
Program or Service Specific Assessments

Unit: College of Arts & Sciences

What program or service specific assessment occurred in the current academic year?

In the 2004-2005 academic year, the College of Arts and Sciences completed Seven-Year Program Reviews for the state of Florida for the following programs:

- Art,
- Spanish, and
- Theatre.

Each of these programs has been in existence since the opening of the institution; this was their first Seven-Year Program Review.

How were the results of the assessment used to improve services or programs?

Each of these programs completed a detailed assessment that included analysis of the mission statement, the learning goals, the curriculum, and the assessment strategies and how those strategies are used to improve student learning. The assessment included a SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threats) Analysis, and analyzed the connection between the university learning goals and the program learning goals.

In each case, the programs made specific recommendations to alter the curriculum or the learning opportunities for students in order to strengthen the program so that students can better meet the student learning outcomes. For instance, the Theatre Program assessment concluded that partnerships with local theatre companies should be explored in order to provide students with further opportunities to gain experience in performance, production, and technical work. The Spanish Program concluded that the faculty needed to continue working towards developing coherence in the Beginning Spanish classes, which provide a foundation for the major.

In addition, the assessment led to a determination to revisit the learning goals of each program, to more clearly map these goals to the university learning goals, and to strengthen and refine the assessment strategies to allow for more nuanced assessment.

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The College of Arts and Sciences completed an update of all Integrated Program Matrices and completed a formal assessment of each academic program. This work will provide a foundation for further assessment in the coming years.

How were the results of the assessment used to improve services or programs?

Within each program, a minimum of two learning goals were identified for assessment, using both indirect and direct measures. The faculty in the programs gathered student feedback and student work, and analyzed this information to determine whether or not the programs were allowing students to meet the chosen learning goals. Once the assessment was complete, faculty discussed the results of the assessment and outlined a plan of action that would lead to an improvement in student learning. Specific curricular changes will be taken through the curriculum review process in the fall; changes to specific courses and to assignments will be implemented in the fall semester, with follow up as the year progresses.

In addition, most programs outlined ways in which they would improve their assessment strategies in the coming year, including a desire to more clearly articulate their learning outcomes.

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The College faculty worked together to conduct an assessment of the Interdisciplinary Core that is a required component of all majors. The faculty began with a review of the purpose and goals of the Interdisciplinary Core and conducted a survey of alumni to determine satisfaction with the Core. 520 surveys were mailed out to CAS alumni. 43 responses were received. Respondents were almost evenly divided on their opinions of the usefulness of their Interdisciplinary Core courses, with roughly one-third responding "very helpful," one-third "somewhat helpful," and one-third "not helpful." This distribution occurred for a variety of questions concerning several different aspects of the program. Respondent numbers for individual majors were too small to yield any useful comparisons across majors.

The faculty then formulated and discussed alternative curricula to the established Interdisciplinary Core that would allow each program to meet the learning goals of the university and the program in a more efficient and effective manner. The proposals were reviewed using a set of guidelines developed by the Curriculum Team in the College of Arts and Sciences. The assessment concluded with a faculty survey to determine the future direction of the Interdisciplinary Core.

How were the results of the assessment used to improve services or programs?

The foundation to the College's discussion for altering the Interdisciplinary Core is to maximize student learning of the university and program learning goals. After the analysis and discussion concluded in the Spring semester, the faculty, with the leadership of the College Curriculum Team, determined that the Interdisciplinary Core revision would include the following elements:

- Foundations of Civic Engagement (IDS 3300) would be retained as a required component of the interdisciplinary studies program.
- Integrated Core Senior Seminar (IDS 4910) would be dropped as a required component of the interdisciplinary studies program.
- The issues courses, Issues in Culture and Society (IDS 3301) and Issues in Science and Technology (IDS 3303), are converted to menu based courses that would be largely housed within particular disciplines. These menus will include courses that are interdisciplinary, and that meet the student learning outcomes currently addressed by the Issues courses.

The key issue to be resolved is what the "menus" will look like, and how courses will be added to the respective menus for students to choose from. This issue will be taken up in the fall and will be a key component to the College's assessment plans for next year. As different proposals come forward that define the menus, the key element in analyzing these proposals will be the way in which they assist students in meeting our learning goals. As the proposals are developed, specific assessment strategies will also be developed to make certain that the learning goals are met.
