ASSESSMENT SHOWCASE

Write Outcomes

Establish criteria for success

Assess performance against criteria

View assessment **results**

Effect improvements through actions

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

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

PRINCIPLES OF ACCREDITATION
FOUNDATIONS FOR QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

CORE REQUIREMENT 2.5
The institution engages in ongoing, integrated, and institution-wide research-based planning and evaluation processes that incorporate a systematic review of programs and services that (a) results in continuing improvement, and (b) demonstrates that the institution is effectively accomplishing its mission. (Institutional Effectiveness)

COMPREHENSIVE STANDARD 3.3.1 - INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS
The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results in each of the following areas:

      3.3.1.1 educational programs, to include student learning outcomes

      3.3.1.2 administrative support services

      3.3.1.3 educational support services

      3.3.1.4 research within its educational mission, if appropriate

      3.3.1.5 community/public service within its educational mission, if appropriate

STATE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING (IHL SYSTEM)

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

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

Vision

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

Mission

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

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

- Education provides opportunities to improve the quality of intellectual, social, economic, and personal well-being. These opportunities should be available to all who are willing and able to meet our standards of excellence.

- Our success is reflected by the degree to which our students become well-read, articulate, and creative and critical thinkers. It is measured by their display of specialized knowledge and abilities suitable to the pursuit of a career and life in our complex, ever-changing world.

- We cherish innovation in the creation and application of basic and applied research findings, creative and artistic expression, meaningful learning experiences, the scope of services provided to our students and the broader community that we sustain, and the continuing evolution of degree programs that both respond to and anticipate the evolving demands of our society, employers, and the labor market.

- Education encourages and advances the ideals of a pluralistic democratic society: civic responsibility, integrity, diversity, and ethical behavior.

- Academic freedom and shared governance are long-established and living principles at the university. We cherish the free exchange of ideas, diversity of thought, joint decision making, and individuals' assumption of responsibility.

- We make efficient and effective use of our resources, for we are accountable to our university communities, the Board of Trustees, and taxpayers.

Plan

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

- A CLIMATE FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

- IMAGE DEVELOPMENT

- CONNECTIONS WITH COMMUNITY

- HEALTHY MINDS, BODIES AND CAMPUSES

A CLIMATE FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

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

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

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

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

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

IMAGE DEVELOPMENT

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

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

CONNECTIONS WITH COMMUNITY

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

• Hosting refers to the importance of every contact made on campus — from the first to the last.

• Serving allows university citizens to invest in people, agencies/businesses, and organizations through volunteering, service learning, internships, applied scholarship and university/community partnerships.

• Sharing focuses on how we build relationships and engagement inside the university and with our host communities.

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

HEALTHY MINDS, BODIES, & CAMPUSES

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

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

Assessment Policies

ADOPTED BY THE UNIVERSITY ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE

Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes Participants:

A. <u>Educational Programs</u> – IHL maintains the official inventory of USM academic programs
(http://www.mississippi.edu/research/stats.html). To be in compliance with SACS policy, all degree
programs in this inventory must assess program-level student learning outcomes in accordance with the
Academic Program Assessment Plan and Report Guidelines.
UAC Approved 9.30.09

B. <u>Certificate Programs</u> – IHL maintains the official inventory of USM certificate programs
(http://www.mississippi.edu/research/stats.html). To be in compliance with SACS policy, all certificate
programs in this inventory must assess program-level student learning outcomes in accordance with the
Academic Program Assessment Plan and Report Guidelines.
UAC Approved 9.30.09

C. <u>Emphasis Areas</u> – All teacher licensure programs must assess separately. All other programs with emphasis
areas determine whether they assess at the program-level or the emphasis-level. Many programs have
elected to separate their assessments at the emphasis-level. The UAC encourages programs to consider
emphasis-level assessment if plans of study vary greatly. The UAC can recommend emphasis-level
assessment if program-level assessment reports are deemed inadequate. The UAC can also recommend
programs address emphasis areas within the same report by having several common student learning
outcomes for the program and at least one separate student learning outcome for each emphasis area.
UAC Approved 10.28.09

D. <u>Stand-alone Minors</u> – All stand alone minors must assess minor-level student learning outcomes in
accordance with the Academic Program Assessment Plan and Report Guidelines. A stand-alone minor is
defined as a program of study that does not have a "parent" degree.
UAC Approved 10.28.09

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

- *educational programs, to include student learning outcomes*

- *administrative support services*

- *educational support services*

- *research within its educational mission, if appropriate*

- *community/public service within its educational mission, if appropriate*

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

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

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

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

UAC Approved 04.19.11

Items for future consideration:

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

UAC Approved 04.19.11

Assessment Process Overview
S P R I N G   2 0 1 1

2010-2011/2011-2012 Academic Program Assessment <u>Plans</u> are in place.

An assessment plan includes:

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

A complete 2010-2011 Academic Program Assessment <u>Report</u> includes:

    d)   Findings (due May 31)
    e)   Action Plans (due June 30) - *Action Plans are not required in Year 1 of assessment cycle, but are encouraged if applicable.*
    f)   Analysis (due June 30)
    g)   Annual Report (due June 30) - *alternative calendar programs have a due date of September 30*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Annual Reporting Fields

The 2010-2011 Assessment Report includes the following Annual Reporting data elements:

- PROGRAM SUMMARY

- ADDITIONAL ACTION PLANS/CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVES

- ACTION PLAN TRACKING/CLOSING THE LOOP

PROGRAM SUMMARY
Programs are asked to summarize highlights of the past year for that <u>particular academic program</u>. The summary field is needed to provide context to an outside reviewer. Program contributions, activities, and accomplishments should be included in this field. Any data collected outside of the student learning outcome measures could be showcased in this field as well.

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

ACTION PLAN TRACKING/CLOSING THE LOOP
Programs are asked to summarize the results of previous action plan implementation. This is the opportunity for programs to close the assessment loop – to report on the success (or not) of previously implemented action plans. It is very important for programs to respond to this section with thought and detail. This section is where programs provide evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results.

SACS Fifth-Year Interim Report

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

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

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

Student Learning Outcomes

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

Frameworks for Learning Outcomes

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

- Bloom, 1956 (Bloom's taxonomy) - 3 domains of learning: cognitive, affective, & psychomotor

- Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001 - a recent update to Bloom's taxonomy

- Costa & Kallick, 2000 – "habits of mind"

- Marzano, Pickering, & McTighe, 1993 – "thinking skills"

(Suskie, 118)

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

- Knowledge and conceptual understanding - remembering, replicating a simple procedure, and defining, summarizing, and explaining concepts or phenomena.

- Thinking and other skills:
  - Application – capacity to use knowledge and understanding in a new context
  - Analysis – ability to identify elements, relationships, and principles of a complex process
  - Evaluation, Problem-Solving, and Decision-Making Skills – skills in making informed judgments
  - Synthesis – capacity to put together what one has learned in a new, original way
  - Creativity – abilities to be flexible, take intellectual risks, and be open-minded to new ideas
  - Critical Thinking – capacities to seek truth, clarity, and accuracy; distinguish facts from opinions
  - Information Literacy – broad set of skills reflecting today's reality of research practice
  - Performance Skills – physical skills
  - Interpersonal Skills – abilities to listen, participate as an effective team member

- Attitudes, values, dispositions, and habits of mind – "personal and social responsibility skills"

(Suskie, 118 – 124)

Expressing Learning Outcomes

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

Too vague: Students will demonstrate information literacy skills.

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

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

(Suskie, 130)

2011 Showcase

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PHD

2009-2010 Program-level Student Learning Outcomes

Research Outcome 1: Research Design

Students will be able to create a research design and critique existing research designs.

Research Outcome 2: Theories

Students will be able to read, understand, and critique theories of international development.

Research Outcome 3: Qualitative Methods

Students will be able conduct qualitative method research and critique existing scholarship that includes qualitative methods.

Research Outcome 4: Quantitative Methods

Students will be able conduct quantitative method research and critique existing scholarship that includes quantitative methods.

Subject Matter Outcome 1: International Political Development and Security Studies

Students will be able to read, understand and critique scholarship in the areas of international political development and security studies.

Subject Matter Outcome 2: International Economic Development

Students will be able to read, understand and critique scholarship in the area of international economic development.

Subject Matter Outcome 3: International Social/Cultural Development

Students will be able to read, understand and critique scholarship in the area of international social/cultural development.

Measures

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

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

Direct Measures

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

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

Indirect Measures

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

Expressing Measures

Measures should be detailed and specific. Measurement should ensure that comparisons are "apples to apples," and should ascertain that, for those programs that are offered at more than one site or by more than one mode, the measure can be duplicated at all sites/modes and the findings can be separated by site/mode. Evidence can include qualitative as well as quantitative information.

2011 Showcase

ENGLISH MA

Program-level Direct Measure

Seminar Papers--Close Reading
Random, anonymous seminar papers collected by instructors from graduate classes and evaluated by blind/cross-reading using departmentally-approved 5-point grading rubric. The grading rubric is comprised of four subheadings; subheading number two measures Outcome Two, Close Reading, evaluating students' ability to analyze literary texts.
Document: *Revised (2010) Graduate Rubric*
Achievement Target:
90% of students scoring 3 ("competent") out of 5 or better on Close Reading.
Findings (2009-2010) - Achievement Target: Met
91.7 percent (11/12, fall and spring semesters combined) scored 3 or better on seminar papers--close reading.

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION MBA

Program-level Direct Measure

Exam questions in MBA 660
Thirteen exam questions will be used to assess knowledge of strategic integration concepts in MBA 660.
Achievement Target:
MBA students will correctly answer 75% of these exam questions.
Findings (2009-2010) - Achievement Target: Partially Met
Results are reported for the Spring, 2010 section of MBA 660. All results represent a combined cohort of 35 students. On the first exam in the course, 6 questions were used to assess knowledge in the strategy area. Results indicate that this goal was met; the class average for these 6 questions was 75% correct. On the second exam in the course, 7 questions were used to assess knowledge in the strategy area. Results indicate that this goal was not achieved on the second exam; the class average for this group of 7 questions was 63% correct.

NURSING (BACCALAUREATE) BSN

Program-level Direct Measure

ATI Comprehensive Predictor Assessment
The ATI (Assessment Technologies Institute LLC) Comprehensive Predictor Assessment is an achievement test administered by the School of Nursing which reflects the nursing student's ability to provide safe and competent care. The majority of items are written at the application or higher levels of cognitive ability, which requires more complex thought processing. The minimal acceptable score on the ATI comprehensive predictor assessment is a score of 76% which corresponds to a 97% probability of passing the NCLEX licensure exam.
Achievement Target:
One hundred percent of nursing students will achieve a score of 76% or higher on the ATI comprehensive predictor assessment prior to graduation from the School of Nursing.
Findings (2009-2010) - Achievement Target: Not Met
December 2009 Graduates (Hattiesburg campus): N = 46 (n = 12 > 76% = 26%) (n = 37 < 76% = 74%). Was not administered on the Gulf Coast campus in the Fall. May 2010 Graduates (Hattiesburg campus): N = 80 (n = 28 > 76% = 35%) (n = 52 < 76% = 65%). May 2010 Graduates (Gulf Coast campus): N = 19* (n = 6 > 76% = 31.6%) (n = 13 < 76% = 68.4%). *One section of students did not take the assessment

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION (K-6 LICENSURE) BS

Program-level Direct Measure

Teacher Candidate Performance Evaluation

The Teacher Candidate Performance Evaluation is a summative assessment rubric of content knowledge, skills, and dispositions of the teacher candidate in the capstone teacher candidacy experience. Ratings are given by the university supervisor and are aggregated and disaggregated on the TK20 Data Collection System.
Source of Evidence: Performance (recital, exhibit, science project)

Achievement Target:

Ninety-five percent (95%) of teacher candidates will receive a rating of mastery or exemplary on the evaluation rubric for teacher candidacy on the criteria of demonstrating pedagogical knowledge.

Findings (2009-2010) - Achievement Target: Met

Fall 2009 Hattiesburg: 42/62 (68%) scored mastery; 20/62 (42%) scored exemplary; Total 62/62 (100%) scored 3 or 4 on demonstrating pedagogical knowledge. Fall 2009 Gulf Coast: 27/51 (53%) scored mastery; 31/51 (45%) scored exemplary; 1/51 (01%) scored marginal; Total 50/51 (98%) scored 3 or 4 on demonstrating pedagogical knowledge. Spring 2010 Hattiesburg: 38/68 (56%) scored mastery; 33/68 (43%) scored exemplary; 1/68 (01%) scored marginal; Total 67/68 (99%) scored 3 or 4 on demonstrating pedagogical knowledge. Spring 2010 Gulf Coast: 22/31 (71%) scored mastery 9/31; (29%) scored exemplary; Total 31/31 (100%) scored 3 or 4 on demonstrating pedagogical knowledge.

ACCOUNTING BSBA

Program-level Direct Measure

ACC 325 Accounting Cycle Project

Students' performances on a comprehensive Accounting Cycle Project (ACP) in ACC 325 will be evaluated to determine their basic knowledge of the accounting cycle (i.e., recording and posting journal entries, including adjusting and closing entries, and financial statement presentation).

Achievement Target:

The assessment target on the ACP is an overall rating at the acceptable level (a 2.00 rating) on the project for each student. A student's performance was rated as follows: Met expectations = 3 (very few problems or none at all); Acceptable = 2 (some minor problems); Unacceptable = 1 (major problems)

Findings (2009-2010) - Achievement Target: Partially Met

For the students completing the ACP, their mean performance ratings for the Hattiesburg and coast campuses were 2.43 and 2.50, respectively. None of these students performed at an unacceptable level. Thus, in general, students performed above the acceptable level (which is a 2.00 rating). The only problem noted by the instructors was that a number of students simply did not complete an ACP. For example, in Hattiesburg 22 (35.5%) of the 62 total students in ACC 325 did not turn in an ACP. Currently, the failure rate in this course (i.e., first intermediate) is quite high, and it appears a large number of students take this course without the proper background in accounting principles needed to successfully complete the course and its assignments. This problem will be addressed in an action plan.

CHILD AND FAMILY STUDIES BS

Program-level Indirect Measure

Exit Survey

Students shall complete a graduation exit survey.

Achievement Target:

Mean scores of 3 for each indicator will document that this target has been met.

Findings (2009-2010) - Achievement Target: Met

Strong knowledge base in technology knowledge and skills is assessed by 3 questions, 1 on the departmental exit survey for Family Relations and 2 questions on the exit survey for Child Development/Child Life). All questions are on a 4 point likert scale, with 4 as 'strongly agree', 3 as 'agree', 2 as 'disagree' and 1 as 'strongly disagree'.
Family Relations (FR), Question 4: I feel competent in current and emerging technologies.
Hattiesburg, 9 responses, average 3.89; Gulf Coast, 2 responses, average 4.0; Total, 11 responses, average 3.91
Child Development (CD), Question 10: I can effectively integrate technology into my instruction; and Question 25: I feel competent in current and emerging technologies.
Hattiesburg, 18 responses, average 3.6; Gulf Coast, 2 responses, average 3.5; Total, 20 responses, average 3.6
TOTAL: Hattiesburg, 27 responses, average 3.70; Gulf Coast, 4 responses, average 3.75; Total, 31 responses, average 3.71. All response means are well above the target mean of 3.0, and 100% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they were competent in current and emerging technologies.

INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY MS

Program-level Indirect Measure

Alumni Survey (Technology Management Methods)

Respondents to the Graduate Alumni Survey will be asked to specify their attitude/perception toward IT 709 (Administration of Instructional Technologies) as a beneficial course in the program and whether the program helped them learn how to manage technology.

Achievement Target:

80% will indicate a rating of 5 for "Most Valuable" or a rating of 4 for "Somewhat Valuable" for Question # 25 - "Please rate the following IT Courses in terms of the content covered, applicability, and the amount of information learned" and to Question #15 - "The program helping you manage technology either at an individual level or in larger environments (e.g., lab).

Findings (2009-2010) - Achievement Target: Met

100% (5/5: summer, fall, and spring combined) of the alumni rated Question #25 (value of IT 709) as either a 5 for "Most Valuable" or 4 for "Somewhat Valuable." 80% (4/5: summer, fall, and spring combined) of the alumni rated Question #15 (program helping them to learn management of technology) as either a 5 for "Most Valuable" or 4 for "Somewhat Valuable."

CHEMISTRY PHD

Program-level Indirect Measure

Exit Interview for Employment

Students will be initially employed or enter postdoctoral programs upon graduation. This will be determined with an exit interview conducted by the college.

Achievement Target:

75% of students will be initially employed or enter postdoctoral programs upon graduation.

Findings (2009-2010) - Achievement Target: Met

88% (7/8) doctoral graduates were initially employed or entered postdoctoral programs.

Action Plans & Analysis

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

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

The End of Assessment Is Action

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

> "Assessment helps the program determine how well it is achieving its outcomes and suggest effective steps for improvement. That means you should conduct assessment for yourselves and your students, not just for compliance with accreditors. You don't need to collect data you don't use; it's much more important to collect a small amount of useful data than to proliferate data that sit in a drawer or on a computer file. If you are collecting information you are not using, either start using it or stop collecting it. Instead of focusing on compliance, focus on the information you need for wise action." *(Walvoord, 2010, p. 5)*

The Most Common Actions Resulting from Assessment

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

1) Changes to curriculum, requirements, programmatic structures, or other aspects of the students' course of study

2) Changes to the policies, funding, and planning that support learning

3) Faculty development

(Walvoord, 2010, p.5)

Are the Actions Working?

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

2011 Showcase

NUTRITION AND DIETETICS BS

Action Plan

Communication Skills

Findings were shared at the June 2010 faculty retreat. APA style will be incorporated into all written assignments across the dietetics curriculum beginning fall 2010. An APA power point tutorial will be developed and made available to students in all courses via WebCT course supplements. Faculty will utilize the power point for giving consistent instruction on using APA style for writing assignments. All faculty will grade for grammar in writing assignments. A grading rubric which includes grammar will be developed for use in all courses. Writing assignments will utilize discipline-specific writing.

> **Established in Cycle:** 2009-2010
> **Implementation Status:** Planned
> **Priority:** High
> **Relationships: Measure:** Alumni Survey | **Outcome/Objective:** Demonstrate communication skills

MATHEMATICS BS

Action Plan

Annual Review of Portfolios

On the Hattiesburg campus the achievement targets related to the Portfolio measure were only partially met for Learning Outcomes 1 (Be aware of breadth and interconnection) and 2 (Understand and connect proofs) because only 66.67% (4 out of 6) had an average score of 2 or better on a scale of 1 to 3 over all six elements. The achievement targets were only partially met for Learning Outcomes 3 (Be mathematically conversant), 4 (Understand and apply calculus), and 5 (Write computer programs) because three of the six portfolios did not have any papers placed in them that demonstrated the use of technology. To avoid this situation in the future, an audit or inventory of each student's portfolio will be made at the beginning of a student's junior year and then again at the beginning of the senior year. This audit will be conducted by a two-person committee appointed by the chairman. This committee will communicate to the faculty each semester the types of papers that are to be included in student portfolios.

> **Established in Cycle:** 2009-2010
> **Implementation Status:** Planned
> **Priority:** High
>
> **Relationships: Measure:** Portfolio | **Outcome/Objective:** Be aware of breadth and interconnections | Be mathematically conversant | Understand and apply calculus | Understand and construct proofs | Write computer programs
> **Implementation Description:** Chairman will appoint two-person committee by September 1, 2010. Audit of portfolios will be completed by September 30, 2010. Faculty will be notified concerning types of papers needed in each student portfolio by October 15, 2010.
> **Completion Date:** 10/15/2010

HISTORY BA

Action Plan

Evaluate Viability of Summer Capstone

HBG: The vast majority of students (75% 3/4) who failed to achieve a 70 (out of 100) on their HIS 400 final projects were students in the summer section of the class. The department needs to evaluate the viability of offering the research intense capstone course in the short summer session (which is only 9 weeks long rather than the regular 15 weeks); making it difficult for students to amass the necessary sources for their research projects (ILL services from the library are also limited in the short summer term). The department might want to determine if certain topic fields are more appropriate to the short summer time frame. While the department cannot lessen the requirements for the capstone when taught in the summer, there may be strategies we can put into practice which may lead to greater student success.

> **Established in Cycle:** 2009-2010
> **Implementation Status:** Planned
> **Priority:** High
>
> **Implementation Description:** Before the Summer 2011 summer term begins.
> **Completion Date:** 05/01/2011
> **Responsible Person/Group:** Department Assessment Committee

COMPUTER SCIENCE BS

Action Plan

Programming Course Cluster

This is an expansion of the action plan "to improve programming capabilities" which was established during the last review cycle. Expanding the courses to monitor to include not only CSC 101/L and CSC 102 but also CSC 307 and CSC 317 will place focus on improving the technical/programming skills of students enrolled in lower-level programming classes. By doing so, the students would have a better foundation to build upon as they move into their upper-level classes. As a result, Major Field Test scores should increase. The duration of this Action Plan is extended, as it may be several years before the results of this initiative are realized.

> **Established in Cycle:** 2009-2010
> **Implementation Status:** In-Progress
> **Priority:** Medium
>
> **Relationships: Measure:** Major Field Test | **Outcome/Objective:** Preparation for Graduate School | Technical Skill
> **Implementation Description:** The measures to improve scores on the Major Field Test (MFT) has commenced.
> **Completion Date:** 05/15/2013
> **Responsible Person/Group:** Faculty teaching CSC 101/L, CSC 102, CSC 301, and CSC 307

EDUCATION (EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION K-12) PHD

Analysis

What specifically did your assessments show regarding proven strengths or progress you made on outcomes/objectives?
The current WEAVE outcomes are related to Educational Administration's NCATE/ELCC standards and as such provide one facet of program evaluation for meeting NCATE/ELCC accreditation. One of the strengths identified is (Outcomes #1-7) the ability of students to apply knowledge and develop leadership skills as measured through the final product that students produce: the Dissertation. The dissertation requires students to synthesize all information learned from coursework, apply it to research applicable to educational administration, and publicly defend the proposed and finished product. Outcome #2 (Collaboration) and Outcome #5 (Manage Resources) are very well supported by the measurements of the Strategic Plan required of Educational Administration students. The Strategic Plan allows the student to develop either a K12 building level or district level plan to improve student achievement; this project requires research, resource utilization, collaboration, understanding of environment, and use of ethics.

What specifically did your assessments show regarding any outcomes/objectives that will require continued attention?
Although most students prove to be successful graduates of the EDA program, the measurement of the SLLA exam reflects several areas for improvement. During Fall 2009, ETS administered the new version of the SLLA, which is the nationwide standardized exam for K12 school leaders. At the same time, the Mississippi Department of Education raised the cut score for passing the SLLA for state licensure. The effects of these changes revealed a need to reassess some of the current courses regarding content as well as assessment measures. The following measures are being taking by the EDA faculty to address this. Comprehensive Exams: At this point during data collection, doctoral comprehensive exams results do not differentiate between EdD and PhD degree status. The scoring rubric used to analyze the comprehensive exams have been revised to capture this information regarding degree level. SLLA: Comprehensive exams will be revised to reflect the format of the current SLLA assessment. Course content and assessments will be revised to better align with current ETS SLLA testing formats and ISLLC/ELCC standards.

MARINE SCIENCE PHD

Analysis

What specifically did your assessments show regarding any outcomes/objectives that will require continued attention?
Areas in need of improvement for the marine science Ph.D. program continue to be timely completion of the student prospectus and formulation of a research hypothesis. Efforts to improve in this area include the development of a student progress checklist specific for Ph.D. students (differentiated on the basis of either full-time or part-time), which includes milestones for completion of the prospectus. Other efforts include making it a graded activity for directed research hours and including it as a metric in faculty annual evaluations. Finally, the chair has initiated regular monthly meetings with students where issues related to progress, timely completion of prospectus, prospectus format and other topics are discussed with students.

Student performance on the qualifying exam is a related area where improvement is warranted. We continue to address this by having core course instructors prepare materials outlining expectations for what will be covered in the exams and share this with advisors and students.

CHILD AND FAMILY STUDIES BS

Analysis

What specifically did your assessments show regarding proven strengths or progress you made on outcomes/objectives?
As a faculty we spent a lot of time revisiting and revising our measures for WEAVE in the Fall of 2009. We believe the measures are more relevant to the goals, providing a more meaningful measure of each goal. As we use these goals, we will continue to review and update them as necessary. Overall, we successfully met new targets, and our students agree, as indicated on the exit surveys. Students graduate with a strong knowledge base in applying systemic, developmental, and cultural perspectives in life situations; competence to identify solutions to problems at all levels of the ecological model; competence in current and emerging technologies; and proficiency in skills and dispositions related to their identified career path. Students will also indicate agreement with the belief that life-long learning is a vital component of professionalism. Potential employers also agree, as indicated by the Employer Practicum Evaluation, where 34 students averaged a mean of 3.75, well above the target mean of 3.0.
What specifically did your assessments show regarding any outcomes/objectives that will require continued attention?
We continue to see students struggle on measures that require extensive writing and self-reflection, as indicated by the FAM 475 Service Learning Project and CD 450 Leadership Philosophy Paper. These assignments require more than learning the material, they require applying that material to one's self in a meaningful and insightful manner, and our students seem too often struggle with this requirement. We will review how well we encourage this in all our classes, with the hope that repeated attempts to effectively self-reflect, incorporate learnings, and write about these will become easier over time.

ENGLISH BA

Analysis

What specifically did your assessments show regarding proven strengths or progress you made on outcomes/objectives?
In 2009-10 the English department continued to develop and modify its measures and targets so as to more effectively gauge the level of our students' success. This past year we moved from a 25 point scoring rubric to a 5 point scoring rubric. On the recommendation of our undergraduate assessment committee, we also modified several of the outcomes to better reflect our expectations for students and defined more precisely our scoring criteria. We feel confident that our outcomes, measures, and targets can now provide us with the information we need to make well-informed curricular decisions between and across classes. Our 2009-10 assessments reveal that students in Hattiesburg maintained or showed significant progress in three of our four primary learning outcomes (thesis and argument, analysis, research skills, and writing skills). Indeed, students demonstrated a 15% improvement (from 40% to 55%) in writing skills and a remarkable 45% increase in research skills (25% to 70%). Coast students showed more consistent performance overall and equally impressive improvement in two of the four categories: 66.7% of students scored 3 or better in argument and thesis and writing skills--the same level as last year--while improving from 66.7% to 80% in analysis and from 50% to 93.3% in research skills. While students failed to meet targets in all four categories in Hattiesburg and in two of the four categories at the Coast we believe the greater consistency and the improvement in performance at both the Hattiesburg and Coast campuses is the result of the department's efforts to use the assessment process to continuously improve its undergraduate program offerings. We expect to see marked improvement this year in achieving our targets.

2011 Showcase
ANNUAL REPORTING

COMMUNITY HEALTH SCIENCES (HEALTH PROMOTION) BS

Program Summary

The Health Promotion degree option is the oldest in the department. Although the degree historically has held the highest number of students, there has been a recent shift of undergraduate students in this degree option to the Health Administration and Policy option. This shift should not be considered a negative occurrence for the department because the Health Promotion degree is consistent with high numbers. New additions of faculty for the degree, updated materials and technology for instructors, additional classes offered online, and an expansion of the practicum sites are all reasons the program remains strong. The Health Promotion degree includes coursework that is open to all students at USM. Many students from across a variety of disciplines take CHS courses as electives. Included are classes that have high enrollments (over 100 students that are not CHS majors per semester), such as Personal Health and Human Sexuality and moderate high enrollments (50-75 students that are not CHS majors per semester) such as Drugs in Society. CHS faculty are actively involved in research with others on campus, serve as resources for the USM faculty in various areas of health, and represent USM as state and national experts in health. As the degree focuses on being an active participant in the community, so does the requirements in most of the courses for the CHS BS program. The courses require students to become cognizant of conducting community assessments, program development, program implementation, program evaluation, and working with diverse populations. The activities, then, are to actively engage the students with working in community health facility sites. Research and Scholarly Activities associated with all degree tracks relate to the many health care facilities in which CHS faculty collaboratively work. The working relationships involving research and scholarly activities with these facilities lead students into prosperous practicum experiences and possible employment, as well as affording faculty the opportunity to remain at the forefront in health research. For the 09-10 academic year, there were 9 publications, 8 professional presentations, and over 1 million dollars in external funding received. Public/Community service associated with the Health Promotion degree includes maintaining a working relationship with community health care settings, including hospitals, clinics, and specialty health and governmental sites. Assignments in the required coursework place students in settings to gain valuable experience while working to assist in community health enhancement. With solid coursework and fieldwork, the Health Promotion degree is preparing undergraduate entry-level health care workers. Many will pursue the Master of Public Health (MPH) degree at USM while others will pursue other advanced fields.

MARINE SCIENCE BS

Program Summary

The 2009-2010 cycle witnessed the inaugural graduating class of marine science undergraduates. While the program was originally developed in part to assist the U.S. Navy in better training their enlisted personnel for science and technical fields related to ocean dynamics, the program also serves the more traditional, civilian student body who seek science and technical training in the multi-disciplinary field of marine science. In December 2009, the first class of MARBS enrollees graduated (100% retention/graduation rate); among this group, 9/10 (90%) graduated with academic honors. Three were promoted by the U.S. Navy during the course of their studies with USM, and another five are currently under review for promotion. Three of them (30%) have been admitted to graduate school and are currently seeking an M.S. degree in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) with MSU.

Student participation in field science and research cruises is an integral part of the curriculum. All students within the MARBS program are afforded the opportunity to conduct an autonomous undergraduate research project, in

addition to the many opportunities to participate on other research cruises within the department. Two of the MARBS program's current enrollees are also in the Honors College.

As a 4-year degree program started in 2007, one would have expected the first class to graduate in 2011. However, the program is extremely attractive to community college transfer students and current B.S. degree holders); thus, many students have started the program at the Sophomore or Junior level (hence our ability to graduate 10 students by December 2009). Visibility of the program, as well as enrollment, are on the rise; given the unique standing of this program (i.e. the only marine science B.S. program in MS, and one of only a handful of marine science B.S. programs nationwide), the program offers a very rare and valuable specialization not often available as a baccalaureate degree.

EDUCATION (SPECIAL EDUCATION) PHD

Continuous Improvement Initiatives

The CISE special education graduate faculty are continually engaged in efforts to improve the doctoral program emphasizing special education. In the last year, faculty have been systematically engaged in moving from three programs [Ph.D. in Special Education, Ed.D. in Education (Special Education) and Ph.D. in Education (Special Education)] to offering only the Ph.D. in Education (Special Education). Faculty have also worked within CISE to identify and systematically offer 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. CISE special education faculty are now working within the revised plans of study to operationalize and institutionalize the professional outcomes we seek to develop in our candidates across the areas of teaching, research, and service (including outreach, technical assistance, and leveraging external funding). We are revising the expectations of individualized courses/arranged courses within the major emphasis to ensure that each doctoral candidate has a mentored experience and has demonstrated the capacity to fulfill these three essential roles of university faculty and other leadership personnel in special education. Additionally, we are working to more explicitly describe expectations for the 1-year residency so that there is consistency in its application and the outcomes experienced by our candidates.

Closing the Loop

Actions that have been completed in the previous cycle include revising the written comprehensive examinations, aligning portfolio artifacts to specific CEC and NBPTS 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.

POLYMER SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING PHD

Continuous Improvement Initiatives

The School of Polymers and High Performance Materials (SPHPM) will continue to seek out new avenues of research to broaden the areas of study available to new students. The faculty will be asked to continue to focus on new competitive funding opportunities, as well as to continue with priority research projects that affect the economic climate of the state. Several new courses for graduate students are under development in order to broaden the elective course options for students, namely a Scattering Methods class and a revamped Advanced NMR Techniques mini-session class.

Closing the Loop

In the previous cycle(s) the achievement targets related the percentage of student who did not pass the written comprehensive exams on their first attempt were below expectations. In order to improve this, the faculty undertook several steps including spending more time outside of the course in group study or one-on-one mentoring. In addition, the School staff assisted students with study habits and learning best-practice study methods. This minimal effort has seemingly paid maximum dividends with a 100% pass rate for the comprehensive exams. However, the sample size was small. This will be monitored over the next several cycles to determine if the initiatives being taken by the School have had the desired effect.

INTERIOR DESIGN BS

Continuous Improvement Initiatives

Student recruitment will be an area of interest for the Interior Design Program over the next few years. The program has updated its mission and goals and will focus on recruitment of high school and community college transfer students. Of particular interest is developing an articulation agreement with Delgado Community College in New Orleans so students can transfer their coursework and complete their bachelor's degree in interior design at Southern Miss. Implementing a structured advisory board is also an area that the program wishes to continue to address. The format for board will be based on the Architectural Engineering Technology Advisory board. The faculty spoke with current advisory board members and found that they were interested in structuring a more formal board that would meet at least two times a year. The program would like to set up a foundation account for private-giving opportunities to help with scholarships for interior design majors as well as funding facility improvements.

Closing the Loop

In reviewing the action plans from 2007 to present, the program has implemented and worked to achieve its goals and improve student learning outcomes. Several years ago, we realized that our expectations were too high for students to pass the professional interior design exam as a senior in the program so we developed a comprehensive exam to measure student learning in foundations of design, building systems, codes/standards, history, professional practices and visual communication. The exam is administered through Blackboard, and each year, we have seen significant improvements in students' scores. We will continue to use this exam and hope to meet expectations in all five categories during this next assessment cycle. The program also implemented a formal portfolio review and developed a grading rubric. Students participate in an orientation and are instructed on the review process as well as the types of work that should be included in their portfolio.

In addition, ID 242 Portfolio Presentation course is offered and has helped students document student work and prepare digital progression portfolios. While there has been significant improvement from the first year the review was implemented, there are still areas for improvement and the program will continue to require sophomore portfolios to assess student learning outcomes in 1) elements and principles of design, 2) design theory, 3) drafting (manual and computer generated), 4) sketching, and 5) presentation methods.

The ethics component was moved from ID 140 to ID 441 and students almost met expectation this cycle. During the previous cycle, student understanding of ethics was not assessed. The program will continue to assess student understanding of ethics in ID 441 and anticipate that we will surpass our expectation of having 85% of students understanding this topic. This past year, we were at 84%, so we are making progress.

Recommended Reading

General Assessment Resources

Assessment Clear and Simple
Barbara E. Walvoord
John Wiley & Sons ©2010

Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide
Linda Suskie
John Wiley & Sons ©2010

Designing Effective Assessment: Principles and Profiles of Good Practice
Trudy W. Banta, Elizabeth A. Jones, Karen E. Black
John Wiley & Sons ©2009

Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers
Thomas A. Angelo & K. Patricia Cross
John Wiley & Sons ©1993

The Course Syllabus: A Learning-Centered Approach
Judith Grunert O'Brien
John Wiley & Sons ©2008

Effective Grading: A Tool for Learning and Assessment in College
Barbara E. Walvoord
John Wiley & Sons ©2010

Introduction To Rubrics: An Assessment Tool To Save Grading Time, Convey Effective Feedback and Promote Student Learning
Dannelle D. Stevens
Stylus Publishing ©2005

Discipline-Specific Assessment Resources

Assessment in Engineering Programs: Evolving Best Practices
Edited by William E. Kelly
© AIR

Assessment of Student Learning in College Mathematics: Towards Improved Programs and Courses
Edited by Bernard L. Madison
© AIR

Assessment of Student Learning in Business Schools: Best Practices Each Step of the Way
Edited by Kathryn Martell and Thomas
Calderon
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