To: Program Review Committee  
From: Jennifer Taylor  
Date: January 16, 2006  
Re: January 2006 Progress Report on Assessment Plan: Internship Program

#1. Program Goal:
In my September 2005 Program Review Assessment Plan, I identified one of my Student Learning Goals as my focus this year:

Develop Personal Understanding Of Christian Vocation: Graduates should be developing a sense of Christian vocation that will inform career and lifestyle goals, and that is based on recognition of their own gifts and on their faith convictions. (cf Standard 1 Christian Orientation)

The part of the plan I hoped to implement fall semester was:

1. Establish a starting point by having students respond in writing to the question, “What does vocation mean to you?” at the beginning of the semester.  
2. Formulate a vocation objective collectively with the students so they enter into the exploration of individual vocation with more intent.

#2. Data:

1. Part A: As simple as it was to assign the cold writes, it was a real eye-opener. I was surprised to learn that students’ ideas of vocation varied widely. In many cases, students defined vocation in terms of a specific occupation or job. Others saw it broadly – “What God calls us to” without personal orientation. But, others came up with definitions and ideas I had not considered. For example: “the receiving or utilization of vocabulary words in speech,” “awesome,” “scary because it puts me in one occupational field,” the ability to express ideas and concepts” and more. This collection of five-minute, in-class writings gave me a realistic starting point from which to gauge the students’ learning.

Part B: Part of the final portfolio presentation requirement was to verify the vocation objective. (See below). Students wrote essays based on their readings and notes from class discussions/presentations from Here I Am by Quentin Schultze and Vocation by Douglas Schuurman. These essays helped me gauge the learning that occurred over the course of the semester. The notable differences between the beginning and end of the semester writings were in the scope and individuation with which they expressed their personal understanding. Some essay snippets follow. “Vocation is our calling and goes into every part of our lives, roles in our family, and church as well as the workplace . . . (Schuurman) covered historical concepts of vocation in his book but most of the class was aimed at our own personal search for our calling and vocation . . . Ultimately, what is most important regarding vocation is what I learned from Schultze, that is, recognizing that everything is under God’s authority, and that regardless of what occupation one pursues, a pursuit of excellence and a honing of one’s skills
allows us to serve God more effectively . . . We should strive to produce the finest work by doing our best with the education and training available to us. Vocation is not about our selves, but about serving and caring for others. We pursue excellence in vocation because of a desire to be obedient to God, not because we yearn for success, accolades, wealth or worldly possessions . . . Vocation is at least using the gifts God has given me to serve others. It brings life back into my work and my job. It gives them meaning.”

#3. Interpretation of the Results
Students used the following objective as a guideline (and as an integral part of their learning plan):

**Objective:**
To explore the concept of vocation as it has been understood historically and in relation to our modern social setting, in order to articulate a personal understanding of vocation.

**Resources/Activities**
1. Read from sources:
   a. Here I Am by Quentin Schultz
   b. (selections from) Vocation by Douglas Schuurman
2. Gather/assimilate pertinent information derived from chapel, coursework, interviews, church, etc.

**Evaluation/Verification**
1. 15-minute oral presentation/discussion based on a chapter from above resource.
2. Written commentary of personal understanding of vocation and its affects on the internship experience and/or other areas of life.
3. Articulation of #2 above at portfolio presentation event at end of semester.

When placed side by side, the students’ final writings on this topic revealed a broader and more personalized understanding of vocation compared to the initial cold writes. In fact, the differences merit some attention. And, I can do a better job of sharing the results (see #4 below). An unexpected source of “data” relating to this objective came to me in another student assignment, informational interviews. In cases where the professional interviewee was a Christian and talked about “Calling,” students were primed to hear the message.

#4. Using the Results.
As a one-person department I need the perspective and suggestions of others. I should ask colleagues outside of my office to read the results of the (writing) data to get additional perspective. In light of the impact of students’ informational interviews and, after conversations with Celia Howen, Brad Berky and Dana Hosjack, I have decided that I can do a better job of bringing this concept home. That is, our students should hear first hand from alums who share their own vocational journeys. For this reason I have arranged to have two Westmont alums in the work force (one working in a for-profit
company and another in a non-profit) speak to the class this semester with special emphasis on vocation.

#5. **Next Steps**
We did not end up formulating a vocation objective as a class (part 2 of this semester’s plan). Instead, in light of the content in the students’ cold writes, I created the objective (above) for them. Because this course emphasizes students taking responsibility for their own learning, this objective was an exception in their learning plan. Was this the best thing to do?
I think I will stay with this approach and re-assess at the end of the semester.
I also have several written evaluations of the final presentation from faculty, staff and an employer-supervisor who attended the final presentations. This semester, rather than general feedback, I could ask for specific feedback on the students’ articulation of vocation.

In the meantime, I am also collecting evidence and items that address learning goal #2:

**Program Goal (#2)**
1. Make the learning plan the point of reference during the midterm site visit.
   Solicit feedback from the supervisor and the student. Ascertain whether objectives remain relevant and reasonable for the remaining weeks.

**Data**
For example, I want to use a version of Brad Berky’s guide for evidence-of-learning (in internship). I will have students complete this form at the end of their internships.

**Interpretation of the results**

**Using the results**

**Next Steps**