



Sam Houston
State University

2015-2016



**College of
Criminal Justice**

**Department of
Criminal Justice
and
Criminology**

Assessment Plan Summary**Department: Criminal Justice and Criminology MA****Sam Houston State University****President, Office of****Academic Affairs, Division of****Criminal Justice, College of****Criminal Justice and Criminology, Department of****Criminal Justice and Criminology MA****Methodological and Statistical Competency****Goal Description**

Enhance and develop student's methodological and statistical abilities.

Related Items/Elements

 **Competency In Employing Elements Of Qualitative And/or Quantitative Research Methods**

Learning Objective Description

Competency in employing elements of qualitative and/or quantitative research methods to design scientific-based projects in the field of criminal justice and criminology.

 **Successful Execution Of Study And Statistics**

Indicator Description

Students will successfully execute the methodology and statistical analyses needed for their thesis. They will also recognize the assumptions and limitations underlying the research methods and statistical techniques used and accurately interpret the results.

Criterion Description

Students will score at least an 80% on each section of the methodological and statistical sections of the thesis rubric. These include 1. mode of inquiry, 2. execution of study, 3. interpretation of results, and 4. analysis.

Findings Description

Overall, the majority of students achieved a working mastery of social science research methods techniques including an understanding of statistics as measured by the 4 criteria outlined in the thesis rubric. The findings reveal that the majority of students (88%; 7/8) excelled (as measured by a score of 5/5) at selecting their mode of inquiry, the execution of their study, and the interpretation of their results. Furthermore, 88% (7/8) scored a 4/5 or better on their analyses, which is the minimum standard, with only 1 student falling below that threshold.

 **Strengthening Methodological and Statistical Skills**

Action Description

In the upcoming year, the Department will focus on strengthening students' methodological and statistical skills. This will be accomplished by 1. providing a faculty led 1/2 day workshop on basic statistics and research methods the summer prior to starting the MA program, 2. offering a Statistics II elective course for 2nd year MA students who are beginning to work on their thesis, and 3. providing additional statistical and methodological workshops throughout the semester to further develop specific skills and abilities.

Research Competence**Goal Description**

Enhance and develop student's ability to conceptualize and deliver an original research paper.

Related Items/Elements

 **Competency In Conducting Original Criminal Justice And Criminology Research**

Learning Objective Description

Students will demonstrate integration of knowledge, skills and abilities needed to conduct original research in criminal justice and criminology.

 Conceptualization And Delivery Of The Thesis

Indicator Description

Successful conceptualization and delivery of an original research study as demonstrated by the defense of a Thesis using a faculty-developed rubric. The rubric uses a 1 (insignificant) to 5 (critically significant) rating of specific criteria pertaining to conceptualization and delivery of an original research paper. These elements include: choice of problem, theoretical framework, written presentation, originality of idea and/or approach, and contribution to the field.

Criterion Description

Students will demonstrate their ability to conceptualize and write an original research study within the field of criminal justice or criminology by completing a thesis. Students will score at least an 80% on each of the related elements of the faculty-developed rubric.

Findings Description

Overall, students demonstrated competency in conducting original criminal justice and criminological research. When assessing the conceptualization and writing elements of the thesis, 1 student did not achieve the 80% threshold for "theoretical framework" with only 38% of the students scoring a 5/5 on that element. Furthermore, 88% (7/8), 75% (6/8), and 88% (7/8) of students scored a

5/5 on the criteria of choice of problem, written presentation, and contribution to the field, respectively. The area that students seem to excel at most is originality of idea with 100% of the students scoring 5/5 on this element.



Strengthen Student Ability to Conceptualize and Deliver Original Research

Action Description

The Department will focus on strengthening students' abilities to conceptualize and write original research in criminal justice or criminology. This may be accomplished by 1. providing a workshop on how to identify criminological problems to study that make a significant contribution to the field, 2. offering more theory-based elective courses to further develop their theoretical knowledge base, and 3. allow MA students to register for Ph.D. electives.

Update to Previous Cycle's Plan for Continuous Improvement

Previous Cycle's Plan For Continuous Improvement (Do Not Modify)

For the 2015-2016 academic year, continued emphasis will be placed on strengthening student research and statistical skills with an overall goal of preparing our MA students for the PhD program. This will be accomplished by 1. providing a workshop on how to identify criminological problems to study that have the potential to make a significant contribution to the field, 2. encouraging students to use the University's writing center, 3. offering more theory-based elective courses to further develop their theoretical knowledge base, 4. providing a faculty led 1/2 day workshop on basic statistics and research methods the summer prior to starting the MA program, 5. offering a Statistics II elective course for 2nd year MA students who are beginning to work on their thesis, and 6. providing additional statistical and methodological workshops throughout the semester to further develop specific skills and abilities.

Students will also be encouraged to publish their research findings in peer-reviewed journal articles with faculty assistance as well as present their research at national conferences and University-sponsored events.

The development of our MA students statistical and research skills is contingent on 1. access to the latest versions of various statistical software programs used in the social sciences (e.g., STATA, MPlus, HLM, etc.), 2. student travel and professional development funds, and 3. summer research scholarships.

Update of Progress to the Previous Cycle's PCI

This academic year, faculty in the department focused on teaching students how to identify criminological problems to study and to strengthen their writing skills. We also provided a faculty led 1/2 day workshop on basic statistics and research methods the summer prior to starting the MA program, offered a Statistics II elective course for 2nd year MA students who are beginning to work on their thesis, and provided additional mandatory statistical and methodological workshops throughout the semester to further develop specific skills and abilities.

Several students worked on publications for peer-reviewed journal articles with faculty assistance as well as presented their research at national conferences (e.g., ASC and ACJS) and University-sponsored events (e.g., Graduate Research Exchange, Woodlands Symposium).

Closing Summary

Closing Summary

For the 2016-2017 academic year, continued emphasis will be placed on strengthening student research and statistical skills with an overall goal of preparing our MA students for the PhD program. The Graduate Standards and Admissions Committee will discuss: 1. continuing to provide a faculty led ½ day workshop on basic statistics and research methods the summer prior to starting the MA program, 2. adding Statistics II as part of the core requirements, 3. allowing MA students to register for Ph.D. electives, and 4. providing additional statistical and methodological workshops throughout the semester to further develop specific skills and abilities.

Students will also be encouraged to publish their research findings in peer-reviewed journal articles with faculty assistance as well as present their research at national conferences and University-sponsored events. The Department will also seek ways to better keep track of graduate student publications.

The development of our MA students statistical and research skills is contingent on 1. access to the latest versions of various statistical software programs used in the social sciences (e.g., STATA, MPlus, HLM, etc.), 2. student travel and professional development funds, and 3. summer research scholarships.

Assessment Plan Summary

Department: Criminal Justice BA/BS

Sam Houston State University

President, Office of

Academic Affairs, Division of

Criminal Justice, College of

Criminal Justice and Criminology, Department of

Criminal Justice BA/BS

Comprehensive knowledge

Goal Description

Exiting seniors should exhibit comprehensive knowledge of key components of the criminal justice system, criminological theory, and methods of inquiry.

Related Items/Elements

 Exhibit Comprehensive Knowledge

Learning Objective Description

Students will demonstrate comprehensive knowledge of the structure and functions of the various components of the criminal justice system

Senior Exit Exam

Indicator Description

Each semester, all graduating seniors are asked to complete an exit exam, through Survey Monkey, an online data collection/response validation website. This survey provides faculty a means of assessing students' comprehension and retention on key concepts provided to them during their educational experience. The 60-item Exit Exam, created by faculty, assesses learning in seven core areas.

Criterion Description

Graduating students will achieve an average of 70% on the exit survey. Last year this average was below 70% but our department will continue to strive toward this goal.

Findings Description

For 2015-2016, graduating seniors who took the exit exam overall averaged a 68.9%. The exam covered 8 topical areas. Average scores for each topic include: criminal justice (74.3%), law (75.0%), police (77.7%), courts (74.3%), corrections (74.1%), theory (56.5%), methods (55.4%), and diversity (60.3%). Individual topic area results highlight areas of concern, which should be the focus of improvement efforts this next year.

 Senior Exit Exam Question Bank 2015-2016 **Develop Active Assessment Schedule****Action Description**

In order to better integrate the assessment process, an assessment schedule will be developed to implement and gather indicators of student success from the core classes in which they are taught. The schedule will be based on the curriculum map that ties assessment indicators to program objectives within the core courses.

 Curriculum Map **Develop Comprehensive Writing Assessment Toolkit****Action Description**

In order to better assess the variety of student writing occurring in multiple sections of writing enhanced research methods courses, an assessment toolkit will be developed that offers options for assessment activities that are better suited to different forms of student writing.

 Theoretical Foundations**Learning Objective Description**

Students will understand the prevailing theoretical foundations of criminology.

 Senior Exit Exam**Indicator Description**

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Development of professional skills**Goal Description**

Exiting seniors should demonstrate professional skills necessary to pursue employment in criminal justice related areas and/or an advanced degree in criminal justice or a related field, including comprehensive knowledge of various research strategies, communication and critical thinking skills, and legal issues.

Related Items/Elements **Communication and Critical Thinking****Learning Objective Description**

Students will demonstrate effective communication and critical thinking skills necessary to pursue employment in criminal justice related areas and/or an advanced degree criminal justice or related field.

 Development Of Scholarly Research Proposals**Indicator Description**

Undergraduate criminal justice students will develop a scholarly research paper proposal in their core required Research Methods course (CRIJ 3378). Writing and research skills will be scored by a rubric agreed upon by a faculty committee. Each professor will utilize this rubric when grading the student research paper proposals. These guidelines include areas of organization, content, quality of proposed research, hypothesis construction and writing.

Criterion Description

Students will score at 70% or above on the research paper scoring rubric.

 Rubric for Research Proposal

Findings Description

Evaluation of the writing assessment process was ongoing throughout this past academic year by the Department's assessment committee. Curriculum mapping was conducted to determine other options for the evaluation of student writing. The assessment committee determined that it evaluating writing samples from all writing enhanced courses would provide a more comprehensive picture of the status of student learning. The new writing assessment process will be implemented for AY2016-2017

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Senior Exit Exam Question Bank 2015-2016



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Curriculum Map



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Knowledge of Methods

Learning Objective Description

Students will demonstrate knowledge of the methods used to generate useful scientific knowledge in the fields of criminal justice and criminology.



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Curriculum Map



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Law and Legal Process

Learning Objective Description

Students will understand the goals and procedures of law and the legal process.



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Senior Exit Exam Question Bank 2015-2016



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Curriculum Map



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Update to Previous Cycle's Plan for Continuous Improvement

Previous Cycle's Plan For Continuous Improvement (Do Not Modify)

As the Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology begins its third year as a distinct department, it is increasingly evident that additional focus needs to be placed on the assessment plan. The first two years of assessment were relatively transitory as the organizational structure of both the College and the Department have occurred. Entering into the new academic year, a renewed emphasis on "doing something more" is underway but potentially not apparent as part of the documented assessment plan to date.

First and foremost, to improve our assessment ability of the BA/BS in Criminal Justice, a working group/committee comprised of Department of CJC faculty members will be convened beginning in August 2016. For many years, the assessment of this degree plan existed at the College level which was then turned over to the department chair to perform in consultation with faculty. Enhanced inclusion of faculty in this process and diffusion of this responsibility will allow for the stimulation of both faculty "buy in" and new ideas for approaches to assessing student learning across the curriculum. The department has historically relied upon a post test only/ exit exam strategy with our graduating seniors as a major criteria for assessment in addition to assessing scientific writing. Additional efforts for assessment of student during their studies will be considered. It would behoove the department to have a number of approaches to ongoing feedback rather than relying on "end of the line" product assessment.

If the avenues of assessment are to continue, a key aspect for the improvement of our assessment efforts will include obtaining a large subset of our undergraduate students for the scientific writing assessment. The current sample size is small by comparison and limited to three sections of a course that used a common assessment rubric. Additional faculty and instructor “buy in” will be needed to achieve this goal. The Department Chair will accept the responsibility for strongly encouraging faculty utilize this redesigned rubric to grade a scientific writing assignment.

We will also provide specific feedback to all of our faculty and instructors regarding the strengths and weaknesses displayed by our students in their writing so that broad based efforts can be made by all faculty members to develop our student’s scientific writing ability.

Update of Progress to the Previous Cycle's PCI

A standing assessment committee was formed where members are faculty from varied areas within criminal justice, in order to provide insight into opportunities to improve the assessment process throughout the Department.

The committee has been working to improve the assessment process and develop a culture of assessment, which will allow for access to better indicators of student success by moving away from the emphasis on the senior exit exam as a primary indicator to implementing smaller scale assessment activities throughout core courses.

Additional work is underway to examine the writing assessment process. In order to improve the reach of the writing assessment process, the committee has proposed to develop an assessment toolkit that will offer options for instructors to choose from that are better suited and the most appropriate for the variety of writing assessments conducted in different course sections.

Plan for Continuous Improvement

Closing Summary

For the 2016 - 2017 academic year, the Department of Criminal Justice & Criminology will continue to place needed focus on implementing and improving the assessment plan.

A new assessment schedule has been put in place in order to reduce the burden the changes in the assessment plan might place on instructors in the classroom. This schedule will allow for the capture of indicators of student success throughout the academic year, in addition to the senior exit exam sent out at the end of each Fall and Spring semesters.

Additional development of the communication and critical thinking assessment will continue to better capture where and how assessment activities are already taking place and improve faculty “buy-in”. This will, hopefully, improve the sample size available for evaluating this assessment indicator.

Based on the development of the assessment committee, it is now possible to have a mechanism through which assessment activities and results can be shared with the other faculty members. The Assessment Committee chair will work with the Department Chair in order to make sure the faculty are informed of assessment activities and will work regularly to encourage participation in collecting assessment indicators.

Assessment Plan Summary
Department: Criminal Justice PhD

Sam Houston State University

President, Office of

Academic Affairs, Division of

Criminal Justice, College of

Criminal Justice and Criminology, Department of

Criminal Justice PhD

Conduct Scientific Research

Goal Description

Enhance and develop student's ability to conduct scientific research that adds to the current body of knowledge in criminal justice and criminology.

Related Items/Elements

 **Doctoral Students Will Be Able To Conduct Original Criminal Justice And Criminology Research**

Learning Objective Description

Students completing the Ph.D. program will demonstrate the ability to produce original research by integrating knowledge, skills, and abilities learned throughout the program.

 Successful Completion Of The Dissertation

Indicator Description

Successful completion of an original research study as demonstrated by the defense of a Dissertation using a faculty-developed rubric. The rubric uses a 1 (insignificant) to 5 (critically significant) rating of specific criteria each dissertation should address. These criteria include: choice of problem, theoretical framework, mode of inquiry, execution of study, interpretation of results, analysis, written presentation, originality of idea and/or approach, and contribution to the field.

Criterion Description

Students will demonstrate their ability to engage in an original research study within the field of criminal justice and criminology. At minimum, a dissertation prospectus will include a literature review of relevant empirical literature and a well defined and

defensible methodology. The final dissertation will include the statistical analysis appropriate to the methodology described, and the contextualization of the study results within the existing literature. Students defending their final dissertation will receive a score of 80% or above on each of the 9 elements outlined in the dissertation rubric.

Findings Description

Overall, the majority of the students demonstrated competency in conducting original criminal justice and criminological research. Our findings revealed that some students fell below the 80% threshold for "theoretical framework" (n = 2), "analysis" (n = 1), and "contribution to the field" (n = 1). Students seem to excel (as demonstrated by a score of 5/5 on the rubric) in their mode of inquiry (80%; 8/10), followed by the execution of their study (60%; 6/10), the analysis (60%, 6/10), and the originality of their ideas (60%; 6/10). Areas in need of improvement include the choice of problem, the interpretation of the results, written presentation, and the contribution to the field with 60% (6/10), 70% (7/10), 60% (6/10), and 70% (7/10) of students scoring a 4/5 or below, respectively.

Encourage Students To Submit Research For Publication And Strengthen Statistical Abilities

Action Description

For the upcoming year, the Graduate Standards and Admissions Committee will review the different standards across the various portfolio committees to see if a more uniformed approach is needed. In addition, portfolio committee members will encourage students to submit their research articles for publication prior to the defense of the portfolio in an effort to increase marketability. The findings from our dissertation rubric also suggest that the Department needs to continue focusing on strengthening students' statistical abilities. This will be accomplished by 1. providing a faculty led 1/2 day workshop on statistics the summer prior to starting the Ph.D. program, 2. offering various statistics related elective courses for 2nd and 3rd year Ph.D. students who are beginning to work on their portfolio and dissertation, 3. providing additional statistical and methodological workshops throughout the semester to further develop specific skills and abilities, 4. encouraging and funding students to attend ICPSR statistical workshops over the summer, as well as 5. encouraging and funding students to attend pre-conference statistical workshops.

Successful Defense Of A Research Portfolio

Indicator Description

Doctoral students are required to submit and orally defend a portfolio of selected written research products that were developed during their tenure in the doctoral program to a panel of faculty members. The current policy states that the portfolio must contain at least two research articles that are deemed by the committee members as acceptable for submission for publication to a peer reviewed journal.

Criterion Description

While the current policy states that the minimum requirement for a portfolio defense is two publishable articles, the Graduate Standards and Admissions Committee would like to start seeing Ph.D. students who are defending their portfolio have at least one paper either published or under review at a peer-reviewed journal at the time of the defense.

Findings Description

A review of the CVs of Ph.D. students who defended their portfolio in AY15-16 revealed that 100% (15/15) of them had at least 1 paper published or under review in a peer reviewed journal at the time of their defense. 66.67% (10/15) had at least 1 peer reviewed publication while 93.3% (14/15) had at least 1 paper under review. On average, students had 1.7 articles under review (range from 0-3) and 1.4 articles published in a peer-reviewed journal (range from 0-6) at the time of their portfolio defense.

Encourage Students To Submit Research For Publication And Strengthen Statistical Abilities

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Doctoral Teaching Fellows Provide Quality Classroom Teaching

Goal Description

Enhance and develop student's ability to demonstrate high levels of teaching effectiveness.

Related Items/Elements

 **Provide Effective Undergraduate Classroom Instruction**

Learning Objective Description

Advanced doctoral students will develop and demonstrate their aptitude for providing high quality classroom instruction for undergraduate students.

 Faculty Observations**Indicator Description**

Doctoral Teaching Fellows teaching face-to-face will be observed in the classroom by a faculty member using a faculty-developed rubric. Elements being evaluated include Preparation for Lecture, such as organization, content, subject knowledge, and use of Powerpoint as well as Delivery of Lecture, such as professionalism, eye contact, enthusiasm, vocal properties, classroom management, body language, and length of presentation.

Criterion Description

Faculty observations of a DTF led lecture will be conducted using the faculty developed rubric. Students will obtain an average score of 80% or above on the overall rubric and on each of the elements.

Findings Description

Of the 17 faculty observations conducted in AY2015-106, 16 scored an overall 80% or above on the faculty teaching observation rubric. The average score was a 90.11% with a range of 78.5% to 97.5%. A review of the average of each of the elements reveals that students excelled at professionalism in the classroom (94%), making eye contact (94%), enthusiasm (93%), classroom management (92%), and body language (93%). Areas in need of improvement include vocal properties (85%) and length of presentation (86%).

 Teaching Effectiveness**Action Description**

We will continue to focus on improving Doctoral Teaching Fellows teaching effectiveness. Prior to being assigned an undergraduate class to teach, incoming DTFs will be required to 1. provide a guest lecture with a faculty observer, 2. attend SHSU's annual teaching conference, and 3. complete the Teaching Online with Blackboard Certification Series course. Students will also be encouraged to complete PACE's Teaching Assistant Certification Series. The Department will also provide a faculty-led discussion on setting and meeting objectives in the classroom as well as discuss and practice (with mock classroom scenarios) proper delivery of lectures and classroom management in CRIJ 7333 (a pre-requisite to teaching).

 IDEA Evaluation Forms

Indicator Description

Student ratings of Doctoral Teaching Fellows using the Individual Developmental Education Assessment (IDEA) Evaluation forms.

Criterion Description

Doctoral Teaching Fellows will perform at or above the similar/middle 40% box on the IDEA evaluation form. Summary Evaluation will be 4.0 or above for teaching evaluations on the following criteria 1. progress on objectives, 2. excellent teacher, and 3. excellent course.

Findings Description

15 courses were taught by Doctoral Teaching Fellows in the Fall 2015, with 100% (15/15) of them scoring a 4.0 or above on the IDEA summary evaluation with an average of 4.5. Furthermore, the average score for progress on relevant objectives was 4.43, for excellent teacher was 4.58, and for excellent course was 4.45.

22 courses were taught by Doctoral Teaching Fellow in the Spring 2016, with 82% (18/22) of them scoring a 4.0 or above on the IDEA summary evaluation. More specifically, 86%, 82%, and 64% of doctoral teaching fellows scored a 4.0 or above on the elements of progress on objectives, excellent teacher, and excellent course, respectively. Furthermore, the average score for progress on relevant objectives was 4.32, for excellent teacher was 4.39, and for excellent course was 4.13.

 Teaching Effectiveness
Action Description

We will continue to focus on improving Doctoral Teaching Fellows teaching effectiveness. Prior to being assigned an undergraduate class to teach, incoming DTFs will be required to 1. provide a guest lecture with a faculty observer, 2. attend SHSU's annual teaching conference, and 3. complete the Teaching Online with Blackboard Certification Series course. Students will also be encouraged to complete PACE's Teaching Assistant Certification Series. The Department will also provide a faculty-led discussion on setting and meeting objectives in the classroom as well as discuss and practice (with mock classroom scenarios) proper delivery of lectures and classroom management in CRIJ 7333 (a pre-requisite to teaching).

Update to Previous Cycle's Plan for Continuous Improvement
Previous Cycle's Plan For Continuous Improvement (Do Not Modify)

For the 2015-2016 academic year, continued emphasis will be placed on strengthening doctoral student research and teaching skills with an overall goal of placing our graduates in academic

positions.

In addition to discussing the utilization of the portfolio process as evidence of doctoral student writing ability and research competency, the Graduate Standards and Admissions Committee will review the different standards across the various portfolio committees to see if a more uniformed approach is needed. In addition, portfolio committee members will encourage students to submit their research articles for publication prior to the defense of the portfolio in an effort to increase marketability.

The Department will focus on strengthening students statistical abilities by 1. providing a faculty led 1/2 day workshop on statistics the summer prior to starting the Ph.D. program, 2. offering various statistics related elective courses for 2nd and 3rd year Ph.D. students who are beginning to work on their portfolio and dissertation, and 3. providing additional statistical and methodological workshops throughout the semester to further develop specific skills and abilities.

Students will be encouraged to publish their research findings in peer-reviewed journal articles as well as present their research at national conferences and University-sponsored events. The Department will start tracking Ph.D. student peer-reviewed publications.

The development of our PhD students statistical and research skills is contingent on 1. access to the latest versions of various statistical software programs used in the social sciences (e.g., STATA, MPlus, HLM, etc.), 2. student travel and professional development funds, and 3. summer research fellowships.

The Graduate Student Development and Assessment Committee will continue to provide formal faculty observations of Doctoral Teaching Fellows. This year, the committee will also include informal "pop-in" observations throughout the semester to provide additional feedback for improvement. Furthermore, to promote excellence in teaching, incoming DTFs will be required to 1. provide a guest lecture with a faculty observer, 2. attend SHSU's annual teaching conference, and 3. complete the Teaching Online with Blackboard Certification Series course. The instructor of CRIJ7333 (a pre-requisite to teaching) will also discuss setting and meeting objectives in the classroom and practice (with mock classroom scenarios) proper delivery of lectures and classroom management techniques.

Update of Progress to the Previous Cycle's PCI

This past year, the Ph.D. program underwent a program review. During that time, the Committee gathered information to assess the various standards across different portfolio committees. Based on the results, the Graduate Standards and Admissions Committee is now discussing updating the portfolio policy to create similar standards across committees as well as a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of the comprehensive exam model.

There has been an increase in students submitting their research articles for publication prior to the defense of the portfolio. This will continue to be encouraged with a focus on top-tier publications.

The Department offered several opportunities to strengthening students statistical abilities including 1. providing a faculty led 1/2 day workshop on statistics the summer prior to starting the Ph.D. program, 2. offering various statistics related elective courses for 2nd and 3rd year Ph.D. students who are beginning to work on their portfolio and dissertation, and 3. providing additional statistical and methodological workshops throughout the semester to further develop specific skills and abilities (e.g., meta-analysis brown bag, workshops on how to write a portfolio and how to write a dissertation, workshop on applying for grants, etc.).

26 Ph.D. students presented their research at national conferences. The Department will develop a better way to track Ph.D. student peer-reviewed publications at various stages throughout the program.

The Graduate Student Development and Assessment Committee provided formal faculty observations of Doctoral Teaching Fellows each semester. Furthermore, incoming DTFs were required to 1. provide a guest lecture with a faculty observer, 2. attend SHSU's annual teaching conference, and 3. complete the Teaching Online with Blackboard Certification Series course.

Plan for continuous improvement

Closing Summary

For the 2016-2017 academic year, continued emphasis will be placed on strengthening doctoral student research and teaching skills with an overall goal of placing our graduates in academic positions.

Based on the results from the external review that occurred in 2015-2016, the Graduate Standards and Admissions Committee will discuss the advantages and disadvantages related to our current portfolio policy vis a vis a comprehensive exam model.

Faculty are asked to encourage students to submit their research articles for publication prior to the defense of the portfolio with an increased focus on top-tier publications.

The Department will continue to focus on strengthening students' statistical abilities by 1. providing a faculty-led 1/2 day workshop on statistics the summer prior to starting the Ph.D. program, 2. offering various statistics-related elective courses for 2nd and 3rd year Ph.D. students who are beginning to work on their portfolio and dissertation, 3. providing additional statistical and methodological workshops throughout the semester to further develop specific skills and abilities, 4. encouraging and funding students to attend ICPSR's statistical workshop in the summer, as well as 5. encouraging and funding students to attend pre-conference statistical workshops.

Students will be encouraged to publish their research findings in peer-reviewed journal articles as well as present their research at national conferences and University-sponsored events. The Department will seek ways to better track Ph.D. student peer-reviewed publications throughout various stages in the program.

The development of our PhD students' statistical and research skills is contingent on 1. access to the latest versions of various statistical software programs used in the social sciences (e.g., STATA, MPlus, HLM, etc.), 2. student travel and professional development funds, and 3. summer research fellowships.

The Graduate Student Development and Assessment Committee will continue to provide formal faculty observations of Doctoral Teaching Fellows. The committee has developed a "short-version" of the observation form for students with previous teaching experience. Furthermore, to promote excellence in teaching, incoming DTFs will be required to 1. provide a guest lecture with a faculty observer, 2. attend SHSU's annual teaching conference, and 3. complete the Teaching Online with Blackboard Certification Series course. Students will also be encouraged to complete PACE's Teaching Assistant Certification Series. The instructor of CRIJ7333 (a pre-requisite to teaching) will also discuss setting and meeting objectives in the classroom and practice (with mock classroom scenarios) proper delivery of lectures and classroom management techniques.

Assessment Plan Summary**Department: Criminal Justice, Victim Services Management MS****Sam Houston State University****President, Office of****Academic Affairs, Division of****Criminal Justice, College of****Criminal Justice and Criminology, Department of****Criminal Justice, Victim Services Management MS****Encourage Students to Critically Analyze and Apply Reading Material****Goal Description**

Students enrolled in CRIJ 6338 Coordinating Victim Services will become conversant in the academic literature on evidence-based best practices to better prepare them to address their clients' needs. Students will be assigned chapters from *Rape Work*, a book detailing the history of rape crisis centers in the United States and the situational pressures and inter-agency conflicts undermining service provision. Students will supplement information from the text with findings from peer-reviewed publications to contextualize their impressions from the field on the exit exam.

Related Items/Elements

 **Students Will Be Able to Critically Review the Literature on Coordinated Community Response Teams and Synthesize Theories and Concepts from Prior Courses.**

Learning Objective Description

Online discussion prompts will promote dialogue about the material and its “real-world” application to students’ field experiences. Students will learn to think critically about the required readings and to seek out additional information in peer-reviewed journals. On a written exit exam, they will be able to synthesize empirical findings from the literature on coordinated community response teams.

 **Students Will Demonstrate a Mastery of the Literature on a Written Exam and in Virtual Posts**

Indicator Description

On a written, exit exam and in weekly discussion posts, students will demonstrate: 1. an understanding of the respective roles of victim service professionals and how stakeholders may coordinate their efforts to promote more optimal service delivery. 2. an appreciation for how victim service organizations unwittingly perpetuate re-victimization. 3. an understanding of specific barriers to interagency collaboration and practical solutions that are grounded in research.

 MSVSM Assessment Rubric

Criterion Description

Students will complete a comprehensive, written exam integrating student impressions from the field and the most up-to-date research in the area of victim services. Student performance will be evaluated in accordance with the attached rubric. This component of the exit exam corresponds with item #3: “Inclusion of appropriate and relevant prior research based on scholarly based theories and concepts.” Students will be assigned a score for this category ranging from 1 to 5. A score of “1” would be indicative of a “poor” work product while a “5” would suggest that the quality of the research was “excellent.” It is expected that at least 70% of students will achieve a minimum score of “4.”



MSVSM Assessment Rubric Highlighting Item #4

Findings Description

Of the 26 students enrolled in the Capstone course during the spring term, all (or 100%) scored a “5” on this learning objective. All demonstrated an ability to: 1.) critically review the literature on coordinated community response teams; 2.) locate and successfully incorporate information from peer-reviewed journal articles; and 3.) integrate theories and concepts from prior courses. While all students performed well on this particular learning objective, some were deficient in other areas, mainly grammar. Recommendations for improvement include continued referrals to the Writing Center.



MSVSM Assessment Results Table Highlighting Item #4

Capstone Research Synthesis Requirement Action Plan

Action Description

In the next assessment cycle, the target for Item #3 on the Capstone rubric (inclusion of appropriate and relevant prior research based on scholarly theories and concepts) will increase by 10%, with an expectation that 80% of students will achieve a minimum score of “4” on this component of the exit exam.

Provide Students With Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective Service Delivery

Goal Description

Students enrolled in CRIJ 6638 Coordinating Victim Services will develop a practical, working knowledge of the victim services industry and skills for providing more optimal service delivery. Through a semester-long field experience students will better understand the realities of working for a victim services organization, including the “nuts and bolts” of the agency’s operations.

Related Items/Elements

 **Students Will Gain a Real-World Perspective Through Their Field Experience and Identify Case Management Resources in Their Communities**

Learning Objective Description

After completing nine hours of (paid or unpaid) field experience in a victim service agency, students will be able to identify both resources and service gaps. By immersing themselves in the field, students will acquire a greater understanding of their clients' needs.

On an Exit Exam, Students Will Demonstrate a Practical Knowledge of the Victim Services Industry.

Indicator Description

On a written, exit exam students will demonstrate an understanding of the inner workings of victim service organizations through the incorporation of agency assessments and a diagram. In addition to their host organization, students will select four victim service providers in their local community and interview agency representatives about their services. They will learn to:

1. examine the fundamental differences between “systems” and “community-based” service providers; and
2. identify common goals and objectives.

CAPSTONE PROJECT RUBRIC

Criterion Description

Students will be required to incorporate the following information into their agency assessments: a. the agency type, mission, and purpose; b. the services it provides; c. funding sources; d. eligibility criteria; and e. community partners, if any. The diagram should reflect the agency’s relationships to key community partners. Student performance will be evaluated in accordance with the attached rubric. This component of the exit exam corresponds with item #4:

“Incorporation of victim service organization data based on Capstone and ACE requirements.” Students will be assigned a score for this category ranging from 1 to 5. A score of “1” would be indicative of a “poor” work product while a “5” would suggest that the agency assessment was “excellent.” It is expected that, at least 70% of students in the class will achieve a minimum score of “4.”

MSVSM Assessment Rubric Highlighting Item #3

Findings Description

Twenty-six students were enrolled in the Capstone course during the spring semester. All (or 100%) scored a “5” on this learning objective, demonstrating an appropriate knowledge of case management resources in their local communities.

MSVSM Assessment Results Table Highlighting Item #3

Capstone Field Experience Requirement Action Plan

Action Description

In the next assessment cycle, the target for Item #4 on the Capstone rubric (incorporation of victim service organization data based on Capstone and ACE requirements) will increase by 10%, with an expectation that 80% of students will achieve a minimum score of “4” on this portion of the exit exam.

Previous Cycle's Plan For Continuous Improvement (Do Not Modify)

In 2014, the faculty teaching in the VSM Program began developing courses that are National Advocate Credentialing Program (NACP) approved. The NACP is a voluntary credentialing option for victim advocates. We currently offer a single course that is NACP “pre-approved” (CRIJ 5366 Advocacy and Case Management.) In addition to receiving credit toward the MSVSM degree, students successfully completing the course may apply for a provisional advocate credential. This is an entry-level certificate; prior experience is not required. CRIJ 5366 is the only NACP “Series A” course in the state of Texas. During the current assessment cycle, three additional courses (CRIJ 5383 Family Violence, CRIJ 5384 Child Abuse and Neglect, and CRIJ 5370 Elder Abuse) were designed according to NACP continuing education (“Series B”) requirements. Per the Committee, it would be logical to develop additional courses with advanced (“Series C”) credentialing in mind. Other NACP specialty topics include: drunk driving, sexual violence, and homicide. By offering additional electives focusing on these specialty topic areas, we can provide opportunities for student-practitioners to acquire more certifications.

Moving forward, the Committee will revisit prior discussions about: 1.) fall-only/“fixed” admissions; 2.) a possible portfolio requirement; and 3.) more meaningful program evaluation indicators.

In the summer of 2016, a pilot survey was administered to students. In the fall, the Committee will begin reviewing the data.

Update to Previous Cycle's Plan for Continuous Improvement**Previous Cycle's Plan For Continuous Improvement (Do Not Modify)**

As this is a newly developed degree plan, the MS VSM committee which is comprised of all faculty teaching in the program will continue to meet on a regular basis. The committee is tasked with continuing to assess the content and learning objectives of the program.

Moving forward, a refined organizational structure for the leadership of this program should be discussed. A program coordinator would be an ideal approach to ensuring stability in assessment, continued program growth and development of internal processes and policies regarding various aspects of this program.

Update of Progress to the Previous Cycle's PCI

The MS VSM Committee reviewed both the degree requirements and the program content. Since leading an organization requires administrative skills, the Committee proposed the development of a course that will focus, more strictly, on management. By and large, the existing coursework concentrates on victim service delivery. However, fundamentally, non-profit organizations are also businesses. To better prepare graduates for leadership roles in the non-profit sector, an understanding of management styles is also essential. The course will, additionally, familiarize students with human resource-related concerns and is slated for development in the spring of 2017. It was also the consensus of the committee that the CRIJ 5330 (Critical Analysis in Justice Administration) course requires substantial revision in order to better align with the program's goals. A new section of the course, which was originally developed for the MSLM Program, can be customized to address current controversies in the field of victim service provision. Much of the existing coursework focuses on non-profit organizations. For balance, a “systems” course is also needed. An ongoing review of the curriculum will continue into the next cycle. Due to budget considerations (and in lieu of appointing a program coordinator), the Committee will continue meeting regularly to assess and develop the program.

Plan For Continuous Improvement

Closing Summary

In 2014, the faculty teaching in the VSM Program began developing courses that are National Advocate Credentialing Program (NACP) approved. The NACP is a voluntary credentialing option for victim advocates. We currently offer a single course that is NACP “pre-approved” (CRIJ 5366 Advocacy and Case Management.) In addition to receiving credit toward the MSVSM degree, students successfully completing the course may apply for a provisional advocate credential. This is an entry-level certificate; prior experience is not required. CRIJ 5366 is the only NACP “Series A” course in the state of Texas. During the current assessment cycle, three additional courses (CRIJ 5383 Family Violence, CRIJ 5384 Child Abuse and Neglect, and CRIJ 5370 Elder Abuse) were designed according to NACP continuing education (“Series B”) requirements. Per the Committee, it would be logical to develop additional courses with advanced (“Series C”) credentialing in mind. Other NACP specialty topics include: drunk driving, sexual violence, and homicide. By offering additional electives focusing on these specialty topic areas, we can provide opportunities for student-practitioners to acquire more certifications.

Moving forward, the Committee will revisit prior discussions about: 1.) fall-only/“fixed” admissions; 2.) a possible portfolio requirement; and 3.) more meaningful program evaluation indicators.

In the summer of 2016, a pilot survey was administered to students. In the fall, the Committee will begin reviewing the data.

Department of Forensic Science

Assessment Plan Summary**Department: Criminal Justice, Forensic Science MS/PhD****Sam Houston State University****President, Office of****Academic Affairs, Division of****Criminal Justice, College of****Criminal Justice, Department of Forensic Science****Criminal Justice, Forensic Science MS/PhD****Ability To Conduct Original Research****Goal Description**

Students engaged in faculty-sponsored research are encouraged to publish or present results externally.

Related Items/Elements

 **Students Will Produce Research Of Publishable Quality**

Learning Objective Description

Students actively engaged in research projects sponsored by program faculty will publish their findings in journals or present their data at scientific meetings.

 Preparation Of Research Materials For Publication/Presentation

Indicator Description

Students will contribute to the knowledge base of forensic science and produce research directed at improving the practice of forensic science. This may be demonstrated by publication of research in a peer reviewed scientific journal or national/international conference proceeding (e.g. American Academy of Forensic Sciences Annual Meeting). Publication of student research in journals and at national or international conferences serves to demonstrate the value and quality of the work to the forensic science and/or scientific community.

Criterion Description

At least 50% of capstone course research or other program-sponsored research is accepted for external publication in either a peer-reviewed scientific journal or national/international conference proceeding.

Findings Description

In 2016 there were a total of sixteen MS students (12 graduating and 4 transitioning into the PhD program at SHSU at the end of the 2016 academic year). During the academic year (2015-2016) there were a total of sixteen publications involving forensic science MS students. Although this exceeds the criterion (50% external publication rate), it was the same number of publications as the previous academic year (with 12 students). Of these sixteen

publications, six (25%) were published in peer reviewed scientific journals, twelve papers were presented at national/international scientific conferences (75%).

In 2016 there were a total of five students enrolled in the PhD program (all had transitioned from the MS program at SHSU at the end of the 2015 academic year). During the academic year (2015-2016) there were a total of twelve publications involving forensic science PhD students. Of these publications 75% were presented at national conferences and 3 (25%) were published in high ranking peer-reviewed journals.

In addition, two publications were in the form of federally funded technical reports (by faculty).

Capstone Research Performance

Action Description

The department will continue to enforce a formalized timetable for submission of draft capstone reports and faculty will continue to document the receipt and return of drafts reports. Doing so ensures that the responsibilities of faculty and students to submit and review reports, respectively, are well-understood. Additional emphasis will be placed on external publication in peer-reviewed scientific journals.

Publication Type

Action Description

Additional emphasis must be placed on publications in peer reviewed scientific journals rather than conference proceedings. In relation to all doctoral students, strong emphasis has been placed on prompt publication of dissertation research in high impact scientific journals.

Challenges and strategies to improve publication type will be addressed during the 2016 Annual Quality Review.

Develop Specific Knowledge Base

Goal Description

Develop specific knowledge base in forensic science to prepare graduates for future success.

Related Items/Elements

Detailed Competence Of Core Course Material

Learning Objective Description

Students will command detailed competence of core course material in forensic science.

The Forensic Science Education Programs Accreditation Commission (FEPAC) defines the core forensic science topics that must be incorporated into the graduate curriculum. These include analytical chemistry and instrumental methods of analysis, drug chemistry/toxicology, microscopy and trace evidence, forensic biology, and pattern evidence. This objective specifically addresses student learning, development and outcomes associated with the core forensic disciplines.

The Forensic Science Assessment Test (FSAT)

Indicator Description

The Forensic Science Assessment Test (FSAT) was developed as an assessment tool for forensic science academic programs in the United States and is administered by the American Board of Criminalistics (ABC). The content and administration of the examination were modeled on ABC certification exams and is used by the program to assess trends which may indicate strengths and weaknesses within the curriculum and to evaluate its relevance. The FSAT exam covers a wide variety of forensic disciplines including some that are not part of the core FEPAC curriculum, such as firearms, toolmarks and questioned documents.

Criterion Description

The overall average score of the FSAT for SHSU shall be above the median for all participating graduate programs in forensic science nationally.

Findings Description

All sixteen graduating students participated in the FSAT examination in the Spring of 2016. Due to scheduling of the examination, students at SHSU participate in the FSAT before all of their coursework is completed, placing them at a slight disadvantage. SHSU did not meet the criteria, achieving an average score of 64% (falling below the median of all colleges nationally). Although the criteria was not met, it was just slightly below the median score of 67%. During the 2016 cycle, a total of 104 students from eight universities participated in the FSAT.

FSAT

Action Description

During exit interviews with graduates who participated in the FSAT examination, it became apparent that students were not motivated to engage in preparation or review of materials prior to the exam. Students indicated there was no incentive to do so, since the examination was not tied to any assessment within the curriculum. The students expressed that they were not inclined to put forth the effort if there was no direct benefit to them in terms of grades.

FSAT results and opportunities to improve the curriculum will be addressed during the 2016 Annual Quality Review. One action will be to incorporate the FSAT as a graded piece of assessment into a core class within the MS program.

Integration Of Knowledge, Skills, And Abilities

Goal Description

Students completing the Master of Science in Forensic Science will demonstrate integration of knowledge, skills and abilities through an independent research project conducted in an environment conducive to research and scholarly inquiry.

Related Items/Elements

Students Will Demonstrate Competency In Research

Learning Objective Description

Students completing the Master of Science in Forensic Science will demonstrate integration of knowledge, skills and abilities through an independent research project conducted in an environment conducive to research and scholarly inquiry.

Capstone Research Report Scoring Methodology

Indicator Description

Consistent faculty-developed scoring methodology will be applied to the capstone research report for FORS 6094 – Forensic Science Research. The scholarly report will demonstrate advanced discipline-specific knowledge, investigation, and problem-solving ability.

Criterion Description

At least 70% of students will be assessed as “satisfactory” or higher using the uniform faculty-developed rubric. The final report will be scored by each member of the committee, consisting of a minimum of three individuals (one of whom must be external to the department).

Findings Description

All students (100%) performed satisfactorily in their capstone research report in accordance with the faculty-developed rubric. Of the 12 graduating students, all received satisfactory final scores and satisfactory scores in their final technical report (which has consistently presented the greatest challenge to students). Scores were assigned by a capstone research committee consisting of at least three members, one of whom was external to the department in accordance with accreditation standards (Forensic Science Education Programs Accreditation Commission). A total of 41 reviews were received for the 12 graduating students, 13 of whom were external reviewers. Five were deemed satisfactory (acceptable) and seven were rated as excellent.

Laboratory or experimental performance has been effectively managed using a formal evaluation system consisting of interim evaluations at three strategic points during the project and faculty are expected to provide formal and timely feedback to students with respect to technical writing and the final report.

The timetable for receipt of the draft reports was formalized and documented in

the syllabus. Additionally, faculty were required to document the date of receipt and return of the draft reports due to student feedback regarding the timeliness and scope of the reviews. Due to limited faculty, some professors are responsible for directing a large number of students, which presents additional challenges in terms of the quality and timeliness of the reviews.

Capstone Research Performance

Action Description

The department will continue to enforce a formalized timetable for submission of draft capstone reports and faculty will continue to document the receipt and return of drafts reports. Doing so ensures that the responsibilities of faculty and students to submit and review reports, respectively, are well-understood. Additional emphasis will be placed on external publication in peer-reviewed scientific journals.

Publication Type

Action Description

Additional emphasis must be placed on publications in peer reviewed scientific journals rather than conference proceedings. In relation to all doctoral students, strong emphasis has been placed on prompt publication of dissertation research in high impact scientific journals.

Challenges and strategies to improve publication type will be addressed during the 2016 Annual Quality Review.

Job Readiness

Goal Description

Graduates will possess the required theoretical knowledge and technical skill set to be effective in the workplace.

Related Items/Elements

 **Graduates will have acquired the required workplace skills**

Learning Objective Description

Graduates will have developed the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities for successful employment in a forensic setting.

Employer Survey

Indicator Description

An Employer Satisfaction Survey is conducted twelve months after graduation. Employers are asked to assess whether SHSU graduates possess the appropriate workplace skills. Using a scale of 1 to 4, (1=very unsatisfactory, 2=unsatisfactory, 3=satisfactory, and 4=highly satisfactory), employers assess job readiness.

Criterion Description

At least 90% of all responses must be ranked as 3 (satisfactory) or 4 (highly satisfactory).

Findings Description

During the summer of 2016, surveys were sent to each employer of the 2015 forensic science graduates (7 total). The response rate for the survey was 100%. The results of the survey indicated that the criterion was met, with 100% of the employers indicating satisfactory (57%) or highly satisfactory (43%) on all aspects of the survey. Among the employers responding to the survey, 71% were public sector forensic laboratories and 29% were private sector.

 Employer Satisfaction**Action Description**

SHSU graduates in forensic science continue to meet the expectations of forensic science employers. The department attributes this in large part due to the hands-on, laboratory-based instructional focus of the current curriculum. Experience using scientific instrumentation (hardware and software) that is currently used by practitioners in the field is critical in terms of graduate success.

Update to Previous Cycle's Plan for Continuous Improvement**Previous Cycle's Plan For Continuous Improvement (Do Not Modify)**

The Department of Forensic Science is in need of additional faculty to support both the MS and doctoral level programs. The overall quality and supervision of graduate research can be improved significantly as a result. This will also allow faculty more time to focus on external publications in peer-reviewed journals rather than scientific meetings.

During the 2015 Annual Quality Review faculty will critically evaluate publication output, identify challenges and propose solutions that will allow us to improve external publications in high-impact journals.

Update of Progress to the Previous Cycle's PCI

The Department of Forensic Science was successful acquiring one additional faculty member for the next academic year (16-17). One faculty member resigned during AY 15-16 and was successfully replaced (AY 16-17). The additional faculty member is expected to improve supervision of graduate research, despite increases in enrollment. During the 2016 Quality Review, the department established a Task Group to address publication types. Recommendations to address the issue are forthcoming.

Summary

Closing Summary

Although the Department of Forensic Science was successful recruiting an additional faculty member for the Fall 2016 semester, increased enrollment in full-time MS and PhD students greatly exceeds the physical space limitations within the Chemistry and Forensic Sciences Building. Limitations in teaching laboratories, research laboratories and adequate support for operational costs and capital outlay present the greatest challenges to both the MS and PhD programs.

Department of Security Studies

Assessment Plan Summary**Department: Criminal Justice, Homeland Security Studies MS****Sam Houston State University****President, Office of****Academic Affairs, Division of****Criminal Justice, College of****Criminal Justice, Department of Security Studies****Criminal Justice, Homeland Security Studies MS****Demonstrate Core Knowledge Competency****Goal Description**

Demonstrate that students are learning the core competency areas required in the field.

Related Items/Elements

 **Demonstrate Knowledge And Integration Of Core Competencies**

Learning Objective Description

Students graduating with a master's degree in Security Studies will demonstrate comprehensive knowledge and assessment of the major issues and principles related to Homeland Security.

 Integrated Major Paper

Indicator Description

The Capstone course, CRIJ 6388, for Security Studies graduate students requires substantial research and integration of theories and principles of completed coursework in the program. The culminating project in this course requires students to state a Homeland Security or related issue and place it in context of the related security field. This paper requires a comprehensive literature review, analysis of the issue in relation to national threat, explanation of how the issue was resolved, and how the issue may have been resolved differently. Through this analysis, core competencies in the field should be demonstrated.

Criterion Description

The scoring rubric for the core competency project in the Capstone course consists of four areas; 1) statement of the issue, 2) review of the salient literature, 3) appropriate sources cited, and 4) reflections of how the curriculum contributed to your ability to solve the issue. Each student completing the capstone course will score 80% or higher on the rubric.

Findings Description

During academic year 2015/16 so far, 12 students have completed the capstone requirement. Of those, all 12 achieved a score of 80+, with 75% of the total achieving a score of 90+. An additional 8 students are scheduled to complete the capstone requirement during summer semester 2016.

Improve Advising for Capstone Students

Action Description

Pursuant to our objective to have our MS in Homeland Security Studies graduates demonstrate comprehensive knowledge of the major issues and principles related to homeland security, we aim to improve faculty advising for students preparing for or completing their capstone projects. We want to see as many of our students as possible earning scores of 90+ on their capstones, and we believe that improved communication and faculty advising will help.

Knowledge into Action: Professional Application of Coursework

Goal Description

Professional application of the skills and knowledge gained in the classroom.

Related Items/Elements

 **Research, Critical Thinking and Analysis**

Learning Objective Description

Students completing the Master of Science degree in Security Studies will be able to think conduct research, think critically, and apply problem solving techniques to complex issues relating to the Homeland Security Enterprise.

Successful Performance In Practical Exercises And Internship

Indicator Description

Integration of theoretical approaches to problem solving with practical analytical solutions is a primary indicator of the success of the program's learning objectives. During the internship experience, security studies graduate students routinely receive critiques and personal evaluations from both the faculty member monitoring the student (internship director) and the employer who supervises the student intern. In addition, students provide written progress reports during the internship process.

Criterion Description

It is not enough to perform well in the classroom. Nearly each course students take in the Security Studies program requires successful completion of some measurable out-of-class project or outcome. Students will score greater than 85% on these practical exercises at the apex of their training experience during their internship.

Findings Description

During academic year 2015/2016 so far, 12 students have completed the internship requirement. Of those, all achieved a score of 90+. During summer semester 2016, an additional 4 students are scheduled to complete the internship requirement.

Prepare students for internships

Action Description

Pursuant to our goal to integrate theoretical approaches to problem solving with practical analytical solutions, we aim to better prepare our students for their internships. Performing well in the real world is a measure of the student's ability to apply the knowledge gained in the classroom. Accordingly, we will work this year to better prepare students for their internship experience by focusing on real-world problems and solutions in the field of Homeland Security. We will also help students develop interviewing skills (which will help them secure good internships) by requiring oral presentations in classes and encouraging them to treat such assignments as opportunities to practice presenting themselves in a professional capacity.

Update to Previous Cycle's Plan for Continuous Improvement

Previous Cycle's Plan For Continuous Improvement (Do Not Modify)

1. We are now administering the face-to-face program as a cohort program, which has eliminated sources of confusion for students
2. We have hired two adjunct professors who have both academic credentials and real world experience

Update of Progress to the Previous Cycle's PCI

In the last year, we had two important goals for the MS in Homeland Security Studies degree program: to continue to improve communications with students, and to continue to utilize the academic and the practitioner approaches to the field. For both of these goals we achieved important successes, described in greater detail below.

First, we wanted to improve our communications with our MS students, some of whom had been confused about program requirements, paths to graduation, etc. Such confusion is of course undesirable, but was understandable. Our chair was on loan from another department and our administrative assistant was brand new. Indeed, the degree program itself was new. In Fall 2014, we implemented a completely new curriculum and were discovering bugs in this new program as we went along. All of this meant that students sometimes would get conflicting answers to their questions from different people in the department, which could be frustrating.

Last year (2015-6), we worked to improve communications and increase transparency with our students. We began the year with an orientation for the new cohort that laid out program requirements, etc. We also had meetings with our second-year cohort to make sure they were on the path to graduation. We solicited feedback from students that came to us during office hours.

We created opportunities for interaction outside the university setting (such as a departmental get-together at a professor's house). Anecdotal evidence suggests that these and other changes helped us make important strides in the right direction.

This year, we aim to do even better. In particular, we want to do the same kind of outreach with our online students that proved helpful with our face-to-face cohort. (We also want to make sure that we are building channels for communication with undergraduate students in our new minor, since many of them will enroll in our MS program.) A Homeland Security program, perhaps more than any other, should know and demonstrate the value of clear communication.

Second, we wanted to continue to utilize, and thus show the importance of, both the academic approach and the practitioner approach to the field of Homeland Security. The most concrete way in which we accomplished this goal was in our hiring decisions. We hired adjunct professors with both academic credentials and real world experience, and we hired a new professor (who also serves as chair) with a resume packed with both scholarly and practical achievement.

In this coming year, we hope to continue this practice. In particular, during this year's job search, we will look for candidates who are able to help bridge the divides between the worlds of academia, policy, and practice.

With these and other improvements in place, we look forward to a great year for the MS program in Homeland Security Studies.

Plan for Continuous Improvement

Closing Summary

The homeland security enterprise emphasizes communication and coordination to solve complex problems, and the integration of knowledge and skills from different realms. Accordingly, in this school year (2016-7), we plan to improve the MS in Homeland Security Studies degree program in the following two ways:

First, we will continue to improve communications with our students. This means increasing transparency, and also ensuring that both formal and informal channels of communication are always open. In particular, we will try to improve our communications with our online MS students by preparing an orientation module which can be integrated into our required courses. For our face-to-face students, we will try to improve our advising for capstone students, to ensure that they are completing outstanding projects that showcase their skills and strengths.

Second, we will continue to bridge the gap between academia and the real world. This is a big job, but there are a few concrete things we can do to contribute to a better integration between these disparate realms. In our hiring decisions, we will look for candidates who utilize and integrate different approaches (academic, policy, and practitioner) to homeland security issues. And in our

classes, we will seek to prepare our students to apply their skills in the real world, especially through their internship experiences.

These improvements will not only help our program succeed in its academic goals, but also bring us more fully in line with best practices in the field of homeland security.
