

## **Unit Plan for Assessing and Improving Student Learning in Degree Programs**

**Unit: Department of Human Resource Education, College of Education**

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### **SECTION 1: PAST ASSESSMENT RESULTS**

Over the past ten years, the Department of Human Resource Education has worked diligently to improve its instructional offerings and maximize student learning and outcomes. Policies and procedures have been developed and implemented, formal and informal assessments conducted, and metrics developed and deployed to track student learning and take improvement steps where appropriate. Some of the key improvements include:

#### Department-Wide

- Developed alumni data base and alumni newsletter to learn about career trajectories of HRE graduates
- Developed and approved a Policy and Procedures Manual.
- Engaged in strategic planning and developed goals, objectives, and metrics to assess progress.
- Required all instructors to administer ICES evaluations and consider ICES scores at the annual performance review, third year review, and for promotion and tenure decisions.

#### Doctoral Programs (Ph.D., Ed.D.)

- Revised and formalized degree requirements for each degree and developed program planning templates for course work and program milestones. Degree plans are on file in the Department office/Student File and updated regularly.
- Established and regularly conduct annual academic reviews for each doctoral student to assure timely completion of course work and mile stones towards the degree. Conduct follow-up individual meetings between students and HRE faculty where appropriate.
- Developed three required doctoral seminars
- Conducted curriculum review and developed set of core required courses for doctoral students who did not earn the master's degree in the field of HRE.
- Set GRE and TOEFL minimum requirements above College minimum based on review of academic progress of doctoral students in the Department.
- Standardized the format and content of the general field qualifying exam and changed the format and content of the special field qualifying exam.

- Implemented travel support policy for doctoral students to attend professional conferences.
- Research presentations required for the completion of the degree.

#### Master's Programs (Ed.M., M. S.)

- Revised and formalized degree requirements for each degree and developed program planning templates for course work and program milestones.
- Increased the number of core/required courses as a result of analysis of professional practice requirements and peer academic programs.
- Increased TOEFL minimum scores as a result of review of program success of international students
- Conducted a series of outcome assessment studies comparing the academic performance of online and on-campus students.
- Developed a cap-stone course for online programs as a result of analyzing the performance needs of graduates in professional settings.
- Conducted a benchmarking study of online programs and identified comparative advantages of the HRE online program delivery.
- Implemented metrics to track retention rates and student ratings of program quality for HRE online programs
- Conducted special research projects targeted at individual courses/cohorts related to:
  - Tracking of asynchronous communication to determine the role of professional experience in online learning
  - Students' approach to using synchronous sessions
  - Student definitions of quality in online learning
  - Gender differences in online communication

## **SECTION 2: ASSESSMENT PLAN**

(a) PROCESS: Description of the process followed to develop the assessment plan.

- The overall context for assessing and improving student learning is provided by the HRE Mission Statement that identifies student learning as one of three core elements:
  - Provide quality education that equips students with the strong academic foundation needed for improving learning and performance in education, business, healthcare, military, non-profit and government organizations.

*As a result of academic experiences in reflective practice, applied processes, and use of technology, Human Resource Education students will have the ability to lead and facilitate change related to learning and performance. (Department of Human Resource Education, Mission Statement, 2003).*

**(b) STUDENT OUTCOME RELATED DEPARTMENT GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND METRICS**

Based on the Mission Statement, the following goals, objectives, tactics, and metrics have been formulated and approved by the HRE faculty specifically related to student learning (Source: Department of Human Resource Education Strategic Plan, 2003). Each objective has specific metrics attached that are omitted here because of page limitations. Only those elements directly related to student learning are listed, and the numbering of the HRE Strategic Plan is used.

**Goal 1: Establish and maintain a department culture that provides an intellectual and social environment that allows faculty to achieve excellence in learning, scholarship, and engagement.**

**Objective 1.4: Promote social and intellectual interaction among faculty, staff, and students.**

Tactic 1.4a: Plan departmental social events for faculty, staff, and students.

Tactic 1.4b: Organize formal and informal events where faculty, staff, and students can discuss critical issues in the field.

**Goal 2: Establish mechanisms through which rigorous and collaborative research flourishes within the Department.**

**Objective 2.1: Engage doctoral students in research activities throughout their academic program.**

Tactic 2.1a: Ensure that doctoral students receive mentoring on conduct of research.

Tactic 2.1b: Ensure that graduate students are engaged in the design, conduct, and publication of their research.

**Objective 2.2: Support research activities, information sharing, and collaboration among faculty and students.**

Tactic 2.2b: Establish faculty-student research teams.

Tactic 2.2c: Organize “book clubs” where faculty and students can meet to discuss recent publications.

Tactic 2.2e: Publicize faculty and student research through the department website and public displays.

Tactic 2.2f: Provide funds to support student travel to conferences, placing a priority on funding students presenting their own research or research conducted collaboratively with other students or faculty.

**Goal 5: Maintain an instructional program marked by excellence, flexibility, and relevance.**

**Objective 5.1: Develop and maintain rigorous and challenging curricula reflective of the standards of a research university and the needs of a diverse student body.**

- Tactic 5.1a: Create differentiated core curricula for masters and doctoral programs.
- Tactic 5.1b: Offer advanced doctoral courses on a regular basis.
- Tactic 5.1c: Maintain a system that ensures regular review of teaching and course quality.

**Objective 5.2: Provide a system of student feedback that allows for monitoring of student progress and provides timely information to students.**

- Tactic 5.2a: Require each graduate student to develop a formal degree plan.
- Tactic 5.2b: Formally review doctoral student progress on an annual basis.

**Objective 5.3: Enhance informal learning opportunities for students.**

- Tactic 5.3a: Create informal learning communities for students.
- Tactic 5.3b: Maintain an active graduate student organization (HREC).
- Tactic 5.3c: Increase student involvement in professional associations.

**Objective 5.4: Enhance student involvement in internships.**

- Tactic 5.4a: Create and maintain ongoing relationships with internship providers.
- Tactic 5.4b: Provide a system for encouraging and supporting students to participate in internships.

**Objective 5.5: Develop and maintain placement services for program graduates.**

- Tactic 5.5a: Create an electronic jobs board for students.
- Tactic 5.5b: Create and maintain strong relationships with alumni and local employers.

**Goal 6: Recruit and admit high caliber graduate students.**

**Objective 6.1: Attract highest quality doctoral students**

- Tactic 6.1a: Actively recruit quality doctoral students from master's programs at other Midwestern universities.
- Tactic 6.1c: Identify master's students within the Department who show interest in and potential for doctoral level coursework and research.
- Tactic 6.1d: Pursue out-of-state and international doctoral applicants.
- Tactic 6.1e: Secure the financial means to support qualified doctoral students through assistantships

**Objective 6.2: Increase selectivity of doctoral students.**

- Tactic 6.2a: Require a minimum GRE score for all doctoral applicants.  
Tactic 6.2b: Require a sample of scholarly writing from all doctoral applicants.  
Tactic 6.2c: At least three members of the faculty systematically review and independently evaluate each doctoral applicant file.  
Tactic 6.2d: Give priority to applicants who express an interest in pursuing an academic research careers and demonstrate familiarity with research methods through their educational, professional, and research experiences.

**Objective 6.3: Promote and maintain the online master's degree program.**

- Tactic 6.3b: Admit fewer limited status students to online program.  
Tactic 6.3c: Recruit qualified support staff to work in online program.  
Tactic 6.3d: Maintain consistency with current delivery systems while researching new ones.  
Tactic 6.3e: Hire hourly help for publishing/tracking system consulting.

### **SECTION 3: PLANS FOR USING RESULTS**

(a) PLANS: Brief description of plans to use assessment results for program improvement.

The Strategic Plan approved in 2003 is an ambitious agenda that calls for the attainment of objectives related to student learning in a wide variety of areas and a sophisticated system of measurement in order to obtain valid and reliable information about student learning and outcomes. Developed as a long-term agenda, implementation of the strategic plan related to student learning and other areas of vital importance to the health of the Department is a multi-year project. Implementation of the key elements of the plan has been achieved but continuous and ongoing effort and attention is needed to achieve the goals of the multi-faceted plan.

(b) TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The Strategic Plan related to student learning is currently being implemented but additional steps are required over the coming years, including:

- Comprehensive evaluation of the degree to which the various measures in the Strategic Plan have been implemented
- Refinement and revision of the plan in light of departmental, college, and campus-level changes in strategic direction and availability of resource.
- Improve alumni tracking and follow-up
- Improve information about program dropouts
- Implement exit interviews for students in all HRE degree programs
- Improve student outcome tracking for international and contract programs