

## **HMS Richards Divinity School Assessment Report Summary 2014-2015**

### **Mission**

The La Sierra University HMS Richards Divinity School, a theological school within the system of Seventh-day Adventist higher education, seeks to integrate believing, thinking, and acting through teaching, scholarship, dialogue, and service, preparing Christian leaders for effective ministries in the church, academy, and world in which we live.

### **Vision**

We see ourselves as an open community of learning and service, conviction and hospitality, solidarity and diversity, where faith seeks both understanding and transformation.

Our vision is to be attentive to the calling of Jesus Christ to present truth, while not forgetting how God has led us in our past history, and ever listening and reaching out through the empowering of the Spirit to a changing church and world. We seek to form leaders who will be both effective and winsome spokespersons for the gospel, and capable of courageously standing for the right though the heavens fall. We seek collaborations with congregations and partner institutions where conversations can deepen our service in God's cause in the world.

### **Student Learning Outcomes**

Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) are not the same this year as in the past. As announced in last year's annual report, the Divinity School has entirely reorganized its SLOs in the way they are conceived and implemented, providing opportunity for assessing new sets of data on how the program is doing. While nothing is the same, the Divinity School hopes to see better and more consistent assessment of student performance because of the new structure.

In addition, the Divinity School has adopted a more focused set of program objectives as follows:

**General Divinity School Learning Objectives:** Individual Program student learning outcomes (SLOs) fall under the general rubric of the HMS Richards Divinity School concerns regarding assessment. The General Divinity School Learning Objectives are as follows:

Each of the following intentions apply at the level of learning appropriate to course and academic level competencies.

1. The Divinity School intends that students learn how to acquire

and religious disciplines. This degree begins theological study at the graduate level and may provide a concentration in a specific type of ministry expertise.

**Students completing the Masters of Theological Studies (MTS degree program will:**

1. Demonstrate an introductory graduate level knowledge and understanding of the Bible's content, structure, message, and interpretation in relation to its literary, theological, historical, cultural, and canonical backgrounds.
2. Show competence in biblical research and in using appropriate and relevant sources with a goal to applying biblical principles to modern life.
3. Outline and assess the major events, persons, and literature in the history of Christianity including the development of Seventh-day Adventists within the wider Christian traditions.
4. Articulate classic categories or issues in Seventh-day Adventist or in Christian theology in contrast to other major Christian and non-Christian traditions.
5. Identify and affirm spiritual growth as to one's calling, ministry giftedness, strengths and personal

## Summary

In 2014 the adoption of the overall learning objectives of the Divinity School assessment targeted a portion of these without focusing on the new program student learning objectives. The University Assessment Committee's review of 2014 commended the Divinity School for the following:

1. The development of new SLOs with a strong conceptual framework.
2. Computerizing the assessment process to make it more manageable.
3. Student learning, as evidenced by most students exceeding most of the benchmarks set by the School.
4. The recognition in your report of what next steps you need to take, such as developing new benchmarks for your SLOs.

Whereas all previous assessment endeavors were based on a small number of SLOs, a portion of which would be assessed each year representing around 20% of the total, all leading to a five-year review, the target for 2014 was to look at the general objectives and do assessment focusing on those as they make contribution to the objectives of the Divinity School. In the 2015-2017 academic years, program assessment will begin using those more focused program outcomes as recommended by the University Assessment Committee's 2014 report to the Divinity School.

This summary is of the 2014 academic year as we reconcieved and rationalized its S3. ber of b ves S3. s S3

Note that for the purpose of this report, only the graduate student results are relevant. Also note that wherever helpful and appropriate, these results have been further delineated into graduate professional programs (M.Div.); and graduate academic programs (M.T.S. and M.A.).

What follows is a summary and aggregate of the results for each of the four SLOs.

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• **Students acquire relevant information.**

Graduate Professional (M.Div., etc) 68% average.

Graduate Academic (MTS., etc) 66% average.

Graduate Professional (M.Div., etc) 68% average.

Graduate Academic (MTS., etc) 76% average.

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- **Students act responsibly.**

1. Faith Maturity Scale: Graduate Professional (M.Div., etc) 96.8% average (high faith maturity).  
Graduate Academic (MTS., etc) 78.6% average (medium high faith maturity)
2. Religious Activity: Graduate Professional (M.Div., etc) 91.4% average.  
Graduate Academic (MTS., etc) 82.8% average.
3. Personal Piety: Graduate Professional (M.Div., etc) 60% average.  
Graduate Academic (MTS., etc) 63.6% average.
4. Activity Scale: Graduate Professional (M.Div., etc) 47.5% average.  
Graduate Academic (MTS., etc) 78.1% average.

Overall averages: Graduate Professional (M.Div., etc) 73.9% average.

Graduate Academic (MTS., etc) 75.8%

**Based on the outcomes of the assessment, how well is the program meeting its objectives?**

In response to feedback from the Assessment Committee to a previous year's Annual Report, we set goals or benchmarks to be attained in most of our SLOs. Unfortunately, with our comprehensive revision of our SLOs, new goals and benchmarks will need to be developed, set and measured now that we have clarified our program student learning objectives beginning in 2015.

Only in a few cases can we still apply those benchmarks. One such case is the PEW Religious knowledge test, where we can compare our results against our own benchmarks, as well as with published national

**What changes are being planned for assessment?**

The Divinity School Assessment Group will focus on looking closely at the assessment of the professional and academic programs outcomes along with continuing those aspects of evaluation which provide key benchmarks for improvement in all programs of the Divinity School.

Combining most of the assessment tools into a single comprehensive on-line survey of student learning outcomes has been a major improvement over working with separate and disparate assessment instruments. Continued evaluation and organization will be completed with both on-line and paper surveys to provide complete student involvement in all types of assessment.