STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT REPORT

SUBMITTED BY: STEPHANIE K. ELLIS
DATE: SEPTEMBER 30, 2013

BRIEFLY DESCRIBE WHERE AND HOW ARE DATA AND DOCUMENTS USED TO GENERATE THIS REPORT BEING STORED:
ELECTRONIC VERSIONS OF COURSE SYLLABI, STUDENT PRODUCTS AND SUMMARY TABLES ARE STORED ON THE DEPARTMENT DROPBOX FOLDER.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

List all of the program’s learning outcomes: (regardless of whether or not they are being assessed this year)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Outcome</th>
<th>Year of Last Assessment</th>
<th>Year of Next Planned Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students will apply a working knowledge of criminal justice to a current issue.</td>
<td>2011-2012</td>
<td>2013-2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students will demonstrate skills in the use of research methods and Statistics</td>
<td>2011-2012</td>
<td>2013-2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students will demonstrate proficiency in written communication</td>
<td>2011-2012</td>
<td>2013-2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students will demonstrate an understanding of ethical issues and exhibit their application to a social phenomenon</td>
<td>2010-2011</td>
<td>2013-2014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Describe how the program’s outcomes support Marymount’s Mission, Strategic Plan, and relevant school plan:

Marymount University is a student centered learning community that values diversity and focuses on the education of the whole person, promoting intellectual, spiritual and moral growth.

Our program outcomes are consonant with the Mission Statement: The Criminal Justice/Forensic Science program graduates will be equipped with the ability to think critically about social issues, understand ethical issues, and be facile in written communication.

The School of Education and Human Services Mission Statement states:

The core mission of the School is to enable students to serve as agents of positive change for individuals and in the global community.

Our program outcomes are consonant with the SEHS Mission Statement: Students who graduate from our program will be able to assess their potential role in improving the social world, at the local level and above.

Provide a brief description of the assessment process used including strengths, challenges and planned improvements:

Assessment of the Criminal Justice/Forensic Science program is systematic, ongoing, and cyclical with the primary goal of improving student learning. This year the assessment activities focused on measuring student performance in three areas: understanding research methods,
application of knowledge of the discipline of criminal justice to a current social issue, and proficiency in written communication. We continued to rely on assessing the major product of the Senior Seminar class as our direct measure of these learning outcomes, employing independent readers (two of the four full-time Criminal Justice faculty in the Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice) to evaluate the issue briefs, using a custom designed rubric. For our indirect measures we utilize responses to the Graduating Student Survey, and focus group data. Information obtained from these students regarding the three learning objectives assessed indicate that to a modest degree they are satisfied with their Marymount forensic science preparation. The student comments on the graduating student survey indicated a desire for more focused criminal justice forensic science courses in addition to Principles of Forensic Science (CJ308) and Principles of Forensic Science II (CJ309). The Criminal Justice Forensic Science (CJFS) program is currently undergoing program review. The faculty plan to substantially revise the CJFS program based upon the outcome of the program review.

Describe how the program implemented its planned improvements from last year:
We continued to implement the program refinements by beginning discussions about necessary revisions to the Criminal Justice Forensic Science curriculum – this conversation is extensive and ongoing. We are in the process of reviewing the Criminal Justice Forensic Science curriculum and plan to make substantial program changes in our curriculum. Additional changes to improve the assessment of the CJFS program will also be necessary for next year. We also plan to implement a new assessment plan, including work that will measure the science components of the program.

Provide a response to last year’s University Assessment Committee review of the program’s learning assessment report: (List each recommendation and provide a specific response to each).

- The UAC will look forward to changes in the outcomes to reflect the differences between the BA and BS programs.
  ✓ This process is still underway. We are in the process of systematically reviewing the CJFS program and will produce substantial program revisions over the course of the year. Next year we plan to have extensive curriculum changes and a new assessment plan for the Criminal Justice Forensic Science program.
- To be clear, it would be helpful to see who (although we assume this to be faculty) collected the student work and how many (for all outcomes) how many were collected.
  ✓ This information is provided in the description of the assessment process.
- The SPSS tables are very informative and it would be helpful to tell the reader which table should be referred to when discussing the data.
  ✓ This information is included in the tables and text below.
- Shows true concern for improving assessment process. Very good write up.
**Outcome and Past Assessment**

**Learning Outcome 1:** Students will apply an understanding of research methodology to analyze a current issue.

**Is this outcome being reexamined?** □ Yes  ❌ No

If yes, give a brief summary of previous results (including trends) and any changes made to the program.

The majority of students demonstrated a working understanding the methodological issues in the field (they met our performance standard expectations). The average scores for the first learning outcome number fell slightly from 2011-2012 (average score =2.5; SD=.548) to 2012-2013 (average score = 2.19; SD=.750). This indicates that students are meeting but not exceeding faculty expectations based upon our rubric (1= fails to meet expectations; 2= meets expectations; 3= exceeds expectations; 4= demonstrates exceptional analysis).

### Assessment Activity

<table>
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<th>Outcome Measures</th>
<th>Performance Standard</th>
<th>Data Collection</th>
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| Explain how student learning will be measured and indicate whether it is direct or indirect. | Define and explain acceptable level of student performance. | Discuss the data collected and student population | 1) Describe the analysis process.  
2) Present the findings of the analysis including the numbers participating and deemed acceptable. |

- **An evaluation of the key issues and fact file components of the senior seminar’s issue brief. (See Attachments A and B) (DIRECT)**
  - Students will receive mean scores of 2.5 or above (on a 4.0 scale). This score represents a midpoint between “meets expectations” and “exceeds expectations”
  - Issue briefs from all students in the Fall and Spring sections of SOC/CJ 495 (Senior Seminar)
  - Two full time faculty members with expertise in Criminal Justice and Forensic Science scored each of the issue brief sections of the senior seminar capstone projects written by students in the CJFS program (N=8). Scores were entered electronically into a survey instrument and results tallied by the Office of Institutional Assessment. The CJ-FS students had mean scores of 2.19 on this learning outcome with a standard deviation of .750 (See Attachment C: Table 3). The scale for the rubric was as follows: 1= fails to meet expectations; 2= meets expectations; 3= exceeds expectations; 4= demonstrates exceptional analysis.

- **Results of the Graduating Student Survey (INDIRECT)**
  - A majority of students will report that the program of studies provided them with a working understanding of the research methods used in the discipline.
  - Seven graduates from the CJ-BS program responded to the Graduating Student Survey.
  - According to the data from the Graduating Student Survey results, several students expressed confidence in their ability to conduct research to support a position, think analytically, and use quantitative/qualitative research techniques within their profession/field. Just over 71% of students reported good or excellent use of quantitative/qualitative techniques within the
Interpretation of Results

Extent this Learning Outcome has been achieved by students (Use both direct and indirect measure results):
The results from the direct measure demonstrate that the students are generally meeting our expectations; however, an average score of 2.1 suggests that they are not exceeding our expectations in their demonstration of understanding the research methodological issues in the field (we hoped more students would exceed our expectations). The indirect measure is consistent with the assessment of the senior seminar issue briefs. The majority of students (71%) responding to the Graduating Student Survey responded that their ability to “conduct research to support a position” and “use of quantitative/qualitative techniques within your profession or field” was good or excellent.

Program strengths and opportunities for improvement relative to assessment of outcome:
The sequence of required and elective courses and the quality of faculty instruction does appear to provide our majors with a general knowledge of the use of research methods. One of the strengths of our program is the requirement for students to complete an independent survey research project in Applied Research Methods. Students are also required to conduct original research in the Writing for Criminal Justice course. Finally, students are expected to demonstrate their ability to describe the methods used to study the topic they selected to research in the senior seminar course. They also provide analysis on the strengths and limitations of these methods and limit or enhance our understanding of the issue.

Discuss planned curricular or program improvements for this year based on assessment of outcome:
Our assessment of this learning outcome indicates that students are meeting and in a few cases exceeding our expectations. The Sociology and Criminal Justice department is in the process of reviewing the Criminal Justice Forensic Science curriculum and plan to implement changes to the program over the next year. One of the ways that we could improve our curriculum would be to change the applied research methods project and senior seminar projects to include a focus that is grounded in forensic science. For example, we are discussing the possibility of changing the capstone project for forensic science majors to include a component such as an extensive crime scene analysis. This would require students to use a case study to demonstrate mastery of the forensic science components of the degree rather than analyzing the research on a current issue in the field. Students in the focus group expressed an interest in having more opportunities to apply their science skills to the criminal justice content. Over the next year, the criminal justice faculty will review and revise the senior seminar product for Forensic Science majors. We are also discussing ways to incorporate the criminal justice forensic science courses (308 and 309) into the student portfolio and assessment process for Criminal Justice Forensic Science majors.
Learning Outcome 2: Student applies a working knowledge of the criminal justice discipline to a current issue.

Is this outcome being reexamined? ☑ Yes   ☐ No

If yes, give a brief summary of previous results (including trends) and any changes made to the program.

The scores for the second learning outcome fell slightly from year 2011-2012 (average score = 2.67; SD=.516; N=3) to the 2012-2013 year (average score = 2.13; SD=.719; N=8). This indicates that students are meeting our expectations based upon our department rubric (1= fails to meet expectations; 2= meets expectations; 3= exceeds expectations; 4= demonstrates exceptional analysis).

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<td>Define and explain acceptable level of student performance.</td>
<td>Discuss the data collected and student population</td>
<td>1) Describe the analysis process. 2) Present the findings of the analysis including the numbers participating and deemed acceptable.</td>
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<td>An analysis of the key issues component of the senior seminar’s issue brief. (See Attachments A and B) (DIRECT)</td>
<td>Students will receive mean scores of 2.5 or above (on a 4.0 scale). This score represents a midpoint between “meets expectations” and “exceeds expectations”</td>
<td>Issue briefs from all students in the Fall and Spring sections of SOC/CJ 495 (Senior Seminar)</td>
<td>Two full time faculty members with expertise in Criminal Justice and Forensic Science scored each of the issue brief sections of the senior seminar capstone projects written by students in the CJFS program. Scores were entered electronically into a survey instrument and results tallied by the Office of Institutional Assessment. The CJFS students had mean scores of 2.13 on this learning outcome and a standard deviation of .719 (N=8).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results of the Graduating Student Surveys.</td>
<td>A majority of students will report that the program of studies provided them with a working understanding of discipline.</td>
<td>Five graduating CJ/FS students responded to the Graduating Student Survey</td>
<td>About eighty six percent of our graduating students reported good or excellent ability to solve problems in the field of criminal justice using knowledge and skills developed in their program of study (mean = 3.857 on a 5 point scale with 1=poor and 5=excellent; standard deviation = .378).</td>
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Results of the Graduating Student Surveys.

A majority of students will report that the program of studies provided them with a working understanding of discipline.

Five graduating CJ/FS students responded to the Graduating Student Survey.

About eighty six percent of our graduating students reported good or excellent ability to solve problems in the field of criminal justice using knowledge and skills developed in their program of study (mean = 3.857 on a 5 point scale with 1=poor and 5=excellent; standard deviation = .378).
Interpretation of Results

Extent this Learning Outcome has been achieved by students (*Use both direct and indirect measure results)*: The results from the direct measure indicate that students are meeting our expectations in their ability to apply a working knowledge of the discipline of criminal justice to an issue in the field; however, they are not scoring as high as we had hoped on this learning outcome. Results from the graduating student survey were similar with the majority (85.7%) of students responding that they were confident they could use the knowledge and skills that they acquired during their time at Marymount to solve problems in the field.

Program strengths and opportunities for improvement relative to assessment of outcome: Our program is unique in that it provides students with a background in criminal justice and a foundation in science to go on to graduate school in forensic science. The students who have successfully completed the program are meeting faculty expectations on this learning outcome. There are many opportunities for improvement. Students in the focus group expressed a desire for more opportunities to apply the skills that they acquire in their science classes to criminal justice content. They also expressed a desire to have more criminal justice forensic science focused elective courses. The full time faculty in the department of sociology and criminal justice are in the process of meeting regularly this year to discuss and implement changes in the direction of the Criminal Justice Forensic Science program. We hope to change the requirements for the senior seminar product for CJFS students.

Discuss planned curricular or program improvements for this year based on assessment of outcome: While the students are meeting faculty expectations relevant to this learning outcome, they are not yet exceeding our expectations. We also would like to note that the assessment plans need to be improved for the Criminal Justice Forensic Science program. Specifically, the learning outcomes and assessment process need to be specifically oriented to the Criminal Justice Forensic Science Program and should include a component of assessment of the contribution of the science coursework in this program. The full time criminal justice faculty are participating in the review of the CJFS program and also will meet with the biology department to discuss how to best incorporate the science component of the program into the assessment process. We will implement a new assessment process next year and will make curricular changes based upon the outcome of the program review.
Learning Outcome 3: Students will demonstrate proficiency in written communication

Is this outcome being reexamined? ☑ Yes ☐ No

If yes, give a brief summary of previous results (including trends) and any changes made to the program.

The trend for the third learning outcome is similar to the first two outcomes. The scores for the third outcome fell slightly from the 2011-2012 (average score = 2.8; SD=.753; N=3) to the 2012-2013 academic year (average score =2; SD=.894; N=8). The Criminal Justice Forensic Science program is currently being reviewed. Extensive curriculum changes can be expected over the next year.

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<td>Define and explain acceptable level of student performance.</td>
<td>Discuss the data collected and student population</td>
<td>1) Describe the analysis process. 2) Present the findings of the analysis including the numbers participating and deemed acceptable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An analysis of the quality of writing of the entire issue brief. Reviewers employ the rubric shown in Attachment A). (DIRECT)</td>
<td>Students will receive mean scores of 2.5 or above (on a 4.0 scale). This score represents a midpoint between &quot;meets expectations&quot; and &quot;exceeds expectations&quot;</td>
<td>Issue briefs from all students in the Fall and Spring sections of SOC/CJ 495.(Senior Seminar)</td>
<td>Two full time faculty members with expertise in Criminal Justice and Forensic Science scored each of the issue brief sections of the senior seminar capstone projects written by students in the CJFS program. Scores were entered electronically into a survey instrument and results tallied by the Office of Institutional Assessment. The CJ-FS students had mean score of 2 on this learning outcome, and a standard deviation of .894 (See Attachment C) (N=8).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results of the Graduating Student Surveys (INDIRECT)</td>
<td>A majority of students will report that the program of studies provided them with skills in written communication.</td>
<td>Five graduates of the CJ/FS program responded to the survey</td>
<td>The majority of our graduating students (71.4%) self reported good or excellent ability to provide a coherent written argument (mean = 3.857 on a 5 point scale with 1=poor and 5=excellent; standard deviation = .690).</td>
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</table>
Interpretation of Results

Extent this Learning Outcome has been achieved by students *(Use both direct and indirect measure results)*:

The results from the direct measure were assessed met our expectations according to our rubric, but fell below where we hoped they would score (average 2.0 v. the predicted 2.5). These findings indicate that students demonstrate some skill in written communication. Results from the Graduating Student Survey also reflect the CJFS students’ confidence in their ability to produce an effective written argument. Seventy one percent of students responded that their ability to develop a coherent written argument was good or excellent.

Program strengths and opportunities for improvement relative to assessment of outcome:

Program strengths and opportunities for improvement relative to assessment of outcome:

The sequence of required and elective courses and the quality of faculty instruction appears to be providing students with adequate, but not exceptional writing skills. The criminal justice faculty will meet to discuss and revise the rubric used to assess the issue brief senior papers. One area for improvement that became apparent relative to this assessment outcome was the need for greater consistency in the Writing for Criminal Justice course. Last year the course was taught by a full time member of the faculty in the Criminal Justice department and by an adjunct faculty member. The course was taught very differently across the two sections. The students expressed concerns about the differences between the two sections in the focus group. In an effort to resolve this problem, a different adjunct has been hired to teach CJ300 and has met regularly with the department chair to ensure greater consistency in assignments, writing projects, feedback, and expectations for the course. One other area where there is room for improvement would be mapping resume-writing skills to the appropriate level in the curriculum. Both the Careers in Criminal Justice and the Writing for Criminal Justice courses should include resume writing in the curriculum. Students should begin working on their resumes in the careers course and then build upon these skills in the Writing for Criminal Justice course (the focus group was conducted with both CJ and CJFS students, and it was not possible to differentiate between the two programs on the writing component. However, the writing requirements are the same for both CJBA and CJFS students.).

Discuss planned curricular or program improvements for this year based on assessment of outcome:

The criminal justice department will improve writing by exposing students to additional writing assignments in the major and elective classes. Students begin with a writing project in the gateway course CJ209 Introduction to the Criminal Justice System and continue to have extensive writing projects with faculty and peer feedback throughout the curriculum. We would like to see our students improve the level of success that they achieved this year. While we would like our graduating student survey results to reflect that all students feel confident that they can develop a coherent written argument (100%); we would like to see the number of students that report confidence in their ability to develop a written argument increase to 75% of students. We hope the University’s recent initiatives in expanding the number of Writing Intensive offerings, as well training additional faculty will enhance the skill level of our graduates and these changes will be reflected in the assessment reports over time. Meanwhile, the full time criminal justice faculty are examining ways that CJFS students can apply their writing to projects that are more focused on the application of science to criminal justice issues (e.g. include more case studies and crime scene analysis reports) in the final products that are used for assessment.