

ASSESSMENT REPORT

Department of Classical Studies

I. Departmental Responses to the Previous Assessment

A. Action Plan Review

1. "We need proper academic housing and a full-time secretary."

During the past decade the administration found funds to grant us a full-time secretarial position and part of the space formerly occupied by the History Department on the third floor of Morton Hall, where we now have a reasonable departmental office space, as good as can be expected on this campus in the newer buildings.

2. "We should create a new position in ancient history which would develop an area in which we offer only introductory courses."

John Donahue, an ancient historian, became a tenure-track member of the Department in Fall Term, 2000, originally as a "mortgaged" replacement for J. Ward Jones, who retired as scheduled at the end of Spring Term, 2001. The authorization of two additional tenure-track hirings for Fall, 2001, one of them as a replacement of the retiring Lewis W. Leadbeater and the other as a replacement for the position which was previously fixed term (and sometimes a 3 course per semester adjunct) have completed the process of fulfilling this point of the plan of action.

3. "A new course on myth in ancient art should be created in the Spring or Fall Term, '93 with monies from an FFE Grant."

Done as planned, although the course has not been offered as frequently as many had hoped.

4. "We will purchase and distribute to our concentrators 'Positions for Classicists' to aid in our advising concerns."

The booklet mentioned went out of print just as we were completing the previous assessment and the revision process by the APA took much longer than expected, so it was just recently that we managed to acquire copies of the newest edition again.

5. "We will encourage our concentrators to take the introductory literature courses earlier and we will place a statement to this effect in the catalogue."

Those members of the Department's faculty who have the opportunity to meet with prospective concentrators when they are still freshpersons have put out great effort in this cause, but with little clear evidence of improvement; by the time many of them come to declare a concentration, it is too late. The catalogue statement was never added, but should be as soon as possible; indeed, the whole of our Department's introductory pages preceding the course descriptions in the Catalog could use a thoughtful revision, and this is included in the new Action Plan at the end of this document.

6. "We will place our archaeological slides on computer discs."

This process of digitizing the older 2X2 transparency resources is now nearing completion at the same time as facilities to use such materials are becoming more common in classrooms around the campus; in the future new materials should be obtained in digital formats or converted to digital as soon as they are received, since we now have the equipment to do this expeditiously. The new members of the tenure-eligible faculty arriving for Fall Term, 2001 are both possessed of special expertise in the use of such materials.

B. Responses to Suggestions from the Deans

1. "Advising -- We suggest that you contact Herb Friedman regarding the advising handbook for concentrators devised by his department. Randy Coleman can help with changes in your concentration advising."

In a department which averages a total of about 7 concentrators per year in 3 different subject fields with 4 distinct areas on which to focus their programs, it is unlikely that a handbook with more specifics than those offered in the College Catalog would be useful. Concentration advisors, however, need to be more careful in paying close attention to the Catalog requirements during the advising process, especially in regard to the items concerning the Concentration Writing and Computing Requirements.

2. "With regard to using modern technology in teaching with the goal of getting many slides into an electronic format, was a videodisc player requested from the Academic Support Fund?"

The "modern technology" which was actually under discussion during the 1991 assessment became obsolete at about the same time as the assessment process was completed, but equipment developed after the transition to CD-ROM digital video formats will be complete enough to be used by the faculty in the Fall Term, 2001. The videodisc player was requested but not funded several times in the early 1990s, but a more up-to-date projection system for our digitized slide library is on its way as part of the start-up acquisitions related to one of the new hires for Fall Term, 2001

3. "We will continue to present the problem of space and staffing to various state legislatures (sic)."

The Department of Classical Studies wishes to express its eternal gratitude for the progress made in both space and staffing during the past decade.

4. "Was the IBYCUS computer moved back to Swem Library?"

The IBYCUS system soon became obsolete as the power and software available in ordinary desktop computers made a special dedicated system unnecessary. The various CD-ROM concordances and many other databases can now be accessed much more conveniently from

every faculty member's desktop or by the newer PERSEUS system. The IBYCUS is, therefore, in storage.

5. "The median score on the exit examination in Classical Studies was 50%. We suggest that one concrete way to get an explanation for the low scores is to look at the examination questions and term paper topics that were assigned over the last few years in each course. We suggest further study and action and perhaps the department as a whole should discuss the questions."

It is agreed that the tests given in 1991 were not well designed to test what is the most important content of a classical degree program; in imitation of the typical nationwide achievement tests, they attempted to cover the entire area of classical studies in breadth rather than depth, and, as expected, the results showed that individual students had only encountered a portion of the material. There are serious doubts as to whether the achievement of our Department's goals can be validly tested by any form of machine gradeable instrument; it is likely that the Concentration Writing Requirement papers and the alumni and alumnae surveys would provide a better indication of student outcomes.

## II. Concentration Writing Proficiency

The purpose of our Concentration Writing Requirement is to ensure that our students leave here with the basic skills necessary to produce clear and readable expository writing about ancient civilization, with all the necessary styles of citation and cross-referencing, in both graduate school and professional situations. In Classical Studies, the specifics are complicated by the differences in expectations between the various subfields: most archaeological publications have gone to the in-line citation forms pioneered a few decades ago in the social sciences, but some philological journals still prefer traditional endnote or footnote formats; we must, therefore, make our students aware of both while attempting to tailor their CWR experience to each individual's career goals. In addition, there have sometimes been signs of tension among the faculty in judging the results of projects, since some would find great merit in a paper which presents the results of many hours of artifact-based research succinctly in 12 or 15 pages, augmented by a grand collection of suitable illustrations from field reports or museum publications, whereas others would insist on 25 or more

pages of original analysis of an ancient "text" in the narrow sense; the former tend to emphasize the research component of the requirement, while the latter are often most concerned about form and style of presentation. No one, of course, would consider papers to be passable which either present trivial high school level common knowledge in beautiful, flowing English with copious footnotes, or present brilliant, original thinking in inarticulate confusion or incomprehensible jargon.

The greatest problem, however, is the attitude among some students that this is just a minor nuisance task on the road to their degree; this is a special problem with the students for whom Classical Civilization is a secondary concentration, often completed for personal satisfaction rather than career goals -- in recent years (including 2001) we have occasionally had students drop their Classical Civilization concentration and file for a minor instead just before graduation rather than complete the Concentration Writing Requirement in this secondary (to them) field; better advising regarding this requirement is clearly needed at all levels of the advising process.

Our assessment strategy was based upon an evaluation and scoring of 3 sample papers from recent years by the assessment committee and by the outside evaluators, using a score sheet which enumerated 7 aspects of content, 4 aspects of style, 5 of mechanics, and 3 of computing skills (see below). All these samples were from students who elected to fulfill the "series of opportunities" phrase by doing one large project, submitted to the chosen instructor for comment and criticism several times at several stages of its development, rather than a series of separate and distinct papers (very few students have ever chosen the second option). One of the papers was found to be of high quality, a second was certainly acceptable, but the third raised some interesting discussion about the definition of the "pass/fail" aspect of the requirement. The Department feels that there is also a need for the Freshman Writing experience to be more clearly oriented towards expository rather than creative writing in order to guarantee that the foundations are properly laid before the students even declare their concentrations -- it appears that some students complete the Freshman Writing Requirement, whether by coursework here or by exemption, without the slightest bit of experience in bibliographical compilation, annotation, or citation.

Our outside evaluators praised the requirement in principle, but raised some questions, partly on the basis of the samples mentioned above and partly on the basis of student interviews, about the realities of its implementation. The Department needs to reconsider its approach to the requirement, including its own guidelines and standards and the need for more faculty time for mentoring the students in preparation for these projects, especially when the results of evaluations of the Requirement campus-wide being conducted by higher level committees become available.

### III. Concentration Computing Proficiency

At the beginning of the implementation of the Concentration Computing Proficiency Requirement, it was considered valid that fields such as Classical Studies would only be required to concern themselves with the students' ability to do sophisticated word-processing and access databases of every sort relevant to the specific field; perhaps, with our teaching emphases, we might add the preparation of state-of-the-art audio-visual presentations to this list, but this seems more appropriate to a course in pedagogical methods than a concentration requirement. It remains true that the specialists in other types of scientific computer applications who nowadays are needed either on-site or in readily accessible laboratories for every archaeological dig and some paleographical research must be people with advanced degrees in chemistry, geology, or civil engineering; the classicist must be willing to recognize his or her limits of expertise and defer to the proper specialists for analysis of DNA, of pollen samples in silt stratigraphy, or of high-tech dating of artifacts or manuscripts. Nevertheless, it appears true that this part of the process of fulfilling the Concentration Writing Requirement has not been taken seriously enough by some of the faculty in the past, perhaps because of the sometimes erroneous assumption that all the students, when they arrive as freshmen, already know more about computers than most Area I faculty. As we see it, therefore, the only change necessary in the Concentration Computing Requirement is that we take much greater care to see that our concentrators fulfill the requirement as it is currently specified; we believe that the turnover in the Department's personnel now in process will remedy that situation.

#### IV. Concentration Advising

Assessment of our concentration advising strategies was carried out primarily through a questionnaire sent to alumnae and alumni; we received 20 responses to most of the questions (not an unexpectedly small response, given the small numbers of our graduates). This is obviously too small a sample for true statistical validity, if there is such a thing, so student comments to faculty and the outside evaluators play an important role in interpreting the results. 85% of the 20 respondents rated the academic advising either "excellent" or "good," 10% rated it "adequate," and the other 5% rated it "fair" (the same percentages as on the "Faculty help outside of class" line). It is clear that Latin and Greek concentrators, who benefit from the small size and close contact with instructors of most of our advanced courses, are for the most part very satisfied with this aspect of their William and Mary experience. Anecdotal evidence suggests, however, that some of the Classical Civilization concentrators find the situation less ideal; these students often are taking Classical Civilization as a secondary concentration, one which is very secondary in their focus because of professional career goals in, for example, medicine or law, but very high in their personal interest quotient, often because of a wonderful past experience with a master high school Latin teacher. Under these circumstances, it is not at all unusual for them not to declare the second concentration until late in their Junior year, or even in some cases during the Fall Term of their Senior year, when they feel certain that they will have time to complete the minimum coursework without distracting important time from the primary concentration -- as a result, their advising is often a matter of after-the-fact confirmation that they have already done most of the courses they need, and there is very little opportunity to develop a mentoring relationship with a faculty member. It is also our duty to point out to all potential concentrators that the Classical Civilization option is not the best path for anyone who intends to become a professional classicist.

There were only 11 responses to the question on graduate school advising: 7 rated it "excellent" or "good," 2 rated it "adequate," and 2 rated it "poor." Among the 15 responses to the question on career advising, 5 rated it "excellent" or "good," 6 rated it "adequate," and there were 2 each in the "fair" and "poor" columns. These "poor" responses represent

considerable distress to the Department, but in some cases it may be a matter of students having unrealistic expectations and in others it may result from the faculty fulfilling their duty to point out to each and every concentrator that by far the greatest unfilled need in our field is for good high school Latin teachers, an unwelcome message to most William and Mary students.

We do believe that the Department is offering the students excellent opportunities to receive first rate concentration and career advising, if only they will seek it out early enough and often enough. The only change to be made is to publicize better what the students are expected to do to reach us and find some way to make contact with all students who are contemplating any of the three concentrations in Classical Studies when they are still in their first year here.

#### V. Library Holdings

Our library holdings were assessed by Professor Oakley, at that time the Department's Library Liaison, and the outside evaluators, in cooperation with the Swem professional staff. As a library for undergraduate students, it was judged to be adequate -- better than adequate in some subfields, such as archaeology and art history. It is definitely far below adequate for graduate or post-doctoral research; the outside evaluators pointed out a long list of the most important journals which are absent, usually because foreign language periodicals and serials, essential to most research in all areas of Classical Studies, have not been supported by the State for undergraduate-only programs in the past and are now too expensive for any form of catch-up acquisitions program. We expect to continue our dependence on interlibrary loan connections with the doctoral schools in the region.

#### VI. External Evaluators' Reports

##### A. The Joint Report

The Department wishes to express its gratitude to Professors Antonaccio and Sider for their thoughtful comments and recommendations, especially for Professor Sider's remark: "I would say (having taught in a number of institutions) that W&M's curriculum is among the best, not least because of its broad offerings in art

and archeology." We feel it necessary, however, to add some comments of our own to their **Joint Comments and Recommendations** and their individual responses to the Dean's questions.

Opening comments.

Professors Antonaccio and Sider list as the most salient positive characteristics of the Department:

The breadth of offerings  
The quality and enthusiasm of the students  
The newly secured departmental space.

Several members of the faculty expressed surprise, indeed shock, that their report made so little reference to the quality of teaching in the Department's program. The occasional disparaging tone regarding career advising, especially the need we recognize for producing more high school Latin teachers if the classics are to survive as a major component of general education at any level, also seemed to indicate an attitude not appropriately sympathetic to our situation as the department among all our state's institutions which has found an essential niche in supporting the high school teachers of Virginia to the maximum degree, as evidenced by our record of participation as office holders and presenters on the programs of the Classical Association of Virginia.

#### Departmental hiring plan

As noted below, this part of the report became obsolete almost as soon as it was written, when the Dean and Provost granted us the authorization to hire not only replacements for the tenured retirees, but a tenure track replacement for the formerly fixed term or adjunct level position. We did choose, however, to follow our own traditions in hiring people who were not excessively specialized or compartmentalized and who fit in well in our developing links to other departments and programs as we know them to be at this institution.

#### Curriculum

We really appreciate their in-depth review and will plan an in-depth review of our own as the centerpiece of the meeting planned for August, in order to see what extent their suggestions, every aspect and

detail of them, are doable and fit our own institution's special philosophy, needs, and resources.

#### Writing concentration requirement

See comments above.

#### Computing

See comments above.

#### Library

During academic year 2000-2001, we dedicated a significant amount of the Hogan Scholarship money to support a student who has made great progress on the reorganization of the Departmental Library (Morton 340), including the creation of a computer index of the resources housed there. Regarding Swem, their suggestions for journal subscriptions to add are very good, but probably unattainable under State budgeting.

- B. Our responses to Professor Antonaccio's and Professor Sider's responses to the Dean's questions.

1. Marks of Excellence

We thank both evaluators for recognizing the validity and strengths of our academic program. Professor Antonaccio was apparently unaware, however, of how much we DO coordinate our work with other departments.

2. Curriculum and Preparation of Students

There seems to have been a serious breakdown of communications during the assessment process in that we prepared packets of course syllabi and teaching evaluations for the outside evaluators to examine, and also instructions on how to access the Department's website and various other databases, but they do not seem to have availed themselves of this copious information; indeed, the packets sat waiting on the secretary's desk but were never picked up. Perhaps one of our pre-assessment messages failed to reach its destination, but now, in retrospect, it is apparent that it would certainly have been better for us to mail the packets to them in advance.

It has long been the feeling of the Department that the sort of "theory" courses which Dr. Antonaccio advocates should better be presented to graduate students who are fully competent in the languages and basic methodologies.

### 3. Undergraduate Research

There are some good points in both evaluators' comments, but they seemed not to have observed (because they didn't examine the syllabi?) how much term paper writing our students are expected to do besides the concentration writing requirement project.

### 4. Quality of Undergraduate Concentrators

We thank the evaluators for recognizing the most important secret of our success: that we receive some of the most able and enthusiastic potential young classicists anywhere in the world, thanks in part to the quality of Latin teaching in Virginia secondary schools.

### 5. Quality of Faculty

The evaluators' comments in this section were disturbing to many of the faculty, and quite offensive to some. They missed the opportunity to examine copious evidence about the quality of our teaching (perhaps through a missed message) and so spoke positively only in generalities about concern and commitment, and nevertheless worried about audio-visual resources for new types of material, to which one member of the Department reacted: "If something is not worth teaching, it's not worth teaching electronically!" Their comments on the faculty's scholarly work were especially narrow-minded and insulting to the mission of our undergraduate program. And the library budget problem is a hindrance to scholarly productivity, not a result of it.

### 6. Learning Climate

We have no disagreements here.

### 7. Library, Technology, and Staff Support

The only disagreements from the faculty have to do with minor matters of emphasis in the merit or demerit of the library's resources, although there was a concern that too much emphasis on posting papers and

holding discussions on the Net can result in a distraction from real scholarship.

8. Student Outcomes

We would be hard pressed to find another institution anywhere with a better track record in getting our students placed in high positions inside and outside our field. We attribute this to the continuing demand for a high level of basic competence in the languages and other fundamental tools of scholarship by the time the students leave us. Our rather informal approach to advising seems to work very well indeed, except for some of those students doing Classical Civilization as a secondary concentration and a few extremely shy individuals. It isn't clear that a more formal system would reach them any better, but we shall consider the issue in August.

9. Opportunities for Future Development

The points made by the outside evaluators seem to be in close accord with the sentiments of the faculty for the most part, and will be considered carefully and in depth during the August meeting.

10. Retirements and Hiring

(The items in the joint comments have already for the most part been accomplished.)

11. Data Provided

Every item for which they asked was available either in the prepared packets, on the Web, or in the Assessment Booklet provided -- We are truly sorry that somehow they were not made aware of the availability of all the materials which we had prepared.

12. Summary and Overview

(Both evaluators refer back to the joint comments for this section, but I don't find it there in my copy.)

VII. Action Plan

The preparation of an action plan to conclude this assessment has had many characteristics of shooting at a moving target. A first draft of this statement was

partly complete, with great emphasis on a hiring plan for coming years based upon the needs identified by the Department and the outside evaluators, when, early in July of 2000, the Provost and Dean decided, presumably on the basis of the outside evaluators' report, to grant us authorization to proceed with a pair of hirings which met virtually all the desires regarding personnel which we had intended to express in this Action Plan. Be it understood that we have not the slightest complaint about this outcome and wish only to express our gratitude to the administrators involved for their foresight in taking the opportunity to be preemptive in meeting our needs.

The balance of the summer of 2000 was dedicated to the preparation of revised advertising and search plans in the light of the new hiring authorizations, and, in the process of conducting the search and reviewing dossiers, etc., during the Fall term, 2000, many issues and questions regarding the future of the Department in both personnel and program began to take a clearer shape than they had during the assessment process, although the answers were not necessarily clarified at the same time as the questions. It was decided, therefore, in January of 2001, that as soon as possible after the new hires arrived in the area, i.e. August, 2001, the new and continuing personnel of the Department would convene for at least a full day of intensive contemplation and discussion of every aspect of the assessment and the Department's future. This is the major item of our Action Plan -- all other aspects will be open to consideration at that meeting, for which space at VIMS has already been reserved. Topics of emphasis will include, but not be limited to:

- (1) the curriculum, especially the Classical Civilization offerings and the possibility of adding post-baccalaureate courses for Latin teachers in service to continue or attain certification,
- (2) the advising process at all levels,
- (3) equitable division of the teaching load and provision for research opportunities for junior faculty.
- (4) The whole of our Department's introductory pages preceding the course descriptions in the Catalog could use a thoughtful revision, with special attention to the clarity of information

conveyed to prospective concentrators regarding the Concentration Writing and Computing Requirements and the need for concentrators to take the Classical Civilization courses required for all concentrators early in their William and Mary careers.

The outcome of this meeting is expected to be a well thought out final action plan for the next decade, done in the light of this assessment and with the input of those whom it will most effect, and not only by present and soon-to-be retirees.

#### VII. Noteworthy Learning Opportunities and Unique Contributions

Foreign study programs, present and evolving, are a perpetual concern to the teachers of a subject field whose major sites and museums are across the Atlantic Ocean. We have very close ties with the American School of Classical Studies in Athens, and many of our students have had the benefit of summer or semester experience there, and we have recently joined the Intercollegiate Center in Rome to augment (but not entirely replace) our ties with the American Academy in Rome and give our students much more extensive opportunities for undergraduate study in Italy.

Finally, we are the quintessential service department, and therefore an assessment which focuses so much on the experience of our concentrators overlooks the more than 90% of the headcount enrollment in our courses who complete neither a concentration nor a minor, but only do our Department's courses as proficiency or GER requirements, or as pure electives. We trust that we are, in the spirit of a classical liberal arts education, having a great impact on their minds, their lives, and even their careers, but have only anecdotal evidence to verify this (for example: "thank you" cards from successful former business concentrators, one of whom gave our courses a significant share of the credit for her high rank in her MBA class at the Wharton School of Business). There is a certain inevitable schizophrenia implied in the fact (not atypical of Classics programs everywhere) that our greatest professional dedication is to our concentrators, a small minority of our students, but our greatest burden and duty to our College and to our discipline is to the rest of the student body, whom we rarely meet outside of large lecture classes.