2012-2013 Outcomes Assessment

What learning outcomes did you assess this year?

COAPRT Learning Outcomes
Students graduating from the program shall demonstrate entry-level knowledge of the scope of the profession, and its professional organizations, that is the focus of the program, along with professional practices of that profession
Students graduating from the program shall demonstrate the ability to facilitate recreation and related experiences for diverse clientele, settings, cultures, and contexts
Students graduating from the program shall be able to apply entry-level concepts, principles, and procedures of management/administration in parks, recreation, tourism, and/or related professions

SOAP Learning Outcomes
Apply understanding of the significance of play, recreation, and leisure throughout the life cycle relative to the individual's attitudes, behaviors, and use of resources. (1.3)
Discuss the economic, cultural, and environmental impacts of the leisure service industry on society. (1.4)
Articulate knowledge of the legal foundations and responsibilities of leisure service agencies, and the impact of policy formation on leisure behaviors and service in all levels of government, community organizations, and business enterprise. (3.1)
Apply principles and practices necessary for the protection and safety of the participant. (3.3)
Engage in a variety of leadership techniques and strategies to enhance the individual's leisure experiences for all populations, including those with special needs. (5.1)
Respond effectively and professionally to crisis and change. (5.2)
Implement components of the planning process as applied to program development including the specification of objectives, selection of activity content and facilitation techniques, identification of strategies, and designation of required resources. (6.2)
Conceptualize, develop, and implement recreation programs. (6.3)
Adapt recreation program, equipment, and facilities to optimize the benefits people seek in their leisure. (6.4)
Conduct research using library and Internet resources to locate information pertinent to the field of recreation. (7.1)
Design and implement appropriate program evaluations. (7.2)
Use a data analysis program (i.e. SPSS) to interpret data. (7.3)
Articulate various management, administrative, and organizational structures, models and systems. (8.2)
Formulate policies and procedures. (8.3)
Implement staff development and in-service training. (8.5)
Continue participation in professional activities and organizations after graduation. (9.2)
Promote, advocate, interpret, and articulate the concerns of leisure service systems for all populations and services. (10.1)
Accept the responsibility of the leisure service professional to make available opportunities for inclusive leisure experiences for all populations, including those with special needs and disabilities. (10.2)

Adapt recreation programs and services to meet the needs of people from diverse populations. (10.3)
Apply the concepts of sustainability to recreation programming and facility management. (11.3)

What instruments did you use to assess them?

Three assessment tools were used to assess these outcomes

Program Implementation
Budget Plan
Alumni Survey

Program Implementation
The RA 77S assignment (program implementation) was revised during our program review/soap revision process in 2011 and was reviewed spring 2013 when we created our COARPT 2013 standards assessment plan. A rubric was created at that same time to assess the learning outcomes. Data was collected in the RA 77S course during the Spring 2013 semester. Students were assessed on their implementation of a recreation program (that they developed) for international students at the American English Institute on campus.

Budget Project
The RA 128L budget project assigned was revised during our program review/soap revision process in 2011. Students develop an operating budget proposal for a recreation agency and present the results. Data was collected during the Fall 2012 semester.

Alumni Survey
The alumni survey created during our program review/soap revision in 2011 was used as the assessment instrument. The department assessment coordinator worked with the college development office to locate contact information for as many alumni as possible. In total 1,259 alumni were contacted to complete the online survey. Both email and mail correspondence was used to invite alumni to complete the survey and to remind them of due dates. The same correspondence also invited the alumni to join the alumni association and (re)connect with the department and university. A response rate of 7.9% was recorded with 100 completed surveys.

One problem encountered in implementation was the change of student email address format from name@csufresno.edu to name@mail.fresnostate.edu which significantly reduced effectiveness of the RA department alumni database. In working with the development office and the supplied alumni database we found a large number of expired physical and electronic addresses which limited our pool.

What did you discover from these data? (Where possible, indicate the relative strengths and weaknesses in student performance on the outcome(s).)

Program Implementation
Strengths:
The aggregate score of all groups was 88%, indicating overall competency for the assessed learning outcomes. Looking at individual areas, competency was noted in 3.3, 5.1, 6.4, and 10.3. Overall the students were also successful in 5.2 and 6.2, although one group was significantly below the standard in these areas. When discussing this discrepancy with the instructor and the site supervisor, it was determined to be due to lack of student preparation rather than a curricular or pedagogy issue.

Weaknesses:
While the overall score was 88%, there were two learning outcomes, 6.2 and 6.3 which were noticeably lower than the rest (although still above 80%). Most notably conceptualizing and articulating the need for the program and creating objectives were areas where all groups struggled.

Budget Project
Strengths:
Students had to use Excel to develop their budget and the graphics that supported their proposal. And develop a budget for a realistic agency scenario by following the steps for budget development as taught in the course. These steps include the financial management techniques identified in 8.1. Budget proposals included a cover letter, numerous Excel data sheets, and various computer generated graphics to highlight key points. Using the scoring rubric, scores ranges from 74 to 95 (out of 100 points) with a mean of 86.6. All students in the course met the 70% or better threshold.

Weaknesses:
Content learning was found to be acceptable, presentation skills were found to be the weaker of the two outcomes. The most difficulty was found in formatting data and explaining findings in a persuasive manner.

Alumni Survey
With less than a 10% response rate, no inferences can be made from the results, so the strengths and weaknesses discussed below are mainly being used to promote discussion of future directions for RA faculty and staff. It is interesting to note that in reviewing demographics of the respondents, while respondents graduation date ranged from the 1960s to 2012, approximately 25% of the respondents graduated from 2000-09 (27) and 25% graduated 1970-79 (25).

Strengths:
Overall 95% of respondents rated the quality of the RA faculty excellent/good. Respondents were asked to rate their preparation in eight areas (a total of 18 specific questions). Ratings were done on a scale of (1) very inadequate preparation to (5) excellent preparation. Those 18 questions tied back to the 13 SOAP learning outcomes being assessed. For ten learning outcomes, the overall question score was above 80% (1.3, 1.4 7.1, 7.2, 8.2, 8.3, 8.5, 9.2, 10.2, and 10.3). These learning outcomes encompass areas including conceptual foundations, research and evaluation, managerial and supervisory skills, professional development, and inclusive practices.

Finally, 80% of respondents reported the advising and supervision they received in the program was excellent/very good (98% when including those who rated advising and supervision as adequate) and 85% indicated the degree to which they were prepared to succeed in the industry was excellent or very good (the number rises to 98% when including those who indicated they were adequately prepared to succeed). The qualitative feedback included praise for faculty, connections with the industry, and faculty concern for student success.

Weaknesses:
Three learning outcomes resulted in scores below 80% although all three were above 70%, indicating respondents still believed they were adequately prepared in all three areas. Items related to legal practices and risk management (learning outcomes 3.1) averaged a score of 72%, with the item related to applying knowledge of the impact of policy formation on business enterprise scoring the lowest at 70%. Learning outcome 7.3 (ability to use data analysis programs) scored 75%. Finally learning outcome 11.3 (applying concepts of sustainability) scored 76%.

Qualitative data that spoke to areas for improvement included the need for clarification of pre-internship hour requirements, a wider variety of internship placements, fewer restrictions for out-of-state internships, increased industry involvement, and requests for the department (and university) to communicate with alumni more (and not only when seeking money).

What changes did you make as a result of the findings?
As a faculty we reviewed the data and came to the following conclusions.

Program Implementation
The two areas of major concern from this assessment including conceptualizing and articulating the need for the program and creating objectives, which both related to program development and not implementation. Neither one was a surprise as both are difficult concepts for entry level students to grasp. Both are major components of the course and required elements of the program plan as well as program development for this implementation. In discussion faculty suspected the importance of these two components may be overlooked as part of this assignment since the students are introduced to their target group and given basic goals for the experience by the director of the program. The RA 77S instructor has been made aware of these findings and is revising teaching strategies to reinforce both concepts and revising how the assignment is presented Revisions will include increase in-class practice of both and the provision of more examples. The instructor has also reviewed and selected a new textbook which he believes will better address these two areas. The faculty has also been asked to review both competencies and to identify at least two ways they can be reinforced in other courses. Those recommendations will be identified and selected in the fall.

Two other issues were noted during our review of data from the program plan implementation. The first was that this course was taught by two faculty over the course of this year and the same site (AEI) was used to implement the service learning assignment. The site supervisor noted that students appeared to be more prepared and more detail oriented in the fall than in the spring. Secondly, while we had prepared a second rubric, aligned with the identified learning outcomes, for the site supervisor to use to provide feedback, she was not provided with it. Instead each faculty member provided different directions to the site supervisor for how to deliver feedback and what to look for, limiting the usability of the data from the site supervisor.

It is anticipated, at least in the near future, that the same instructor will be teaching the course both semesters, negating the first issue. However, it is an important issue for us to note and we are aware we need to do a better job of sharing information with part-time faculty who support the department. When a new faculty is assigned to a course that is part of our outcomes assessment plan, the assessment coordinator will meet with the faculty member to cover expectations in addition to the previous instructor meeting with the part-time faculty to increase consistency of delivery. The chair and assessment coordinator will also include our outcomes assessment plan at the beginning faculty meeting of each semester and review all assessment data that needs to be collected that semester so that all faculty are aware of their role in the assessment plan and there is adequate time to prepare.
The second issue will also be addressed during the initial faculty meeting as the chair and assessment coordinator make sure that all faculty are aware of and have access to the correct rubrics for all learning outcomes being assessed.

Budget Project
No major changes are suggested other than to rotate to a different budget scenario each year. A need for a more explicit scoring rubric for data presentation of the budget project was identified to better prepare students for expectations. A need was also identified to enhance the course unit on data presentation. The instructor for the course is using the assessment results to revise the data presentation unit.

Alumni Survey

The span of time in which the respondents graduated means that some of the items identified as weaknesses have already been addressed by the department. Learning outcome 7.3 (ability to use data analysis programs) has been addressed in two ways, based on a need identified as a result of our last accreditation self study as well as from feedback from alumni and employers. First, in our 2008 core curriculum revision, a research and evaluation course was added (RA 139), creating the opportunity for students to practice using data analysis programs. Those programs are introduced in RA 128L, the Legal and Financial Lab. Secondly, in our 2010 program review process, the faulty identified a need to increase exposure to excel in the 128L course (previously the emphasis had been predominately on SPSS). The course was reformatted to increase the emphasis on excel and to expose students to its options and flexibility. The use of excel and SPSS continue to be reinforced in RA 139. The first graduates benefitting from these changes graduate this year, so their voice is not included in the assessment results. Based on conversations with current interns and intern supervisors, faculty members are confident that this weakness has been addressed.

The three items related to legal practices and risk management averaged a score of 70%. In reviewing these three items, we believe all three were strengthened in the 2010 review of RA 128, the Legal and Financial course. Curriculum was not changed at that time, however, delivery techniques and emphasized outcomes were revised. We do believe, however, that we need to continue improving delivery in this area. All students are exposed to the content in RA 128 and it is reinforced in RA 179 (administration) A review of RA 179 found that in this course the outcome can be enhanced. A review of textbooks is being undertaken to identify if another text, or any additional readings, would be beneficial. Reviewing the course assignments has also led to the identification of a way to reinforce the policy formation component of the competency, which was the lowest scoring area of the learning outcome. We also found the learning outcome is inconsistently reinforced in the emphases. We found strong reinforcement in the sport and entertainment facility management and therapeutic recreation emphases, but did not see the same coverage in the other three emphases. Our solution is for each of those emphases coordinators to review the introductory course for the emphasis and identify methods to reinforce these competencies. Specific strategies will be discussed during the initial faculty meeting of the fall semester and implemented in the fall.

Learning outcome 11.3 (applying concepts of sustainability) was just under the 80% threshold. In breaking down the data we find that the 90% of those who indicated a score of 3 (adequate) or below in this area graduated prior to 2000. The concept of sustainability was not included in our accreditation outcomes until the early 2000s, so it is a learning outcome that realistically would not have applied to those graduating prior to this time as it was not a department outcome (it was a new learning outcome in our 2010 soap revision). Analyzing the data for recent graduates (since 2000) results in a score of well over 80% for this outcome. As a result, we do not believe change is needed at this time.

Many of the suggestions provided in the qualitative data are consistent with changes the department has made in recent years. For example, our student handbook, majors meeting, RA 55 advising assignment, advising checklist, and student advising responsibilities sign off all have improved understanding of the pre-internship hour requirements. These are all pieces that have been put into place over the last 15 years, with the last piece, the student advising responsibility sign off just going into effect this spring semester. Internship procedures have changed quite a bit over the years, in part due to department decisions and in part due to university requirements. Students now identify their own internship placement (with faculty approval) and out of state internships go through the same process. An application process, including a GPA and pre-internship hour requirement, remains in place and are considered by the faculty to be important pieces in the decision process for out-of-state internships. We also believe the advising pieces mentioned previously are helpful in lessening confusion related to internship. As noted in the accomplishment section of this annual report, all of us are very pleased with the work we have done to increase industry involvement in our department. Between service learning courses, certificate hour requirements, applied learning assignments, pre-internship hours, guest speakers, tours, and internships, we believe we are providing excellent opportunities for our students to get industry exposure.

The last suggestion to address was the request for the department (and university) to communicate with alumni more (and not only when seeking money). At the request of the college development office, two years ago the department started a facebook fan page and our alumni survey request included an invitation to join the page. Most if not all faculty also include the invitation to join the page at the bottom of their email signature, so this is one method trying to communicate with alumni. To the best of our ability, we post department news, job vacancies, and other information that would be of interest to alumni on this page. Alumni also have the opportunity to remain on our student list serve, so at least for recent graduates, they have the opportunity to stay connected. In discussing the survey results, we are also investigating using Linked In for the department to connect with alumni on this professional networking site. Alumni that we are in contact with are invited to many department functions annually, such as socials for new faculty, to be guest speakers, sit on interview panels and events for students to connect with alumni so part of our effort is going to be identifying methods to be able to maintain contact information with as many alumni as possible.