

UT MARTIN ASSESSMENT NEWSLETTER

APRIL/MAY 2024

Our most important job is to help our students succeed!

Comprehensive Program Reviews Completed!

Each year, UT Martin conducts comprehensive reviews of academic programs that do not have external program accreditation. This process is guided by THEC expectations, and the results of this process inform state funding each year.

The program review process occurs on a five-year cycle and includes several steps:

- 1.) preparing a program Self Study (fall of the year preceding the formal review)
- 2.) creating the program review committee (early spring)
- 3.) conducting the On-Site visit and Exit Interview (mid- to late spring)
- 4.) completing the Program Review Rubric and the Written Report (late spring)
- 5.) completing the program's Improvement Measures Plan (fall following the formal review), and
- 6.) completing the Mid-term Progress Report (third year of the five-year cycle).

Complete information about the process can be found here: <https://www.utm.edu/offices-and-services/accreditation-and-assessment/institutional-assessment/assessment-forms.php>.

This spring, three academic degree programs were reviewed: Philosophy, Psychology, and International Studies. In addition, the Honors Program underwent their first formal program review using these same guidelines.

All of our programs received high praise from the review teams. We want to share with you some of the highlights of these programs as noted by the members of their respective review teams.

Philosophy: In the past five years, Philosophy has implemented several steps to improve enrollment numbers, including increasing the number of online philosophy courses offered; creating a fully online philosophy major; establishing a new interdisciplinary minor in Ethics; increasing outreach to local high schools by establishing and supervising High School Ethics Bowl teams to compete in the annual West Tennessee High School Ethics Bowl Regional Competition (which Philosophy faculty also lead); and teaching core classes in the University Scholars Program.

As part of their assessment of the Philosophy program, Philosophy faculty require students to submit a portfolio containing three writing samples of approximately 3,000 words each from advanced classes. Each of the three writing samples must address a particular type of topic. Additional guidelines regarding sources, formats, structures, etc. are also provided to the students. The faculty have implemented these guidelines in their upper division courses and have seen a distinct improvement in their students' work.

The Philosophy faculty maintain the *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy (IEP)* (<https://iep.utm.edu/>). The external reviewer noted that worldwide there are two primary scholarly internet resources for the Philosophy discipline—one is maintained by Stanford University and the other is the IEP maintained here at UT Martin by our own faculty. Each year, more than 8.2 million unique visitors to the IEP are logged.

Psychology: The Psychology Program gives students multiple opportunities to conduct and present research. Each year, the

program hosts a research symposium at UTM that allows students to present their research in a formal setting. In addition, the Psychology Department is in rotation to host the MidSouth Psychology Conference, a regional research conference that brings students from multiple institutions to campus to present their research results.

Students are also given an opportunity to earn a professional certification, the Registered Behavior Technician Certification from the Behavior Analysis Certification Board, as part of PSYC 330. To earn this certification, students are assigned a case and must work on a specific area of behavior change. Students are supervised by a Board-Certified Behavior Analyst and are given the opportunity to interact with other professionals in the field.

International Studies: Students enrolled in the International Studies major have multiple opportunities for experiential learning. One example is participation in a program called Model United Nations. Students participating in Model United Nations must learn about their assigned countries, including issues within those countries (such as smart cities, radicalization, artificial intelligence, etc.), and diplomacy. Students then participate in a three-day event held in either Charlotte, NC (spring semesters) or Atlanta, GA (fall semesters). During the event, students have the opportunity to network with students and faculty from more than 40 US colleges and universities. Students may also apply to serve in research and administrative roles during the event; these roles include research, preparation of background materials for delegates, and facilitating committee sessions which can sometimes include more than 100 delegates.

More locally, students develop research posters and participate in a senior research showcase held in the Paul Meek Library. These students are able to engage a much broader audience than they would in a more conventional classroom setting and are able

to develop more flexible presentation skills by learning to connect with a broader audience.

The International Studies program has a travel study/study abroad component that requires travel to a foreign country. Students in the International Studies program are also required to complete 12 upper division hours in a foreign language. The program itself is multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary, including options for courses in a wide array of fields, including Art History, Fashion, Geography, Philosophy, Religious Studies, Sociology, Agricultural Economics, Natural Resources Management, Sustainability, and other areas.

Several courses included in International Studies use a variety of technology in the classroom, including Kahoot!, PollEverywhere, word clouds, and interactive maps. Faculty are now exploring the potential use of generative artificial intelligence platforms like ChatGPT in their classrooms as well.

Honors: The Office of Honors Programs oversees the University Scholars Program, designed for students who qualify for the Chancellor's Scholarship. Applications to the University Scholars Program are reviewed, and selected applicants are invited to campus for interviews. Final selections are made following the interviews, and a cohort of 30 students are invited to become University Scholars.

The Office of Honors Programs has also developed the Honors Program of Study, a pathway available to all undergraduate students, including transfer students, graduates of community colleges, and students enrolled at UT Martin Centers or in online programs, who meet certain requirements. Students completing the Honors Program of study are recognized at graduation for their achievement.

The University Scholars Program's core curriculum is structured to provide cohort-based, shared experiences for students. During interviews with the review team,

students noted the strong critical thinking skills they learned in the program and described how they applied those skills to courses in their own major.

The Office of Honors Programs offers two study abroad programs (one in Spain and the other in France) for University Scholars that are held in May and June each year. University Scholars also have opportunities to participate in regional cultural events as well. Recent examples include theatrical productions in Memphis and Nashville, visits to museums in Memphis, Nashville, St. Louis, and Arkansas, and symphony concerts in Paducah, KY, and Jackson, TN.

Each University Scholar is required to provide 15 service hours each semester. To facilitate opportunities for service, the Office of Honors Programs has partnered with the Athletics Department to provide tutoring for athletes who need academic assistance. In the past, the Office of Honors Programs has partnered with the Martin Housing Authority's Enrichment Academy to provide after-school tutoring and activities for local at-risk and underprivileged youths.

University Scholars enroll in four, 1-credit hour research courses to complete and then defend their thesis project. Scholars work with a faculty member or a professional from their field to complete the project.

The Office of Honors Programs also leads a one-week summer colloquium each year for faculty and staff. This year's theme is *The Mind, Imagination, and Art of the American South*. (For more information on this program, please contact Donna Clanton, dclanton@utm.edu, or John Glass, jglass3@utm.edu.)

Review teams for these five-year program reviews include three faculty from UT Martin and an external reviewer from a similar program at an institution outside of Tennessee. We want to thank the UTM members of this year's review teams:

- **Adnan Rasool, Derek Ezell, and Denise Williams**, for their work on the Philosophy team;
- **Sean Walker, Patrick Bishop, and Laura Hatch**, for their work on the Psychology team;
- **Steve Elliott, Caren Nichter, and Christy Stubblefield**, for their work on the International Studies team; and
- **Brittany Cole, Jason DeVito, and Justin Martin** for their work on the Honors team.

Next year, the following programs will be conducting their five-year reviews:

- BA program with a major in English;
- BA program with a major in Spanish;
- Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies program; and
- BS in Agricultural Business program.

We will begin working with these programs to provide additional information in early Fall 2024. We are expecting THEC to implement some changes to the review criteria for either the 2024-25 cycle or the 2025-26 cycle; we will share information about those changes as soon as we know anything.

We will be asking for volunteers to serve on review teams for these programs in the early Spring, 2025. If you are interested in serving on a review team, please contact Patty Flowers (pflowers@utm.edu). Faculty from programs who will be reviewed in subsequent years (Biological Sciences, Chemistry, and Political Science are expected to be reviewed in 2025-26) are especially encouraged to participate.

Thank you all for everything you do for our students every day. You continue to inspire and support our students through all of the challenges they, and we, face. You are the heart of UTM, and you are what makes UTM so special. Thank you!