**Whitehouse Nature Center**

**Next Steps:**

**Please observe the following deadlines for your assessment cycle:**

**In general, there were a few themes that the Assessment Committee noticed in reviewing all plans that were submitted. First, it is most helpful when the progression from Step 2 to Step 3 and Step 3 to Step 4 are clear. That is, after you have articulated your learning goals, the clearest proposals are explicit in how the courses/experiences in Step 3 directly support the learning goals. And Step 4 should take full advantage of all of the places in Step 3 where data might be collected. Second, make strategic use of both direct and indirect measures****[[1]](https://docs.google.com/a/albion.edu/Doc?docid=0AUaAHaCO2ORDZGh0bWJ0NXJfM2dyN3I4eGRm&hl=en" \l "_ftn1" \o "), and think about whether data can be collected at the beginning, during the program of study, and at the end. This gives a richer sense of where and when your work contributes strongly to learning goals and where improvements might be made. Third, make your plan manageable! All data need not be collected annually; some can be done every other year. And you may choose not to measure for all of your learning goals right now. Make claims that you can (a) intellectually, ethically stand behind and (b) find resources to measure.**

**1] *In assessing student learning, there are direct and indirect sources of evidence. Direct evidence is clear and convincing information about student learning, such as: tests, examinations, papers, projects, assignments, field experience assessments, and portfolios. These are particularly strong sources of evidence especially when accompanied by articulated standards (such as a rubric). On the other hand, with indirect evidence there is room for other factors to affect the outcomes either positively or negatively. Examples of indirect evidence include: retention, graduation, and placement rates (may be impacted by economic conditions or college policies); surveys of students and alumni (may indicate feelings about college experience); grades (standards and even content may differ across instructors and institutions).***

**Step1: Department/Program Mission**

**The Nature Center is to "stimulate awareness, understanding and appreciation of our natural environment among college, school, community and other groups of all ages."**

**Step 2: List goals/outcomes**

1. Students who visit the Nature Center will develop a more comprehensive liberal arts background especially in the areas of awareness and understanding of the outdoors and its diverse natural environments along with associated flora and fauna.

1a. Students will use the Nature Center as an extension to the classroom for academic disciplines

1b. Students will be involved in conservation projects

1c. Students will take part in learning opportunities for leadership and career development

2. Students will have educational resources and facilities for use and development

3. Students will take part in healthy-living opportunities through recreation-based workshops and activities that support the Nature Center's mission

 **Step 3: Identify program components**

***Required courses, elective courses, out-of-classroom or other experiences that are designed to achieve each educational objective. NOTE: Every class will not, nor is it expected to, achieve each outcome. The goal is to get an even distribution of experiences that achieve the outcomes.***

*1a/1c/2 Seniors in the Education Department will be utilizing the resources and expertise of the Nature Center and its staff during Maymester 2010/2011 by adopting the theme of environmental education. Students will take part in learning/teaching sessions with the Nature Center Director prior to student teaching and field trips.*

1a. Students will attend classes, field research or land lab assignments held at the Center by college faculty from various disciplines.

 Examples…

Art and Art History:  photography; drawing

Biology:  plant and animal identification; animal behavior; ecological interrelationships; environmental Issues and Art

English:  creative writing; environmental radicalism

Geology: Groundwater Geology; Soil sampling/testing

Physical Education: hiking; canoeing; kayaking;

1b/1c. Students will sign up for and take part in **Conservation Management** projects: invasive species removal; tree planting, pruning and care; land management; habitat improvement; landscaping for wildlife; trail management; bird watching/inventory; reptile and amphibian surveys

1a/1b/1c/3

Students will volunteer or be employed through work-study as a **Naturalist-Assistant** and take part in various tasks: exhibit design; animal care/rehab of wildlife; outdoor education programming - general public, schools, scouts; and photographing wildlife, nature center programs and users

2. Students will use the library of books and magazines on natural history topics; sign out binoculars and other tools for wildlife studies

2. Students will use the Visitor’s Center and Grounds for studies

1c/3.  Students will participate in and/or lead classes or workshops. Examples...bird watching; hiking; backpacking; orienteering; photography; snow shoe making; outdoor survival; river-rescue training; kayaking

**Step 4: Select methods/data sources and instruments**

***...that you will use to gather information about whether expected outcomes and learning objective are being achieved. NOTE: You do not need to collect data from the same sources every year. Rather, some kind of assessment rotation will be sufficient (e.g., Years1 & 3, collect data from graduating seniors, Years 2 & 4 collect data from employers and alumni, etc.).***

\* Survey of graduating seniors in the sciences asking what role(s) did the Nature Center play in their educational path.

\* Survey of students that worked or volunteered at the Nature Center as part of work study

\* Annual survey of Faculty to assess their usage of the Nature Center, improvements of the Interpretive Center and the overall grounds

FORMAL SURVEYS ARE STILL IN THE PROCESS OF BEING CREATED AND UTILIZED.

\* Attendance of Nature Center visits (guestbook), programs or volunteer projects

\* Program/workshop evaluations

\* A mailing list of students has been started in order to expose students’ to the Nature Center Happenings.

**Step 5: Analyze and interpret the data**

Director of Nature Center will analyze all surveys, attendance records, program evaluations.

The Nature Center will continue to work with faculty, institutes and other interested parties to identify ways that their students can utilize the center which in turn will enhance their curriculum/courses.  A committee of interested parties could analyze surveys and programs or discuss potential needs of the Nature Center that could grow the students' use of the Nature Center and its mission.

**Step 6: How will the data collected be used for decision-making, strategic planning, etc.**

***NOTE: You will need to submit a summary report of your findings to the Assessment Committee for review. In that report, please include details of how the data will be used, any program changes that will be made (or not made). Questions to ask yourself/to include in the report are as follows:***

* *How, exactly, will your data be used to help with program planning and improvement?*
* *Will your program form a committee to review assessment findings, and make recommendations for change or improvement in a timely manner?*
* *Will your entire department convene to discuss assessment results and program changes?*
* *Who will make formal recommendations for curricular or other changes—the chair/head? The committee?*

From surveys and committee discussions the Director will adjust and/or change program components if needed in order to meet the Nature Center's goals and mission. Assessments will be used for long-term as well as short-term planning, programming and management of the Nature Center’s grounds and Interpretive Center.