer on a 4.0 scale. This will aid in the more exact designation of distinction, and more exact assessments next review.

<b>UNDERGRADUATE COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION RESULTS</b>									
<b>SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES</b>									
<b>AY2011-2012 to AY2015-2016</b>									
	Fail		Pass		High Pass		Pass w/Honors		TOTAL
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
AY2011-2012		0.00%	12	85.70%		0.00%	2	10.00%	<b>14</b>
AY2012-2013		0.00%	7	87.50%		0.00%	1	10.00%	<b>8</b>
AY2013-2014		0.00%	12	92.31%		0.00%	1	7.69%	<b>13</b>
AY2014-2015		0.00%	15	88.24%		0.00%	2	11.76%	<b>17</b>
AY2015-2016		0.00%	14	87.50%		0.00%	2	12.50%	<b>16</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.00%</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>88.24%</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.00%</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>11.76%</b>	<b>68</b>

In 2011-2012, an Undergraduate Curriculum Committee Chaired by then Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies William C. Mattison III conducted a review of the BA in TRS, including student input from the majors. That program change is firmly in place, and students have expressed great satisfaction with it. We have also recently implemented a new set of general education requirements with which the students are also very satisfied.

### **Dean's List**

The School of Theology and Religious Studies posted its first Dean's List for the Fall of 2015. 29 out of the 50 primary theology majors made the Dean's list (58%). To make the dean's list one must achieve a 3.5 GPA or higher for the respective semester. The top ten percent receive dean's list with distinction, for 2015.

### **Assessment Findings Certification in Pastoral Ministry**

#### **Capstone Seminars Discussion:**

Enrollment, student grades and course evaluation data are best analyzed for the two 400-level seminars that together provide the capstone experience for students in the Certification for Pastoral Ministry program. Though courses like TRS 357 and TRS 359 are also part of the program, their enrollment is buttressed by non-CPM students. Enrollment in these courses was quite low three years ago. With the arrival of Msgr. Michael Clay as program director in 2012 and his heightening of the standards of and investment in the program, enrollment has steadily

increased. Only three received the certificate in 2014, an indication of a program in transition. That number increased to 5 in 2015 and continued to grow to 7 in 2016.

Other excellent assessment measures of the program are the Internship supervisor ratings of students' performance and job placement rates upon graduation. The vast majority of supervisor ratings have assessed the student's performance as outstanding. The ratings showed that those students who had taken TRS 453 (The Practice of Pastoral Ministry) prior to their Internship tended to be more confident and competent. Focus group interviews confirmed student preference to have this course and the practical tools it offers before the internship. Two years of job placement data indicate that of those graduates seeking a position on a parish staff or within a Catholic School, all were hired and reported that their certification in Pastoral Ministry from CUA provided them with an advantage in the selection process.

### **Curricular Improvements**

The first course in the CPM program, TRS 355, is now being offered in an enhanced version only for CPM students and other TRS majors and minors. The choice of a new course in the program has increased from two to three with the addition of TRS 358 Ministry with Vulnerable Populations in spring 2015. We now have full time CUA faculty (such as Msgr. Clay) teaching at least three of the four required CPM courses.

### **Assessment Findings**

#### **TRS 201: Faith Seeking Understanding**

Seven years ago the School of Theology and Religious Studies agreed to take part in the new First Year Experience program, and to offer an introductory theology course, TRS 201: Faith Seeking Understanding, as part of that program. The course was designed from scratch. For the first three years (2009-2012) it received lower evaluations, for instructors but especially for the course. During the 2011-2012 academic year the Undergraduate Curriculum Review Committee worked to revise the content and format of the course, receiving both full faculty input as well as student input. The proposed revision was accepted and for the past three years it has been taught in this revised format. Evaluations scores have improved after this revision. Scores for TRS 201 are now the highest among all FYE courses. Yet the School hopes to improve those scores further. To secure that goal, workshops are held each term with TRS 201 instructors to enable them to better teach the course by learning from each other and from experienced instructors. The School has also further refined the course in a streamlined format starting the 2016-2017 academic year.

Enrollment numbers are less relevant for this course since it is required of all CUA students. In terms of grades, we learned two years ago that TRS 201 students get the highest grades in the FYE. We have begun to train instructors to not inflate grades by informing them of FYE grade averages, though we also do not want to penalize students with lower grades if effective teaching leads to better performance.