

Unit Plan for Assessing and Improving Student Learning in Degree Programs

Department of Human and Community Development

Head: _____

Date: _____

Section 1: Past Assessment Results

Since 2000, the department has engaged in four major curriculum revisions. Though driven in part by external forces – resource constraints, external mandates, or changes in the discipline or in graduates’ career environments – each employed findings of ongoing and ad hoc assessment efforts. Each also became an opportunity to engage stakeholders in the curriculum development and assessment process. These revisions occurred as follows:

1. In 2002, the Illinois State Board of Education mandated that all teacher training programs work with stakeholder groups to identify specific teacher competencies and assure their instruction in required course work. This led agricultural education faculty and stakeholders statewide to review assessment data, map desired competencies against course requirements, and craft a new curriculum to meet the ISBE mandate. Newly identified subject matter-related (as distinguished from skill-related) competencies were also incorporated into the assessment instrument administered to all teacher certification candidates.
2. During 2005-06, a revision in the undergraduate Agricultural and Environmental Communications and Education (AECE) curriculum that combined two concentrations (agricultural communications, and environmental communications and education) into a single agricultural, consumer and environmental sciences communications concentration. Ongoing assessments had confirmed that environmental communications students needed more professional skills courses and that students in both concentrations needed more coherent sequences of major and ACES subject-matter courses. As a result, the new, unified curriculum requires advisor approval of ACES subject-matter courses used to meet degree requirements; advisors also have been more active in enforcing course prerequisites.
3. During 2005-06, a comprehensive faculty review of the Ph.D. curriculum in Human and Community Development that included a review of ongoing assessment findings revealed a need to more clearly distinguish the program’s two subject-matter paths, strengthen students’ methodological competency, and broaden the array of subject matter available via departmental seminars. This review resulted in creation of two formal concentrations, several new seminar courses in each concentration, more rigorous methodology requirements, and some minor changes in the graduate program’s assessment process.
4. Ongoing assessment of the HDFS program prompted a comprehensive curriculum mapping project in 2007. Findings from this project have led to current work to replace a course deemed redundant with one focusing more on cross-cultural analysis of families, add a family economics course to the family studies curriculum, and more rigorously enforce prerequisites in the course registration process.

Section 2: Revised Assessment Plan

(a) Process:

Since the department’s initial outcomes assessment plan was formalized in 1997, assessment procedures have changed incrementally according to faculty and administration information needs and the resources available to commit to various components of the outcomes assessment plan. These changes have been incorporated in the plan outlined below, along with objectives and measures developed by faculty during

recent curriculum mapping and revision processes. The department's graduate and undergraduate program coordinators each have reviewed the revised plan for reporting to the faculty and the department head.

(b) Student Outcomes:

General Competencies Developed by HCD Programs

Undergraduate programs in HCD aim to help students develop entry-level professional competence within the context of a liberal education. Desired general competencies include:

- Subject matter expertise
- Understanding of cultures and their histories
- Critical thinking abilities
- Problem solving abilities
- Communication skills
- Leadership and interpersonal skills
- Computer literacy and skills
- Experience in research projects and independent study
- Completion of internship, international study/travel, and work experience
- Co-curricular involvements, including honoraries and student clubs

Graduate programs in HCD aim to help students develop competencies to prepare themselves as researchers, educators, policy developers, or professionals who develop, evaluate, and implement education or outreach programs for children, families, and communities. General competencies desired of advanced degree graduates include:

- Subject matter expertise
- Methodological expertise in the particular areas of research, teaching, and outreach or intervention appropriate for the student's professional direction
- Communication skills appropriate for the student's professional direction
- Professional participation skills

Specific Competencies Incorporated in the Outcomes Assessment Plan

Some of the desired competencies are relatively directly attributable to HCD programs and activities; others are more likely developed in courses or other activities outside the department's control. For example, while HCD expects graduates to be computer literate, resources to teach computer skills lie elsewhere, and most basic skill development necessarily occurs in classes taught by another unit. Hence the specific competencies examined in the outcomes assessment process include only those over which the department anticipates being able to exert significant control.

The HCD undergraduate programs committee and faculty have identified the following priority items for assessment of the department's undergraduate programs:

- Subject-matter expertise
- Successful completion of internship practicum experience
- Successful completion of study abroad experience
- Successful completion of research project experience
- Written communication skills
- Readiness for entry-level employment

The HCD graduate programs committee and faculty have identified the following priority items for assessment of the department's graduate programs:

- Subject matter expertise, including expertise in a specialized area
- Methodology expertise, including the ability to plan and conduct research

- Communication skills, including ability to make oral presentations at professional meetings
- Teaching skills at the college or university level
- Professional participation skills and experience, including the ability to work in an interdisciplinary setting

(c) Measures and Methods Used to Measure Outcomes

Measures of these competencies to be used for outcomes assessment, along with the sources of assessment data, are enumerated in the following table. Some of these measures are necessarily broad, and some outcomes data sources still need to be developed. Also included are methods for gathering information about more general aspects of HCD programs that have a bearing on those programs' ability to assist students in reaching the desired competencies.

Outcomes Assessment Measures/Methods for Undergraduate Programs

Competency	Data	Sources
Subject-matter knowledge in key areas	Human Development & Family Studies: Understanding of concepts, relationships, and applications related to:	Evaluation of random samples of student work in:
	Development periods and domains	HDFS 301 (Infancy & Early Childhood), HDFS 405 (Adolescent Development), HDFS 401 (Socialization and Development)
	Socialization contexts	HDFS 401
	Diversity in development and family life	HDFS 208 (Children & Families with Special Needs), HDFS 340 (Gender, Relationships and Society), HDFS 420 (Family Diversity)
	Research methods	HDFS 290 (Intro to Research Methods)
	Family interaction, dynamics, transitions, resilience	HDFS 425 (Critical Family Transitions), HDFS 426 (Family Conflict Management)
	Family policy	HDFS 420, HDFS 426
	ACES Communications: Understanding of concepts, relationships, and applications related to:	Evaluation of random samples of student work in:
	Fundamental public relations skills	AGCM 220 (Presenting Information), AGCM 320 (Educational Campaign Planning)
	Targeted campaign design	AGCM 320
	Agricultural Leadership Education: Understanding of concepts, relationships, and applications related to:	Evaluation of random samples of student work in:
	General theories of leadership	AGED 260 (Intro to Leadership Studies)
	Emergence of personal leadership style	AGED 360 (Advanced Leadership Studies)

Competency	Data	Sources
	Agricultural Education: Understanding of concepts, relationships, and applications related to:	Evaluation of random samples of student work in:
	Methods of teaching agriculture	AGED 420 (Teaching Strategies for Youth), EDPR 442 (Ed Prac in Secondary Ed)
	Program evaluation	AGED 450 (Program Delivery and Eval)
	Professional development	AGED 451 (Professional Dev in Ag Ed)
Successful completion of internship practicum experience	Proportion of graduates successfully completing internship/practicum experience	Enrollment and grade records for HDFS 450 (Practicum in HDFS), AGCM 293 (Communications Internship), AGED 293 (Ag Leadership Internship), and EDPR 442
	Internship/practicum supervisors' and coordinators' assessments of students' readiness for employment	HDFS, ACES Com, Ag Leadership Ed: HDFS 450, AGCM 293, and AGED 293 site supervisors' summary evaluations plus faculty supervisors' evaluations of student product
		Ag Ed: EDPR 442 cooperating teacher evaluations, ICTS test results, CTE certification
Successful completion of study abroad experience	Proportion of graduates successfully completing study abroad experience	Enrollment and grade records for HCD undergraduates enrolling in ACES 298 (International Experience), ACES 299 (ACES Study Abroad), and other study abroad or study tour courses
Successful completion of research project experience	Proportion of graduates successfully completing undergraduate research assistantships	Enrollment and grade records for HDFS 294 (Research Internship), faculty supervisor evaluations
	Proportion of HCD James Scholars completing final research project	ACES Honors Program records, faculty supervisor evaluations
Written communication skills	Evaluation of coherence, clarity, and use of sources in student work produced in writing intensive courses	Random sample of student work in HDFS 401, HDFS 425, and AGCM 320
Readiness for entry-level employment	Proportion of graduates employed in field or enrolled in graduate/professional school 90 days after graduation	ACES senior survey and 9-week follow-up survey
	Internship/practicum supervisors' and coordinators' assessments of students' readiness for employment	HDFS, ACES Com, Ag Leadership Ed: HDFS 450, AGCM 293, and AGED 293 site supervisors' summary evaluations plus faculty supervisors' evaluations of student product
		Ag Ed: EDPR 442 cooperating teacher evaluations, ICTS test results, CTE certification

Outcomes Assessment Measures/Methods for Graduate Programs

Competency	Data	Sources
Subject-matter expertise	Completion of course work and general academic performance	Annual review
	Mastery of relevant subject matter	Qualifying examination Preliminary examination Dissertation
Methodological expertise	Research skills Development of a dissertation research strategy with high probability of successful execution	Annual review Qualifying examination Preliminary examination Dissertation
Communication skills	Oral and written communication skills	Qualifying examination Critical analysis paper Dissertation
Teaching skills	Evaluations by faculty and students	ICES information Annual review
	Placement of graduates	Student placement information
Professional participation skills and experience	Attendance at relevant professional meetings	Annual review
	Number of papers submitted for publication or presentation	Publication records Annual review

Additional Measures/Methods for Assessing General Program Climate

Domain	Topic	Evaluation sites
Curriculum	Structure and sequence of courses	ACES senior survey HCD sophomore & senior surveys Periodic focused discussions with groups of undergraduate/graduate students Periodic internal program review Consultation with external advisory committee Consultation with HCD graduate student organization
	Variety of courses	
	Cross-disciplinary perspective	
	Opportunity for research skill development	
	Opportunity for professional skill development	
	Opportunity for collaboration and leadership development	
	Opportunity for study abroad and internships	
Student development	Academic advising and faculty mentoring	
	Student organizations	
	Participation in department decisions	

Section 3: Plans for Using Results

(a) Plans

The outcomes assessment process in HCD will be managed by the undergraduate program coordinator and the undergraduate and graduate programs committees. The undergraduate coordinator will compile outcomes assessment data and trends before the beginning of each academic year and prepare a report for the committees. The committees will review the report, append recommendations for action, and transmit those to the department head. The department head, in consultation with the Departmental Faculty Advisory Committee and others as appropriate, will initiate program improvement activities suggested by the outcomes assessment findings.

Summary reports will also be prepared for faculty and presented at one or more regular department meetings during the academic year. The department head and faculty may determine that one or more topics raised by the outcomes assessment merits sustained attention at a faculty retreat. Where outcomes assessment activities show a need to incorporate new subject matter or otherwise modify particular courses or curricula, the appropriate program committee (graduate or undergraduate) will consult with faculty to develop curricular or other program changes.

Periodic summary reports will also be prepared for the HCD External Advisory Committee. These will be delivered at times appropriate for their inclusion in discussion at the committee's annual on-campus workshop.

(b) Timeline for Implementation

Outcomes assessment activities outlined in this plan will be implemented in a recurring three-year cycle as shown in the following table:

Three-year outcomes assessment activity plan

	Fall	Spring	Summer
2008-09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop senior, sophomore online assessment surveys Review evaluations of summer internships (AGCM 293, AGED 293) Review ACES survey findings Student focus group for Ag Ed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administer senior survey Annual review of graduate students Review student work in fall semester HDFS courses External Advisory Committee annual on-campus workshop Review graduate student placement and publications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review senior survey findings Review evaluations of spring semester practica (HDFS 450, EDPR 442) Review student work in spring semester HDFS courses Review study abroad and honors information Prepare summary report
2009-10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administer sophomore survey Review evaluations of summer internships (AGCM 293, AGED 293) Review ACES survey findings Student focus group for HDFS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review sophomore survey findings Annual review of graduate students Review student work in fall semester AGCM/AGED courses External Advisory Committee annual on-campus workshop Review graduate student placement and publications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review evaluations of spring semester practica (HDFS 450, EDPR 442) Review student work in spring semester AGCM/AGED courses Review study abroad and honors information Prepare summary report

2010-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review evaluations of summer internships (AGCM 293, AGED 293) • Review ACES survey findings • Student focus group for ACES Com 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administer senior survey • Annual review of graduate students • Review student work in fall semester courses • External Advisory Committee annual on-campus workshop • Review graduate student placement and publications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review senior survey findings • Review evaluations of spring semester practica (HDFS 450, EDPR 442) • Review student work in spring semester courses • Review study abroad and honors information • Prepare summary report
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Other activities occurring on an irregular basis

- Graduate student qualifying examinations
- Graduate student preliminary examinations
- Faculty consultation with graduate student organization