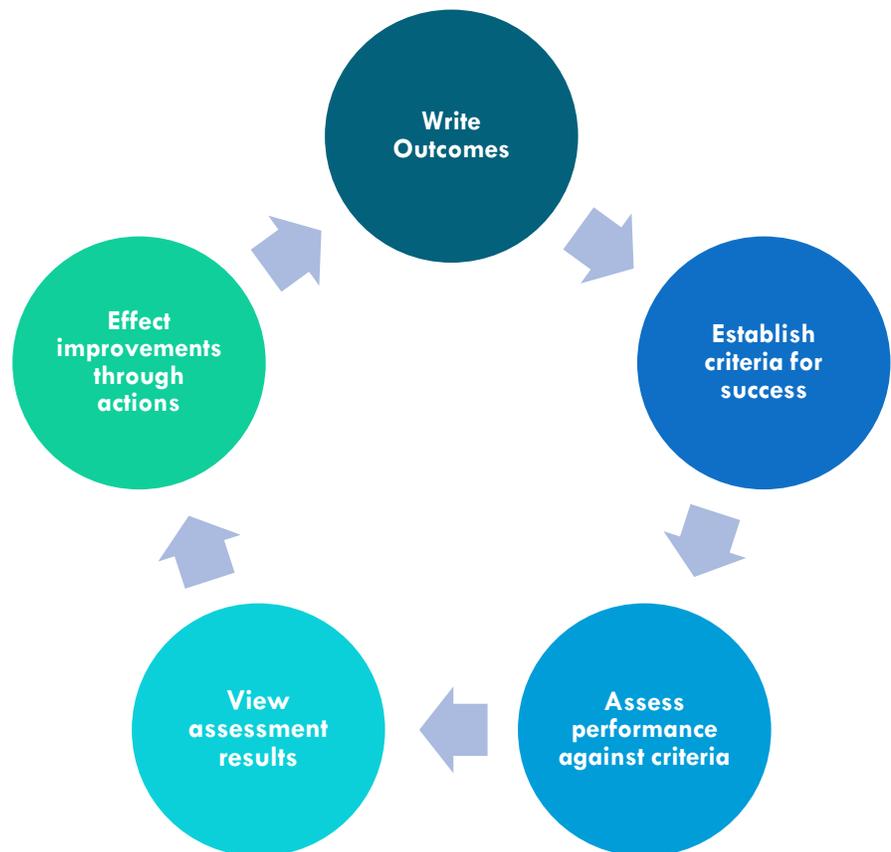


# ASSESSMENT SHOWCASE



Spring 2010

Academic Program Assessment

## Table of Contents

PRINCIPLES OF ACCREDITATION .....	2
USM VISION, MISSION, PLAN .....	3
ASSESSMENT POLICIES .....	6
ASSESSMENT PROCESS OVERVIEW .....	7
STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES.....	9
MEASURES .....	11
ACTION PLANS & ANALYSIS.....	15
ANNUAL REPORTING .....	19
RECOMMENDED READING .....	22

---

# SOUTHERN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS (SACS) COMMISSION ON COLLEGES

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges is the regional body for the accreditation of degree-granting higher education institutions in the Southern states. The Commission's mission is the enhancement of educational quality throughout the region and it strives to improve the effectiveness of institutions by ensuring that institutions meet standards established by the higher education community that address the needs of society and students. It serves as the common denominator of shared values and practices among the diverse institutions in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and Latin America and other international sites approved by the Commission on Colleges that award associate, baccalaureate, master's, or doctoral degrees. The Commission also accepts applications from other international institutions of higher education.

## PRINCIPLES OF ACCREDITATION

### FOUNDATIONS FOR QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

#### CORE REQUIREMENT 2.5

The institution engages in ongoing, integrated, and institution-wide research-based planning and evaluation processes that incorporate a systematic review of programs and services that (a) results in continuing improvement, and (b) demonstrates that the institution is effectively accomplishing its mission. (Institutional Effectiveness)

#### COMPREHENSIVE STANDARD 3.3.1 - INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results in each of the following areas:

- 3.3.1.1 educational programs, to include student learning outcomes
- 3.3.1.2 administrative support services
- 3.3.1.3 educational support services
- 3.3.1.4 research within its educational mission, if appropriate
- 3.3.1.5 community/public service within its educational mission, if appropriate

## THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

# Vision

Southern Miss will emerge as the premier research university of the Gulf South – engaging and empowering individuals to transform lives and communities.

# Mission

The University of Southern Mississippi is a comprehensive research extensive university. Our primary mission is to cultivate intellectual development and creativity through the generation, dissemination, application, and preservation of knowledge.

Our mission is supported by the values that have been formed through the history and traditions of our institution. These values are widely and deeply held beliefs of our faculty, staff, students, and administrators:

- Education provides opportunities to improve the quality of intellectual, social, economic, and personal well-being. These opportunities should be available to all who are willing and able to meet our standards of excellence.
  - Our success is reflected by the degree to which our students become well-read, articulate, and creative and critical thinkers. It is measured by their display of specialized knowledge and abilities suitable to the pursuit of a career and life in our complex, ever-changing world.
  - We cherish innovation in the creation and application of basic and applied research findings, creative and artistic expression, meaningful learning experiences, the scope of services provided to our students and the broader community that we sustain, and the continuing evolution of degree programs that both respond to and anticipate the evolving demands of our society, employers, and the labor market.
  - Education encourages and advances the ideals of a pluralistic democratic society: civic responsibility, integrity, diversity, and ethical behavior.
  - Academic freedom and shared governance are long-established and living principles at the university. We cherish the free exchange of ideas, diversity of thought, joint decision making, and individuals' assumption of responsibility.
  - We make efficient and effective use of our resources, for we are accountable to our university communities, the Board of Trustees, and taxpayers.
-

# Plan

Four priorities guide the University of Southern Mississippi, each helping to support our vision. These priorities, identified through a strategic planning process in 2007-08, provide a solid foundation for progress.

- A CLIMATE FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS
- IMAGE DEVELOPMENT
- CONNECTIONS WITH COMMUNITY
- HEALTHY MINDS, BODIES AND CAMPUSES



## A CLIMATE FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Our vision for a climate of academic success includes a unified environment that minimizes barriers for prospective and enrolled students; attracts and retains quality faculty and staff embraces and reflects diversity; and produces graduates who are truly competitive in the global marketplace.

Students, faculty and staff at Southern Miss, along with the larger community, benefit from a wide range of cultural, social and educational experiences that yield informed, responsible, and productive citizens with a standard of lifelong learning.

University experiences are supported by quality facilities and up-to-date technology accessible to the entire university community. Educational programs adhere to rigorous standards in terms of student advisement, engagement, and mentoring; curriculum development and delivery; and the exploration and generation of scholarly and creative work.

Students admitted to Southern Miss have every opportunity to earn a degree and acquire a comprehensive educational foundation that expands their perspectives, enhances their opportunities, and enriches our society.

**Supporting Measures:** Baccalaureate degrees awarded/Six-year graduation rates/Student return rates/Square footage of new or substantially renovated facilities/Accreditation for eligible programs/Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory results (Instructional Effectiveness Scale Report)/Percentage of graduates employed in relevant field or admitted to graduate school within one year of graduation/ Peer-reviewed publications & presentations/External research funding.

## IMAGE DEVELOPMENT

Image development promotes the internal and external reputation of the university and supports the vision of Southern Miss. Image development must be linked to what we do and how well we do it.

**Supporting Measures:** Results on Chronicle/Gallup Branding Index/Scores in U.S. News & Forbes University rankings/Positive national media coverage/Surveys of prospective and current students.

## CONNECTIONS WITH COMMUNITY

We envision engaged citizens of Southern Miss (students, staff, faculty and alumni) who genuinely invest in their university community and their host communities (locally, regionally, nationally and globally). Our engaged citizens intentionally build community through learning and working together inside and outside the university in order to create and sustain a culture of respect and civility. We do this through hosting, serving, and sharing.

- Hosting refers to the importance of every contact made on campus – from the first to the last.
- Serving allows university citizens to invest in people, agencies/businesses, and organizations through volunteering, service learning, internships, applied scholarship and university/community partnerships.
- Sharing focuses on how we build relationships and engagement inside the university and with our host communities.

**Supporting Measures:** Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory results/Student volunteer hours/Sq. ft of sharing (social/learning) space/Attendance at university-sponsored events/Externally funded applied initiatives/Total endowment.

## HEALTHY MINDS, BODIES, & CAMPUSES

A culture that emphasizes a multidimensional healthy environment at Southern Miss is deemed central to attain the goals of this strategic plan. An emphasis on healthy lifestyles will enhance the quality of the Southern Miss experience and beyond. Appropriate efforts in campus sustainability and environmental education will contribute to an improved environmental impact and an informed perspective on resource use. Continuous efforts to maintain and safety and security of all at Southern Miss will increase the potential to attain individual and community goals.

**Supporting Measures:** Participation in university-sponsored wellness/fitness activities/Employee absenteeism/Utility Costs/LEED certified buildings & renovations/Solid waste reduction/recycling/Sustainability within curricula/Noel-Levitz SSI response data in Safety and Security Scale grouping.

---

# Assessment Policies

ADOPTED BY THE UNIVERSITY ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE

## Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes Participants:

- A. Educational Programs – IHL maintains the official inventory of USM academic programs (<http://www.mississippi.edu/research/stats.html>). To be in compliance with SACS policy, all degree programs in this inventory must assess program-level student learning outcomes in accordance with the Academic Program Assessment Plan and Report Guidelines.  
UAC Approved 9.30.09
  
- B. Certificate Programs – IHL maintains the official inventory of USM certificate programs (<http://www.mississippi.edu/research/stats.html>). To be in compliance with SACS policy, all certificate programs in this inventory must assess program-level student learning outcomes in accordance with the Academic Program Assessment Plan and Report Guidelines.  
UAC Approved 9.30.09
  
- C. Emphasis Areas – All teacher licensure programs must assess separately. All other programs with emphasis areas determine whether they assess at the program-level or the emphasis-level. Many programs have elected to separate their assessments at the emphasis-level. The UAC encourages programs to consider emphasis-level assessment if plans of study vary greatly. The UAC can recommend emphasis-level assessment if program-level assessment reports are deemed inadequate. The UAC can also recommend programs address emphasis areas within the same report by having several common student learning outcomes for the program and at least one separate student learning outcome for each emphasis area.  
UAC Approved 10.28.09
  
- D. Stand-alone Minors – All stand alone minors must assess minor-level student learning outcomes in accordance with the Academic Program Assessment Plan and Report Guidelines. A stand-alone minor is defined as a program of study that does not have a “parent” degree.  
UAC Approved 10.28.09

*The University of Southern Mississippi Assessment Policies document is a “work-in-progress.” The University Assessment Committee will continue to develop these policies to ensure the university is in compliance with the areas of assessment as outlined in SACS Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1.:*

- *educational programs, to include student learning outcomes*
- *administrative support services*
- *educational support services*
- *research within its educational mission, if appropriate*
- *community/public service within its educational mission, if appropriate*

# Assessment Process Overview

SPRING 2010

2008-2009/2009-2010 Academic Program Assessment Plans are in place.

An assessment plan includes:

- a) Program Mission/Purpose
- b) Student Learning Outcomes
- c) Measures and Targets

A complete 2009-2010 Academic Program Assessment Report includes:

- d) Findings (due May 31)
- f) Action Plans (due June 30) - *Action Plans are required in Year 2 of assessment cycle*
- f) Analysis (due June 30)
- g) Annual Report (due June 30) - *alternative calendar programs have a due date of September 30*

After review of the 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 Assessment Reports, program faculty should reevaluate the program's student learning outcomes and measures/targets. After the reassessment, 2010-2011/2011-2012 Academic Program Assessment Plans should be implemented fall 2010. Action Plans developed in the 2009-2010 Assessment Reports should be implemented in fall 2010 as well.

University Assessment Calendar for degree programs can be found on the Institutional Effectiveness Web site:  
<http://www.usm.edu/ie>

The University Assessment Committee (UAC) directs the assessment process at the University of Southern Mississippi. Southern Miss follows a two-year planning and annual reporting cycle. With this cycle, assessment plans are in place for two years, action plans are developed every two years, and assessment reports are annual.

The University of Southern Mississippi submits Academic Program Assessment Reports as supporting documentation for compliance with SACS Core Requirement 2.5 and Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1. Responses to the Analysis questions and Annual Reporting fields are the basis for demonstrating that our institution is effectively accomplishing our mission.

Departments should refer to the SACS requirements and standards and the University Vision, Mission, Commitments, and Strategic Plan as they complete assessment reports and develop assessment plans.

The University Assessment Committee (UAC) reviews assessment reports in the fall semester to determine if:

- 1) Assessment Report Guidelines were followed
- 2) The Assessment Report supports SACS Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1

These reviews are presented to the deans and the provost in the spring semester.

---

## New Annual Reporting Guidelines

In order to target only needed information and reduce redundancy, the University Assessment Committee (UAC) voted to revise and reduce the number of Annual Reporting fields required in the Academic Program Assessment Report. The 2009-2010 Assessment Report includes the following Annual Reporting data elements:

- PROGRAM SUMMARY
- ADDITIONAL ACTION PLANS/CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVES
- ACTION PLAN TRACKING/CLOSING THE LOOP

### PROGRAM SUMMARY

The Program Summary replaces most of the former Annual Reporting fields. Programs will be asked to summarize highlights of the past year for that particular academic program. University Assessment Committee members agreed that a summary field was needed to provide context to an outside reviewer. Program contributions, activities, and accomplishments should be included in this field. Any data collected outside of the student learning outcome measures could be showcased in this field as well.

### ADDITIONAL ACTION PLANS/CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVES

Any action plans for improvement that are not necessarily tied to a specific student learning outcome should be described in this field.

### ACTION PLAN TRACKING/CLOSING THE LOOP

Instead of going into each previous action plan to make updates, programs are now asked to summarize the results of previous action plan implementation. This is the opportunity for programs to close the assessment loop – to report on the success (or not) of previously implemented action plans.

## SACS Fifth-Year Interim Report

The Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools is one of only a few accrediting commissions that conducts a comprehensive review of its institutions every ten years. Most accrediting agencies conduct such reviews every 5 to 7 years. The U.S. Department of Education requires accrediting agencies that it recognizes to monitor its institutions more often to ensure that institutions having access to federal funds continue to meet accreditation standards. To that end, the Commission has developed a Fifth-Year Interim Report. (<http://www.sacscoc.org/FifthYear.asp>) This report carries the same level of seriousness that the 10-year reaffirmation requires in that the same types of sanctions can be levied.

**The university's Fifth-Year Interim Report is due March 15, 2012.** The Fifth-Year Interim Report consists of an abbreviated compliance report that addresses 14 standards of the Principles of Accreditation and the QEP Impact Report. The Impact Report is a report demonstrating the extent to which the QEP has affected outcomes related to student learning. Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1 subsection 3.3.3.1 (*educational programs, to include student learning outcomes*) is one of the 14 standards to be addressed.

**Supporting documentation collection is in progress.** It is recommended that three complete cycles of assessment reports be included as documentation of compliance with SACS Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1. To submit our report in March 2012, that means 2008-2009, 2009-2010, and 2010-2011. Commendable and adequate reports from 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 will be showcased as well.

# Student Learning Outcomes

A Student Learning Outcome (SLO) is a statement regarding knowledge, skills, and/or traits students should gain or enhance as a result of their engagement in an academic program. SLOs are the items that complete the sentence, “When they complete our program, students will be able to.....” A program does not need to state all possible student learning outcomes, but it should try to articulate those that are fundamental. A program may choose to rotate SLOs. Student learning outcomes should show progressive distinction between degree levels (BA, MA, PhD) in the same academic unit.

## Frameworks for Learning Outcomes

In *Assessing Student Learning, A Common Sense Guide*, Linda Suskie (2009) explains how understanding and using frameworks can assist with the task of identifying and articulating learning outcomes.

Examples of frameworks include:

- Bloom, 1956 (Bloom’s taxonomy) - 3 domains of learning: cognitive, affective, & psychomotor
- Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001 - a recent update to Bloom’s taxonomy
- Costa & Kallick, 2000 – “habits of mind”
- Marzano, Pickering, & McTighe, 1993 – “thinking skills”

(Suskie, 118)

The learning outcomes in various frameworks could be summarized into three categories:

- Knowledge and conceptual understanding - remembering, replicating a simple procedure, and defining, summarizing, and explaining concepts or phenomena.
- Thinking and other skills:
  - Application – capacity to use knowledge and understanding in a new context
  - Analysis – ability to identify elements, relationships, and principles of a complex process
  - Evaluation, Problem-Solving, and Decision-Making Skills – skills in making informed judgments
  - Synthesis – capacity to put together what one has learned in a new, original way
  - Creativity – abilities to be flexible, take intellectual risks, and be open-minded to new ideas
  - Critical Thinking – capacities to seek truth, clarity, and accuracy; distinguish facts from opinions
  - Information Literacy – broad set of skills reflecting today’s reality of research practice
  - Performance Skills – physical skills
  - Interpersonal Skills – abilities to listen, participate as an effective team member
- Attitudes, values, dispositions, and habits of mind – “personal and social responsibility skills”

(Suskie, 118 – 124)

## Expressing Learning Outcomes

Student Learning Outcomes should be neither too broad nor too specific:

Too vague: Students will demonstrate information literacy skills.

Too specific: Students will be able to use the college’s online services to retrieve information.

Better: Students will locate information and evaluate it critically for its validity and appropriateness.

(Suskie, 130)

# 2010 Showcase

## **HOTEL, RESTAURANT, AND TOURISM MANAGEMENT (HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT) BS**

### 2010-2011 Program-level Student Learning Outcomes

#### **Outcome 1:**

Conceptual Knowledge Outcome - Students will define important business and tourism industry terminologies, acronyms, and concepts, and be able to use and apply them in appropriate industry contexts.

#### **Outcome 2:**

Ethical Behavioral Outcome - Students will demonstrate values, attitudes, and behaviors that reflect cultural sensitivity, professional ethics, and social responsibility required in the service industry environment.

#### **Outcome 3:**

Oral Business Communication Outcome - Students completing the degree will possess the ability to organize and present precise and clear verbal instructions, deliver verbal reports and demonstrate effective oral communication skills traditionally required of managers in tourism organizations and within traditional business and service environments.

#### **Outcome 4:**

Written Business Communication Outcome - Students completing the program will possess the ability to produce well-constructed written business communications such as reports and documents (including electronic) traditionally found in tourism organizations at managerial levels.

#### **Outcome 5:**

Technological, Administrative and Managerial Skills Outcome - Students completing the program will demonstrate the requisite level of information and communication technology skills such as the use of office productivity tools, data analytic tools, and the internet. They will also develop administrative skills such as time management and multi-tasking.

#### **Outcome 6:**

Critical and Creative Thinking Outcome - Students completing the program will demonstrate the ability to generate something fundamentally new out of their creative thinking process or put the existing elements together in a new system, format, or structure to improve upon what already exists.

# Measures

A measure identifies evidence and methods used to determine achievement of expected outcomes. Targets show criteria for success for each student learning outcome. The findings that result from these measures should be used to demonstrate student learning and provide direction for improving learning.

Measures and Targets should show progressive distinction between degree levels (BA, MA, PhD) in the same academic unit. Simple rates, frequencies, or percentages of activities are not true measures of student learning outcomes.

## Direct Measures

The best measures for student learning are **direct measures** in which students demonstrate that they know or can do the specified learning outcome. Direct measures directly evaluate student work. Examples of direct measures include portfolios, exams, papers, projects, presentations, performances, standardized tests, licensure exams, comprehensives, and internship evaluations.

An overall course grade is NOT an acceptable direct measure. And in various cases, an overall exam, project, or paper grade is not an appropriate measure. However, the grading process can be used for assessment, if the classroom exam or assignment **actually measures** the learning outcome and the **criteria** for evaluating student work **is stated explicitly** in writing (usually in the form of a rubric).

## Indirect Measures

Indirect methods such as surveys and interviews ask students to reflect on their learning rather than to demonstrate it. Indirect measures also include job placement rates, admission rates into graduate programs, employer surveys, alumni surveys, focus groups, honors/awards earned by students & alumni, student participation rates in research publications, & conference presentations.

## Expressing Measures

Measures should be detailed and specific. Ensure measurement is “apples to apples,” and make certain, for those programs that are offered at more than one site or by more than one mode, the measure can be duplicated at all sites/modes and the findings can be separated by site/mode. Evidence can include qualitative as well as quantitative information.

---

# 2010 Showcase

## COMMUNITY HEALTH SCIENCES (HEALTH PROMOTION) BS

Program-level Direct Measure

### Measure: Methods Assignment

In CHS 408, students will describe educational methods, identify appropriate use of methods, and give step-by-step instructions for using methods.

#### Achievement Target:

80% of students will score 4 or 5 on a five point rubric scale for items (1) description and use of method clearly explained, (2) clearly identifies appropriate situation for use of method, and (3) provides a step-by-step procedure for using method.

#### Findings (2008-2009) - Achievement Target: Met

Fall 2008 - Course not offered. Spring 2009 - 81.8% of students scored 4 or 5 on a five point rubric scale for items (1) description and use of method clearly explained, (2) clearly identifies appropriate situation for use of method, and (3) provides a step-by-step procedure for using method. (Sample size: 11)

## POLYMER SCIENCE BS

Program-level Direct Measure

### Measure: Research Project Portfolio

The written portfolios of the original research projects of students completing PSC 490/L or PSC 491/L (Special Projects in Polymer Science & Laboratory) will be evaluated by the undergraduate committee and viewed by the entire faculty.

#### Achievement Target:

75% of these portfolios will be deemed acceptable in terms of a basic checklist used by the undergraduate committee. This checklist includes ranking of poor, acceptable, and excellent in the areas of written communication, presentation, and basic understanding of problems and techniques of polymer science.

#### Findings (2008-2009) - Achievement Target: Met

Spring 2009--100% (7/7) of final portfolios were deemed at least acceptable. No portfolios were deemed poor and 6 of 7 were determined to be excellent.

## ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE PHD

Program-level Direct Measure

### Measure: Qualifying Exam (Oral Presentation)

All doctoral students will make an oral presentation during the qualifying exam. Oral presentations must address theoretical component and methodology of research assignment.

#### Achievement Target:

95% of all doctoral students will successfully present a contemporary topic to the justice faculty. The presentation will be judged on preparation (20%), organization (20%), delivery mechanisms (20%), persuasiveness (20%), and ability to convey information in a logical manner (20%).

#### Findings (2008-2009) - Achievement Target: Met

4 of 4 (100%) of doctoral students completed the qualifying exam process for the Fall 2008 semester. No student was eligible or completed the qualifying exam process in the Spring 2009 semester.

## INTERIOR DESIGN BS

Program-level Direct Measure

### Measure: Internship Mentor Evaluation

ID 442 Internship students are evaluated using a program-designed rubric by the professional employer/mentor to assess the student's 1) professional design knowledge, 2) computer knowledge, 3) client interaction, 4) dependability, 5) initiative and 6) attitude. Assessment by the mentor will be restricted to observations while the student is participating in a required structured professional internship with the firm.

#### Achievement Target:

85% of internship students will earn a total mean score of 3.8/5 or higher in each category on an evaluation completed by the professional mentor (internship host).

#### Findings (2008-2009) - Achievement Target: Met

Summer 09: N=16

(100%) 16/16 earned a minimum total mean score of 3.8/5 in Professional Design Knowledge

(100%) 16/16 earned a minimum total mean score of 3.8/5 in Computer Knowledge

(94%) 15/16 earned a minimum total mean score of 3.8/5 in Client Interaction

(94%) 15/16 earned a minimum total mean score of 3.8/5 in Dependability

(88%) 14/16 earned a minimum total mean score of 3.8/5 in Initiative

(94%) 15/16 earned a minimum total mean score of 3.8/5 in Attitude

## COMMUNICATION (SPEECH COMMUNICATION) MA/MS

Program-level Direct Measure

### Measure: Comprehensive Essay Exam

Students will take a comprehensive essay exam after completing required coursework for the master's degree. This exam will contain one or more questions that pertain to the learning objectives 1-4. The exam will be read by a two-person examination committee and rated on a form containing a specific criterion for knowledge of the field; critical reasoning; ability to understand and conduct research; and, ability to apply and utilize research and theory. Once a year, the department's examination committee (2 graduate faculty and chair who design and evaluate all masters comprehensive exams) will meet to discuss the performance of all students on the exam during the past year. Assessment of the program and recommendations will be made based on student answers. Results of this assessment by the examination committee will be presented to the faculty and the need for programmatic change will be discussed.

#### Achievement Target:

90% of students to score at an acceptable or passing level on the "ability to apply and utilize research and theory" criterion on their comprehensive exam.

#### Findings (2008-2009) - Achievement Target: Met

Three students took the comprehensive exam during this time period. All students received at least a "minimally adequate" score on the "ability to apply and utilize research and theory" criterion.

## PSYCHOLOGY BA/BS

Program-level Indirect Measure

### Measure: Alumni Survey-Career Development

Alumni respond to an Alumni Survey that uses a 1-7 Likert scale to measure degree of agreement with statements regarding each of the department's outcomes.

#### Achievement Target:

70% of alumni will agree "strongly" or "somewhat" that the quality of training, with regard to career planning, was adequate.

#### Findings (2008-2009) - Achievement Target: Not Met

64% of alumni (N=22 reporting) from the Hattiesburg campus, and 20% of the alumni (N=10 reporting) from the Gulf Coast campus, reported being satisfied with the quality of training with regard to career development in psychology.

## PARALEGAL STUDIES BA

Program-level Indirect Measure

### Measure: Graduate Exit Survey - Resolving Ethical Dilemmas

Graduating seniors will evaluate on a graduate exit survey the ability to identify and resolve ethical dilemmas that arise in the legal workplace on a 5 point scale with 1 as strongly agree and 5 as strongly disagree.

#### Achievement Target:

80% of graduating seniors will strongly agree or agree on a graduate exit survey that their education experience in the paralegal program at USM has given them the ability to identify and resolve ethical dilemmas that may be confronted in workplace.

#### Findings (2008-2009) - Achievement Target: Met

100% of the students enrolled in PLS 490 mini-session for Fall 2008 (12/12) on the Hattiesburg campus strongly agreed or agreed on a graduate exit survey that their education experience in the paralegal program at USM has given them the ability to identify and resolve ethical dilemmas that may be confronted in workplace. For the Gulf Coast for Fall 2008, the instructor failed to give the students the graduate exit survey, thus there is no data available. No Spring 2009 data was collected as the PLS 490 capstone course was not offered in Hattiesburg or on the Gulf Coast campus.

## MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPY (MS)

Program-level Indirect Measure

### Measure: Advanced Graduate Studies

Students seeking advanced graduate degrees will be accepted into advanced graduate degree programs.

#### Achievement Target:

80% of all students applying to advanced graduate degree programs will be accepted.

#### Findings (2008-2009) - Achievement Target: Met

100% of the students (n=2) that applied for advanced graduate study were accepted the schools of their choosing.

# Action Plans & Analysis

An action is an organized activity undertaken to help programs more effectively achieve intended outcomes, or an activity developed by program faculty to improve and grow the program for the future.

Analysis is the reflection of the program's findings within/for the criteria set for success on the program's intended outcomes. The Analysis is a summary of strengths and areas in which improvement is needed.

## The End of Assessment Is Action

In *Assessment Clear and Simple*, Barbara E. Walvoord (2010) states the goal of assessment is information-based decision making.

“Assessment helps the program determine how well it is achieving its outcomes and suggest effective steps for improvement. That means you should conduct assessment for yourselves and your students, not just for compliance with accreditors. You don't need to collect data you don't use; it's much more important to collect a small amount of useful data than to proliferate data that sit in a drawer or on a computer file. If you are collecting information you are not using, either start using it or stop collecting it. Instead of focusing on compliance, focus on the information you need for wise action.” (Walvoord, 5)

## The Most Common Actions Resulting from Assessment

Three common actions that result from assessment in the department, in general education, and in the institution:

- 1) Changes to curriculum, requirements, programmatic structures, or other aspects of the students' course of study
- 2) Changes to the policies, funding, and planning that support learning
- 3) Faculty development

(Walvoord, 5)

## Are the Actions Working?

To close the loop, programs should not only use assessment information to inform action, but should come back and examine (and document) whether the action led to improvement of student learning.

---

# 2010 Showcase

## PSYCHOLOGY PHD

### Program-level Action Plans

#### **Focus on Training Students for Academia**

The action plan related to this deficiency [not meeting target for graduates' initial employment] will be two-fold. First, we will evaluate whether a target goal of 40% placement in academic areas serves the best interest of our students. In today's economic climate, preparing students to take advantage of a variety of employment opportunities might be more prudent. Nevertheless, to the extent that we continue to focus on training students for academia, we will increase student opportunities to teach and publish during their graduate training. We will enhance mentoring activities directed toward honing students for academic positions. Finally, we will examine recruitment efforts to ensure that we place proper focus on the admission of students with high academic potential.

**Priority:** High

**Responsible Person/Group:** all faculty

**Additional Resources Needed:** increased funds for student travel to professional conferences to increase student opportunities for networking with other academics

#### **Increase the Performance Rate of Student Applications for external funding**

To increase the performance rate of student applications for external funding we will emphasize the importance of this activity in all relevant classes. We will incorporate formal training pertinent to grant writing processes in relevant classes, like research design and other writing intensive classes. We will schedule formal workshops dedicated to training students in grant writing. We will also increase student awareness of funding opportunities for students, as well as faculty funding opportunities that have a student-relevant component.

**Priority:** High

**Responsible Person/Group:** All faculty

## ACCOUNTING BSBA

### Program-level Action Plans

#### **Additional Transaction Cycle Case**

In an attempt to improve the Acc 409 course, enhance the overall accounting program, and positively "close the loop" from last year's assessment findings, a transactions cycle chapter was added to the undergraduate auditing course in the spring 2009. The transactions cycle chapter was added because comments in exit interviews in the prior year's assessment cycle from students who had performed internships with CPA firms indicated these students felt ill-prepared in this area when they performed their internships. Thus, this is the first year this particular assessment procedure has been performed. Overall, the performances of the students on the two traits measuring knowledge of transactions cycles are acceptable. That is, on both traits the mean performances were at or slightly above 2.0 (i.e., 2.0 indicates a student "met expectations"). Still, this result is only marginally acceptable, and the assessment team believes there is room for improvement in this area. The assessment team recommends the instructor in Acc 409 add another transactions cycle problem or case next year to give the students more exposure to this somewhat difficult topic.

**Priority:** Medium      **Target Date:** Fall semester 2009

**Responsible Person/Group:** ACC 409 instructor, Assessment Team

**Increase projects requiring research databases and analysis**

In the assessment report for the 2007-2008 academic year, the assessment team recommended adding a case research requirement in Acc 325 so that changes in the students' abilities could be evaluated longitudinally during their undergraduate career (i.e., from Acc 325 through Acc 327 and finally in Acc 401) to determine if their research skills improved significantly during the program. Indeed, the 2008-2009 results indicate the students' abilities to research databases and draw proper conclusions based on their research appeared to improve dramatically in the sequence of financial accounting courses as a large portion of the students performed at an unsatisfactory level in Acc 325, but by the final case in Acc 401 the vast majority of students performed at an acceptable level. Based on these results, the assessment team recommends that the current structure of case assignments in the financial accounting sequence of courses be continued in the future with proper assessment to ensure this learning objective continues to be met. Results from the assessment rubric applied to the case in Acc 407 in the 2008-2009 academic year, however, suggest improvements are needed in researching the governmental accounting standards. Almost half the students in Acc 407 performed at a low level on the research case in this course. In the prior year (i.e., 2007-2008), students solved three research cases in Acc 407, but this was cut back to one assignment in 2008-2009 because the assessment team recommended additional cases be added to Acc 401 to ensure that students were exposed to a series of cases over sequenced courses (i.e., Acc 325, 327, and 401). In the prior year, with three case assignments in Acc 407, students performed well overall on their third and final case in this course. However, in 2008-2009, the Acc 407 students had less exposure to researching GASB standards since only one case was assigned; this likely resulted in their poor performance on the assessment rubric this year. The assessment team recommends increasing the number of research case assignments in Acc 407 to three, with assessment evaluation to occur on the third case. This will give Acc 407 students more exposure to researching GASB standards, which should improve their skills in this area. The current assessment procedures measure the ability of students to research the professional standards, which is important. However, the assessment team believes students' research skills should be broadened to include the ability to research databases containing empirical (i.e., financial) data and the ability to download selected data from these databases for analysis. The assessment team recommends that in one or more senior level accounting courses a project be added requiring students to access the Compustat database and import financial data into an Excel spreadsheet for appropriate analysis. The project should be included as part of the course grade and evaluated for assessment purposes as well.

**Priority:** High **Target Date:** Beginning Fall semester 2009

**Responsible Person/Group:** Accounting faculty teaching at/above 300 level, Assessment team, Director

**Access Excel spreadsheet technology in ACC 320 vice ACC 325**

In Acc 325 in the spring 2009, 27% of the students did not turn in an acceptable project. In hindsight, this course may have been a poor choice for measuring technology skills of accounting majors on a comprehensive project. Although Acc 325 is comprised mostly of accounting majors, it also contains a number of finance majors. It was noted by the instructor that several of the finance majors were simply trying to achieve a passing grade of a "D" in the course. Even though the project was worth 10% of the course grade, some of the students simply chose not to do it or to put very little effort into it. Thus, the relatively high portion (i.e., 27%) of unacceptable performances on the project in this course does not necessarily mean these students are not competent in technology. It is a convoluted finding that may be more the result of apathy towards the project by non-accounting majors than a lack of ability. The assessment team recommends that technology competence of accounting majors should not be measured in Acc 325 in the future. Instead, it should be measured in Acc 320, which is comprised of accounting majors only and has a number of topics that can be used for assignments involving the use of technology.

**Priority:** High **Target Date:** Spring semester 2010

**Responsible Person/Group:** ACC 320 instructor, Assessment Team

## **DANCE (PERFORMANCE AND CHOREOGRAPHY) (BS)**

2008-2009 Program-level Analysis

### **What specifically did your assessments show regarding proven strengths or progress you made on outcomes?**

First, dance performance and choreography majors achieved a majority of the targets for Outcomes #1, 3 and 4. (Perform exit competencies in dance, Prepared to participate in various fields of dance, Articulate dance theoretically and aesthetically). In other words, our program does a fine job in technically training and preparing dancers as both practitioners and as advocates. In relation to Outcome #3, it is positive to see that students are prepared to participate in the field of dance given that the BFA degree they are earning is intended to be a pre-professional one that can provide entry into the professional world upon graduation. With regard to Outcome # 4, our curriculum and the rigor therein does situate students for being able to articulate dance on theoretical and aesthetic level; they are offered many courses, opportunities, and venues for meeting this objective. Second, this is the first year we administered the exit interview during finals week of the Spring semester. This interview (which was combined with the oral defense of thesis) allowed us to gather perhaps the truest "end point" glimpse into where are our students are at the point of graduation. As an assessment method, the exit interview is comprehensive and helps us to understand how successful our program is in working towards meeting our intended learning outcomes. The exit survey (combined with the exit interview) showed an overwhelming sense that graduating majors feel prepared for the post-baccalaureate careers. Third, our students who worked with guest artist (Misnomer Dance Theatre) received high marks. This is one (rare) way to assess their work in a "real life" situation. The results show that they were prepared not just technically and artistically, but professionally. This is a well-earned push for professionalism that our entire program has undergone in the last 4-5 years. Fourth, standardizing DAN 312/410 has allowed for greater ease in assessment reporting in measure #17. While, there is still a need for developing links between DAN 310 and DAN 312 (specifically prospectus writing), the links between 312 to 410 are now assured (and reflected in the quality of student work.)

### **What specifically did your assessments show regarding any outcomes that will require continued attention?**

The two outcomes that will continue to require attention are # 2 (Comprehensive knowledge of dance) and #5 (Applies and demonstrates knowledge of dance making) as they were only met in one instance each. That performance and choreography majors are not meeting standards for applying knowledge of dance making is disarming. In reviewing the measures we use to assess this objective, they seem reasonable and appropriate, so I see no need to change them. I think attending to ADCFA adjudication selections and working with students more in their research presentations and oral defenses will help to some extent. In relation to Outcome # 2, once the portfolio requirement is established, I think this objective can be met. Other issues to consider: 1. Adding "stylistic accuracy" into our learning outcomes at the advanced technical level. Instructors are assessing in ballet technique classes now with classical variations instead of original choreography. We need to make sure that maintaining a high level of exit competencies is not eclipsed by stylistic concerns. 2. The reporting process for measure #9 is still not working. Because of this, we cannot tell how we are preparing our dancers for auditioning for RDC from semester to semester. New measures, perhaps? 3. Similar to my discussion of Outcome #2 above, our program presence at the American College Dance Festival, while a worthwhile experience unto itself, has not yielded performance in the Gala concert in 2 years. How can the faculty position our program better to achieve this goal? Or is the experience itself enough?

# 2010 Showcase

## ANNUAL REPORTING

### EDUCATION (SPECIAL EDUCATION) PHD

#### Executive Summary

In 2008-2009, there have been 10 Special Education Ph.D. candidates at various stages of the program. After two years of research and discussion of the CISE doctoral programs, CISE graduate faculty made the decision to eliminate the Ed.D. programs and revise and enhance the Ph.D. programs. Graduate faculty met in curriculum emphasis areas to review program plans to ensure that programmatic outcomes and assessments were included in the revised plans. Research requirements in the Ph.D. program were sequenced and enhanced to better align with the coursework and the dissertation. Additionally, the CISE Graduate Handbook was reviewed and revised to reflect the changes in the programs. The new Ph.D. programs were approved by the COEP Curriculum Committee, the Professional Education Council and the Graduate Council.

### POLYMER SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING MS

#### Contributions to the Institution

The School strives to meet the aspirations set forth by the University in its Mission, and fulfills the universities mission and values in several key areas. First and foremost, the SPHPM is a research focused program at all educational levels. The research conducted by the students and faculty of the SPHPM is internationally respected and renown, as evidenced by the number of publications, presentations, and invited presentations given by students and faculty each year. At the BS level, the School has made great strides in increasing enrollment by recruiting and retaining students. During the current cycle, the School has been very active in attending high school and junior college career fairs or visiting classrooms in order to recruit high ability students to the University of Southern Mississippi. The School anticipates a record or near record enrollment for the coming year and anticipates continuing the activities that will bring these students to the University of Southern Mississippi. In addition, the School has taken a proactive stance on retaining students by encourage early engagement with the program faculty, students, and staff through involvement in undergraduate research, enhanced advising, and participation in the student group of the School.

### NUTRITION AND DIETETICS BS

#### Highlights

100% of academic programs eligible for accreditation are accredited. NFS faculty received an IHL course redesign award focused on redesign of our undergraduate introductory nutrition course, NFS362. Academic clinical programs are supported by 30 hospitals and other facilities (health departments, nursing homes, wellness facilities, home health agencies, schools) and 70+ food and nutrition professionals as preceptors. Faculty were awarded \$1.45 million in external funding (including the unit228s second NIH grant) for an average of \$167,268 per tenure track FTE. Grant release time generated \$144,134 in faculty salary recovery, or an average of \$16,015 per tenure track FTE. Faculty serve in eight national roles which include professional association committee chairs, accreditation team members, journal boards of editors, and federal agency proposal reviewers.

## **MEDICAL TECHNOLOGY BS**

### **Teaching Activities**

Introduction to Medical Technology (MTC 101) is in preparation for on-line delivery in spring, 2010. Several Special Problems (MTC 492) courses were completed, including courses that will lead to completion of honor theses. As part of the faculty's teaching goals, each faculty member reviews objectives, course content, exams, and other course-related material each year. Each faculty member documents this in the annual report for the calendar year. Each faculty member reviews section scores from the national certification exam to ascertain the level of performance for each group of graduates. The section scores are divided under specific topics so each faculty member can make adjustments based on past student performance.

## **SOCIAL WORK BSW**

### **Research and Scholarly Activities**

The faculty have been productive with 54 presentations for an average of about 7-8 presentations per faculty. Faculty published 19 publications in refereed journal or as technical reports. Just over \$4.1 million dollars of external funds were generated collectively by faculty over the course of the year. The School of Social Work's Training Academy continues to strengthen child welfare services to children in Forrest County. The impact of these services on children and DHS and Youth Court has been substantial.

## **BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION BS**

### **Public/Community Service**

Dr. Diane J. Fisher served as Editor of the NABTE Review, an annual refereed journal that serves as a forum for research in business education. At the NBEA Annual Convention, Dr. Fisher was elected as the NABTE President-Elect. Dr. Fisher also is serving as Chairman of the Membership Committee for Delta Pi Epsilon, a national graduate honorary business education society. Dr. Fisher was elected as President-Elect of the Mississippi Business Education Association. Dr. Sharon Rouse was elected as Secretary of the Policy Commission for Business and Economic Education. Dr. Rouse serves as editor of the technology section for the Business Education Forum. Dr. Rouse will serve as the NBEA membership director for the state of Mississippi. BTE 485 students engaged in service learning projects

## **LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE BA**

### **Challenges**

Managing data collection in a more efficient and effective manner has been and will continue to be a challenge. Helping students keep current and feel confident with emerging and rapidly changing technology and its impact on our field will always be a challenge. The speed of change and related impacts make technology a challenge for all fields. Increasing successful grant writing and improving economic development within the School are two critical challenges.



# Recommended Reading

## General Assessment Resources

Assessment Clear and Simple

Barbara E. Walvoord  
John Wiley & Sons ©2010

Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide

Linda Suskie  
John Wiley & Sons ©2010

Designing Effective Assessment: Principles and Profiles of Good Practice

Trudy W. Banta, Elizabeth A. Jones, Karen E. Black  
John Wiley & Sons ©2009

Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers

Thomas A. Angelo & K. Patricia Cross  
John Wiley & Sons ©1993

The Course Syllabus: A Learning-Centered Approach

Judith Grunert O'Brien  
John Wiley & Sons ©2008

Effective Grading: A Tool for Learning and Assessment in College

Barbara E. Walvoord  
John Wiley & Sons ©2010

Introduction To Rubrics: An Assessment Tool To Save Grading Time, Convey Effective Feedback and Promote Student Learning

Dannelle D. Stevens  
Stylus Publishing ©2005

## Discipline-Specific Assessment Resources

Assessment in Engineering Programs: Evolving Best Practices

Edited by William E. Kelly  
© AIR

Assessment of Student Learning in College Mathematics: Towards Improved Programs and Courses

Edited by Bernard L. Madison  
© AIR

Assessment of Student Learning in Business Schools: Best Practices Each Step of the Way

Edited by Kathryn Martell and Thomas Calderon  
© AIR