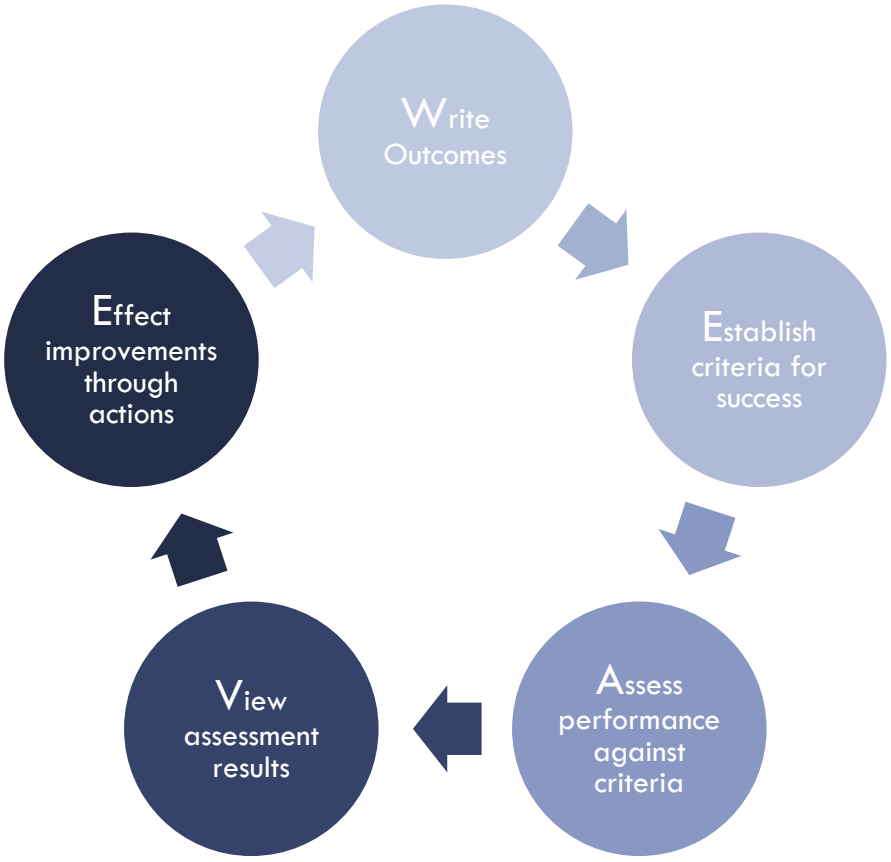
ASSESSMENT SHOWCASE



Spring 2015

Academic Program Assessment

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

ACADEMIC PROGRAM ASSESSMENT SHOWCASE

Table of Contents

PRINCIPLES OF ACCREDITATION 2
USM VISION, MISSION, PLAN 3
ASSESSMENT POLICIES 6
ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES 9
ASSESSMENT PROCESS OVERVIEW 10
ASSESSMENT UPDATES 11
STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES 12
MEASURES 14
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT OBJECTIVES 17
ACTION PLANS & ANALYSIS 23
ANNUAL REPORTING 28
RECOMMENDED READING 31

Notes

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

Assessment of Administrative Outcomes Participants:

E. Administrative Support Services – The Office of Institutional Research (IR) maintains the official USM Organization Chart annually submitted to IHL. To be in compliance with SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation, all units with primary administrative support functions identified on the Organization Chart must assess in accordance with the Administrative Unit Assessment Plan and Report Guidelines. Administrative Support Units include all Vice President for Finance and Administration units, all Vice President for Advancement units and other organizational chart units not identified as an Educational Support Service, Research Unit, or community/Public Service Unit.
UAC Approved 02.19.14; Modified 2.25.15

F. Educational Support Services – The Office of Institutional Research (IR) maintains the official USM Organization Chart annually submitted to IHL. To be in compliance with SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation, all professionally staffed units with primary educational support functions identified on the Organization Chart must assess in accordance with the Administrative Unit Assessment Plan and Report Guidelines. Student organizations identified on the Organization Chart are assessed by their advising unit. Educational Support Units include Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs units (including similar Gulf Coast units), Vice President for Student Affairs units (including similar Gulf Coast units), and Special Assistant to the President for Military and Veterans Students Affairs.
UAC Approved 02.19.14; Modified 2.25.15

G. Research within its educational mission, if appropriate
The Office of Institutional Research (IR) maintains the official USM Organization Chart annually submitted to IHL. To be in compliance with SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation all units with primary research or research support functions identified on the Organization Chart must assess in accordance with the Administrative Unit Assessment Plan and Report Guidelines. Research units include administrative units, centers, and institutes reporting to the Vice President for Research.
UAC Approved 02.19.14

H. Community/Public Service within its educational mission, if appropriate
The Office of Institutional Research (IR) maintains the official USM Organization Chart annually submitted to IHL. To be in compliance with SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation, all units with primary community and/or public service functions must assess in accordance with the Administrative Unit Assessment Plan and Report Guidelines. Community and Public Service units include the Center for Community and Civic Engagement, Center of Higher Learning - Stennis, Institute for Disability Studies (university institute reporting to the Vice President for Research), Office of Professional Development and Educational Outreach (to be phased out as of June 30, 2015), Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, and the Trent Lott National Center for Economic Development and Entrepreneurship.
UAC Approved 02.19.14; Modified 2.25.15

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 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 will continue (1) its recognition of academic programs judged to provide adequate and commendable support to SACSCOC Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1; (2) to hold the annual Assessment Showcase that recognizes academic programs judged to provide commendable support to SACSCOC 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. Programs not achieving at least an adequate rating will follow up with a plan of improvement to the respective Dean and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness.

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 SACSCOC 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; Modified 03.19.14

Items for future consideration:

UAC recommendations for the future are that (1) University Assessment Committee processes be incorporated into the program prioritization processes, 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; UAC Modified 03.19.14

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 outcomes. At least four outcomes must be Student Learning Outcomes and at least one outcome must be a Program Objective focused on student achievement. Student achievement includes enrollment and retention rates, graduation rate, job placement rate, licensing, and certification.
7. Student learning outcomes must show progressive distinction between degree levels (BA, MA, PhD) in the same academic unit.
8. Each student learning outcome must have two measures; one must be a direct measure. At least one measure is required for Program Objectives.
9. 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 - Programs are asked to describe the program and summarize program highlights of the past year. The summary field is needed to provide context to an outside reviewer. Program contributions, activities, and accomplishments should be included in this field.
5. 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 or program objective should be described in this field. Efforts to improve enrollment and retention rates, graduation rate, job placement rate, licensing, and certification should be captured in this field.
6. 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.

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 2015

2014-2015/2015-2016 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 2014-2015 Academic Program Assessment Report includes:

d) Findings (due May 31)
e) Action Plans (due June 30) - *Action Plans are not required in Year 1 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/institutional-effectiveness/academic-program-assessment

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 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.

Assessment Updates

Compliance Certification Report. The university will submit the Compliance Certification Report for the decennial review in fall 2015. A sample of reports from assessment cycles 2011-2012, 2012-2013, and 2013-2014 representing all colleges, degree levels, teaching sites, and delivery modes will be included as supporting documentation for SACSCOC Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1.1.

Implementation of New Plan and Report Guidelines. SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation Federal Requirement 4.1 requires the institution to "evaluate success with respect to student achievement" and "criteria may include enrollment data, retention, graduation, course completion and job placement rates; state licensing examinations; student portfolios; or other means of demonstrating achievement of goals." The University Assessment Committee (UAC) reviewed the Assessment Plan and Report Guidelines and current assessment plans in light of Federal Requirement 4.1. The amendments are effective with the 2013-2014 Assessment Cycle.

The guidelines state: Program-level Assessment Plans have a minimum of five outcomes. At least four outcomes must be Student Learning Outcomes and at least one outcome must be a Program Objective focused on student achievement. Student achievement includes enrollment and retention rates, graduation rate, job placement rate, licensing, and certification. At least one measure is required for Program Objectives.

Efforts to improve enrollment and retention rates, graduation rate, job placement rate, licensing, and certification should be captured in the Continuous Improvement Initiatives (Additional Action Plans) field.

Revision to Academic Plan Guidelines to include SLO progression among degree levels. The University Assessment Committee approved a modification the Academic Assessment Plan Guidelines to provide support to SACSCOC Comprehensive Standard 3.6.1:

The institution's post-baccalaureate professional degree programs, master's and doctoral degree programs, are progressively more advanced in academic content than undergraduate programs. (Post-baccalaureate program rigor)

The guidelines state: Student learning outcomes must show progressive distinction between degree levels (BA, MA, PhD) in the same academic unit.

New Policy – Less than Adequate Reports. The University Assessment Committee approved an amendment to the University Assessment Committee Policy Regarding Academic Programs' Participation in the University-Wide Assessment Process. Beginning Spring 2015, programs not achieving at least an adequate rating will follow up with a plan of improvement to the respective Dean and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness.

Modified Policies - Assessment of Administrative Outcomes Participants. The University Assessment Committee modified policies to define the units that are to participate in the four areas of administrative unit assessment. The unit assessment reports will be used as supporting documentation for SACSCOC Comprehensive Standards 3.3.1.2, 3.3.1.3, 3.3.1.4, and 3.3.1.5.

UAC Co-Chairs. The University Assessment Committee Bylaws were revised to institute Co-Chairs beginning AY 2015-2016. One Co-Chair will represent Academic Programs and one Co-Chair will represent Administrative Units. The Administrative Co-Chair will assist in notifying Administrative Units of assessment responsibilities/cycles. The Director of Institutional Effectiveness will establish routine meetings with the Administrative Co-Chair to review administrative assessment progress.

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)

2015 Showcase

PUBLIC RELATIONS MS

Student Learning Outcomes

SLO 1: Mass Communication and Public Relations Theories
Students will demonstrate knowledge in mass communication and public relations theories and the ability to integrate these concepts, theories, and principles to public relations problems and opportunities.

SLO 2: Research Skills
Students will be able to gather and analyze information and relate conclusions to the public relations opportunity or problem at hand or apply the findings to organizational strategic planning and/or strategic communication planning.

SLO 3: Application of Skills - Campaign/Strategies
Students will demonstrate a thorough knowledge of mass communication and public relations theories and research by developing a comprehensive public relations campaign or providing in-depth analysis of public relations strategies.

SLO 4: Application of Skills - Internship/Project
Students will develop professional skills through major projects or supervised internships in various media settings.

Student Achievement Program Objective

O/O 5: Program Objective Outcome
The School of Mass Communication and Journalism will maintain an 80% graduation rate in the Public Relations MS program.

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.

2015 Showcase

CHILD AND FAMILY STUDIES BS*
Program-level Direct Measure

M 2: Family Science Policy Impact Paper Final Draft (Theoretical Connections Section only) (FAM 475)
Students will connect family systems theory and bioecological theory to a proposed or recently enacted legislative policy impacting children and families in order to assess the potential impact of policies. The Family Science Policy Impact Paper Final Draft (Theoretical Connections Section only) will be utilized to measure student performance.
Source of Evidence: Capstone course assignments measuring mastery
Target: 80% of students will score 80% or greater on the Family Science Policy Impact Paper Final Draft (Theoretical Connections Section only) Rubric.
Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Not Met
Summer 2013 Hattiesburg: 67% of students who completed the assignment scored 80% or greater on the FAM 475 Public Policy Theoretical Analysis rubric (n=8/12).
Fall 2013 Hattiesburg: 31% of students who completed the assignment scored 80% or greater on the FAM 475 Public Policy Theoretical Analysis rubric (n=5/16).
Fall 2013 Gulf Coast: 76% of students who completed the assignment scored 80% or greater on the FAM 475 Public Policy Theoretical Analysis rubric (n=13/17).
Spring 2014 Hattiesburg: 100% of students who completed the assignment scored 80% or greater on the FAM 475 Public Policy Theoretical Analysis rubric (n=7/7).

LOGISTICS, TRADE, AND TRANSPORTATION MS
Program-level Direct Measure

M 7: Midterm Examination in IET 570
In IET 570, students will examine various trade & transportation rules and policies in their domain.
Source of Evidence: Writing exam to assure certain proficiency level
Target: 80% of the students' score will be 80% or better on the policy section of midterm exam of IET 570 course. (Scale: 100-90% = Advanced, 89-80% = Adequate, 79-70%=Minimally Acceptable, <70% Unacceptable)
Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Met
There were 23 students in IET 570 class offered in the spring of 2013 who completed the course requirements. About 87% (20 out of 23) of the students received 80% or better on the policy section of the midterm exam of IET 570 course.

LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE MLIS**
Program-level Direct Measure

M 4: Procedures and policy for collections
Identify and develop procedures and policies for analyzing needs and providing a collection and services to meet those needs.
Source of Evidence: Written assignment(s), usually scored by a rubric
Target: 85% of the students achieve satisfactory rankings against the community analysis rubric. Students analyze a community setting to develop the information necessary to establish appropriate service and collection policies and write a community analysis report. The community analysis requires 1) a description of the library, 2) details of the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the library patrons and of the community it serves, 3) specific details of any focused service or community needs, 4) explanation of the sources of the data collected.
Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Met
OVERALL TARGET MET. 85% (46/54) (combined summer, fall, spring) achieved satisfactory ranking against the community analysis rubric.
Nine out of nine (100%) licensure students achieved excellent or satisfactory.
Thirty-seven out of forty-five (82%) non-licensure students achieved excellent or satisfactory.

PSYCHOLOGY PHD
Program-level Direct Measure

M 2: Annual Evaluations
Students will receive a rating of in the area of professional development on their annual evaluations of student performance and progress toward the doctoral degree.
Target: 80% of students will receive a rating of at least satisfactory progress in the area of professional development on their annual evaluations of student performance and progress toward the doctoral degree.
Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Met
82 of 84 students (97%) were evaluated and rated as at least satisfactory in the area of professional development.

POLYMER SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING PHD
Program-level Direct Measure

M 5: Research Prospectus
Students will present their prospectus of research in written form and defend it publicly to the entire department, to the satisfaction of their advisory committee.
Target: 80% of students will be able to defend their Prospectus to the department and their committee members regarding their research on their first attempt. Successful defense incorporates 1) a document that clearly and concisely describes the proposed research and its relevance; 2) an oral presentation that clearly demonstrates knowledge of the field of research and has clear goals and objectives for the proposed research; and 3) the ability to answer questions posed by faculty and students in a professional manner.
Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Met
Fall 2013--100% (4 of 4) of student presenting a prospectus of research successfully defended their prospectus. Spring 2014--100% (3 of 3) of student presenting a prospectus of research successfully defended their prospectus of research. Successful is judged by the PhD committee and based on a clearly written document, an oral presentation to the faculty, students, and staff of the University of Southern Mississippi, and the ability to answer questions and lead a discussion of the topic among those attending the oral presentation.

COMMUNICATION STUDIES BA/BS
Program-level Indirect Measure

M 5: Student self-assessments of learning
Students in the capstone class will complete a self-report measure asking them to assess how their courses have enhanced their abilities to communicate effectively in dyadic, small group, and public contexts, as well as to advocate ideas and adapt messages. This questionnaire consists of 4 or 5 items for each measure, each with a 5-point response continuum ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).
Source of Evidence: Student satisfaction survey at end of the program
Target: The mean score on the 5-item scale will be 4.25 or greater. This is equivalent to 85% of the students agreeing strongly with statements describing how courses in their major have enhanced their abilities to advocate ideas.
Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Met
4.79/5 (96%) for 29 students (criterion met). Summer 2013. The questionnaire was not administered. Fall 2013. 18 students taking the capstone class (CMS 450 + CMS 493) completed this questionnaire and produced a 4.72 average (94%) on items related to advocating ideas. Spring 2014. 14 students completed capstone requirements (CMS 440+ CMS 493) in the spring semester. 11 students completed the questionnaire and produced a mean of 4.85 out of 5 (97.1%) on items related to advocacy. 7 of 11 strongly agreed with all of the advocacy items.

College of Arts and Letters Student Achievement Objectives

ENGLISH (LICENSURE) BA*
Student Achievement Objective and Measure

O/O 6: Job Placement
Program achievement will be measured by assessing the job placement rate of English licensure graduates seeking full-time teaching positions. Because not all May graduates will have found employment by the time the assessment report is written, we will look at the job placement rate for the previous May and December graduating classes.
M 7: Job Placement Data
The percentage of English licensure students who graduated the previous May and December and were hired in full-time teaching positions will be determined.
Source of Evidence: Job placement data, esp. for career/tech areas
Target: 66% of students who graduate from the English licensure program in previous May and December and seek full-time teaching position will find full-time employment as an English teacher.
Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Met
Hattiesburg: 100% of students seeking a full-time teaching position were hired (9 out of 9); one additional student began graduate school and one decided not to seek a full-time teaching position. Gulf Park: 83.33% of students seeking a full-time teaching position were hired (5 out of 6).

ANTHROPOLOGY MA
Student Achievement Objective and Measure

O/O 6: Graduation Rates
Students are expected to complete the program and graduate in a timely manner.
M 11: Time to graduation
For students who remain in good standing, the MA program is designed to be completed within 24-29 months. Per graduate school policy (up to 2009), students have six years after being admitted to complete the program. In 2009, the policy was changed by the graduate school to allow students five years to complete the program. Student data will be tracked to assess how many students, who remain in good standing, graduate within three years and within six years (five years for those admitted after 2009).
Source of Evidence: Existing data
Target: For the five year period ending in the assessment year (2013-2014), 50% of students who started the program between Fall of 2009 and Fall of 2011 and remained in good standing will have graduated in 3 years; and 90% of the students who started the program between Fall of 2008 and Fall of 2009 and remained in good standing will have graduated in five years if they started in 2009 or six years if they started in 2008.
Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Not Met
For the five year period ending in the assessment year (2013-2014), 40% (6/15) of students who started the program between Fall of 2009 and Fall of 2011, and remained in good standing, graduated in three years. 83.3% (5/6) of the students who started the program between Fall of 2008 and Fall of 2009, and remained in good standing, graduated in five/six years.

College of Business Student Achievement Objectives

ACCOUNTING MPA
Student Achievement Objective and Measure

O/O 6: Microsoft Excel Certification
MPA students will achieve Microsoft Certification in Excel prior to graduation.
M 12: Microsoft Excel Certification
This certification is highly desirable by all business employers, but especially by accounting firms. Excel certification sends a strong signal to potential employers of the quality of preparedness for the profession by our students. The Microsoft Office Specialist Certification in Excel is the premier credential for validating skills and advancing careers and is an industry-recognized certification. During the 2013-14 academic year, the College of Business became a Certiport testing center and also purchased self-study software (GMetrix) to help our students prepare for this certification exam.
Source of Evidence: Standardized test of subject matter knowledge
Target: 90% of the MPA students who took the Microsoft Certification Exam in Excel will pass the exam and receive the designation as a Microsoft Office Specialist in Excel.
Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Met
100% (16/16) students passed the certification exam and received their designation as a Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) in Excel. Initially, 14 of 16 students passed (87.5%) but the two who did not pass the first time were able to take the exam again and passed on the second attempt. By the end of the spring 2014 term, all students had achieved the MOS certification in Excel. This student achievement objective was initiated in the spring 2014 term for the first time.

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION MBA*
Student Achievement Objective and Measure

O/O 6: International rankings of MBA program outcomes
International percentile rankings of MBA student knowledge at the conclusion of the MBA program will be used as the most externally valid Student Achievement Objective for the MBA program. MBA results on the MBA ETS Major Field Exam will be compared to the external results prepared by ETS to assess program achievement over time. This comparison for each year's MBA graduating cohort will show what our MBA students know at the conclusion of their program to more than 25,000 MBA students world-wide who take the same standardized exam at more than 260 institutions.
M 33: International rankings of MBA program
Annually, results on the MBA comprehensive exam (the MBA ETS Field Exam) will be compared to the total international cohort to compare what our MBA graduates know to more than 25,000 MBA graduates at 260 institutions worldwide. This externally valid comparison of knowledge in 5 areas critical to MBA program learning will provide an annual benchmark for our graduates.
Source of Evidence: Benchmarking of learning outcomes against peers
Target: Annually, the percentile ranking for the USM MBA graduating cohort on the MBA ETS Field Exam will be at least in the 50th percentile internationally.
Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Met
Results are reported for the 2014 graduating MBA cohort who took the MBA ETS Field Exam in late spring of 2014. The exam also serves as the comprehensive examination for the MBA program. The total graduating MBA cohort at USM was 24 students; students took this exam at the completion of the MBA program in the capstone course for the program (MBA 660). In 2014 the mean composite score for Southern Miss MBA students was 257. When benchmarking against the international cohort of more than 25,000 students who took the same exam at 260 different institutions worldwide, a mean composite score of 257 ranks at the 79th percentile internationally. Therefore, our Student Achievement Objective measure documents that Southern Miss MBA graduates are in the top 25th percentile internationally for knowledge at the conclusion of the degree program. Therefore, the goal of being in the top 50 percent internationally was achieved and far surpassed.

College of Education and Psychology Student Achievement Objectives

SCHOOL COUNSELING AND GUIDANCE SERVICES MED
Student Achievement Objective and Measure

O/O 2: Licensure
Cohort members will demonstrate competence in preparation for licensure requirements as outlined by the state department of education. This includes successful scoring on the Praxis exam and completing the program requirements outlined by the School Counseling and Guidance Services program.
M 3: Praxis Exam
School counseling candidates whose states require the Praxis will complete the Praxis exam with the required minimal score. Mississippi requires 156 for a pass.
Target: 60% of USM`s school counseling Praxis participants will pass the exam on the first attempt.
Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Met
The Praxis scores are reported for all current and prior students who took the exam during the reporting cycle 2013-2014. 100% (N=14) earned a passing score as required by the state of Mississippi during the reporting cycle.

LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE BA
Student Achievement Objective and Measure

O/O 5: Retention and Graduation
Students majoring in library and information science will progress through the program and graduate.
M 11: Retention
Students choosing Library and Information Science as a major will be retained in the program. Retention in the program will be measured by data from Institutional Research and/or PeopleSoft data.
Target: 70 percent of the students choosing Library and Information Science as a major will be retained in the program as indicated by data furnished by Institutional Research and/or internal data.
Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Not Met
69 percent (61/88) of the students choosing Library and Information Science as a major will be retained in the program as indicated by data furnished by Institutional Research and/or PeopleSoft data. This percentage was calculated by taking students admitted to the major since fall of 2008 and combining numbers of those who graduated and those who are still active in the program.

College of Health Student Achievement Objectives

NUTRITION AND FOOD SYSTEMS MS
Student Achievement Objective and Measure

O/O 6: Career progress/job placement
Program graduates will progress professionally by obtaining employment in their chosen field or pursuing further graduate education.
M 2: Alumni Survey
The Alumni Survey is administered to MS alums one year after program completion. The survey assesses graduates' professional achievement as well as their perceptions of their skills and competencies related to program and student learning outcomes.
Source of Evidence: Alumni survey or tracking of alumni achievements
Target: Within 12 months of program completion, 83% of graduates will be employed in nutrition and food systems professional roles or enrolled in further graduate education.
Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Met
Of the 15 2012-13 graduates who were eligible to complete the Alumni Survey, 12 responded. Of those, 12/12 (100%) indicated they were employed in nutrition and food systems or were a full or part-time student.

COMMUNITY HEALTH SCIENCES (HEALTH POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION) BS
Student Achievement Objective and Measure

O/O 5: Student Progress
Students will progress through degree requirements timely.
M 9: Roster Analysis
The department will analyze rosters of an introductory course and the internship course to determine timely student progression.
Target: 75% of students enrolled in introductory coursework will be enrolled in their internship within 2 years.
Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Met
83% (19 out of 23) of students enrolled in introductory coursework were enrolled or had completed their internship within 2 years.

College of Nursing Student Achievement Objectives

NURSING BSN*
Student Achievement Objectives and Measures

O/O 7: NCLEX-RN Licensure
The NCLEX-RN exam measures the competencies needed to perform safely and effectively as a newly licensed, entry-level registered nurse.
M 17: NCLEX-RN
The NCLEX-RN (National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses) is an exam that measures the competencies needed to perform safely and effectively as a newly licensed, entry-level registered nurse. The exam is graded on a pass/fail basis, which consists of items that use Bloom's taxonomy for the cognitive domain as a basis for writing and coding items. The majority of items are written at the application or higher levels of cognitive ability, which requires more complex thought processing. Passing occurs when the student reaches a level of competency determined by a complex computerized algorithm, which means that students may take complete between 75 and 265 items for passing or failing.
Source of Evidence: Certification or licensure exam, national or state
Target: The composite NCLEX-RN licensure pass score for the College of Nursing will be at or above the state and/or national NCLEX-RN licensure pass rate level. Pass rate is defined as the percentage of students who pass the NCLEX.
Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Met
The 2013 composite NCLEX-RN licensure pass score was 93.29% (n=153) for all BSN graduates (N=164) which was at the state pass rate (93.65%) and above the national pass rate (83.04%). A total of 123 out of 151 graduates passed the NCLEX-RN exam on the first write (81.45%). For Spring 2013 graduates, Hattiesburg: 80.55% (n=58) of the students (N=72) passed NCLEX-RN exam on first write. Coast: 74% (n=23) of the students (N=31, Spring only assessment) passed the NCLEX-RN on the first write. Fall 2013, Hattiesburg: 87.5% (n=42) of the BSN graduates (N=48) passed the NCLEX on the first write.

O/O 8: Employment Rate
The employment of graduates reported within 12 months of graduation.
M 18: Employment Rate
The employment rate is measured to assist in assessing the experience of new graduates in finding employment after graduation. The employment rate of BSN graduates within 12 months of graduation is measured through an online Alumni survey. Employment rate is reported as the number of graduates who graduate within 12 months of graduation excluding those graduates who choose not to be employed.
Source of Evidence: Job placement data, esp. for career/tech areas
Target: 70% of the BSN graduates will be employed within 12 months of graduation excluding those graduates who choose to not be employed.
Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Met
Fall 2012-Spring 2013 Alumni surveys were emailed to BSN alumni 1 year after graduation. Employment rate 72.73% at graduation to 3 months increasing to 95.46% employment rate 4-6 months after graduation. Fall 2013-Spring 2014 Alumni surveys were emailed to BSN alumni 6 months after graduation. Employment rate 97.14% at graduation to 3 months increasing to 100% employment rate 4-6 months after graduation.

College of Science and Technology Student Achievement Objectives

FORENSICS BS
Student Achievement Objective and Measure

O/O 6: Student Retention
The School of Criminal Justice will demonstrate reasonable success in retaining its undergraduate majors in forensic science.
M 9: Student Retention
The School of Criminal Justice will demonstrate reasonable success in retaining its undergraduate majors in forensic science. The retention rate will be computed based on the following formula: No. of students returned / Total No. of students - No. of degrees awarded
Target: The retention rate for undergraduate majors in forensic science will be 70%. (Note: IR does not make data available until the Fall term of the next academic year; thus student retention for this objective will always be computed for the immediate past academic year.)
Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Met
158 (of 239) undergraduate majors in forensic science returned in the Fall 2012 term, and 27 (of 239) were awarded degrees; as such, the retention rate (as computed from data made available by Institutional Research) was 75% (158 of 212).

LOGISTICS, TRADE, AND TRANSPORTATION MS
Student Achievement Objective and Measure

O/O 6: Student Enrollment
Students' enrollment in the program will be tracked.
M 11: Student Enrollment
Institutional data will be used to track student enrollment in the program
Target: The number of students enrolled in the program should increase 1 to 4 students from previous year using as the base of comparison the spring semester.
Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Met
There were 22 students enrolled in the program during Spring 2013 and there were 27 students enrolled in the program during Spring 2015. This is an increase of 5 students and therefore the target was met.

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.

2015 Showcase

CHILD AND FAMILY STUDIES MS**
Action Plan

FAM 605 Action Plan
Although the required targets were met for FAM 605 in the Spring 2014, it has been determined that this is an advanced course that should build upon previous coursework. It is currently offered in the spring of the 1st year before students have established sufficient theoretical foundations and skills to truly benefit from this course. By moving the course to the second year of study students will be better prepared to effectively engage in the advocacy process. It has also been determined that the advocacy project paper should be broken into smaller increments so that a draft of each section is completed separately and feedback is provided before the final paper is due.

Established in Cycle: 2013-2014
Implementation Status: Planned
Priority: Medium
Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):
Measure: Research Policy Project (FAM 605) **| Outcome/Objective:** CFS MS-SLO 3: Advocacy
Implementation Description: Dr. Williams will make needed changes in project requirements before course is offered again. Course sequencing will take effect in the next academic year.
Projected Completion Date: 05/29/2015
Responsible Person/Group: Department chair, program director, and CFS MS workgroup.

SPORT COACHING EDUCATION BS*
Action Plan

Standard Syllabi
Standard syllabi for all SCE courses will be developed to ensure consistency in course delivery across instructors and campuses.

Established in Cycle: 2013-2014
Implementation Status: In-Progress
Priority: High
Responsible Person/Group: SCE faculty

INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES BIS*
Analysis Answers

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

We are pleased with what our programmatic assessments show with regard to students' performance in our program: all of the targets that we have established were met in the past year, although we clearly have more work to do (see below). While our assessment of students in our Writing Intensive course show that early in our program, students lack the writing and research skills they need, we are pleased to see that by the time they get to the final project in the capstone class (the source of our direct measures at this point), they have highly developed skills and an understanding of the nature of interdisciplinary writing and research. We are also pleased to see that students believe the program prepares them well as writers and researchers and paves the way for them to enter the workforce or a graduate and professional program.

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

While our students performed well overall and while our assessment measures are tied specifically to principles of and best practices in interdisciplinary learning, research, and writing, we are committed to digging more deeply into both our assessment measures and our ways of gauging achievement. Only in the 14-15 academic year will we have an instructional corps that is large enough to manage both the size of the student body in IDS (hovering around 250 students) and the assessment responsibilities. In short, we believe that our assessment mechanisms could be more developed and responsive, and that at last the program has a large enough faculty to begin to undertake such development. We are committed to adding more direct measures to our assessment tools, because we recognize that relying primarily on one assignment (the capstone research paper) and an exit survey, we are gauging performance too narrowly. Additional, more distinct, and more specific measures will allow us to determine more precisely our program's strengths and weaknesses.

MARINE SCIENCE MS**

Analysis Answers

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

We are pleased with the learning outcomes demonstrated by the written and defended prospectus, written and defended thesis, and oral presentation of research (talk or poster) at scientific meetings. Students demonstrate command of their subject and facility in weaving in relevant, multidisciplinary threads into their work. They "get" how their questions usually require knowledge of both the biological and physical environments of the ocean. The students have learned basic field and laboratory techniques for their thesis, they know how to organize presentations and papers in the scientific style, and they are well on their way to finding that fertile, scientific frontier that generates useful, scientific hypotheses. We are gratified that our students are finding employment in science after graduation or are continuing in a Ph.D. program. This tells us that others value our students' accomplishments.

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

Aspects of our master's program in Marine Science need further attention. We have struggled with the method of evaluation of the core courses and commit herein to find a solution. The core courses provide the basis for a broad, multidisciplinary knowledge of the ocean environment that we view as fundamental to ocean science. We need a satisfactory method for evaluating the learning outcomes of our students so we can improve the core courses as needed. By discussions with the core of instruction we will choose a path: 1) improve the Qualifying Exam and improve preparation for the exam so student pass on the first try, or 2) institute rubrics to evaluate learning outcomes directly from the core courses, or 3) perhaps institute another strategy that the core of instruction can suggest. Solving this issue will affect other perceived problems; it will help reduce time to an approved prospectus, completion of courses, and completion of a thesis.

We would like to find better ways to directly evaluate the field and laboratory experience of master's students. All students are getting this training, and their success in writing/presenting a thesis suggests that they have attained their learning objectives, but it would be useful to directly measure learning outcomes at the time they are doing the field and lab work and to do so in a consistent way, based on consensus among the thesis advisors.

COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY MS

Analysis Answers

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

The faculty see the previous year as a successful one for our program. This assessment process particularly highlighted to us success in two main areas: Sufficient knowledge in core areas (Objective 1) and Critical thinking in scientific research (Objective 4).

With regards to objective 1, our students not only meet essential competencies in their courses relevant to the core areas of the counseling psychology field (SLO #1), but they also pass our comprehensive exam assessing these areas at one time at the end of their program (SLO #2). Additionally, our students have a long history of scoring well above the national average on the National Counselor Exam (SLO #3). This shows the training in our program and the student's learning translates outside of what competencies are emphasized in our program and to the profession nationally.

We see that our students' critical thinking in scientific research (Objective 4) is increasing due to the programmatic changes around boosting this competency. Much of this is accomplished through our research teams. With students' participation on faculty research teams, this method of mentorship helps to boost their performance across many areas, including professionalism, research, and coursework. Most goals in these areas were met this year and our research team affiliation for each student provides us with a mechanism by which to continue to support students in their development, implement increased efforts such as conference awareness, as well as individually remediation students with areas for growth in these domains. More specifically 100% of our students are participating on research teams (SLO # 14) and during portfolio review all had met their negotiated research goals during the year (SLO # 12). Our students are also consistently performing well on a class-based research project (SLO #13). Because of the success our students are experiencing in research, the faculty believe we are even ready to increase the rigor by which we assess this domain. We will implement the assessment of conference presentations and professional publications over the next year.

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

Overall, we see our program as strong and our graduates as being especially well prepared for the mental health field and continued graduate study. Yet, our assessment did highlight some areas we could focus some continued attention.

On an ongoing basis, we seek to improve the research training and experience of our Counseling Psychology MS students. As discussed in our action plans, we had a dip in our students' conference attendance (SLO #6), which we see as an important activity to build their professional identity. Yet, conference participation also allows for development of research competencies. We will boost our emphasis on conference attendance and better inform our students of conference availability as an improvement initiative related to their professional identity. Yet, our assessment also revealed that the majority of students that did attend conferences this year also presented their research at these conferences. Presenting research at a conference likely better develops our students' professional identity (Objective 2) and additionally serves to increase their research experience (Objective 4). In the next year, we plan to assess not only conference attendance but presentations at conferences as a method by which we can assess the increased research competency of our students. Currently, one of methods of assessing research competency is through a project they complete in a research class. As an increasing number of our students are producing research, we feel we can increase the rigor of our assessment in this area and assess publications and presentations next year rather than a class project that may not lead to research production in our field.

As mentioned in our action plan regarding the employment and further graduate study (Objective 6) assessment of our students, our assessment this year revealed a flaw in our assessment approach to this area and led to us not meeting our employment goal detailed in SLO #17. With the dual mission of our program to train graduates for work in mental health fields or continued graduate study, we now recognize that some years more students will seek one mission more than the other. Assessing employment and further graduate study across all students does not accurately assess the success of our students. Next year, we will assess successful employment in those students that pursue that after graduation and further graduate study for those students that apply to doctoral programs. We believe this will better assess and reflect the successes and of our students.

HIGHER EDUCATION (STUDENT AFFAIRS ADMINISTRATION) MED

Analysis Answers

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

Program assessments have shown that the program has been successful in matching students with professional opportunities upon graduation. More students than in the past attended and presented at NASPA and ACPA, the student affairs professional conferences. More students also attended the professional job fairs offered as a part of these conferences and were offered on-campus interviews and, in some cases, eventual job offers as a result. We were also successful at improving relationships with student affairs departments which resulted in a more seamless match between our students and graduate assistantship opportunities. We have focused on students' development of the ACPA/NASPA professional competencies in both the coursework and practicum requirements and tracked that carefully in the professional portfolios they produce as a requirement in the practicum course. Because the M.Ed. in Higher Education with emphasis in Student Affairs Administration program focuses on preparing students for entry and mid-level professional positions in student affairs practice, these opportunities to develop professional competencies, professional networks and job experience are very important.

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

Program benchmarking has demonstrated that changes are needed in our curriculum that will allow it to become more congruent with national standards and professional competencies outlined for student affairs programs. Specifically, the program will become compatible with minimum requirements recommended by the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS), a national model of professional standards and guidelines for effective student affairs programming and services including graduate preparation in student affairs. In the absence of a formal accrediting body, CAS provides the framework with which Student Affairs graduate programs nationwide seek to align themselves. Professional competencies for student affairs practitioners are outlined by the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), the two national professional organizations for the field of student affairs. The professional competencies, revised in 2010, outline the foundational knowledge areas needed for practice as a student affairs professional. Together with the CAS standards, the ACPA/NASPA professional competencies constitute the standards by which student affairs graduate preparation programs assess their congruence with national expectations.

Our review of the CAS standards and ACPA/NASPA Professional Competencies reveals that changes in our needed. This includes an increase in required program hours from 33 to 45 that is congruent with the CAS recommendation that student affairs graduate preparation programs be a minimum of 40 hours. Changes in the curriculum that will better prepare our students to develop the skills and knowledge needed for a successful career in Student Affairs Administration and were approved by Graduate Council effective Fall 2014 include: the addition of 4 new courses, modification of 1 course, conversion of 2 courses from requirements to electives, the program will better prepare our students to develop the skills and knowledge needed for a successful career in Student Affairs Administration. We will continue to support students who enrolled when the old curriculum was active. We will need to work with these students to be sure they are able to obtain the courses they need for graduation. This requires careful attention to course scheduling and offering a few independent study courses in which students will learn the course content in a one-to-one relationship with a faculty member of small group instruction. While this may be expensive in terms of faculty time and program resources, it is our obligation to be sure that students are able to graduate. Another need is be sure that faculty on the Admissions Committee and faculty advisors are fully informed of the new curriculum and what it entails. Finally, we must be sure that students applying to the program will realize that moving to a 45 credit hour curriculum will mean that the program can be completed by full-time students in 5 semesters instead of the previous 3.

Annual Reporting

Annual Reporting Fields

The 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.

2015 Showcase

ART (GRAPHIC DESIGN) BFA

Program Summary

The 2013-14 academic year was largely successful for the graphic design emphasis area. The unit designed and implemented a new capstone evaluation rubric and a new student exit survey, collected data using these instruments, and was able to report successfully met targets in all but one of the measures associated with these new metrics. (An action plan has been associated with the relevant unmet measure and improvement is anticipated in the 2014-15 academic year.) 25 students successfully completed the senior capstone project during the academic year. Several program improvements took place that are not directly related to WEAVE assessment criteria. In spring 2014, the graphic design emphasis area instituted a student-run graphic design agency, Rise Creative. The agency secures clients and delivers professional-caliber design work to these clients. Students apply to join Rise Creative and the graphic design faculty selects the strongest applications, ensuring the quality of work that is delivered to clients. The agency will continue to operate over the summer of 2014 and throughout the coming academic year under the supervision of Professor John Mark Lawler. Also in spring 2014, the AIGA Student Group at USM was established. AIGA is the professional association for graphic designers, and having a student group on campus will be an excellent networking and professional development opportunity for students. Organizational and planning meetings took place in spring 2014 and in fall 2014 the Office of Student Activities will review the group's official Application to Charter. The group will continue to operate throughout the coming year under the supervision of Professor Dori Griffin. Finally, in spring 2014, the Sophomore Portfolio Review took place, with 31 applications for acceptance into the upper-division graphic design program. 20 full-time students and 1 part-time student were accepted into the program, meaning that the program is now operating at (or, technically, slightly above) 100% capacity. Professor DeAnna Douglas chaired the committee of the whole graphic design faculty which reviewed Sophomore Portfolio Review applications.

INTERIOR DESIGN BS

Continuous Improvement Initiatives

The Interior Design Program met the following initiatives planned during the 2013-14 academic year:

1. Increased program enrollment by 13% from fall 2013 to fall 2014.
2. Achieved an 81% retention rate from spring 2013 to fall 2013.
3. Actively participated in recruitment events and developed a new recruitment brochure.
4. Created a Social Media presence to promote our program.
5. Introduced the new Interior Design minor with our first minor graduating in December 2014.
6. Renovated the Kate Hubbard House to help with recruitment.

The Interior Design Program will target the following initiatives for the 2014-15 academic year:

1. Continue to focus on recruitment and retention for the next academic year. The program seeks a 5% annual growth in enrollment for AY 2014-15. This initiative will be achieved by working closely with the School of Construction to develop a comprehensive brochure for the school, participate in recruitment events and utilize the power of social media.
2. Actively seek funding for additional scholarships for our students.
3. Build relationships with architectural firms in the New Orleans and Baton Rouge markets to offer more internships and job opportunities. We are seeing more students joining our program from this region.
4. Offer educational opportunities to professional designers in Building Information Modeling (BIM) as well as continuing to offer preparatory courses for the professional licensing exam.
5. Provide opportunities for students to compete in more regional and national competitions.
6. Evaluate the need for more specialized courses in our curriculum such as a healthcare interior design and theory of human factors.
7. Increase collaborative efforts with the Architectural Engineering Technology program to provide interdisciplinary collaborative student projects in preparation for our 2017 CIDA accreditation review.

MANAGEMENT (BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION MANAGEMENT) BSBA*

Closing the Loop

We took one important step to close the loop from the last assessment cycle. As our report from last year suggested, students struggled somewhat on certain portions of the ETS field exam. At the first faculty meeting in Fall 2013, faculty reviewed the most often missed questions by USM CoB students by subject area and identified a few key concepts/topics/theories on which to focus throughout the upcoming year. Changes to lecture materials, review materials, and test questions resulted from this process.

INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY MS**

Closing the Loop

Two actions plans have been completed or terminated. This past year, we have achieved in restructuring the master's program to become completely online (in the past it was about 80% online). Further, we terminated one action plan concerning the requirements of the Capstone, considering that this component was no longer required for the new program plan of study. Yet, because the new program plan of study has an "online component" concerning the graduation requirements (e.g., comp exams), developments of new criteria, rubrics, and processes will have to be completed this year. In addition, the online master's program will be appealing to many students. Marketing, promotion, and recruitment strategies must be performed. This will be a task of priority so that we can begin soliciting the program to online students throughout the nation. With the program becoming online however, resources for faculty members teaching online courses will be required. These would include instructional support such as software and hardware, as well as making these items accessible to students if necessary. Cloud server space and/or cloud storage will become a necessity, something that we are not sure iTech could handle. Thus, along with the promising aspects of having an online program available to students requiring such format, issues such as resources is, and will always be, a major concern.

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 participate in a "Super Clinical" week each semester. During that week, CISE 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 proven to be effective in improving teacher candidate outcomes prior to student teaching. Resequencing of courses to include classroom management course work during the more intense clinical experiences of the senior block resulted in improved candidate outcomes for classroom management. Student teachers now begin their intern experiences at the beginning of the K-6 semester to get an authentic view of beginning of the year procedures. Additionally, CISE faculty elementary education faculty have participated in professional development seminars to share and learn about cutting-edge instructional technology and have met in curriculum content groups to standardize didactic and clinical course syllabi across the three elementary education programs.

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

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