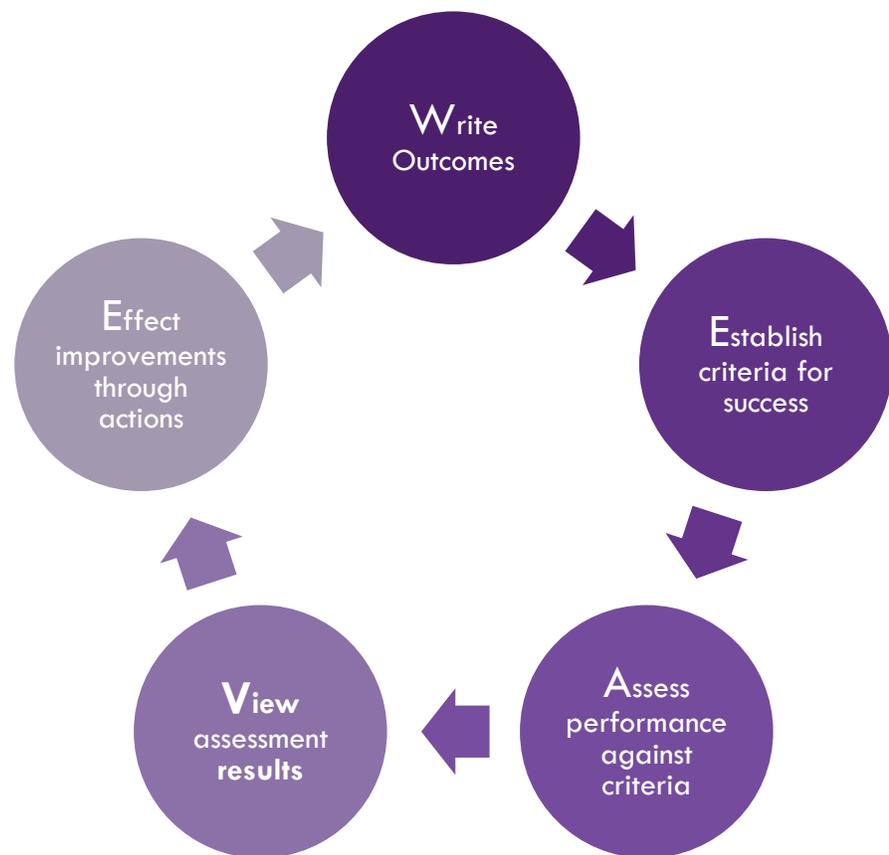


# ASSESSMENT SHOWCASE



Spring 2012

Academic Program Assessment

# THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

## ACADEMIC PROGRAM ASSESSMENT SHOWCASE

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Note: Site and delivery mode inventory is maintained by the Office of Institutional Research. Programs that fall in the multi-site and/or multi-mode category are marked with a single asterisk. Hybrid delivery programs, programs that are 50 percent to 100 percent online without a face-to-face equivalent, or programs that rest entirely at one of the teaching sites off the Hattiesburg campus are marked with a double asterisk.

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

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

## MISSISSIPPI INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING (IHL)

The Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL System), under the governance of its Board of Trustees, will operate as a strong public university system with eight distinct, mission-driven universities, and will enhance the quality of life of Mississippians by effectively meeting their diverse educational needs. In so doing, the IHL system will be characterized by, and become nationally recognized for, its emphasis on student achievement and on preparing responsible citizens; its adherence to high academic standards and to quality in instruction, research, service and facilities; and its commitment to affordability, accessibility, and accountability.

## 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 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 – The Office of Institutional Research maintains the inventory of active USM certificate programs (<http://www.usm.edu/institutional-research>). To be in compliance with SACS-COC Principles of Accreditation policy, all certificate programs in this inventory must assess program-level student learning outcomes in accordance with the Certificate Program Assessment Plan and Reporting Guidelines. UAC Approved 9.30.09; Modified 02.29.12
  
- 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 Certificate 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; Modified 02.29.12

*The University of Southern Mississippi Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes Participants Policy 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*

## **University Assessment Committee Policy Regarding Academic Programs' Participation in the University-Wide Assessment Process**

The purpose of the University Assessment Committee (UAC) is to support the process of continual self-evaluation and improvement across all academic and administrative units at The University of Southern Mississippi. Assessment involves the articulation of desired student learning outcomes, the design of measures to assess student learning in relationship to those outcomes, and the systematic collection of findings to determine if, and to what extent, student learning is occurring. Student learning outcomes assessment data are reported and preserved in WEAVEonline, the program adopted by the UAC as the university-wide assessment database.

Each year, a report of program and academic unit assessment participation is made to the deans, provost and president of The University of Southern Mississippi. The UAC will continue (1) its recognition of academic programs judged to provide adequate and commendable support to SACS Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1; (2) to hold the annual Assessment Showcase that recognizes academic programs judged to provide commendable support to SACS Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1; and (3) to provide focused guidance and assistance to those programs that do not achieve at least an adequate rating in a given year. The UAC will include in that report a list of any academic programs that did not submit plans and reports required within the university-wide assessment process.

The UAC finds it unacceptable that some academic programs consistently do not participate in the university-wide assessment process and documentation of such in WEAVEonline. Such lack of participation undermines the university-wide efforts in assessment and jeopardizes the university response to SACS Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1. The UAC supports academic programs' participation in discipline-specific accreditation processes; however, this participation does not exempt a program from participation in the university-wide assessment process.

UAC Approved 04.19.11

### **Items for future consideration:**

UAC recommendations for the future are that (1) University Assessment Committee processes be incorporated into the program prioritization processes used by the University Priorities Committee (UPC), and (2) successful completion of assessment documentation be incorporated in performance evaluations of those department chairs and program coordinators responsible and of their respective deans. It is essential to the continued success of the university that assessment data are collected and the results be acted upon for improvement of student learning.

UAC Approved 04.19.11

# Plan and Report Guidelines

## Academic Program Assessment Plan and Report Guidelines

### PLAN GUIDELINES:

1. All USM degree programs on the IHL Academic Program Inventory assess student learning outcomes at the program level.
2. Separate assessment plans are encouraged at the emphasis level.
3. To assist with the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) assessment requirements, all teacher licensure programs assess at the emphasis level.
4. Programs that offer separate online emphasis areas or distinct emphasis areas at different sites assess separately.
5. Programs with two degrees at the same level in the same subject can choose to assess within one plan or separate plans.
6. Program-level Assessment Plans have a minimum of five student learning outcomes.
7. Each student learning outcome must have two measures; one must be a direct measure.
8. Course grades cannot be used as measures.

### REPORT GUIDELINES:

Programs offered at multiple teaching sites or by multiple delivery modes must report their findings by site and include all sites and/or modes in the findings analysis.

The following components are required for a complete assessment report:

1. Findings (separated by site/mode if applicable)
2. Action Plans (required in year 2 of the assessment cycle)
3. Analysis
4. Program Summary
5. Continuous Improvement Initiatives
6. Closing the Loop

## Certificate Program Assessment Plan and Report Guidelines

All certificate programs must identify a minimum of two student learning outcomes. Each student learning outcome must be assessed with at least one direct measure.

Certificate programs must assess annually, following program-level calendars. The following components are required for a complete assessment report:

1. Findings (separated by site/mode if applicable)
2. Action Plans
3. 2-part Analysis to include Closing the Loop as applicable

## Stand-alone Minor Assessment Plan and Report Guidelines

All stand-alone minors must identify a minimum of two student learning outcomes. Each student learning outcome must be assessed with at least one direct measure.

Stand-Alone Minors must assess annually, following program-level calendars.

Stand-Alone Minors shall follow certificate reporting guidelines.

# Assessment Process Overview

SPRING 2012

2010-2011/2011-2012 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 2011-2012 Academic Program Assessment Report includes:

- d) Findings (due May 31)
- e) 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*

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.

In the spring semester of the second year of the cycle, departments are asked to gather faculty; review past assessment reports (including data from the current year); reevaluate learning outcomes, measures, and targets; and develop action plans for the next assessment cycle implementation. With the two-year cycle, departments should have more than a full year of data (including any summer semester data) to evaluate when developing new action plans for improvement and revising assessment plans if needed.

The University of Southern Mississippi submits Academic Program Assessment Reports as supporting documentation for compliance with SACSCOC Core Requirement 2.5 and Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1. Departments should refer to the SACSCOC 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 Plan and Report Guidelines were followed
- 2) The Assessment Report supports SACS Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1

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

## SACSCOC FIFTH-YEAR INTERIM REPORT

**The university's Fifth-Year Interim Report was submitted March 26, 2012.** The Fifth-Year Interim Report consists of an abbreviated compliance report that addresses select 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*) was one of the standards addressed.

**Supporting documentation.** A sample of reports from assessment cycles 2008-2009, 2009-2010, and 2010-2011 representing all five colleges, degree levels, teaching sites, and delivery modes were included as supporting documentation for SACS Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1.1. In the interest of full disclosure, examples of Outcomes, Measures, Findings Data, Action Plans, Analysis, Program Summaries, and Continuous Improvement Initiatives from programs not represented in the three-year sample were also presented to document student learning outcomes assessment activities of all 43 degree-granting units.

Closing the Loop documents were included to present specific evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results. These documents highlighted examples of Closing the Loop discussions from a large representative sample of WEAVE reports from each college. The documents have been combined and are presented in the 2012 Assessment Showcase supplement booklet titled "Closing the Loop."

# 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)

# 2012 Showcase

## **HIGHER EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION EdD/PhD**

2010-2011 Program-level Student Learning Outcomes

### **O 1: Context and Environment of Higher Education**

Students will demonstrate knowledge of the context and environment of higher education.

### **O 2: Curriculum Development in Higher Education**

Students will be able to describe and classify theories of curriculum development, as well as construct curricular models for higher education settings.

### **O 3: Higher Education Finance**

Students will demonstrate knowledge of funding sources in higher education and gain experience with budget development, resource allocation, and financial management in higher education institutions.

### **O 4: Legal and Ethical Practices in Higher Education**

Students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of legal and ethical practices related to higher education and apply them to specific higher education case studies.

### **O 5: Human Resources in Higher Education (EdD only)**

Students will be able to comprehend and apply the legal regulations and policies surrounding today's workforce in areas of employee relations, recruitment and selection, training, benefits, compensation, diversity, documentation, information systems and other related topics for public universities.

### **O 6: Faculty Roles and Responsibilities**

Students will be able to articulate and rank the importance of faculty roles and responsibilities as they are applicable to different types of higher education settings.

### **O 7: Leadership in Higher Education**

Students will be able to describe leadership theories relevant to higher education and categorize specific leadership practices according to those theories.

### **O 8: Current Trends, Issues, and Innovations in Higher Education**

Students will be able to characterize and critique current trends, issues, and innovations in Higher Education institutions.

### **O 9: Student Diversity in Higher Education (PhD Only)**

Students will be able to implement strategies for creating a culturally responsive learning environment in their teaching.

### **O 10: Proficient Research Practitioners**

Students will demonstrate the ability to design, implement, and analyze research in higher education.

# 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. Measurement should ensure that comparisons are “apples to apples,” and should ascertain that, 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.

# 2012 Showcase

## **MARKETING BSBA\***

Program-level Direct Measure

### **M 5: Marketing research exam**

The Marketing Research Exam Core Knowledge Questions. The questions come from 4 exams throughout the semester and cover the techniques and issues surrounding collecting market information.

#### **Achievement Target:**

70% of students will score 70 or above on the core knowledge questions.

#### **Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Met**

Fall 2010 Hattiesburg: In the Fall class, 37 students completed all four exams and 97% scored 70 or above.

Spring 2011 Hattiesburg: In the Spring of 2011 there were 27 students in the class but two did not complete all four exams. Of the 25 who completed all exams, 76% scored 70 or above on the core knowledge questions.

## **LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE BA**

Program-level Direct Measure

### **M 3: Demonstrate essential writing skills: Collection Development**

A collection development policy for a hypothetical library that is 1) free of typos, punctuation errors, spelling errors, and grammatical errors 2) clear and logically arranged 3) incorporates varied, interesting, appropriate vocabulary and sentence structure 4) written in third-person, objective, gender-free style. (LIS 411)

#### **Target:**

Target 80% of assessed student writing assignments are rated as satisfactory based on the writing rubric with at least 5% of those rated as excellent as compared to the writing rubric.

#### **Findings (2010-2011) - Target: Met**

Spring 2011: 94% (17 of 18) students achieved an excellent rating on the writing aspects of the rubric, with 1 (6%) student needing improvement.

## **POLYMER SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING PhD**

Program-level Direct Measure

### **M 3: Comprehensive Exam**

Students will demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the field of polymer science by taking nine comprehensive examinations (three organic, three physical and three practical. (Comprehensive examinations are given on a rotating basis by a variety of polymer science faculty members - in one complete rotation all of the faculty are required to give at least one comprehensive examination in their area of specialty.)

#### **Achievement Target:**

90% of students pass 6 of 9 comprehensive examinations, including at least one from each section.

#### **Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Not Met**

Fall 2010--100% (1 of 1) of first time comprehensive exam takers passed 6 of 9 exams, including one from each section Spring 2011--72% (8 of 11) of first time comprehensive exam takers passed 6 of 9 exams, including one from each section.

**INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES BIS**

Program-level Indirect Measure

**M 4: Placement Data**

Students will report on their post-baccalaureate placement.

**Achievement Target:**

80% of IDS grads will report employment or graduate admission in the first 6 months after graduation.

**Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Partially Met**

of 128 students who graduated in the past cycle, 90 (70%) reported full time employment within 6 months, 12 (9%) reported part-time employment, 11 (8.5%) are attending post-baccalaureate programs, 22 (17%) did not report. (Some people reported more than one status).

**COUNSELING AND PERSONNEL SERVICES (SCHOOL COUNSELING) MED**

Program-level Indirect Measure

**M 9: Course/Program Reflection**

Candidate Course/Program Reflections. Reflections are used solely for program development and are scored by completion only. However, program committee members feel strongly that students continue their learning through personal reflections of progress. Students will also reflect on their ability to establish maintain relationships and their progress toward becoming an effective counselor.

**Achievement Target:**

Each cohort will complete a reflection. One cohort focuses on personal growth and the other cohort includes their analysis of the program.

**Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Met**

Summer 2011: The first year cohort in (N=14) completed a detailed analysis of their individual growth during the summer. This reflection included "aha" moments, areas of concern for their personal growth, and an overall assessment of summer one. It was noted that the students found a tremendous difference in the professional approach to assist students versus the way they worked with students as a teacher. Each student was asked to identify an area of concern, which was documented and will be used as a foundational piece during the online sessions of WIMBA this fall. The second year cohort all felt that the program satisfactorily assisted them in establishing and maintaining relationships with k-12 students. Over half reported strongly satisfied. (N=13)

**HYDROGRAPHIC SCIENCE MS\*\***

Program-level Indirect Measure

**M 1: Employer Survey**

Employers will be polled to determine level of understanding and preparedness of alumni. Evaluation will be based on Employer Evaluation Instrument responses.

**Achievement Target:**

90% of employer respondents feel that their graduates have a good understanding of hydrography and are in favorable positions to move forward in their careers. Evaluation will be based on Employer Evaluation Instrument responses. Each question in the instrument will have a 1 to 5 scale response (significantly below peers to substantially above peers), with an average of 3 (same as peers) considered to be a minimum affirmative response.

**Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Met**

Survey was conducted 20 June - 18 August 2011. Four responses received of 18 sent. Three of six U.S. Government organizations, one of five commercial companies, and none of seven foreign hydrographic organizations. 100% of employer respondents felt that their graduates have a good understanding of hydrography and that graduates are in favorable positions to move forward in their careers. **The average rating was 3.75 for bathymetry.**

# 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, 2010, p. 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, 2010, p.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.

# 2012 Showcase

## MUSIC BA

### Action Plan

#### Music Theory Action Plan

A free tutoring program has been implemented for students in theory classes. The theory faculty has begun a systematic review of materials taught from MUS 100 to MUS 202 to make sure it meets the overall goal of the program as a whole.

**Implementation Description:** Tutoring program and program review

**Responsible Person/Group:** Theory Faculty

**Established in Cycle:** 2010-2011

**Implementation Status:** Planned

**Priority:** High

**Additional Resources Requested:** None at this time

## AUDIOLOGY AuD

### Action Plan

#### Improvement of Praxis Exam Scores

The AuD Program at USM graduated its first class in 2009. Part of the requirements for obtaining a state license and practicing audiology is successful completion of the Educational Testing Service's Praxis examination in Audiology. This exam is typically taken during the last semester of the third year or first semester of the fourth year. Thus far, all (100%) of graduating students have passed the Praxis exam. However, several students have passed with the minimal score of 600. This outcome is of concern to the AuD faculty. Therefore, during a faculty meeting in 2010, the faculty agreed to implement a comprehensive examination during the second semester (spring) of the second year. This examination will be similar to the Praxis exam in form but the content will be based on the first two years of the AuD curriculum. The Praxis exam has a broader scope. The AuD comprehensive was compiled from questions provided by faculty members. The purpose of the exam is to provide an experience similar to the national Praxis exam and, by analysis of errant responses, to identify students' weaknesses. Also, a second purpose of the exam was to identify students who are not capable of retaining information and would be considered for dismissal from the AuD Program. It is anticipated that the implementation of a comprehensive exam in audiology will encourage students to review previous material prior to taking the exam and this review will improve scores on the Praxis exam also. This exam was administered recently to the current third year and second year students. All third year students scored 70% correct or higher and all second year students scored 60% or higher. A successful passing score is yet to be determined and will be based on results acquired on the current class next and year's class of second year students. The AuD comprehensive exam will be administered to the Fall 2011 class of first year students when these student are in the spring semester of their second year (2013).

**Implementation Description:** The AuD comprehensive exam will be implemented during the second spring semester of the class admitted in the fall of 2011.

**Responsible Person/Group:** AuD Faculty. Coordinated by Program Director.

**Established in Cycle:** 2010-2011

**Implementation Status:** Planned

**Priority:** High

**Completion Date:** 05/31/2013

## INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS BSBA

### Analysis Answers

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

We are quite pleased with the performance of our students on multiple assessment measures. IB students appear to have a satisfactory understanding of the concepts of international business upon entry into the program and also at the end. Results from IB300 indicate that 2/3 of the students are mastering the basic principles in the introductory course. They also performed very well on the pre-test and post-tests in IB472 (the un-official capstone course), and met our expectations for having a working knowledge of INCOTERMS (International Chamber of Commerce rules and procedures). Finally, the ETS-MFT (IB portion) results are quite strong, as our students are performing at the 95th percentile nationally. In sum, these measures indicate that our students are fully absorbing program content. Results of the Export Project in IB472 also indicate that students are not only meeting faculty expectations, but also those of independent practitioners, as the course projects are graded by the faculty in consultation with U.S. Department of Commerce representatives.

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

Despite the strong results above, there is still room for improvement. While the students demonstrated their understanding of cultures (O1) through their performance on M1 (understanding of the Kiss, Bow, or Shake Hands text), and their ability to apply international business tools (O4) by their performance on the Export Project, their performance on the Management portion of the ETS-MFT was just short of expectations (55th and 90th percentiles with a target of 70th percentile). These results call for a reconsideration of the use of the ETS-MFT sub-tests as measures (as discussed in the Action Plan section).

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MS\*\*

### Analysis Answers

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

The Masters of Science in Economic Development Program is generally achieving and making progress toward achieving the established outcomes/objectives. The tests, papers, and other measures used to determine outcomes have been refined. For example, the comprehensive exam has been modified to include learning objectives from all the required courses. A written exam has been added to each class to better prepare the students to take the final comprehensive examination. The faculty meets regularly to discuss curriculum and this has helped the progress toward achieving outcomes. Evidence of the impacts of these efforts are growing. Recent interview with student employers have noted that the graduating students are prepared for the workplace. These interviews have also enabled the professionals to make substantive suggestions on areas where potential programmatic enhancements may improve the quality of the program.

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

An area that requires continued attention is the writing skills of students entering the program. Several students have been accepted into the program that lacked the basic writing skills to complete graduate level work. As a result, the program has added a writing sample to the application package and has been working with the university writing center. The short time frame format of the classes is another area that requires attention because the existing month long classes do not allow much time for student reflection on the subject. Additionally, written examinations are being required for the courses where appropriate. This is enabling the students to be assessed and to receive feedback regarding their writing skills. This increases the likelihood that the students will matriculate through the comprehensive examination process and ultimately, be better prepared for the workplace.

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## ANTHROPOLOGY BS

### Analysis Answers

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

In 2010-2011, the program in anthropology focused on assessing student skills and working to ensure that students are gaining knowledge of theory, can apply the perspective on anthropology to the "real world," are able to conduct a research project and present their findings, and feel prepared for success upon graduation. Our students met all targets set, and findings indicate that students are particularly strong in theoretical understanding and application as well as the ability to craft a resume, cover letter, and personal statement. We will continue to look closely at our outcomes and measures throughout 2011-2012 to ensure that our students are improving and succeeding through our program.

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

As previously noted, in 2010-2011, all targets were met in the Anthropology BA program. That said, some aspects of the Capstone Seminar continue to be less than where we want them to be in terms of student performance. Only 75% of students earned a grade of 70% or better on their oral presentation in Capstone, and the same percentage above 70% for the research paper. This course is a difficult one to teach, as offering a single "Capstone" experience is challenging in a four-field discipline. Although all targets were met, in 2011-2012, the faculty in the program in anthropology will discuss student performance in this seminar and consider alternative ways of organizing the seminar to improve the rate of successful research papers and presentations.

## NUTRITION AND FOOD SYSTEMS PhD

### Analysis Answers

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

For 2010-11, both objective and subjective targets were met for four of five student learning outcomes, including evaluate behavioral management theories and evaluate food and nutrition public policy, and communicate nutrition and food systems research concepts in writing and orally. These findings are consistent with those from the past two years, and improved for the outcome evaluate food and nutrition public policy. Alumni survey responses by graduates indicate that they are experiencing success in the faculty positions they currently hold, as demonstrated by reports on professional presentations and success with grant funding for research. We do however recognize the limitation of drawing conclusions about the program when the program completion rate has been low during the time period we are evaluating.

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

The objective measure for the outcome "demonstrate research skills" was not met, nor was it met in three of four past evaluation periods. We recognize that the small number of students in our program affects our ability to meet the target (i.e. if 1 our 4 students does not meet it, the rate is 75%). The subject target for this outcome was met consistently, but the two types of measures represent two different pools of students, those who have completed the program and those who have not. We have instituted remediation activities related to this area of weakness, which are included in action items.

## ENGLISH BA\*

### Analysis Answers

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

Students in the BA program in Hattiesburg showed significant improvements in 2010-2011 from 2009-2010 on all measures.

<u>2009-2010</u>	<u>2010-2011</u>
thesis = 60%	thesis = 92.8%
analysis = 55%	analysis = 85.7%
writing skills = 55%	writing skills = 92.8%
research skills = 70%	research skills = 85.7%

Students in the BA program in Gulf Park showed either progress or consistency from 2009-2010 to 2010-2011. Only on the measure of research skills was there a decline.

<u>2009-2010</u>	<u>2010-2011</u>
thesis = 66.7%	thesis = 78.9.8%
analysis = 80%	analysis = 78.9%
writing skills = 66.7%	writing skills = 94.7%
research skills = 93.3%	research skills = 73.7%

Moreover, the failure to meet targets on most measures in 2009-2010 encouraged a renewed commitment to addressing writing more explicitly in upper-level courses. In 2009 the English department's undergraduate assessment committee recommended to the department that students be advised to sequence their coursework for the major more carefully, beginning with ENG 340 (analysis of literature), moving through the four literature surveys, and only then proceeding to the more specialized 400-level courses. The committee also recommended more consistency in the types of assignments given in the 300- and 400-level courses, with the 300-level courses emphasizing thesis-driven close reading and the 400-level courses including more research and historical and critical contextualization in addition to thesis-driven close reading. These recommendations appear to have resulted in significant improvements for all measures. In spring 2010 the undergraduate assessment rubric was revised to a 5-point scale from a 4-point scale, allowing for a more accurate assessment, and in spring 2011 an assessment rubric was designed for the oral presentations in the senior capstone course, which were assessed for the first time in spring 2011. Students on the Hattiesburg campus showed strong competency in oral presentations skills, with 87.5% scoring a 9 or above out of 15. No presentations scored below a 3 on the measure of thesis/content, only one scored below a 3 on the measure of coherence/organization, and only two scored below a 3 on the measure of professional presentation (vocal and non-verbal delivery).

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

Gulf Park students showed declines for only two measures: analysis and research skills. The decline for analysis was a mere 1.1%, which does not appear significant. The decline in research skills was nearly 20%, but this may be the result of the type of assignment required rather than a lack or decline in skill on the part of the students. The Gulf Park assessment committee will discuss requiring more research for 400-level literature courses and for addressing research more explicitly in ENG 340 (analysis of literature). While data from Gulf Park was not collected for oral presentation skills in 2010-2011, we plan to do so for the next cycle. In 2010-2011 the English department only collected data using single measure for each of the five learning outcomes (a seminar paper for outcomes 1-4 and an oral presentation for outcome 5). We are revising the student exit survey as a second, indirect measure for outcomes 1-5.

# Annual Reporting

## Annual Reporting Fields

The 2011-2012 Assessment Report includes the following Annual Reporting data elements:

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

### **PROGRAM SUMMARY**

Programs are asked to summarize highlights of the past year for that particular academic program. The summary field is 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.

### **CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVES (ADDITIONAL ACTION PLANS)**

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

### **CLOSING THE LOOP (ACTION PLAN TRACKING)**

Programs are 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 nonsuccess) of previously implemented action plans. It is very important for programs to respond to this section with thought and detail. This section is where programs provide evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results.

# 2012 Showcase

## **SPORT COACHING EDUCATION MS\*\***

### **Program Summary**

The Master of Science in Sport Coaching Education (SCE), housed in the School of Human Performance and Recreation, was approved for online delivery by the Graduate Council in January of 2006 with a launch in the fall semester of that year. The program includes 36 hours of graduate coursework related to all domains of the coaching profession. The mission of the graduate program in Sport Coaching Education is to prepare professionals throughout the country for an advanced coaching career by enhancing their critical thinking skills and exposing them to expert knowledge and research in the field of coaching education. Students enrolled in the Master of Science in Sport Coaching Education program are learning current approaches to the coaching profession including administrative philosophy and responsibility, psychosocial factors related to coaching, training techniques, and technological advances in athletic evaluation. The purpose of the program is to prepare students to be a standards-based coach for a range of athletes, with an emphasis on interscholastic and intercollegiate athletics. The MS in Sport Coaching Education was recently awarded the eLearning Initiative grant from USM in partnership with Blackboard to enhance the delivery of the online program. The initiative included marketing strategies, branding materials, and faculty instruction workshops, which were implemented for the Fall 2010 semester. Due to increased marketing that is scheduled to begin this summer, the faculty in SCE are projecting a rapid increase in enrollment. It is the primary goal of the faculty in SCE to make the online master's program one of only 2 Level V NCACE accredited programs in the country; the only that is fully online.

## **COMPUTER ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY BS**

### **Continuous Improvement Initiatives**

As with all programs at the University, the CET program strives to maintain a robust assessment plan to measure program performance and determine how findings may be impacted to best effect the desired program outcomes and objectives. The CET program is currently involved in discussions with IE to utilize WEAVEOnline with TAC of ABET assessment requirements to serve the two-fold purpose of supplying the appropriate data for University assessment, while at the same time simplifying the objective data measurement process for ABET criteria a-k. With the current requirements for assessment, the CET program has two action plans which are not directly tied to any specific measure, but are used to emphasize data collection importance to the faculty concerning data collection for both University assessment and ABET assessment. The Departmental/Administrative Calendar action plan is intended to provide the faculty with a method that can easily remind them of dates and events for data collection for our assessment purposes. Of course the calendar could be used for other purposes also. The second action plan is the End of Course Surveys. As required by our ABET assessment, the CET program administers a survey to each of its major classes at the end of the semester to determine how students feel the outcomes of the course were met. This information is also used in some of the University assessment for WEAVE. The CET program is looking forward to the development of an assessment plan utilizing WEAVE that will serve to reduce to assessment workload for both SACS and ABET, and increase the overall strength of the systems.

## **PUBLIC HEALTH MPH**

### **Continuous Improvement Initiatives**

Based on a spring 2011 Master of Public Health (MPH) student assimilation assessment, the department is considering establishing a MPH Professional Development Seminar. The seminar would include resources and guidance in the areas of teaching, research and service. Students expressed interest in attending Professional Development seminars, but reported limited opportunities in this area. The USM chapter of the Health

Administration Student Association (HASA) was organized during the 2009-2010 academic year. Over the last year, HASA has built tremendous momentum among graduate and undergraduate students in the department. HASA provides students with professional networking opportunities, career planning and workshops and presentations by healthcare administrators from local, state and national levels. Students have shown an interest in organizing additional public health student associations. The department is committed to improving communication with undergraduate and graduate students by using a variety of communication media. In the aforementioned survey, MPH students reported using the following information sources moderately to a great deal. Information resources are presented in rank order from high to low percentage: student peers 85%; academic advisors 78.8%; graduate listserv 67.5%; orientation materials 65%; student support staff 60%; faculty mentor 56.4%; department website 37.5%; and campus hub 20%. This information will be used to enhance departmental communication.

## **HUMAN PERFORMANCE (KINESIOTHERAPY) BS**

### **Continuous Improvement Initiatives**

The Kinesiotherapy (KT) major continues to attract a large number of students, many who have goals of applying to doctorate level therapy programs following graduation. In order to build on the current success of the program and to increase its viability, several changes are currently under consideration. These include but are not limited to, creating additional courses that are specific the requisite treatment approaches of KT, and also increasing the GPA requirements for entering the major.

## **PSYCHOLOGY BA/BS\***

### **Continuous Improvement Initiatives**

The Department has undertaken several activities to address program improvement issues. The following illustrates some of these efforts: The addition of two new undergraduate courses during the school year in response to a request by our undergraduates to offer more psychology electives. The Psychology of Humor (PSY 453) and the Psychology of Music (PSY 469) are now offered in the fall and spring each year. Both courses have been well received by our undergraduate students. The Undergraduate Advisement Center came on line fall 2010 to more fully address the advisement needs of our undergraduate students. The Center is available to undergraduates approximately 30-35 hours per week on a walk-in basis or for scheduled appointments. Having the Undergraduate Advisement Center frees up faculty to spend more time in the mentoring aspect of support to our undergraduate majors. Mentoring takes the form of career guidance and support in the research process. To facilitate the career development process for our undergraduates, PSY 251 (Careers in Psychology) is being consistently offered on an elective basis not only in regular and summer semesters, but also during mini-sessions. In addition to offering information pertinent to careers in the field, information related to the graduate school process is also covered during the class. The Department is currently assessing whether to make the course a required course in the major. That decision will be made during the 2011-12 year. Career development information is also routinely offered to our undergraduate through participation in the Psychology Club and Psi Chi. Such information is also contained in the Preview packets distributed to incoming students during early registration sessions conducted during the summer. Based on information gathered during the assessment process pertinent to PSY 361 (Research Evaluation), an ad hoc committee assessing not only the impact of this course on our undergraduates, but also PSY 360 (Behavioral Statistics) to determine how to redesign this sequence to better serve psychology majors. This initiative will be completed during 2011-12. It is anticipated that these activities will continue to strengthen the undergraduate BA and BS programs.

## CONSTRUCTION ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY BS\*

### Continuous Improvement Initiatives

This program underwent a 6th year TAC-ABET accreditation visit in fall 2010. From that visit, it was apparent that the program objectives in WeaveOnline did not provide adequate resolution from program level to course level. The organization of supporting materials and student samples of work was also extremely difficult to collect and organize in a meaningful manner. It was decided then to reorganize the program learning outcomes to exactly map to the TAC-ABET general and program specific criteria with direct linkages from each course in the program that supported a particular criteria.

Criteria Specific to Construction Engineering Technology Associate degree programs (and our corresponding lower-division) must demonstrate that graduates are capable of: a. utilizing modern instruments, methods and techniques to implement construction contracts, documents, and codes; b. evaluating materials and methods for construction projects; c. utilizing modern surveying methods for construction layout; d. determining forces and stresses in elementary structural systems; e. estimating material quantities and costs; f. employing productivity software to solve technical problems.

Baccalaureate degree programs must demonstrate that graduates, in addition to the competencies above, are capable of: a. producing and utilizing design, construction, and operations documents; b. performing economic analyses and cost estimates related to design, construction, and maintenance of systems in the construction technical specialties; c. selecting appropriate construction materials and practices; d. applying principles of construction law and ethics; e. applying basic technical concepts to the solution of construction problems involving hydraulics and hydrology, geotechnics, structures, construction scheduling and management, and construction safety; and f. performing standard analysis and design in at least one recognized technical specialty within construction engineering technology that is appropriate to the goals of the program.

Faculty mapped each of their course objectives to the TAC-ABET criteria using a listing of the tools/methods for assessing each objective/criteria. This provided evidence of which courses in the program inventory were supporting any given TAC-ABET criteria and also provided a simple index system for staff to organize supporting materials by criteria for inspection. And, while TAC-ABET only requires summative evidence, this approach easily provides for formative inspection of the curriculum.

WeaveOnline Objectives reflect the exact TAC-ABET criteria with two measures for each criteria: one direct and one indirect. The direct measures are the aggregated assessments for all student work samples (projects, exams, quizzes, papers) as determined by the faculty in their mapping exercise. The indirect measures will be the graduate exit surveys and alumni surveys rewritten to also reflect the TAC-ABET criteria; these have not yet been implemented for this cycle.

Faculty then reported their findings for each section of their courses for fall 2010 and spring 2011. At the course level, it was decided to begin this process using targets of 80% of students would achieve 70 (out of 100) on the assessments. The findings were separated by program area the course might serve; for example, a course might have Architectural Engineering Technology (ACT), Construction Engineering Technology (BCT), Industrial Engineering Technology (IET), or other (OTHER) students. These findings were organized in a master spreadsheet organized so that the findings for each criteria for each program by semester and by delivery type (online or face-to-face) could be summed. This provides the total number of student samples for each criteria meeting the performance target versus total number of students being assessed. The findings for each criteria were then entered in WeaveOnline as annual summation values as well as being reported by semester and by type of site or delivery method. This system allows the program faculty to see the impact of their courses as a whole and individually on each criteria. Beyond the reporting system for SACS and TAC-ABET, the faculty also now have a systematic approach to evaluate each of their course objectives using the defined performance target levels to look at weaknesses in each course.

**POLITICAL SCIENCE MA/MS\*****Closing the Loop**

Previous action plans called for changing our research methods sequence from a 500 level sequence to a 600 level sequence. This has been completed. The aim was to allow us to focus more directly on graduate student learning in these courses. Although the program has yet to fully address the problems we see here, this change has allowed us to get a better handle on where the problems lie, and on how to better assess learning outcomes in this area. Another previous plan called for reducing our subfield areas from seven to four to better align the program with the undergraduate curriculum. This was implemented in 2008-2009. However the results were not good. A parallel change reduced to two the number of subfields students would major in and be tested on in comprehensive exams. However, the new subfield areas were simply combinations of the old fields (public law and public administration were simply added together). Students who chose this area were unclear whether the subfield comprehensive exam would now cover both public law and public administration, or only one of the two (and if only one, then which one, and who decided that?). We quickly realized that it was preferable to maintain the old seven field subfield division that better reflects the kinds of integrated knowledge we hope Master's students will acquire, as well as the divisions of the discipline of political science. The fields were returned to seven, with all students required to do research methods and choose three areas from the remaining six. Sometimes programs in the same discipline need not align.

**ELEMENTARY EDUCATION BS\*****Closing the Loop**

As a means to "close the loop" on actions to better integrate didactic and clinical coursework, CISE cohort faculty initiated a "Super Clinical" week each semester. During that week, CISE cohort didactic faculty participate with the CISE clinical faculty, the K-6 mentor teachers, and the teacher candidates at the clinical sites throughout the week. This action has proved to be very effective in improving teacher candidate outcomes prior to student teaching. Additionally, didactic and clinical faculty for each cohort group meet regularly to review student dispositions and to develop remedial plans for those teacher candidates who require additional mentoring. During cohort team meetings, the faculty determined that classroom management should be moved closer to student teaching to achieve better student outcomes for classroom management. As a result, a new sequencing of coursework was put into place beginning in the fall 2011.

**SOCIOLOGY BA/BS****Closing the Loop**

Over the past few years, the program in sociology has focused on standardizing course expectations, developing shared rubrics for grading speaking and writing, and increasing the flexibility of the degree. Through faculty focus group discussions and assessment of student performances, common rubrics have been developed for writing in GEC courses and speaking in the Capstone course. In addition, the program faculty agreed upon shared standards for writing and amount of reading in classes by level (e.g., 400-level courses, 100-level courses) to help establish predictable expectations for students enrolling in courses. Through these mechanisms, the program is more organized and clear for our students, which hopefully will lead to greater student success. In addition, greater flexibility has been built into the major to enable a wider range of students to enroll. First, we added a Bachelor of Science degree to the existing Bachelor of Arts degree in sociology, which will allow more students from outside the College of Arts and Letters to earn a double major with sociology (e.g., psychology). Many other universities have both degrees and students have responded favorably to having this option. In addition, we offered our first online course (SOC 101) in 2010-2011, and we are planning to offer additional courses online in the future, when suited to the course content. Through these changes, we hope to enable a wider range of students to enroll in our courses and pursue a sociology degree.

# 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  
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