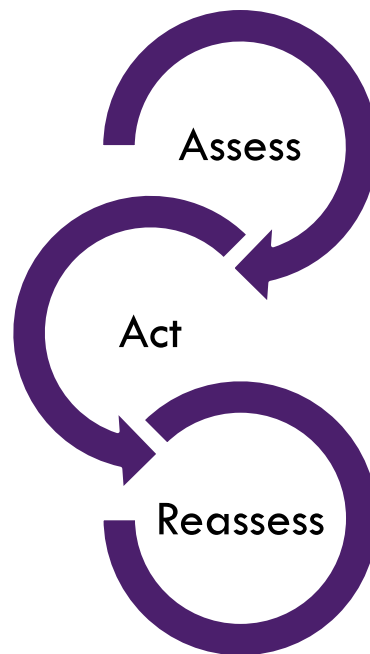# CLOSING THE LOOP

Assess

Act

Reassess

The End of Assessment is Action

# THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

# ACADEMIC PROGRAM ASSESSMENT SHOWCASE

## Table of Contents

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.

# INTRODUCTION

## 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.

## Continuous Improvement Documentation

Continuous improvement documentation within the annual assessment report includes findings data, an analysis discussion on proven strengths or progress made on outcomes assessment, an analysis discussion on outcomes that will require continued attention, and action plans for improvement. Example of Action Plans and Analyses that exemplify solid efforts towards continuous improvement are showcased each year in the Assessment Showcase Booklet. In addition to being distributed at the annual luncheon, the Assessment Showcase Booklet is available on the webpage of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness.

Specific examples of improvement are highlighted in a closing the loop discussion in which programs are asked to summarize the results of previous action plan implementation. The Closing the Loop field is an opportunity for programs to provide evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results.

Examples of Closing the Loop discussions are presented in the sections that follow:

Closing the Loop - College of Arts and Letters
Closing the Loop - College of Business
Closing the Loop - College of Education and Psychology
Closing the Loop - College of Health
Closing the Loop - College of Science and Technology

# COLLEGE OF ARTS AND LETTERS

**Closing the Loop Responses**

## 2010-2011 Anthropology BA

### Closing the Loop

In reviewing the past three years of action plans for the Anthropology BA program, the Capstone Seminar has been a major focus. In particular, the method and rubric for evaluating oral communication in the Capstone Seminar had to be established and revised over time to create a useful and informative assessment. Based on assessment results, we now have a rubric that works and will continue assessing oral communication with this tool. Assessment also indicates that, although we are meeting our targets for the course, room for improvement exists and we will address that need in the upcoming cycle. In addition to oral communication, we previously used a comprehensive exam as a measure of student learning and did not have good success with this approach. As such, over the past three years we have gathered evidence that the exam was not a good fit for that seminar and, as such, have revised the measure of student learning to focus on the written papers for the course, which provide us with richer data for understanding student learning. The only outstanding action plan in this cycle is the need to promote the minor on campus. We have a relatively small number of minors but believe that the program would be very useful to students in many majors across campus. During this cycle we will work to promote the courses we offer and the option of a minor.

## 2010-2011 Anthropology MA

### Closing the Loop

Over the past several assessment cycles for the MA program in Anthropology, the primary focus has been on addressing the slow time-to-graduation that was identified in earlier cycles. Students who graduate do very well, but the numbers of students who do not graduate and the time it takes for students to progress through the program are too large. As a result, we have begun implementing program changes that were shown in assessment to be needed. In particular, we revised the core seminar requirement, reducing the seminars from four to three and offering them all in the first academic year (rather than spilling into the second year). As a result of the acceleration of required course offerings, we were then able to implement the second major change, which is offering the comprehensive exam in August prior to the second year starting rather than January of the second year. In doing so, our plan is for students to complete required seminars and pass their exam before starting their second year. In that third semester, they will take courses in their area and craft a proposal for the thesis; in spring or summer of their second year, they will then complete the thesis, as their funding is running out. This faster schedule is a dramatic change from previous student cohorts, and we look forward to assessing the progress of those who entered on this schedule (in fall 2010) and whether the changes implemented leads more students to graduate in a timely fashion. Beginning with 2011-2012, we are also instituting new deadlines for milestones in the program (e.g., defending one's proposal), and we are formally evaluating each graduate student's progress in the program annually. Together, we hope these changes will strengthen the graduate program and facilitate student success.

## 2010-2011 Communication Studies BA

### Closing the Loop

A review of the department's previously formulated actions plans was undertaken. Some actions plans were effective and no longer needed. For example, we have reexamined and stopped using certain self-report measures for two of our objectives (ability to adapt messages; advocacy skills). Likewise, a previous action plan stated that the faculty would reconsider the administration of the "comprehensive exam" administered as part of the capstone class. Though we still use student responses to open ended questions to measure to learning objectives, this is now called simply an essay exam and is integrated better with course objectives. Other action plans were ineffective and eliminated. For example, we were not successful getting students to

attend workshops on graduate education so we haven't offered these again. Some action plans have become part of normal department procedures. For example, we routinely refer assessment results to the undergraduate and graduate curriculum committees. They examine the reports and make recommendation to the faculty concerning department procedures as well the assessment plan. Likewise, the department previously relayed assessment reports of the capstone class from one teacher to the next. However, now we have made this more formal by having a meeting so that instructors can share experiences and ideas about the capstone class. There appears to be a natural attrition and institutionalization of our action plans.

### 2010-2011 Communication (Communication Studies) MA/MS

#### Closing the Loop
A review of the department's previously formulated actions plans was undertaken. Some actions plans were effective and no longer needed. For example, we instituted a policy to reduce the length of time allowed for students to finish the master's degree. This has been implemented and requires no further actions on the part of the faculty. Some action plans have become part of normal department procedures. For example, we routinely discuss student performance as revealed by the assessment report. The graduate curriculum committee makes recommendations as appropriate related to instructional practices, department policy, and the assessment plan. There appears to be a natural attrition and institutionalization of our action plans.

### 2010-2011 Communication (Communication Studies) PhD

#### Closing the Loop
A review of the department's previously formulated actions plans was undertaken. Some actions plans were implemented effective and no longer needed. For example, we revised our brief assessment questionnaire to provide more useful data concerning students' employment. Other action plans were appropriately implemented but no longer needed. For example, we have monitored curricular changes and have decided that these were helpful. There is no longer a need to attend specifically to these changes. Some action plans have become part of normal department procedures. For example, we routinely refer assessment results to the graduate curriculum committees. This committee examines the reports and makes recommendation to the faculty concerning department procedures as well the assessment plan. Likewise, the action plan related to the supervision of teaching assistants is now routinely conducted. A faculty member is assigned the responsibility of monitoring and supervising the graduate assistants who teach each of the service courses offered by our department. There has been a natural attrition and institutionalization of our action plans.

### 2010-2011 Dance (Licensure) BFA

#### Closing the Loop
The following actions have been taken in the dance program in relation to existing and previous action plans:

- Performance assessments in ballet (variations) have been specified and separated from performance assessments in modern technique. We now have a way to generate data specific to our majors in their ballet training as opposed to their training in modern technique.
- Administering the exit survey to graduates in now embedded in DAN 411 and is required in the syllabus.
- A faculty member has been tasked with the "alumni project" which will lead to a successful attempt to administer the same survey to program graduates in 2011.
- We went beyond our objective of "updating targets" in our composition and choreography series. The composition and choreography faculty thoroughly reviewed all the syllabi, assignments, expectations and assessment instruments for DAN 212, 310, 312 and 410 and made revisions based on what we want our students to know and experience combined with where we perceived a "gap" in their training. We hope to see improvement in our majors' ability to articulate and contextualize their dance-making in the future. We also hope to influence their creative research with additional perspectives from the profession.
- We implemented "mini residencies" with successful graduates as a way to increase student preparedness for the field. We also intentionally did this in 2010-2011 because we have no "major" guest artist come

into our program. The results were positive, so we are expanding the idea in 2011-2012. This will assist our students in their comprehensive understanding of dance, both historically and aesthetically.

- While the gathering and analysis of the (Repertory Dance Company) RDC audition data has always been difficult to manage, this year we started to rotate the directorship of RDC. For this reason, it is even more critical that we systematize a way to handle the data from auditions that goes into the report. · In relation to scores on final projects in theory courses, as a faculty we discussed if our expectations are too high, especially in DAN 131 and other low level courses. We decided no, they are not too high. We've maintained our high standards in our WEAVE Assessment Plans. At the same time, a recent push for student retention has tempered some of our actions. Overall, student academic achievement is an area in which we feel pulled in many directions. Talent? Retention? How do they play against and with one another?
- Expanded faculty engagement in the thesis defense process has raised the stakes, and thus the quality of work in the oral defense of the thesis.
- University efforts to revise the GEC and general discussions about writing in an undergraduate degree have trickled down to the dance program. We are in the beginning stages of "working backwards" to determine what/where writing in our own curriculum over a 4 year period will best prepare student to meet our expectations in senior level writing.
- All licensure students are now required to produce dance in the schools where they student teach. We have also developed an additional opportunity for licensure students to choreograph on school-aged children in the summer.

## 2010-2011 Dance BFA

### Closing the Loop
The following actions have been taken in the dance program in relation to existing and previous action plans:

- Performance assessments in ballet (variations) have been specified and separated from performance assessments in modern technique. We now have a way to generate data specific to our majors in their ballet training as opposed to their training in modern technique.
- Administering the exit survey to graduates in now embedded in DAN 411 and is required in the syllabus.
- A faculty member has been tasked with the "alumni project" which will lead to a successful attempt to administer the same survey to program graduates in 2011.
- We went beyond our objective of "updating targets" in our composition and choreography series. The composition and choreography faculty thoroughly reviewed all the syllabi, assignments, expectations and assessment instruments for DAN 212, 310, 312 and 410 and made revisions based on what we want our students to know and experience combined with where we perceived a "gap" in their training. We hope to see improvement in our majors' ability to articulate and contextualize their dance-making in the future. We also hope to influence their creative research with additional perspectives from the profession.
- We implemented "mini residencies" with successful graduates as a way to increase student preparedness for the field. We also intentionally did this in 2010-2011 because we have no "major" guest artist come into our program. The results were positive, so we are expanding the idea in 2011-2012. This will assist our students in their comprehensive understanding of dance, both historically and aesthetically.
- While the gathering and analysis of the (Repertory Dance Company) RDC audition data has always been difficult to manage, this year we started to rotate the directorship of RDC. For this reason, it is even more critical that we systematize a way to handle the data from auditions that goes into the report.
- In relation to scores on final projects in theory courses, as a faculty we discussed if our expectations are too high, especially in DAN 131 and other low level courses. We decided no, they are not too high. We've maintained our high standards in our WEAVE Assessment Plans. At the same time, a recent push for student retention has tempered some of our actions. Overall, student academic achievement is an area in which we feel pulled in many directions. Talent? Retention? How do they play against and with one another?
- Expanded faculty engagement in the thesis defense process has raised the stakes, and thus the quality of work in the oral defense of the thesis.
- University efforts to revise the GEC and general discussions about writing in an undergraduate degree have trickled down to the dance program. We are in the beginning stages of "working backwards" to

determine what/where writing in our own curriculum over a 4 year period will best prepare student to meet our expectations in senior level writing

## 2010-2011 English (Licensure) BA* and 2010-2011 English BA*

### Closing the Loop

In the past two years the English department successfully completed a number of action plans. We created a rubric for undergraduate seminar papers that specifies clear assessment criteria and scores, we identified numerical targets for undergraduate students, and we reconciled the criteria with desired student learning outcomes. The rubric was subsequently revised for the blind cross reading of student essays.

## 2010-2011 English MA and 2010-2011 English PhD

### Closing the Loop

In the past two years the English department successfully completed a number of action plans. We created a rubric for graduate seminar papers that specifies clear assessment criteria and scores, we identified numerical targets for graduate students, and we reconciled the criteria with desired student learning outcomes. The rubric was subsequently revised for the blind cross reading of student essays. The English graduate committee redesigned the literature curriculum to ensure students receive broad training in a variety of literary periods and additional instruction in writing and analysis through the introduction of a second required methods course.

## 2010-2011 International Development PhD**

### Closing the Loop

This is our first year of reporting data with our new assessment outcomes. To date our targets have been met which gives us another confirmation that the program is moving forward with educating and training doctoral students. Our past measures were traditional measures of the number of students who pass comprehensive exams, dissertation proposal defenses, etc. Our new measures are more targeted to a specific learning outcome which has forced the faculty into the program to adopt grading rubrics for each class and assignments within each class. Though it was a time consuming process, the effort appears to have paid off to date.

## 2010-2011 Paralegal Studies BA

### Closing the Loop

The faculty has been working on a number of plans to improve student learning generally, including encouraging legal research assignments in most paralegal classes, reassessing the legal research exit exam, and encouraging students to enroll in the paralegal internship course. The faculty has also been working on student recruitment of high school and community college transfer students. The paralegal program has continued to emphasize legal research assignments in most paralegal classes. This emphasis has obviously worked as one of the strengths of the paralegal program is the students' ability to compose legal documents, specifically legal memorandums. Indeed, our students have steadily improved with 100% of Hattiesburg and Gulf Coast students for 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 who turned in a legal memorandum receiving a score of 70 or better on the grading rubric (up from 83% in 2008-2009 for Hattiesburg students).

Students have consistently reported over the years on exit surveys that they feel their paralegal education at Southern Miss has prepared them to draft basic legal documents. This ability is a cornerstone of a good, solid paralegal. Likewise, we continue to emphasize legal ethics across the curriculum. This emphasis has had an impact as students are consistently scoring high on the grading rubric for the ethics portion of their senior writing portfolio and the ethics exit exam students take before graduation.

While the legal drafting skills of our students are unquestioned, students are continuing to have difficulty with the exit exam in legal research. The exam itself is one that was developed many years ago by the American Association for Paralegal Educators (AAfPE). One of the action plans completed in the previous cycle was a thorough examination of the exit exam in legal research. Indeed, the test was changed to more closely correspond to the concepts and skills learned in legal research classes here at USM. This review was performed in the Fall of 2010 and what was once a 15 question legal research exit exam is now 24 questions. However, despite the changes, it appears that only 50% of Hattiesburg students and 0% of Gulf Coast students scored 70% or better on the exam in 2010-2011. The faculty will continue to evaluate the exam as well as course content to ensure that our students have the necessary legal research skills. The problem may very well be that while students feel comfortable performing legal research and actually do well on their finished product, when it comes to being tested on the process of legal research, students simply are unable to translate their research activities to the exam.

The faculty has continued to encourage students to participate in the paralegal internship course in order to actively engage the students in working in law offices and other legal environments. The internship is invaluable in providing students with actual work experience which could assist them in finding employment after graduation. In many instances, the employer hosting the intern will ultimately offer the student work upon graduation. The Director has met with local attorneys to discuss the benefits of having a student intern and has several firms who are committed to accepting our paralegal student interns on a regular basis. Likewise, former paralegal graduates have returned to campus to speak to students and have encouraged students to consider the internship course. As a result of these concerted efforts, enrollment in the internship courses has seen a marked increase.

The Southern Miss paralegal studies program has continued with its student recruitment efforts begun in 2009 by the Director. The plan to boost enrollment calls for a three-pronged approach: 1) distributing USM paralegal program brochures to area high schools and persons inquiring about our program; 2) speaking at local high schools on career days; and 3) working with local junior colleges to attract more transfer students. The faculty has done all three: paralegal brochures have been distributed to career guidance offices of local high schools; the faculty attended career fairs at area high schools; and the faculty has worked with local junior colleges to attract more transfer students via Memorandums of Understanding (MOU). In the past, community college transfer students would be penalized for pursuing a Bachelor's degree in paralegal studies since some of the coursework they had taken at the community college level would not count toward the major here at Southern Miss. These students were left to repeat certain courses at the University level in order to receive credit. However, the Director has worked closely with Mary Dane Gregg, Assistant to the President for Articulation and Planning, concerning MOU. In 2010, Jones County Junior College and Holmes Community College signed the agreement. As a result, the program has already seen an increase in transfer students from these community colleges.

## 2010-2011 Philosophy BA

### Closing the Loop
This year I went through and closed out many old action plans that for one reason or another had become irrelevant. In many cases, we still had open action plans based on our old assessment regimen that I had simply never closed out. In other cases, we had substantially accomplished the relevant goal and were no longer actively making changes related to it. Other than that, as mentioned previously, in various other ways the new assessment strategy seems to be working well and we are hopeful to have more meaningful data by next year by which we can draw at least some tentative conclusions.

**2010-2011 Political Science BA***

**Closing the Loop**

The BA program in Political Science has reduced outcomes for greater clarity in assessment. We focus our assessment attention on the Senior Capstone course (PS 491). Comparing senior students on a rather rigorous assessment instrument, the exit essay exam, with our PS 201 students, we find statistically differences in mean scores (a four point differential in this cycle). In accordance with previous action plans, we have developed a PS 311 course in research methods. We hope that this course will help our students improve their writing and analysis skills. Service learning has been a growing component of more of our classes, the benefits of which we may see in the future. Writing is not yet calculating in with assessment analysis, and yet it is a point of great concern among our faculty. We are puzzled, however, about how to fully incorporate paper-writing into our assessment tools. This topic will be revisited before the next assessment cycle.

**2010-2011 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.

**2010-2011 Religion BA**

**Closing the Loop**

Our ongoing action plans regarding the Religion major overall seem successful yet could use more work. Both students and faculty alike have reported improved performance in writing abilities among majors to complement improved performance in oral speaking among majors. Presumably such skills are also being developed by the many non-majors who take our upper-division courses. Our previous concerns from the 2006 cycle about meeting a proper definition of Eastern religions have been erased not through redefinition but rather through offering a wider variety of training in the religions of east Asia to include Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism, Daoism, and Confucianism in both introductory and upper-division courses. Content training in Western religious ideas and practices appears to be successful but our data indicates that this success is mixed. Likewise, training in the ideas and practices of Eastern religions shows some signs of success but is not at the level which our targets demand. Of course, it may be that we are meeting our targets in terms of pedagogy but the data do not show this because of limited sample sizes. Nonetheless, more work needs to be done by faculty so that we may meet our targets fully even if sample sizes remain small.

**2010-2011 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.

**2010-2011 Theatre BFA**

**Closing the Loop**

Last year, we discovered that we needed much more clarity in differentiating degree plans and in collection of data, particularly the Exit Survey. The faculty did create a degree application checklist as well as more clarity in the degree plan retention requirements. A process for ensuring participation in the Exit Survey is in place. We also held BFA Area Meetings to make sure that these students know the demands of a pre-professional degree. The bar is higher, the standards are in writing, and the language used by faculty and students alike is more powerful.

**2010-2011 Theatre MFA**

**Closing the Loop**

Last year was all about the NAST self-study and administrative process. We spent a lot of time working out details, color-coding, and forms. Now it's time to implement the decisions we have made while keeping the creative focus of the department. The most significant development was in establishing more graduate-only courses in each MFA emphasis area. THE680 Graduate Design Studio is back in rotation (the dean supported adjunct funds for THE201 to free the professor for the required graduate course). THE 670 Graduate Voice and Movement is in approval stages to be split into Graduate Voice as a course separate from Graduate Movement (the adoption of MFA candidates as instructors for entry-level performance classes is facilitating this shift). This process has been very productive.

# COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

**Closing the Loop Responses**

**2010-2011 Accounting BSBA***

### Closing the Loop

Example 1: The curriculum changes to ACC 407 recommended in last year's assessment report (i.e., to add a second research case and have the instructors emphasize to the students that their research had to be in the printed GASB standards) produced the desired results in the students' ability to research this important database. For example, in 2009-2010 in the Hattiesburg ACC 407 class, only 27% of the students located the correct standard in the GASB codification in their case analysis. In 2010-2011, however, almost 87% of the students on the final case in the Hattiesburg ACC 407 class located the correct standard in the codification. In addition, in the coast ACC 407 class in 2009-2010, the mean score on the research trait was 1.89 (i.e., below the "acceptable" rating of 2.00); however, this score increased to well above the "acceptable" rating (i.e., to 2.40) in 2010-2011. These results clearly demonstrate a positive "closing of the loop" in our assessment process as a problem was initially identified in our 2008-2009 assessment report and confirmed in the following year's report (i.e., 2009-2010) as a systemic and continuing issue, curriculum changes were then recommended and made in an attempt to remedy the problem, and subsequent assessment results in the current year suggest the problem has been resolved.

Example 2: In the spring 2010, almost half the ACC 402 students on both campuses performed their WRDS/Compustat assignment incorrectly, while in the spring 2011 92.5% and 87.5%% of the coast and Hattiesburg students, respectively, performed at an "acceptable" level or above on their assignment dealing with the extraction and analysis of empirical data from an online database (i.e., WRDS/Compustat). These rates in the current year would have been even higher except, as noted in the results column, several of the better students chose not to turn in this assignment. However, this does not mean those students were not exposed to assignments emphasizing this learning objective as virtually all upper-level accounting courses have mandatory WRDS assignments. Based on these results, the assessment team believes that our students are adept at retrieving and analyzing empirical data from online databases. The results also demonstrate a positive "closing of the loop" in our assessment process as a problem was identified in last year's report (i.e., unsatisfactory performance on the online empirical database project in ACC 402), changes were recommended to and made by the instructor to address this problem, and assessment results in the current year indicate the problem has been resolved.

Example 3: A problem noted by the instructors last year was that a large number of students simply did not complete an Accounting Cycle Project. For example, in the spring 2010 ACC 325 classes in Hattiesburg, 22 (35.5%) of the 62 total students did not turn in an ACP. At that time, the failure rate in this course (i.e., first intermediate) was quite high, and it appeared a large number of students took this course without the base level knowledge of accounting needed to successfully complete the course and its assignments. As discussed previously in this report, PACE was implemented in the current year in an attempt to improve the performance of students in ACC 325 by ensuring that students entering this course possessed at least a basic understanding of the accounting cycle. The completion rate of the ACP in the Hattiesburg ACC 325 class indicates that PACE produced positive results as only 6.9% of the students failed to complete their ACP in the spring 2011 (as opposed to 35.5% in the spring 2010, which was prior to the PACE requirement). This demonstrates a clear "closing of the loop" in our assessment process as a problem was identified through a prior year's assessment measures (i.e., low ACP completion rate), changes were made to the curriculum to address the problem (i.e., implementation of PACE), and subsequent assessment testing shows a noticeable improvement in student performance (i.e., significant enhancement in ACP completion rate post-PACE).

Example 4: The substantial increase in the pass rate in the Hattiesburg ACC 325 course from 38% (pre-PACE) to 60% (post-PACE) is precisely what the assessment team had hoped for when it recommended implementing

PACE. More specifically, a pass rate in ACC 325 of 38% is unacceptably low and suggests that a large portion of the pre-PACE students taking ACC 325 were simply unprepared for the rigors of this course. The assessment team feels the 60% post-PACE pass rate in this course is an acceptable and even desirable metric, as it shows the majority of students taking the course were able to complete it successfully, and yet the course still maintained a significant "weed out" rate, which should exist in the first intermediate accounting course. These results demonstrate a clear "closing of the loop" in our assessment process as prior assessment procedures identified a weakness in our curriculum (i.e., unreasonably low pass rates in ACC 325 because students were unprepared for this course), changes were made to the curriculum to address the problem (i.e., PACE was implemented to ensure students entering ACC 325 possess functional knowledge of the accounting cycle), and subsequent assessment measures show the changes brought about the desired results (i.e., a significant improvement in the pass rate and performance of students in ACC 325).

Example 5: Last year, as an additional measure of determining whether students possess functional knowledge of basic accounting skills, the assessment team recommended that their understanding of IFRS be evaluated in one of the three courses where this information is taught. Accordingly, this year the students' performance on the embedded IFRS questions on the multiple-choice portions of the ACC 327 exams were evaluated, and it was found that the students correct response rates on the IFRS questions were favorable on both campuses relative to the correct response rates on questions dealing with U.S. GAAP. Thus, the assessment team believes that our BSBA students possess the basic skills and understanding of international accounting standards needed to function in entry level accounting positions. This finding demonstrates a positive "closing of the loop" in our assessment process as a prior year's assessment report identified a change needed to keep the curriculum current with practice (i.e., coverage of IFRS), the change was implemented, and subsequent assessment testing in the present year shows the change produced the desired results (i.e., students possess basic knowledge of international accounting standards).

Example 6: In the 2009-2010 academic year, the Hattiesburg auditing professor made the two assignments as recommended and performed assessment evaluations on the second one. She continued this procedure in the current year (i.e., 2010-2011). The results showed improvement from year to year as the mean rating on the first trait increased from 2.00 in spring 2009 to 2.13 in spring 2010 to 2.18 in spring 2010. The mean rating on the second trait increased from 2.03 in spring 2009 to 2.11 in spring 2010 to 2.15 in spring 2011. In addition to the improved scores in the transactions cycle traits measured in the evaluation rubrics in the last two years in the Hattiesburg ACC 409 class, no students having performed internships (nor their supervisors) have noted the students were ill prepared in this area since we began emphasizing transactions cycles in ACC 409 (and ACC 610 as well). The actions taken in relation to transactions cycles demonstrate a clear "closing of the loop" in our assessment process as a problem was identified through assessment procedures one year, the curriculum was changed the subsequent year, and assessment results for the following cycles (years) suggest the deficiency has been corrected.

**2010-2011 Accounting MPA**\*

**Closing the Loop**
Example 1: Based on the students' comments in the exit surveys for 2009-2010, the SoA Director and the graduate accounting faculty believed the structure of corporate finance was inappropriate for MPA students. The SoA Director met with the Department Chair of Finance to determine a solution to this problem. The new coordinator of the MPA program also became involved in this process. The Finance Department Chair was receptive to the SoA Director's concerns and, in consultation with the MBA 640 instructor, decided to offer an additional section of MBA 640 in the fall 2010 that would be taught only to MPA students (i.e., previously, MPAs and MBAs took the same section). The new section of MBA 640 for MPA students was taught in a time period so that it did not overburden the MPA students (i.e., it was not taught on the same day as any MPA class). In addition, the MBA 640 instructor cut back on some of the time consuming assignments that had been made in prior years, while still maintaining a rigorous course. These changes freed up time for the MPA

students to devote to their MPA classes and, in particular, corporate tax. The result was an improved performance of the students in corporate tax in the fall 2010 relative to their performance in the fall 2009. In addition, unlike the 2009-2010 academic year when students stated in their exit surveys that their understanding of corporate tax was weak due to their inability to devote the time needed to this class, no students in their 2010-2011 exit surveys indicated they felt weak in corporate tax. Plus, in their exit surveys for 2010-2011, the students did not indicate MBA 640 took an inordinate amount of their time but instead viewed its time requirements on par with their other classes. This represents a clear "closing of the loop" in our assessment process as a problem was identified through our assessment procedures in 2009-2010, curriculum changes were proposed in the 2009-2010 assessment report and acted upon in the 2010-2011 academic year, and assessment results for 2010-2011 suggest the problem has been resolved.

Example 2: In the spring 2010, the ACC 605 instructor followed a similar structure to the one used in 2009 except that rather than assigning an additional (i.e., instructional) case in between the two cases used for assessment purposes, he elaborated on the first case when it was returned to the students to provide them with the key ingredients needed in solving unstructured cases. The effect was the same as the prior year (i.e., spring 2009) as the students showed marked improvement in their critical thinking skills between the first and second case. The ACC 605 instructor continued the same procedure in the spring 2011 as used in the spring 2010 and with the same results (i.e., the students' critical thinking skills and their ability to solve unstructured cases improved dramatically between the first and second case). Thus, the desired results over a three-year window (i.e., 2009, 2010, and 2011) clearly confirm that the curriculum changes made in ACC 605 did not result in an anomaly (i.e., a one year improvement) but instead in a procedure that distinctly represents a long-term "closing of the loop." The assessment team recommends the ACC 605 instructor continue the current procedures for evaluating critical thinking skills in this course in the future.

Example 3: In a prior assessment cycle, while conducting exit interviews of graduating MPA students some of the students who had performed internships with CPA firms noted that they felt weak in the area of transactions cycles. To remedy this problem, transactions cycles cases/problems were added to both the undergraduate and graduate auditing classes a couple of years ago. As shown in the results, all students in ACC 610 in the current year performed at least at the "met expectations" level on both traits measuring knowledge and understanding of transactions cycles. In addition, no students mentioned in either their written or oral exit surveys this year that they felt weak in this important area (transactions cycles). The same was true in last year's exit interviews as well. This demonstrates a clear "closing of the loop" in our assessment process as a problem was identified through our assessment procedures in a prior year, changes were made to the curriculum to address the problem, and subsequent assessment testing through multiple cycles shows the problem has been resolved.

Example 4: The results from the critical thinking rubric applied in ACC 620 in the fall 2009 indicated this change in the curriculum produced the desired effects as all students were able to identify the tax consequences of virtually all decision points in the case. In the fall 2010, the ACC 620 instructor continued to emphasize the tax consequences of business decisions to ensure students understood their importance and could recognize the types of decisions that carry tax consequences. The results stayed positive as, just like those of the prior year. All students in the fall 2010 critical thinking project were able to appropriately identify the tax consequences of all key decisions presented in the case (i.e., they identified which decisions had tax consequences and which ones did not).This demonstrates a positive "closing of the loop" in our assessment process as a weakness was identified through our assessment procedures, recommended changes were implemented in the curriculum, and subsequent assessment measures through two consecutive cycles (i.e., years) suggest the changes produced the desired effects on outcomes.

Example 5: In ACC 605 on each of the three teamwork projects in the spring 2011, most assessments fell in the "exceptional" category for each teamwork trait evaluated. On the second teamwork project in ACC 605, most of the "unacceptable" ratings were from two team members who had evaluated each other harshly, and

these two students had severe personality conflicts on this particular project. The majority of the students received few, if any, "unacceptable" ratings on any trait. The unique changes made each year (i.e., 2008-2009, 2009-2010, and 2010-2011) in assigning and evaluating team members in ACC 605 made the teamwork environment for the students more reflective what they will experience in practice (i.e., relative to the methods used in ACC 605 in prior years). As noted in last year's assessment report, the results showed an improved performance by the students when the majority of the changes were implemented in 2008-2009 and 2009-2010. These strong results continued in 2010-2011 as the method was tweaked by adding a third teamwork project in ACC 605. These changes over the last three assessment cycles demonstrate a "closing of the loop" as adjustments were made to the curriculum to make the teamwork environment more reflective of practice and this brought about desired consequences in outcomes in terms of student performance.

Example 6: A question missed by a large percentage of students on the comprehensive examination concerned the justification for using fair value measurements in the balance sheet and was aimed at determining students' base level understanding of why fair value measurements are important. In last year's assessment report, the assessment team recommended that the ACC 605 instructor emphasize both of the above topics more in class. On the 2010-2011 MPA comprehensive exam, the students performed much better on the question addressing the justification for fair value reporting relative to their performance in the prior year. This demonstrates a "closing of the loop" as a weakness was identified through the prior year's assessment procedures, the curriculum was appropriately adjusted based on recommendations in last year's assessment report, and the current year's assessment results indicate the problem has been corrected.

## 2010-2011 Business Administration MBA*

### Closing the Loop

The 2010-11 year provided more evidence of the successful MBA program revision, and improved learning outcomes. Faculty participation in assessment activities increased, as did systematic review of assessment results. Major assessment results (ETS) documented improved learning outcomes when compared to the 2009-2010 year. The 2011-2012 year will begin a third round of loop closing for the MBA program. Collectively, our assessment results have documented better outcomes in the Coast MBA cohort (working, professional part-time students) compared to the Hattiesburg MBA cohort (full time students with little to no work experience). Beginning in the Fall 2011, the cohorts will be combined into one MBA program -- the Professional MBA Program on the Southern Miss Gulf Coast campus. We believe this combined cohort will strengthen the program in two ways: by developing a common network of MBA students, and by encouraging higher performance among the full time MBA students. We will continue to review assessment indicators in each group, to review any changes in learning outcomes due to the program's consolidation.

During the year we also closed loops regarding further globalization of our MBA program. For many years, graduate students have participated in the British Studies Program at Southern Miss. This is an excellent program, but has an extended time frame that most working MBA students cannot afford. The Panama program in 2011 offered an alternative to working MBA students; since only 10 days are spent in-country, our working MBA students could participate in this study abroad. Four MBA students, all with full-time professional jobs participated in the Panama Study Abroad Program in 2011. Our plans during the 2011-2012 year include continuing the Panama program, and also offering the option of a Caribbean Studies program in Jamaica in January of 2012. We will continue to market these programs to MBA students, in an effort to continuously improve and globalize our curriculum.

## 2010-2011 Management (Business Administration Management) BSBA*

### Closing the Loop

While no activities during the 2010-2011 assessment cycle appear to have "closed a loop," based on the results of several planned initiatives, we expect make improvements at both the major and emphasis levels. Focal areas include improving ETS performance, updating/improving SACS assessment by developing new

learning outcomes, measures, and achievement targets for each emphasis area to replace the current plan which is only at the major level of assessment, and updating/improving curricula within all of the emphasis areas.

**2010-2011 Marketing BSBA**

**Closing the Loop**

This year we began to deconstruct the major in order to classify where each important concept is taught and reinforced. The hope is that this will improve the performance of our graduating seniors on the comprehensive ETS exam.  The addition of Professional Selling to our core curriculum is in response to our recruiters who are looking for these skills in our graduates.

# COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND PSYCHOLOGY

**Closing the Loop Responses**

**2010-2011 Counseling and Personnel Services (School Counseling) MEd**

**Closing the Loop**

The former measures utilized were not found to assist significantly in the evaluation of the program. The surveys were attempted for several years with minimal success in gaining returns. In various attempts through phone calls and emails, the success rate for returns did not dramatically increase. In addition this measure was terminated due to ongoing changes in the program as well. The students started to use TK-20 in 2010-2011 for submission of all data and documents formerly gathered in portfolio. There were many questions and concerns as well as guidance needed to complete this process. The attempt to use Tk-20 for the surveys was terminated as it was noted that the entire process was overwhelming during our pilot year of Tk-20 use. Furthermore, the survey measured dispositions and had a component for the employer. The employer didn't really get the opportunity to evaluate the student as a counselor, but more so as a teacher. This measure didn't seem to give reliable data for school counseling evaluation. The program has adopted new measures which is hopeful to be a better reflection of the candidate and his/her skills and dispositions. (As a note the surveys returned did reflect positive comments.)

**2010-2011 Counseling Psychology MS**

**Closing the Loop**

The counseling psychology MS program will continue to monitor the open action plans which include increasing attention to professional development activities (professional organization membership and attendance at professional conferences) as well as working to increase mentoring related to doctoral program applications. As the program has undergone several revisions in the last 10 years, it is hoped that the successes enjoyed in the current assessment cycle will continue. Accreditation will continue to be an upcoming goal of the program. With new accreditation bodies being developed to address the unique training aspects of counseling psychology master's programs, it is anticipated that revisions of program goals and measures may be considered to remain in line with programmatic changes to the field.

**2010-2011 Education (Elementary Education) EdS**

**Closing the Loop**

Actions implemented included merging emphasis areas into one core program with emphasis area electives, enhancing training for the IRB process, providing more effective mentoring of Ed.S. candidates and providing more effective research coursework. These actions resulted in candidates being more successful with the research requirements of the Ed.S. programs.

**2010-2011 Education (Elementary Education) PhD**

**Closing the Loop**

CISE graduate faculty have reviewed and enhanced the Ph.D. program in the past two years through providing a better sequence of research courses and through ensuring that all Ph.D. candidates had the opportunity to participate in teaching, research, service and grant activities. Additionally, the written comprehensive examinations were revised for better alignment with national educational standards. These are ongoing activities that will be continued in the next academic year.

### 2010-2011 Education (Special Education) PhD

**Closing the Loop**

In the previous academic year, faculty merged three programs [Ph.D. in Special Education, Ed.D. in Education (Special Education) and Ph.D. in Education (Special Education)] to become the Ph.D. in Education (Special Education). CISE graduate faculty identified and systematically offered a doctoral core across all emphasis areas in order to ensure candidates are well-rounded within the larger field of education. Faculty have worked with the four special education emphasis areas to ensure that candidates have a variety of options for specialization within the field of special education. All of this has been accomplished and revised plans of study have been approved. Through the work within the emphasis areas, the doctoral program has benefited from the move to online delivery of emphasis area coursework shared by the M.Ed. and Ed.S. in Special Education.

### 2010-2011 Educational Curriculum and Instruction (Secondary Education) MEd

**Closing the Loop**

Actions to redesign and merge the secondary education M.Ed. and MAT have resulted in a more accessible and efficient secondary education master's level degree program. Actions to develop alternate delivery of coursework have improved recruitment efforts.

### 2010-2011 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.

### 2010-2011 Higher Education Administration EdD/PhD

**Closing the Loop**

Given that this Assessment Plan is newly established there is little to be said at this point. All Achievement Targets have been met. Nevertheless, several Action Plans have been put in place to reflect program initiatives: 1) a change in the comprehensive examinations, 2) differentiating the Ed.D. and Ph.D. programs, and 3) increasing academic rigor. The effectiveness of these changes will be reflected on several times over the next two years.

### 2010-2011 Instructional Technology (Administrative Communication) BS

**Closing the Loop**

The primary continuous improvement initiatives from 2010-2011 were greater consistency between instructors teaching the same course and improvements to the type of assignments and rubrics included in various courses. In IT380, Organizational Communications, for example, meetings were held with all full time faculty and adjuncts--6 total--in order to insure that each section was receiving the same content. Rubrics and assignment narratives were distributed and discussions held concerning in-class expectations and assessments. In IT485, Administrative Management, several assignments were revised and updated to provide more meaningful content for the students. These assignments were well done as 100% of students scored 80% or better and the assessments were fully met.

### 2010-2011 Instructional Technology (Business Technology Education Licensure) BS

#### Closing the Loop

The Communications with Online Students Action Plan will remain active to provide awareness to faculty that students may need additional communication when in an online setting. BTE faculty meet regularly to review student dispositions and to develop remedial plans for those teacher candidates who require additional mentoring. Additionally methods course content is reviewed as well as the sequencing of coursework. In 2010-11, faculty met regularly to review the BTE Plan of Study. The BTE Plan of Study will be revised to align with the changes being made to the MDE state business education frameworks.

### 2009-2010 Instructional Technology MS

#### Closing the Loop

Two action plans that have been initiated in the year 2008-2009 based upon the IT Alumni Survey results has been closed this year. These two actions revolved around the quality of the computer-lab facilities and the Capstone Project graduation requirements.

First, based on results from the alumni survey during 2008-2009 year, the respondents (2/2) did not report a positive experience with the lab-based experiences. Only two alumni responded to that particular survey that could have played a factor in the low ratings, however. Regardless of the number of respondents, the faculty took this result into consideration. The IT faculty had two assumptions as to why such responses occurred: (1) either the software in the labs related to course projects may be out-of-date, and thus, do not match recent versions that students may have on their own computers, and/or (2) the students did not fully utilize the labs because they already had access to the software elsewhere, and thus, did not completely utilize the lab themselves to complete projects. This is the first set of alumni who rated this particular question as less than satisfactory, so we decide to wait and see what happens with the next set of alumni in year 2009-2010. The results did vary from the previous year in that the alumni from 2009-2010 reported higher ratings with the computer-lab facilities. 80% (4/5: summer, fall, and spring combined) rated computer-lab facilities as either "very good" or "outstanding." In addition, for fall 2010 new computers will be installed for courses that are computer intensive. These will include Mac computers and contain updated software programs on the system. Hence, the computer-lab facilities will be improved to counter these problematic issues.

Second, responses (2/2) from the IT Alumni Survey in 2008-2009 resulted in only 50% of the alumni rating the question on the Usefulness of completing a Capstone Project or Thesis as a 4 or "Somewhat valuable." The other rating for this question was a 3 for "Average". However, what is important to note in these results is that only one of the alumni who responded to this question actually completed the Capstone Project. Therefore, the response made sense in that one alumnus would find the Capstone Project valuable, and the other would not. This is why developing an action plan for this area has been difficult for that particular year because we could not really assess the results. In 2009-2010, however, 3/3 alumni who had completed a Capstone Project that year indicated a score of 4 for "Very Good" or 5 for "Outstanding" on the question Usefulness of completing a Capstone Project or Thesis. Thus, the previous year's results were skewed because of the low number of alumni who responded, and the fact that only one student completed the Capstone Project.

### 2010-2011 Library and Information Science BA

#### Closing the Loop

A recurring issue has been the identification of student writing problems and determining the remedies. The issue identified in the 2008-2009 cycle has been dealt with by sending more faculty to QEP training and adopting a unified writing rubric across the school. Attempting to train our GAs to act as volunteer writing tutors was a good idea, but ineffective when the students do not make use of the GAs' assistance. All faculty within the school are expected to grade assignments for grammar, spelling, and clarity. The rubric has

allowed more consistent assessment of student writing and aided in identifying the most common errors. Problems that have been identified: inferior previous grammar training with no support from outside of the program, inattention to details and instructions, and failure to review materials after writing. Students need additional grammar support; grammar should be graded in all courses outside of the program as well as within the program. Students need to be given guidance about the importance of following instructions and editing after writing. Specific assessment points have been instituted rather than an overall general writing assessment. Faculty report some improvement in writing once students are made aware that they will be graded on basic writing skills as well as the importance of using standard English. Reflective writing is permitted in a number of courses, but structured writing is required in virtually all courses. Two key assessment points, one early in the student's program and one at the end are used to measure improvement. A new action plan will be developed during the 2011-2012 year to attempt to further address these issues.

A problem with a course assignment, the annotated bibliography task, had been omitted from its course and we had to ensure it be included in the 401 course requirements. (An omission of this task occurred in the 2007-2008 cycle and it was corrected.) However, in fall 2010 a different set of assessment points was not collected. So one problem was corrected but the underlying problem in the system that allowed it to happen has not been dealt with yet, so the curriculum committee and the director will have to design a foolproof method for ensuring the faculty are collecting all the data as appropriate.

For the 2010-2011 year, a modification to how we report our assessment data involved reporting results based upon submitted assignments rather than on student enrollment. This was put in place to address the issue of some undergraduate students who stop attending or submitting assignments long before they go through the process of formally dropping the course. Being more aware of changes in a student's course work submission has also aided us in more quickly reporting students via Eagle Alert. Allowing students to withdraw through SOAR should help to eliminate the students who remain on the class roster long after they stop participating and attending; this will also improve the accuracy and reliability of data collected.

## 2010-2011 Library and Information Science MLIS**

### Closing the Loop
Two of three exit survey responses in the 2007-2008 cycle indicated student perception of technology preparation was weak. Since library and information science has very dynamic evolving technology systems and structures, e.g., Second Life, blogs, wikis, gaming, etc., we needed to increase proactive technology engagement in the courses for the students. The curriculum committee reviews the technology implementation in every core course annually. Technology has been integrated into all courses; students discuss and interact with Web 2.0, social networking, and Library 2.0 impact on the library. Students now use blogs, wikis, review gaming as a teaching tool and participate through the online courseware, Blackboard, in a wide number of technological tools: chat rooms, Wimba, podcasts, etc. Technology will continue to be a carefully monitored aspect of the curriculum and in fact we have petitioned to change our degree program so that students are required to take at least one of the technology intensive courses, LIS 516 Media Utilization, LIS 557 Computers in Libraries or LIS 558 Internet Resources. The review of the area will be ongoing but the action plan has been labeled as finished. Cataloging was identified in 2009-2010 cycle as having weaker student performance than expected. Faculty modified course instructions and made additional cataloging software tools available, including Catalogers Desk. Student performance in the 2010-2011 cycle was improved, and this action plan labeled finished. However, faculty will continue to monitor the situation, providing more focus on tools and hands-on practice.

## 2010-2011 Psychology BA/BS*

### Closing the Loop
Action plans that were completed specific to PSY 361 (Research Methods) during 2010-11 included more "hands on" research experiences through course assignments. Also, PSY 361 instructors met to determine why

alumni tended to rate our research emphasis below our performance target. Regarding increasing responses to the Alumni Survey, the piloting of survey data collected through the email was completed in lieu of traditional mail out processes that were more costly and time inefficient. Additionally, given the unreliability of physical addresses of our graduates, this data gathering process proved more efficient and resulted in a slightly higher response rate. Continued attention will be paid to increasing response rates to our Alumni Survey. The Department of Psychology looks forward to reporting on the Continuous Improvement Initiatives undertaken, yet not completed during 2010-11. We anticipate continued improvement in supporting our undergraduates.

**2010-2011 Psychology PhD**

**Closing the Loop**

We will continue to monitor our action plans for unmet objectives and research milestones for an additional year. We have discontinued several action plans that are no longer needed, but will strive for continuous improvement in all areas of our graduate training

**2010-2011 Special Education BS***

**Closing the Loop**

Ongoing monitoring and enhancing innovative technology has been a major effort of special education faculty. CISE faculty have collaborated with K-12 mentor teachers to help special education teacher candidates integrate technology that is currently being used in the schools. A new emphasis has been placed on using family and community resources for teaching and learning with this objective being added to both didactic and clinical courses. Family members of students with disabilities have been included in the program to help teacher candidates understand the family perspective. Online courses have been monitored and evaluated to ensure their effectiveness.

**2010-2011 Special Education MEd***

**Closing the Loop**

Actions that have been completed in the previous cycle include enhancing online and clinical site technology, aligning portfolio artifacts to specific CEC standards, and mentoring and collaborating with adjunct faculty to ensure that they teach the CEC standards that are aligned with their courses and that they administer the appropriate assessments for the courses. Additionally, graduate special education classes have been scheduled for a two-year period resulting in graduate students being able to sequence their degree plans. Actions to provide appropriate scheduling and sequencing of coursework and providing online graduate courses have contributed significantly to recruiting and retaining special education graduate students.

# COLLEGE OF HEALTH

**Closing the Loop Responses**

**2010-2011 Athletic Training BS**

**Closing the Loop**

As was noted in 2008-09, the ATEP outcomes and assessments were reconfigured for the 2009-10 academic year. The overall plan for the ATEP was reduced from 27 to 10 assessments. Findings after the first year indicated much attention to the objectives and measures was needed. Review of the 10 objectives following the 2010-11 assessment year indicated improvement in addressing each item, as evidenced by all objectives being met (6/10) or partially met (4/10) during the summer, fall, and spring 2010-11 academic year. The new assessments relate to the five domains of athletic training (injury/illness, Clinical Evaluation Diagnosis, Immediate and Emergency Care, Treatment and Rehabilitation, and Organizational and Professional Health and Well-Being), and are divided into didactic (classroom) and clinical components. The didactic objectives are measured by written and practical exam scores, and the clinical objectives are currently measured by scores on clinical proficiencies. Future clinical objectives will be measured by rubric scores on clinical case study proficiency portfolios. These portfolios will address current literature and current best practices in health-care provision, and will include writing and speaking assignments which allow students to demonstrate their competency in these areas.

**2010-2011 Audiology AuD**

**Closing the Loop**

Thus far no action plans have been completed. However, an action plan was implemented this year that will monitor AuD students' performance on the national Praxis examination in Audiology. The recently initiated action plan will continue to closely monitor scores from the Educational Testing Service. In an attempt to improve scores on the exam, the faculty added a comprehensive examination requirement for students admitted in the Fall 2011 and subsequent classes. The exam will consist of multiple-choice questions (similar format as the Praxis exam) derived from the faculty and will consists of approximately 200-300 questions related to course content during the first two years of the Program. The exam will be taken during the Spring semester of their second year. A cut-off score for passing is yet to be determined but will be based on "practice" exam results administered to the current second and third year students.

**2010-2011 Human Performance (Exercise Science) BS**

**Closing the Loop**

Significant improvements in student learning are being demonstrated in all of the assessed courses. Several of the assessments indicate that while students may not be correctly answering questions, fewer "I do not know" answers are being selected. One area that we need to do a better job on is tracking our students between entry and exit to the program. We might also need to review the content of the different assessment tools.

**2010-2011 Nursing (Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner) MSN**

**Closing the Loop**

The Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP) program of study continues to be a stellar program that consistently meets all targets every cycle. The PEC will continue to revisit and revise the data collection process to improve the response rate of Alumni Surveys. AY 2010-2011 included changes in the data collection process for the Employer Surveys which increased response rates from 0% to 30% (n=3). The PEC will continue to revisit and revise this data collection process to improve response rates. Though targets were met, the PEC along with the SoN faculty and administrative team will continue to monitor and implement strategies to maintain and improve the PMHNP program outcomes.

**2010-2011 Nursing BSN**

### Closing the Loop

Actions that been completed in the previous cycle include changing the data collection process of the BSN Alumni Surveys. AY 2009-2010 the BSN Alumni Surveys were administered through Facebook groups using SurveyMonkey. The response rate increased from dismal (3-5%) to 55% that cycle. The Program Evaluation Committee (PEC) published a manuscript in Nursing Education regarding this innovative evaluation strategy. Because of the concerns the University expressed with using Facebook for official University business, the BSN Alumni Surveys were administered using emails and SurveyMonkey. The response rate dropped to 16% (n=19) for the Hattiesburg campus to 0% for the Gulf Park campus. The PEC will revisit the use of Facebook. AY 2010-2011 include changes in the data collection process for the Employer Surveys which increased response rates from 0% to 30% (n=3). ATI scores improved with actions implemented in the previous cycled. Additional strategies will be employed (e.g., faculty course exploration) in combination with tracking of individual student scores and remediation in an effort to continue improvement in ATI scores. NCLEX pass rates dropped below target for Fall 2010 due to changes in the NCLEX testing plan. Efforts (e.g., faculty education, testing changes) employed immediately brought NCLEX pass rates above targets for Spring 2011.

**2010-2011 Nursing PhD**

### Closing the Loop

Actions that been completed in the previous cycle include changing the data collection process of the Alumni Surveys. AY 2010-2011 include changes in the data collection process for the Employer Surveys which increased response rates from 0% to 30% (n=3). Although these response rates are dramatically improved, the PEC will continue to revisit and revise this data collection process to maintain and increase this outcome. Actions of AY 2010-2011 that were completed because their respective targets were met included those to improve students defending their proposal within 24 months of completing course work, graduation rates, and comprehensive examination pass rates (e.g., PhD Coordinator, Academic Coordinator, improved student advising, faculty mentors, improved progress monitoring, and acculturation of students). Although these initiatives improved their respective targets, continuing these efforts are necessary to maintain and advance these outcomes.

**2010-2011 Nutrition and Dietetics BS**

### Closing the Loop

Action plans implemented in the 2008-2009 cycle included fully implementing an updated curriculum during the 2008-2009 academic year and fully implementing new accreditation standards in 2009-2010. Activities and assignments in courses related to nutrition knowledge and skills were implemented that included progressive knowledge and skill development via rolling case studies, further practice in counseling individuals, knowledge of genetics and giving group presentations. While scores on the nutrition portion of the national examination for registered dietitians have met the targeted outcome, scores on the food service management portion continue to be below the target. Likewise the percentage of students reporting that they felt they had adequate preparation in foodservice management was below the target. Therefore an action plan related to foodservice management was revised and will continue in progress for the next assessment cycle. New activities and assignments in the writing/speaking intensive capstone course were implemented to provide students with more opportunities to improve speaking skills. While the percentage of graduates reporting they felt adequately prepared in oral communication was below the target in 2010, it had improved from 2009. However, the low number of respondents to the graduate survey makes it difficult to generalize its findings to all graduates of the program. The program will continue to focus on preparing students to communicate orally through activities and assignments in the capstone course and in other courses throughout the curriculum via class presentations. An APA tutorial was developed and distributed among the faculty who now post the tutorial on their course Blackboard supplement for students to access. Grading

rubrics for assignments that include writing were developed to incorporate grammar as a component of the writing grade. This action plan was intended to improve student's writing skills and use of a standard reference/publication style. Students have met the outcome target on the written portion of the capstone research project over the 2008-2010 academic years. The program will continue to emphasize grammar and a common reference/publication style across all courses which have writing assignments.

## 2010-2011 Nutrition and Food Systems MS

### Closing the Loop
In reviewing our action plans over the past four years, most of our action items have related to measurement and achievement of student learning outcomes. Most have thus been rather narrowly focused. We have achieved and closed out most items from prior years (although we may not have used the proper mechanism in Weave to close out items to reflect their final disposition). We have retained two items from past years. One, evaluating the departmental research methods course, is a continuing item, because we are constantly striving to improve student learning about research methodology in students with little prior exposure. This past year the course instructor incorporated more student learning activities in the course, with good success. In the coming year a new faculty member who has had extensive coursework in research methods will team teach the course with the regular instructor. We also retained the item related to the research outcomes grading rubric, as we continue to tweak this to include better guidance for the student. Each year in our annual faculty retreat, we discuss broader program needs and objectives. We have not previously included action items as part of our annual program assessment that have evolved from those faculty discussions, that are of a broader nature vs being related to a single student learning outcome. This year we have included some of those objectives within our action plans in the Weave reporting system and look forward to reporting next year on our progress.

## 2010-2011 Nutrition and Food Systems PhD

### Closing the Loop
We have categorized one action plan as completed, since we added a nutrition and food systems theories course to the PhD core curriculum. We have maintained four others as in progress, largely because we are bringing on two new PhD faculty this fall whom we anticipate will be teaching graduate courses that include PhD students over the next few years. Therefore as new, along with continuing, faculty update courses to reflect their own individual teaching styles and areas of interest, we want to insure that research skills assignments complement each other and that integration of nutrition and food systems is considered for each course to the extent that is appropriate. Having new faculty also prompts us to reevaluate the elective course rotation based on faculty expertise and interests.

## 2010-2011 Public Health MPH

### Closing the Loop
The chair, biostatistics faculty members and graduate coordinator met to discuss the 2009-2010 findings. Revisions were made and the target was met in the 2010-2011 assessment period. The chair, environmental health faculty and graduate coordinator identified measurements and data was obtained for the 2010-2011 assessment period. The chair, health administration faculty and graduate coordinator identified measurements and data was obtained for the 2010-2011 assessment period.

## 2010-2011 Social Work BSW*

### Closing the Loop
Actions that have been completed in the previous cycle include pedagogical efforts to increase students' interests in social policy and research. Efforts to increase students' interests in policy included developing opportunities for leadership and advocacy through curriculum and application of theories through community

engagement. Nevertheless, there was no significant difference between 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 in students' perceptions of their preparation to analyze, formulate, and influence social policy. According to the 2009-2010 Exit Surveys, 71% to 86% of students (vary by site and semester) believed that they were well prepared in analyzing, formulating and influencing social policy. According to the 2010-2011 Exit Surveys, 64% to 86% of students believed that they were well prepared in analyzing, formulating and influencing social policy. For 2011-2012, Policy Analysis Assignments will be given to students. These assignments include: 1) Students identify an area of practice of interest to them (child welfare, juvenile justice, community-health, mental health, etc). 2) Students create a social history for a hypothetical client in this practice area. 3) Students identify the primary problem for which the client has been referred to them. 4) Students identify a specific policy at the Mississippi state level that impacts how they work with this client. 5) Students complete a written analysis of this policy using the Policy Analysis Framework developed in the course text. Research: Efforts to increase students' interests in research involved 1) teaching research methods through the framework of evidence-based practice; 2) improving students' information literacy skills; and 3) strengthening students' abilities to apply the research discussed in literature to the presenting problem of their client; 4) encouraging students to engage in research (their own or collaborative with faculty) and present findings of the research at conferences. Compared to the year of 2009-2010, an increased percentage of students felt that they were prepared well in evaluating and applying research studies (2009-2010 Exit Surveys: 29% to 86%; 2010-2011 Exit Surveys: 64% to 92%).

**2010-2011 Social Work MSW***

### Closing the Loop

Actions that have been completed in the previous cycle include pedagogical efforts to increase students' interests in research. Efforts to increase students' interests in research involved 1) teaching research methods through the framework of evidence-based practice; 2) improving students' information literacy skills; and 3) strengthening students' abilities to apply the research discussed in literature to the presenting problem of their client; 4) encouraging students to engage in research (their own or collaborative with faculty) and present findings of the research at conferences. Nevertheless, there was no significant difference between year of 2009-2010 and year of 2010-2011 in students' perceptions of their preparation to advance research and evaluate research studies. Plans for 2011-2012 year include intentional integration between research methods and policy community engagement projects. Results should be increased understanding of the relevance of research to micro (e.g., individual practice) and macro (e.g., community) change.

**2010-2011 Sport Coaching Education MS****

### Closing the Loop

We have finished two action plans this semester: 1) changing the required text for the sport skills course, and 2) revising the practicum evaluation methods.

# COLLEGE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

**Closing the Loop Responses**

**2010-2011 Applied Technology BS***

### Closing the Loop

In the previous cycles, the program has worked to improve the students' ability to communicate proficiently. In the last year, to improve scores in written and oral communication, students were required to refer to the APA manual as a reference, and visit the writing and speaking centers. In addition, the faculty has become more timely and effective at providing valuable feedback. Also, students are allowed to resubmit assignments with adept improvements. This practice has been influential in the improvement to 100% proficient scores for the Capstone Research Project (Written and Oral). Actions to provide courses through online delivery, interactive video, and hybrid methods, to a unique group of students has attributed to an increase in recruitment and retention. Although, several companies send their employees through this program to develop their future mangers and to strengthen their succession planning efforts, the department has very little knowledge of students' career progression after finishing the program. This action is currently in progress and will continue to be monitored for any inconsistency.

**2010-2011 Architectural Engineering Technology BS**

### Closing the Loop

At the program level, all performance targets were met. In the Architectural Engineering Technology (ACT) program, this is represented by 8,863 student work samples (out of 10,130) that were evaluated as better than or equal to 70 (out of 100). The percentage of samples better than or equal to 70 is 87% which exceeds our stated level of performance of 80%. These findings were derived from 15 of 23 courses in the curriculum; the findings from the remaining eight courses are still being pursued but were courses taught by an adjunct and an instructor that lost all data from hard-drive failure. (These two issues will lead to an improved reporting system). Since the data is driven from the ground up (that is, from the faculty), the value of this assessment approach is that all faculty are involved rather than a select few as previously. The faculty are able to review their course level findings with respect to either the TAC-ABET criteria or the course objectives (which are generally more important to them). Although we have met all performance targets at the annual program level, there are findings (also reported in WeaveOnline) where the semester based report for either face-to-face or online might not have met the performance target. It is a simple matter to drill back down to the course level and determine which assessment tools the students were having difficulty with. When the faculty submitted their findings, they were asked to provide an assessment of any finding that went below the 80% threshold and develop action plans as needed. In some cases, the issue was too few students in a section; these sections did not require an action plan but would be monitored. Sections with significant student numbers that had assessments below targets were added to the action plan section in WeaveOnline.

**2010-2011 Chemistry PhD**

### Closing the Loop

I have terminated the plan to create a room equipped with computers for graduate students and faculty to meet. This plan has had no action and will have no action in the near future. The other action plans are still active and in progress with no loop to close at this time.

**2010-2011 Computational Sciences (Mathematics) PhD**

### Closing the Loop

The Outcomes, Measures and Attainment Targets listed in many of the previous assessment reports were deemed to be altogether too reliant on surveys (student surveys, alumni surveys). Given the small number of graduates, these proved difficult to utilize. Instead, we have decided to restructure our annual assessment

using direct measures of student performance in areas that measure teaching and research effectiveness. In the longer term, these should provide us a better sense of where our strengths and weaknesses lie, as well as to provide the necessary feedback to improve our program. The additional programmatic changes being considered for the graduate programs also reflect an awareness by the faculty of the need to align and streamline the program to so that its overall productivity is increased.

### 2010-2011 Computer Engineering Technology BS

**Closing the Loop**

Findings for the CET program continue to be mixed. As discussed in the Summary/Analysis section, the strong points for the program is still the students' abilities to perform and understand laboratory experiments in both the theoretical and experimental sense. Most action plans associated with these strong points were to facilitate timely data collection from the faculty or to remedy time issues for student performance. All utilized action plans for this area provided positive results. In direct contradiction to these approaches, the major deficiency that the CET program has is the ability of its senior students to communicate. Every method that has been attempted to effect positive change has been refuted as shown by the continual sub-standard performance of seniors in CET capstone courses regardless of what action plan was being implemented. The forthcoming approach by the program is to take an academic boot camp approach to the students entering the courses rather than the business type professional approach that had long before worked and has recently began failing. With strict academic guidelines and a drop before fail policy numbers should begin to improve.

### 2010-2011 Computer Science BS*

**Closing the Loop**

At the end of Fall 2010, several faculty met to discuss the course outcomes. As a result of this meeting it was decided to focus efforts initially on one cluster that included the courses CSC101, CSC101L, CSC102, CSC307 and CSC317. This cluster of courses is vital for each student to perform well in other clusters. Standardizing tests, text books and topics to be covered within each course and across the courses are some of the steps discussed to improve these courses. A similar meeting for discussing the outcomes of Spring 2011 courses will be held over the summer. Developing standardized rubrics for grading oral presentations and writing intensive assignments is still work in progress.

### 2010-2011 Construction Engineering Technology BS*

**Closing the Loop**

At the program level, all performance targets were met. In the Construction Engineering Technology (BCT) program, this is represented by 22,123 student work samples (out of 24,768) that were evaluated as better than or equal to 70 (out of 100). The percentage of samples better than or equal to 70 is 89% which exceeds our stated level of performance of 80%. These findings were derived from 21 of 22 courses in the curriculum; the findings from the remaining course is still being pursued but was taught by an instructor that lost all data from hard-drive failure. (This issue will lead to an improved reporting system). Since the data is driven from the ground up (that is, from the faculty), the value of this assessment approach is that all faculty are involved rather than a select few as previously. The faculty are able to review their course level findings with respect to either the TAC-ABET criteria or the course objectives (which are generally more important to them). Although we have met all performance targets at the annual program level, there are findings (also reported in WeaveOnline) where the semester based report for either face-to-face or online might not have met the performance target. It is a simple matter to drill back down to the course level and determine which assessment tools the students were having difficulty with. When the faculty submitted their findings, they were asked to provide an assessment of any finding that went below the 80% threshold and develop action plans as needed. In some cases, the issue was too few students in a section; these sections did not require an action

plan but would be monitored. Sections with significant student numbers that had assessments below targets were added to the action plan section in WeaveOnline.

## 2010-2011 Criminal Justice BA*

### Closing the Loop
The School of Criminal Justice made many revisions to the criminal justice baccalaureate assessment plan as a result of its continued dedication to improving the evaluation process. Specifically, the following represent what is believed to be progress with respect to an already "commendable" rated assessment plan in 2010-2011: (1) evaluation criteria were restructured from fourteen broad measures to ten more easily managed measures; (2) the faculty decided that the goal of an undergraduate comprehensive exam was just not workable, and thus removed this perpetual "not met" item from the evaluation process; (3) the action plan implemented for the calendar year regarding the "ethics and theory component of the capstone reflective essay assignment" appeared to be a successful initiative (target was achieved).

## 2010-2011 Criminal Justice PhD

### Closing the Loop
There are several initiatives that the School of Criminal Justice continues to focus on to "Close the Loop." The first issue is recruitment. The School has created a committee that will convene early in the Fall 2011 semester to create a three year recruitment plan/strategy. Faculty and students will also be encouraged to be more actively involved in recruitment at regional and national conferences. The second issue is the redesign of the doctoral curriculum. The redesigned curriculum, which in the process of receiving final approval by the USM, should enhance recruitment strategies and serve to enhance the preparation of our students for success in both the academic and practitioner fields. The offering of a professional course for the first time last year demonstrates the school's movement to better prepare our students. The third issue regards the process of getting students "market ready". Doctoral students are being provided more opportunities to teach undergraduates than in previous years and that bodes well for the school and students. Teaching experiences combined with their production of peer reviewed publications are providing our doctoral students with stronger portfolios and vitas. It is expected that doctoral students graduating from our program will be competitive and will serve other institutions well. The development of strong, respected doctoral programs takes time. The Doctoral Program at USM is on a trajectory of success. The hiring of new faculty, the replacement of recently vacated faculty lines and the continued and increased funding of graduate students combined with an effective recruiting plan are critical to moving the doctoral program forward. The future is bright and the faculty and staff in the School of Criminal Justice are committed to creating the best criminal justice doctoral program in the United States.

## 2010-2011 Economic Development MS

### Closing the Loop
The Department of Economic and Workforce Development has undertaken a comprehensive approach to applying the lessons learned and feedback received from students and professionals into how we teach our students. We are consistently seeking to improve our methods of instruction, interactions with the students, and potential long-term beneficial impacts on our students. As noted above, the recommendations from students have been folded into the curriculum. Similarly, feedback from speakers, alumni, and internship site supervisors has also impacted the content and delivery of our programs. In order for our Department and programs to continue in the growth and development, a series of evaluations have been undertaken. These have impacted our growth and development trajectory. Actions that have been completed in the previous cycle include revising the written comprehensive examinations, adjusting individual class syllabi based on feedback, and improving the program options. Significant format modifications and revised learning objectives will be conducted over the next several years. The Department will continue its efforts to utilize student and expert feedback in its programmatic improvement. It is expected that teaching evaluations,

formal feedback through internship reports, systematic program assessment, and industry feedback will contribute to this process.

## 2010-2011 Forensics BS

### Closing the Loop

The Forensic program has made changes to its curriculum to ensure that students are prepared for the workplace upon graduation. Additional three forensic science courses (FSC 141, FSC 301 and FSC 321) have been added to the curriculum to enhance the knowledge of the students. The program will continue to look at the needs of employers by staying abreast of new technologies and developments in all fields through literature reviews, attending meetings and follow accreditation guidelines, so that our students will have the latest information and knowledge to be able to compete in the workplace. Our program will continue to evolve as the world of forensic science rapidly changes. Some of the measures were terminated due to low importance or difficulty in implementation with the available man power and resources.

## 2010-2011 Industrial Engineering Technology BS**

### Closing the Loop

At the program level, all performance targets were met. In the Industrial Engineering Technology (IET) program, this is represented by 4,645 student work samples (out of 5,354) that were evaluated as better than or equal to 70 (out of 100). The percentage of samples better than or equal to 70 is 88% which exceeds our stated level of performance of 80%. These findings were derived from 11 of 13 courses in the curriculum; the findings from the remaining two courses will be captured for the next cycle since they were not offered last year (due to two-year cycle of offering). Since the data is driven from the ground up (that is, from the faculty), the value of this assessment approach is that all faculty are involved rather than a select few as previously. The faculty are able to review their course level findings with respect to either the TAC-ABET criteria or the course objectives (which are generally more important to them). Although we have met all performance targets at the annual program level, there are findings (also reported in WeaveOnline) where the semester based report for either face-to-face or online might not have met the performance target. It is a simple matter to drill back down to the course level and determine which assessment tools the students were having difficulty with. When the faculty submitted their findings, they were asked to provide an assessment of any finding that went below the 80% threshold and develop action plans as needed. In some cases, the issue was too few students in a section; these sections did not require an action plan but would be monitored. Sections with significant student numbers that had assessments below targets were added to the action plan section in WeaveOnline.

## 2010-2011 Interior Design BS

### Closing the Loop

The program is pleased that our graduates are meeting and often exceeding the expectations for entry-level positions in the interior design profession. However, we continue to see a weakness in time management and reliability within our studio classes and in their field (internship) experiences. Upper level interior design students will continue to be exposed to complex time management challenges in their upper-level studios. They will be required to document their time in and outside of class in order to prepare for the real world which operates on a "time-is-money" concept and often charges clients by the hour. Students will have to learn to make decisions more quickly and to stay on course with their plan of action in order to complete tasks in a timely manner. They will be asked to get more involved in community service initiatives as well as their professional organizations, and they will be required to document their service each semester.

The program continues to experience difficulty in administering a comprehensive exam and desires to resolve the logistics of how and when to administer the exam during the 2011-2012 academic year. Discussions of going back to the National Council for Interior Design Qualifications (NCIDQ) format and not associating the

exam with the capstone class were discussed; however, no resolution has been approved to date. Progress was being made using the previous exam and significant improvements were documented during the last assessment period. Faculty had made a variety of improvements such as honing in on key learning objectives, modifying and adding additional course assignments and providing appropriate study guides for the comprehensive exam so that the exam would not be so intimidating. Further discussion will continue in hopes of developing an exam that will measure the senior's overall knowledge in 1) foundations of design (elements and principles, history, theory, etc.) 2) Codes and Accessibility standards 3) Building Systems and 4) Professional Practice to name a few.

The ethics component was not assessed this cycle since the course was not offered this cycle. Ethics will be reviewed in the upcoming spring 2012 semester as will the senior portfolio which did not get assessed this year since the rubric was not distributed in time to be utilized. The program will work hard to incorporate a better understanding of business ethics into our ID 441 Professional Practices course in spring 2012, and it has already distributed the grading rubric for the senior portfolio. We anticipate meeting the minimum expectations in both these two categories which were "not reported this cycle".

## 2010-2011 Marine Science BS**

### Closing the Loop
A review of previous action plans (and the core metrics defining program success) indicates that we are on the right track with the MARBS program thus far. Improvements can always be made (and these are addressed individually in previous sections); however, the program as a whole is a success with regard to: (1) the rigor of the MARBS plan of study; (2) the suitability of the MARBS curriculum relative to the educational goals of said program; and (3) student performance within the MARBS program. The visibility of the program (from an enrollment and marketing perspective) is a vital concern and shall provide the greatest opportunity for program growth and success; the erection of a new science complex at the Gulfpark campus will be a TREMENDOUS asset to program quality and growth. Once students are enrolled in the MARBS program, all effectiveness measures indicate that MARBS students are afforded excellent academic and skills education pertaining to their field of choice. However, the success of the program shall also require continued dedication in non-academic areas beyond the purview of MARBS instructors; namely, the appropriate marketing to, and subsequent admission of, students adequately prepared for success within the USM system and interested in the marine sciences.

## 2010-2011 Mathematics BS*

### Closing the Loop
In the past several academic years (2005-2006, 2006-2007, 2007-2008, 2008-2009, and 2009-2010) no fewer than twelve Action Plans have appeared in the assessment reports of the Department of Mathematics. These fall into five groups.

1. Three Action Plans deal with the need to strengthen the collection of papers placed in student Portfolios: "Improve data collection for Portfolio," 2006-2007; "Improve Portfolio data collection," 2007-2008; "Continue with Portfolio as assessment instrument," 2008- 2009. If the annual audit or inventory of Portfolios called for in the Action Plan "Annual Review of Portfolios" (2009-2010) takes place, the "loop" on this set of Action Plans should be closed.

2. Three Action Plans deal with the need to strengthen the collection of Exit Surveys: "Improve Exit Survey data collection," 2006-2007; "Improve collection of Exit Survey material," 2007-2008; "Exit Survey data collection," 2008-2009. If the "follow-up" on the collection of Exit Surveys called for in the Action Plan "Higher Return Rate for Exit Surveys" (2009-2010) takes place, the "loop" on this set of Action Plans should be closed.

3. Two Action Plans deal with the need to strengthen the assessment of Learning Outcome 4 (Understand and apply calculus): "Decide on the assessment of calculus knowledge," 2005-2006; "Measure for calculus proficiency," 2007-2008. The "loop" for these two Action Plans is effectively closed with the introduction of the use of the major field test in Mathematics provided by Educational Testing Services as a measure for assessing Learning Outcome 4 in the spring 2011 semester. Data for this test will begin to be reported in the 2011-2012 report.

4. Two Action Plans deal with developing a new capstone course: "Improve awareness of breadth and interconnections," 2005-2006; New Capstone Course," 2007-2008. (The first of these Action Plans does in fact center upon the desire to design a new capstone course.) Until the spring 2010 semester no action was taken on these Action Plans. At a late spring 2010 faculty meeting a committee of four members was appointed and charged with the task of developing a proposal for a new capstone course. The current capstone course is MAT 481, "History of Mathematics." There has been some sense of dissatisfaction with this course functioning as the capstone course. The desire is to have a course that will help "tie" things together more effectively. One suggestion is to have a course that would focus on the nature of proof, examining this concept in several different branches of mathematics. The committee has been working on this issue and there are plans to implement a new capstone course, possibly as early as spring 2012.

5. There is still one miscellaneous Action Plan titled "Restructure MAT 305 or Leave It as It Is," (2005-2006) that needs to be addressed. The concern here is whether students might be better served by learning another computer language or by using a number of different software programs instead of using only MAPLE (as was the case in MAT 305 at the time this Action Plan was adopted). A curriculum committee has addressed this issue and will bring recommendations to the faculty in fall 2011.

## 2010-2011 Polymer Science and Engineering MS

### Closing the Loop
New course offerings have been developed that are available as electives for graduate students in the School of Polymers and High Performance Materials, such as a composites course, a molecular modeling course, and a scattering course, that address needs for students with advanced polymer science and engineering degrees to be versed in these topics. In particular, composites and molecular modeling were recommended by employers who were hiring our students into the composites industry for internships and full-time work, such as GE Aviation, Boeing, and Northrop Grumman/ Ingalls. These two courses have been met with enthusiastic approval by our current students, who believe that these related areas are an important part of their potential career paths.

## 2010-2011 Polymer Science and Engineering PhD

### Closing the Loop
Over the course of this cycle, the PhD program in Polymer Science and Engineering has attempted to assist students who may not be properly prepared by their backgrounds for graduate study. Students have been evaluated through transcript information and entrance exam performance to determine whether or not the students have similar backgrounds as their peers. If students are found to be deficient in a category, that student is counseled by a faculty member who recommends whether or not further action is necessary. Further action may consist of sending a student to a lower level (undergraduate) course or mentoring by the faculty. Additionally, the faculty closely monitor performance in the core coursework, and if any student appears to be struggling may recommend that the student drop that class and take a lower level course prior to attempting the dropped course again. While this does set a student back in terms of milestone completion, the extra time and work is preferable to a student being forced to leave the program due to a poor background. Additionally during this cycle, new special topics courses have been added for our students to use as research tools. The courses, a composites course, a molecular modeling course, and a scattering course, address the need for students with advanced polymer science and engineering degrees to be versed in these

topics. In particular, composites and molecular modeling were recommended by employers who were hiring our students into the composites industry for internships and full-time work, such as GE Aviation, Boeing, and Northrop Grumman/ Ingalls. These two courses have been met with enthusiastic approval by our current students, who believe that these related areas are an important part of their potential career paths. As the courses are refined, they will be moved from a Special Topics course to a traditional course.

## 2010-2011 Polymer Science BS

### Closing the Loop
The combining of the sophomore level courses PSC 291/292 and changing of the time offering of PSC 292 has led to increased enrollment in the course (24 students in 2011 vs. 11 in 2010) and an increase in the early enrollment for the junior level course PSC 301 (21 students enrolled). This represents a significant increase in retention of students at this level. Student involvement and is enhanced by having an accessible class at all levels, so that students do not feel distant from the faculty or program. The progression of students from their freshmen to junior year (through the sophomore level PSC 292) will continue to be monitored closely, as will the ability of students to easily enroll in required courses.

## 2010-2011 Science Education MS

### Closing the Loop
We had planned to encourage greater participation in professional activities such as submitting abstract to meetings, collaborating on articles, etc. To that end, we saw an increase in such activities: two of our master's students presented at an international conference and four presented at a state conference. One is a collaborator on an article that has been submitted for publication.

## 2010-2011 Science Education PhD

### Closing the Loop
We had planned to encourage greater participation in professional activities such as submitting abstract to meetings, collaborating on articles, etc. To that end, we saw an increase in such activities: six of our doctoral students presented at an international conference and at least six presented at state conferences. Two are collaborating on articles to submit for publication and two had articles accepted.

## 2010-2011 Workforce Training and Development MS**

### Closing the Loop
Students' achievements and application of theory in the workplace is revealed and communicated during the mastery project presentations and through class projects and assignments. A more focused emphasis has been placed on taking students from theory to application in most of the coursework. The value of the learning results in changes made in the workplace. Many students comment on their ability to take lessons from the classroom and immediately apply their learning on the job. Students also comment on their improved ability to articulate what they are doing in a more comprehensive and meaningful way to executives. Areas of improvement exist in the exit interview process. This is an ongoing effort and with the appropriate resources now in place for the academic 2011-12 year, this effort should be completed.