

ASSESSMENT WEBSITE INFORMATION

College: Humanities

Degree Program: Heritage Studies Ph.D.

Chair/Director: Clyde Milner II

2012 Report

DATA SAY:

Public presentation of dissertation research not being well done. Casual personal storytelling about dissertation topic not providing enough insight about analytical approach or grounding in theory that the dissertation required.

SO WHAT:

The depth of analysis and theoretical thinking that the dissertation contains was not being communicated to a public audience that needs to understand what Heritage Studies provides. A better understanding of Heritage Studies by a larger audience was not being achieved.

HOW WE CHANGED:

At the spring 2011 assessment meeting of the Heritage Studies faculty, it was decided that part of the oral defense of the dissertation before a student's doctoral committee should include a statement about what the student planned to do at the public presentation of dissertation research that is required after the defense before the committee. In effect, the student had also to defend the plan for the public presentation so that the committee could insist on more analytical and theoretical content if needed.

WHAT WE GOT:

After the actions taken at the spring assessment meeting, two students defended their dissertations before their doctoral committee and made the public presentation of their research. The public presentation of each student was far better in terms of analysis and theory than what had been presented in earlier public presentations. Each student graduated with the Ph.D. in August 2011.



ASSESSMENT WEBSITE INFORMATION

College: Humanities

Degree Program: Heritage Studies Ph.D.

Chair/Director: Clyde Milner II

2013 Report

DATA SAY:

Doctoral students seem confused about what a “review of the scholarly literature” entails, especially as a foundational chapter of a dissertation and as an important aspect of the proposal for a dissertation.

SO WHAT:

A successful case for a proposed dissertation must demonstrate where a doctoral student’s topic contributes to the larger scholarly discussion as shown in the scholarly literature, especially published books and articles that connect to the dissertation topic. The intellectual context for the dissertation must be demonstrated through critical examination of the appropriate scholarly literature.

HOW WE CHANGED:

At the fall 2012 and followed up at the spring 2013 assessment meeting of the Heritage Studies faculty, this focus on each student engaging a review of the scholarly literature was addressed. The final major research exercise in the introductory seminar for first-term doctoral students each fall requires a “Five Source Essay” that critically assesses the five most important published scholarly books in a student’s area of interest for a dissertation. The students also provide a brief outline of a possible dissertation based on insights gained from the critical examination of the five sources/books. These five works become five building blocks for the much larger full review of the scholarly literature that must be undertaken by the end of a student’s doctoral course work. That full review is now required as the focus of the “Capstone Research Seminar” for an individual student if it already has not been carried out in an earlier course.

WHAT WE GOT:

Students in the fall 2012 and spring 2013 Capstone Research Seminar undertook their individualized review of the scholarly literature and now have substantive written assessments in an integrated essay of the appropriate bibliography of works in their field of interest. That essay will speed the crafting of a dissertation proposal and will serve as the basis for an important introductory chapter of the dissertation itself.

