

College of Professional Studies Assessment Summary Report

The commitment to assessment in the College of Professional Studies is grounded in our focus on excellence in student learning outcomes, program curriculum and faculty development. The major goal of our process is to move each program toward exceptional assessment plans while creating a supportive environment within the college.

We have a standing Assessment Committee in the College of Professional Studies. This year it was chaired by Dr. Diane Wigand, MPA coordinator in the Institute of Government. The purpose of the committee is to coordinate assessment activities in the college, and to share information about assessment practices throughout the college. A number of years ago, we encouraged programs to develop multi-year, comprehensive assessment plans so that they could focus each year on a subset of goals.

Each year as assessment reports are completed, a reviewer's panel is assembled to offer feedback to each program. Members of the review panel are different faculty members than those who serve on the college assessment committee. The purpose is to involve as many faculty members as possible in the assessment process. The members of the review panel give constructive feedback on assessment reports, and rate them as meeting expectations, exceeding expectations or needing improvement. This year all reports were rated as at least meeting expectations. Six reports, the B.A. in Speech, M. A. in Applied Communication, the doctor of Audiology, the M. S. in Speech Pathology, and the MPA program, were rated as exceeding expectations.

This year the College of Professional Studies used assessment fees to co-sponsor the annual conference of the Arkansas Association for the Assessment of Collegiate Learning held March 18 on the UALR campus. Eight faculty members from CPS attended the meeting.

In overviewing the assessment reports in the college, we would observe that programs have done an excellent job in developing student learning outcome goals and objectives for their programs. Programs use a broad variety of assessment methods from portfolios to town hall meetings. They are also making changes in curriculum, instructional methods, and assessment techniques in response to assessment findings. A number of our programs involve external stakeholders in the assessment process ranging from input from field supervisors, surveys of employers of graduates, or guest evaluators from the community for student capstone presentations. Several of the programs are working on mapping assessments of learning outcomes in courses throughout the curriculum. The Master's in Audiology and Speech Pathology is especially noteworthy in mapping over 300 KASA objectives required by their national accrediting agency onto their curriculum, and documenting achievement in permanent student record data bases. Programs are also doing more to assist students with self-assessment of skills and knowledge through a variety of self-assessment tools. We could improve by sharing results more across programs and making sure that the best assessment methods are adopted across the college.

The major areas we need to continue to improve are authentic measures of student learning outcomes, and matching assessment methods to learning outcome goals. We still are using too many indirect measures for student learning – course grades, student satisfaction surveys, global faculty ratings, etc. We need better ways to measure what students know and what they can do as a result of the programs of study. We also are not matching in some cases what we are measuring with the learning outcome goals we have articulated. We also need to continue to demonstrate how our program learning goals track with university core competencies. While our methodological analyses are more sophisticated, we are not providing in some cases explanations or analysis of results. For example, while an improvement of from 4.0 to 4.86 on a 10-item pre-post test of knowledge may be statistically significant, are we concerned after a course that our

students can only answer half of the questions correctly? We would also provide more detail in our reports about how faculty members are systematically discussing and analyzing results and making data-based changes in programs. We also need to seek more input from external stakeholders in all our programs, and involve students more in the assessment of their own learning.

Overall, our programs continue to make great progress in student learning assessment, and use the information significantly in program revision.