

UNIVERSITY ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE
Feedback to Non-Academic Units on Assessment Activities Reported in 2008-09 Annual Reports
NON-ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

DEPARTMENT Career Services DATE 11-29-10

COMMITTEE MEMBER(S) CONDUCTING REVIEW Joan Hawthorne, Krista Lynn Minnotte

1. STUDENT LEARNING GOALS

- Were any goals referenced? YES X NO QUALIFIED Y/N
- If so, were goals well articulated? YES NO QUALIFIED Y/N X
- Do goals address student learning? YES NO QUALIFIED Y/N X

Comments:

As articulated in the annual report, the Career Services “goals” primarily address program goals rather than learning goals. For example, the program has a goal of expanding departmental participation in Co-op experiences, a goal of expanding student participation, a goal of upgrading the online system, etc. These may be exactly what the program needs to accomplish – but what will students LEARN if all of those goals are achieved as described? So these goals may be well-articulated in terms of addressing programmatic needs, but they are not well-articulated in terms of describing learning specifically.

On the other hand, it is clear from the rest of the annual report information that intended learning outcomes have been articulated for at least some of these goals, although they are named as “outcomes” rather than goals. One “goal,” for example, is to offer a Career Exploration class. The intended outcome (which we’d normally describe as a goal for student learning) is to help students develop familiarity with and begin work on the career exploration process. Assessments described include some which will provide insight into learning achieved toward the intended outcome or goal. So part of the issue regarding student learning goals is that you are not using terms in the same way as we do on the Assessment Committee – and hence the “qualified” yes or no ratings on goals. You HAVE student learning goals, but that’s not what you’re calling them.

Regardless of terminology, there is definite merit in separating program goals from student learning goals. Doing so makes it easy for YOU (as well as for an outside reader) to see what the program should do versus what you want students to learn. Having a convenient way to distinguish (e.g., a list of “program goals” + a list of “student learning goals”) makes it easier to ensure that learning goals don’t fall between the cracks – given that they usually pose the more complicated assessment challenge.

In addition to Program goals, please also consider UND’s Institutional and Essential Studies goals for student learning (shown in alignment within parentheses). Identify UND/Essential Studies goals which are similar to the referenced program goals.

- X 1 Communication – written or oral (“able to write and speak in various settings with a sense of purpose/audience”)
- 2 Thinking and reasoning – critical thinking (or “be intellectually curious”; analyze, synthesize, evaluate)
- 3 Thinking and reasoning – creative thinking (or “be intellectually creative”; explore, discover, engage)
- 4 Thinking and reasoning – quantitative reasoning (“apply empirical data...analyze graphical information”)
- 5 Information literacy (“be able to access and evaluate...for effective, efficient, and ethical use”)
- 6 Diversity (“demonstrate understanding of diversity and use that understanding...”)
- 7 Lifelong learning (“commit themselves to lifelong learning”)
- 8 Service/citizenship (“share responsibility both for their communities and for the world”)

Comments regarding departmental goals and alignment of program goals with institutional and Essential Studies goals:

It makes sense that written communication might align with goals (intended outcomes) for some Career Services programs, but the other goals do not appear relevant to the work of the CS office.

2. ASSESSMENT METHODS

- Were any specific assessment methods referenced? YES X NO QUALIFIED Y/N
- If so, were specifically chosen assessment methods appropriately aligned with individual goals? YES X NO QUALIFIED Y/N
- Were both direct and indirect assessment methods used as components of a “multiple” YES NO X QUALIFIED Y/N

measures” approach?

Comments:

It appears that Career Services uses primarily indirect assessments (aligned with “outcomes”), although it uses multiple indirect assessments. Surveys are the most commonly used method. This makes sense for some programs and outcomes, although there are other intended outcomes (e.g., writing resumes, cover letters.) and programs (e.g., the Career Explorations class) for which it seems possible that direct assessment could be productively incorporated. If students complete projects in the class, for example (which appears to be one of the assignments), could those projects be analyzed to determine how well students are demonstrating achievement of the intended learning? Would you find, for example, that students are much stronger in some areas of learning than in others? If so, that would be good to know.

In addition to surveys, the department also uses counts (i.e., “counts” of users or attendees). While such information is critical for program evaluation, counts do not provide information about student learning. Well-written surveys, in contrast, can be a very useful tool for indirect assessment of student learning.

3. ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Were any assessment results reported?	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	QUALIFIED Y/N <input type="checkbox"/>
• If so, were the results clear in terms of how they specifically affirm achievement of goals?	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	QUALIFIED Y/N <input type="checkbox"/>
• If so, were the results clear in terms of how they indicate need for improvement?	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	QUALIFIED Y/N <input type="checkbox"/>
• Were the results tied to goals for student learning?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	QUALIFIED Y/N <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Comments:

Comments from surveys (but no quantitative data) and conclusions from “counts” were reported for most learning outcomes, and both were directly linked to the activities of interest and usable for making changes within those activities. Although some of the survey data address learning outcomes (and program staff are using the data they collect), much of the information collected is probably more useful for program evaluation than for assessment of student learning (addressing student satisfaction, e.g., rather than student perceptions of learning). However, some surveys appear to be purposeful about incorporating questions that get at students’ perceptions of their learning. And it appears likely that even more useful data regarding learning could be collected (from both surveys and direct assessments) if department staff had an opportunity to rethink goals and methods with a focus on student learning specifically in mind.

From a program evaluation standpoint, the results appear to be providing intended and useful information. From a student learning assessment, it appears likely that tweaking goals and methods could increase the usefulness of results.

In addition to program goals, some assessment results may be applicable to institutional and Essential Studies goals. Please identify those results which are applicable to institutional/Essential Studies goal achievement. For indicated items, please describe findings below. .

- 1 Communication – written or oral (“able to write and speak in various settings with a sense of purpose/audience”)
- 2 Thinking and reasoning – critical thinking (or “be intellectually curious”; analyze, synthesize, evaluate)
- 3 Thinking and reasoning – creative thinking (or “be intellectually creative”; explore, discover, engage)
- 4 Thinking and reasoning – quantitative reasoning (“apply empirical data...analyze graphical information”)
- 5 Information literacy (“be able to access and evaluate...for effective, efficient, and ethical use”)
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- 8 Service/citizenship (“share responsibility both for their communities and for the world”)

Comments regarding results and the application of results to programmatic, institutional and Essential Studies goals:

No results regarding written communication skills were reported.

4. CLOSING THE LOOP

Were any actions taken on the basis of assessment results reported? YES NO QUALIFIED Y/N

- If so, do curricular or other improvements/ changes arising from assessment results directly address goals for student learning? YES _____ NO _____ QUALIFIED Y/N ___?__

Comments:

Department staff are to be commended for making use of the results they obtain – there are several references in this report to changes which have been (or will be) made based on findings. For example, a student presentation was added to the Career Explorations class. Follow-up research is being conducted to determine if there would be benefit in requiring the full Myers Briggs test. Marketing efforts were beefed up following lower user counts in the Walk-In Center.

Without the actual data, however, it's difficult to tell if various changes were made to improve intended learning outcomes specifically or for other reasons (e.g., to increase student satisfaction).

SUMMARY

Strengths

Areas for Improvement

- _____ A specific plan for assessment is in place.
- _____ Student learning goals are well-articulated.
- Assessment methods are clearly described.
- _____ Assessment methods are appropriately selected.
- _____ Assessment methods are well-implemented.
- _____ Direct and indirect methods are implemented.
- Results are reported.
- Results are tied to closing the loop.
(Decision-making is tied to evidence.)

- _____ No specific plan for assessment is in place.
- _____ Student learning goals are not well-articulated.
- _____ Assessment methods are not clearly described.
- _____ Assessment methods are not appropriately selected.
- _____ Assessment methods are not well-implemented.
- A single type of assessment methods predominates.
- _____ No results are reported.
- _____ Results are not clearly tied to closing the loop.
(Decision-making is not directly tied to evidence.)

OVERALL SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Career Services staff appear to be collecting data regularly, analyzing data, and using findings to make changes to the program – which is exactly what we like to see occurring, and staff members deserve to be recognized for their progress in this area. This practice could be even more beneficial, however, if additional front-end work were done.

We would recommend three steps: (1) Identify intended student learning outcomes (goals for student learning) as distinct from programmatic goals. (2) Consider wording for learning outcomes. Think in terms of naming what students should be able to do (or know) as a result of participating in a given class, event, activity, etc. (3) Reconsider methods to ensure the most benefit from the effort. Make sure that surveys explicitly address intended learning outcomes, where appropriate. Consider adding direct assessment for longer-term activities (e.g., the class). Direct assessments are very difficult to do well with hit-and-run activities like walk-ins – but they can be extraordinarily productive with longer-term activities.

MATERIALS REVIEWED

- Annual report
- _____ Appendices (cited in annual report)
- _____ Other (please describe)
- _____ Assessment plan (as posted)
- Previous assessment review

Reviewer(s):	Name	Joan Hawthorne	_____	_____	Krista Lynn Minnotte	_____
	Department	Academic Affairs	_____	_____	Sociology	_____
	Phone Number	7-4684	_____	_____	7-4419	_____
	e-mail	joan.hawthorne@email.und.edu	_____	_____	krista.minnotte@und.edu	_____

Section 1: Y Section 2: Y Section 3: Y Section 4: Y

Coding Key:

- Y = yes, this is done appropriately and well
- N = no, this is not done at all, or it is not done in relationship to student learning
- NA = no information reported
- ? = action or progress is apparent; however, evidence is lacking that this is completely and appropriately done