

AHA Tuning Project
Saint Vincent College History Department Goals and Assessment
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In order to better share what the Saint Vincent College History Department has accomplished relative to the Tuning project goals, this report conveys important information, documents, and data. The History faculty have moved cooperatively, though often with grumbling and consternation, through this long-term project of making sense of what we do and studying it in a formal way so that we can improve our efforts. The AHA Tuning project came along at just the right time to inform and affirm our efforts.

This document contains the following:

1. **Table 1: History Department Goals and Assessment Measures** (This lays out the SVC History Department goals and the ways that we measure our success in meeting these goals.)
2. **Table 2: Senior Thesis Rubric** (All faculty who teach the senior thesis use this common rubric to evaluate each student's thesis. We use the scores as a central element in measuring our success in meeting the goals identified in table 1.)
3. **Table 3: Thesis Rubric aligned with Department Goals** (This links each component of the senior thesis rubric to specific department goals.)
4. **Table 4: SVC History Major Portfolio description** (Each history major must complete a portfolio that demonstrates mastery of a set of writing skills that faculty consider essential to success in the discipline.)
5. **Table 5: SVC History Program Assessment of Program Success** (This table conveys our scores for each of the departmental goals over the most recent four years for which we have data – we are still processing data for the just concluded academic year. It also includes an overall score for each year. Those scores have risen over time, perhaps because we are more directed in our teaching as a result of this assessment process.)
6. **Graph 1: History Major Plans at the Moment of Graduation**

Table 1: History Department Goals and Assessment Measures

This table contains two columns. The first column lists the goals for our majors that have existed for many years. We revisited them in light of the goals that the Tuning Project developed and found them to be consistent with that set. Rather than switch wording to match up exactly with specific Tuning goals, we determined to keep the uniquely Saint Vincent language. (This also provided the benefit of maintaining a consistent assessment mechanism.) The second column identifies the ways that the department assesses the goals. (I have included additional material on the assessment later in this document.)

Goal	Assessment mechanism for majors
Awareness of forces ¹ that shape societies and institutions in order to better understand a particular institution's or idea's rise or fall.	
a. "Identify the particular forces most relevant to the development of an idea or institution, and trace the interactions of those forces through inception, development, transformation and decline"	Senior Thesis (The thesis argument and structure)
b. "relate historical forces to one's own growth and"	Portfolio Reflection
c. "understand a work of literature in relation to literary and cultural history."	Historiographical essay in each of the three seminars
Develop students' "intellectual understanding of both the facts of historical events and their broader significance;"	Senior thesis (The thesis argument and structure)
"nurturing [students'] skills in critical thinking and..."	Article review thesis Book review thesis Historiographical essay argument and structure
"effective oral communication" and...	Presentations of work in HI 300, HI 301, and conferences

¹These forces include, "but are not limited to, political, economic, scientific, philosophic, military, religious, and cultural" phenomena.

Goal	Assessment mechanism for majors
"effective written communication" ²	Article review Book review Historiographical essay Prospectus Senior Thesis
"Students can more fully appreciate the complexity of human experience." ³	Transcript evaluation: have students taken three pairs of introductory sequences?
Develop the "ability to weigh evidence and arguments that are essential for those who live in a rapidly changing world."	Historiographical essay; thesis argument; thesis evidence/sources
By the time of graduation a history major will be prepared to enter a graduate or professional program, or pursue a career broadly construed as being related to history.	Survey of graduating history majors' plans for after graduation. Survey of alumni five years out (not yet developed.)

²"Effective" in this case is defined as meeting the criteria that we set out for each of the separate assignments listed: book review, article review, historiographical essay, prospectus, and thesis.

³"Complexity" here is defined as "variety" of human experiences, so that students who take three sets of 100 level sequences and one non-Western course will satisfy this goal.

Table 2: Senior Thesis Rubric

AUTHOR: _____ **DATE:** _____ **FACULTY:** _____

SENIOR THESIS RUBRIC

Component	Maximum Score	Your Score	Component	Maximum Score	Your Score
Cover Page	2		Citation according to Turabian Manual		
25 pages of text	3		Footnotes	5	
25 sources (including some primary sources)	5		Bibliography	5	

Subtotal (out of 20 possible points): _____

Historiographical Discussion

Addresses the arguments of 10 sources.	5		Addresses these historians in relation to each other	5	
Discusses the evidence that these historians use.	5		Creates a central argument about the historians included in this historiographical essay.	5	

Subtotal (out of 20 possible points): _____

Other Elements of an Effective Senior Thesis

Introduction contains a clear argument (thesis) that addresses change or persistence over time	5		Other elements of the Six Principles of Good Writing ⁴	40	
The central argument structures the overall senior thesis.	15				

Subtotal (out of 60 possible points): _____

Total _____

⁴The six principles are: Purpose, Organization, Coherence, Support, Clarity, Insight

Comments (see other side for additional comments):

**Table 3: Thesis Rubric aligned with Department Goals
Senior Thesis Evaluation Rubric**

Component	Maximum Points	Comments
Cover Page	2	Thesis will not be accepted absent a cover page.
25 pages of text	3	<p>Length was specified both as a measure of rigor (students should do a sustained writing project) and to enable students to fully implement the goal to have a student demonstrate his/her ability to “Identify the particular forces most relevant to the development of an idea or institution, and <i>trace the interactions of those forces through inception, development, transformation and decline</i>”</p> <p>This length will also allow students to demonstrate the ability to “<i>weigh evidence and arguments</i> that are essential for those who live in a rapidly changing world.”</p> <p>Finally, the length will allow students to “more fully appreciate the complexity of human experience.” Short essays do not allow sufficient space for the full appreciation of these complexities.</p>
25 sources (including some primary sources)	5	We require students to “develop the ability to weigh evidence and arguments that are essential for those who live in a rapidly changing world,” and this source requirement pushes them to engage a wide range of evidence in their thesis.
Citation according to Turabian Manual		
Footnotes	5	These are disciplinary standards that are necessary to “effective written communication” for history majors.

Component	Maximum Points	Comments
Bibliography	5	These are disciplinary standards that are necessary to “effective written communication” for history majors.
Total score for Thesis Structure components	20	
Historiographical Discussion		
Addresses the arguments of at least 10 historians.	5	This component derives from the department goal: “understand a work of literature in relation to literary and cultural history.”
Discusses the evidence that these historians use.	5	This component addresses the department goal to: develop the “ability to weigh evidence and arguments that are essential for those who live in a rapidly changing world.”
Addresses these historians in relation to each other	5	Here too, students will demonstrate the “ability to weigh evidence and arguments that are essential for those who live in a rapidly changing world.”
Creates a central argument about the historians included in this historiographical essay.	5	This is a measure of the student’s ability to “develop effective written communication.”
Total Points for Historiographical Essay	20	

Component	Maximum Points	Comments
Clear argument--your thesis's thesis.	20	<p>Argument must address change or continuity over time.</p> <p>This derives from the department goal to : "Identify the particular forces most relevant to the development of an idea or institution, and trace the interactions of those forces through inception, development, transformation and decline"</p> <p>and the goal to...</p> <p>"develop effective written communication"</p>
Other elements of the Six Principles of Good Writing	40	These can be assessed however the faculty teaching the course chooses.
Total Points	100	This grade is for the thesis document itself. Faculty will also be free to evaluate the thesis "process" (how well did a student meet deadlines, come to meetings, and work on the project overall).

Table 4: History Major Portfolio

Portfolio Component	Course	Year First Submitted	Description/Notes
Cover Letter	HI 300 Historian's Profession	Sophomore or Junior	Students write a cover letter that would accompany their application for a job. (Updated in the Junior Seminar)
Resume/ CV	HI 300 Historian's Profession	Sophomore or Junior	Students draft their resume to accompany their letter of application. Faculty give feedback on multiple drafts. (Updated formally in the Junior Seminar, and faculty urge students to update it further in the senior year.)
Article Review	HI 300 Historian's Profession HI 301 Junior Seminar	Sophomore Year Junior Year	Students write a review of an article in a professional historical journal, with an aim toward identifying and critiquing the central argument and sources.
Book Review	HI 300 Historian's Profession HI 301 Junior Seminar	Sophomore Year Junior Year (Spring)	Students write a review of a book written by a professional historian, with an aim toward identifying and critiquing the central argument and sources.
Historiographical Essay	HI 300 Historian's Profession HI 301 Junior Seminar HI 302 Senior Seminar	Sophomore Year Junior Year (Spring) Senior Year	Students write an historiographical essay in the Historian's Profession (usually taken in the sophomore year) that addresses at least six secondary sources, then write one in the Junior Seminar that addresses ten sources. Students then revise and expand their historiographical essay from the sophomore year as part of their senior thesis.
Prospectus	HI 301 Junior Seminar	Junior Year (Spring)	Plan for the senior thesis that includes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A general introduction to the topic • Historiographical essay on subject • Student's anticipated argument and plan of study
Senior Thesis	HI 302	Senior Year (Fall)	Students write a thesis on a subject of their choosing (25 page minimum) as the central component of their Senior Seminar.
Reflection Essay	HI 302	Senior Year (Fall)	Students reflect on their experience in the major, highlighting what they found most and least useful to them (at this point).

**Table 5: Saint Vincent College History Program
Assessment of Program Success**

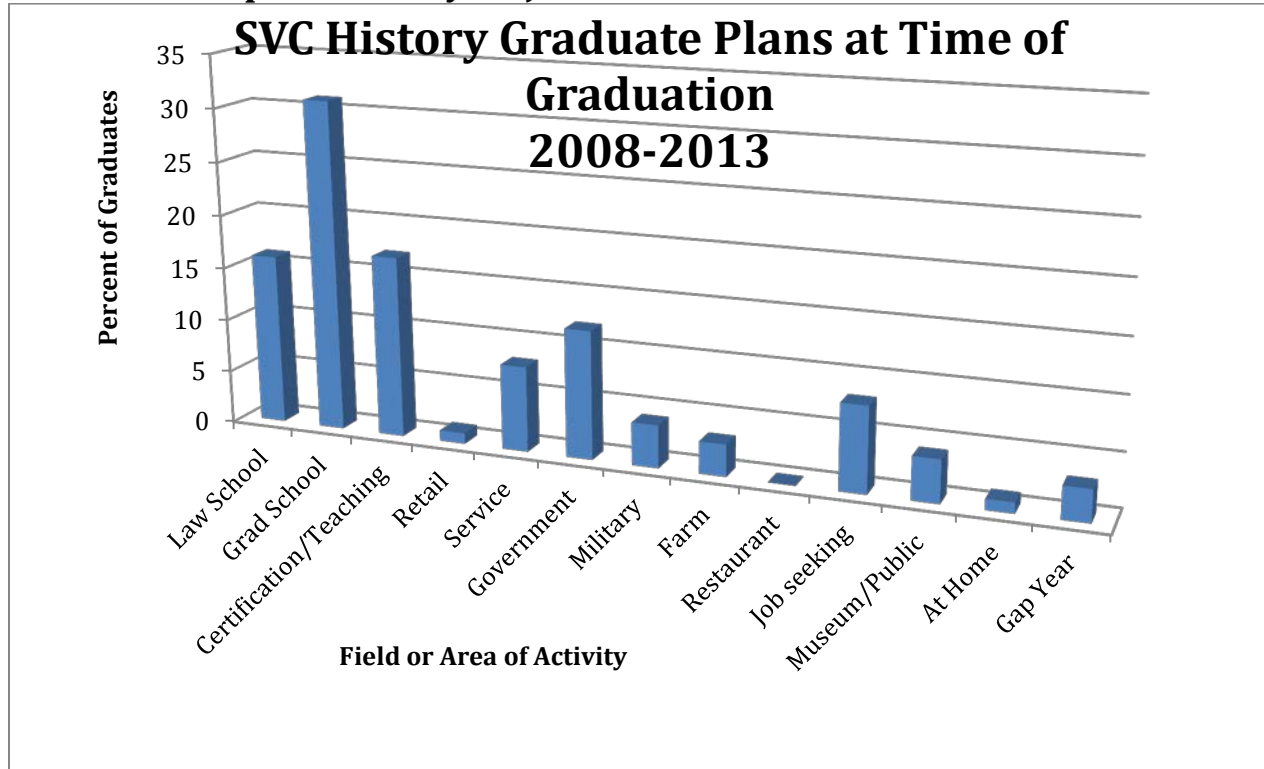
This table tracks the department’s success for each of the goals over the four most recent years for which we have data. (We are still processing the data for the most recent academic year.) The scores suggest that we have been relatively successful across time, with a slight improvement over the four years. This improvement likely results from our greater attention to the goals and our determination to focus on them in our teaching and in the ways that we structure the courses. We made a deliberate effort to convert our scores into common academic conventions, so that we can determine readily how we are doing. Every department member is comfortable with the numeric score and the way that this score transfers into a “letter grade” for the year. Even the least quantitatively inclined among us can read and understand the score’s meaning for each goal in any individual year, and the overall scores for the year.

The faculty have been mostly compliant in using the rubrics and reporting data from them. A few faculty have neglected to retain records in any given year, but we are confident that the data trends are reliable and accurate.

Saint Vincent College Major Competencies	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
1. Awareness of forces that shape societies and institutions in order to better understand a particular institution's or idea's rise or fall	88	93	97	86
2. Identify the particular forces most relevant to the development of an idea or institution, and trace the interaction of those forces through inception, development, transformation and decline	89	95	84	92
3. Relate historical forces to one's own growth				

4. Understand a work of literature in relation to literary and cultural history.	78	86	86	92
5. develop students' intellectual understanding of both the facts of historical events and their broader significance	82	93	90	93
6.nurtuing students' skill in critical thinking.	85	86	93	86
7. Effective oral communication		90	89	90
8. effective written communication	87	87	81	88
9. Students can more fully appreciate the complexity of human experience.	86	92	92	92
10. Develop the ability to weigh evidence and arguments that are essential for those who live in a rapidly changing world.	81	85	88	89
Overall Average	84.5	89.6	88.8	89.9
	B	B+	B+	A-

Graph 1: History Major Plans at Moment of Graduation



We have been tracking our graduates' plans at the time of their graduation for the past five years. Until this year, we did this through an exit interview which students came to voluntarily. In some years, we did not get information from every graduating senior. We now make the exit survey a graduation requirement and we use "Survey Monkey," which allowed us to get a fuller set of data for the 2013-14 academic year—though that data did not make it into this report.