

Child, Family and Consumer Sciences Department
Outcomes Assessment Grant Report
Resubmitted June 1, 2007

During the summer and fall of 2006, the CFCS faculty implemented a plan aimed at creating an assessment strategy and methodology that would meet this criteria:

- 1) Assure ease of use from implementation through evaluation
- 2) Embed assessment activities in courses
- 3) Ensure that the activity addressed the outcome selected for measurement

We determined that the following outcome for the Bachelor of Science in Child Development would be measured in both beginning and advanced theory courses:

Goal 1: Knowledge

To prepare graduates to be knowledgeable about child development through the study of multiple theoretical perspectives and cultural contexts.

Outcomes: Graduates will be able to:

- 1.1 Compare and contrast major theoretical perspectives on the cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development of children.

The 2 courses in the Child Development major core in which theory is taught include CFS 39 – Introduction to Child and Adolescent Development (a course with multiple sections each semester), and CFS 140 – Advanced Child Development Theory and Play (a single section course offered each semester). One assessment activity was selected for, and embedded in, each level course. Assessment activities were administered and scored by instructors as part of the course on a schedule established by the full time faculty. At the end of the semester, instructors posted results to a departmental course portfolio. The department assessment coordinator reviewed the data to determine whether or not department-set minimum competency levels had been met at beginning and advanced levels.

Methodologies/procedures used to implement the project and timeline

Summer 2006

The assessment coordinator:

Worked with Digital Campus to develop the department electronic archive system and protocols to be used by faculty to store, manage, and retrieve scored assessment activities.

Fall 2006

The permanent faculty who teach the theory courses and the assessment coordinator met to discuss and select activities from those already in use in course/s. Faculty were asked to:

- a. describe the learning activities and assessment methods for each course and relate them to their respective course objectives;
- b. develop a common the scoring rubric for the activities
- c. implement the activities and post the scores in the electronic archive

Winter Break 2007

The assessment coordinator reviewed scores, comparing results to pre-established minimum competency levels, that is, the minimum score a student could receive to demonstrate competency, and the minimum percentage of all students in a class needed to demonstrate achievement of learning goals. Although “D” is a passing grade, “C” was set as the minimum level of competency for students. Seventy-five percent was selected as the acceptable percentage of all students in a course with “C” or better for the course to be considered successful.

Outcomes

An analysis of the data shows that in CFS 39, only 44% of students received a grade of “C” or better. In CFS 140, 46% of students received a grade of “C” or better. It was clear to us that students are not integrating theoretical concepts to a satisfactory degree.

Impact

As a result of the findings, faculty evaluated the ways in which theory is conveyed in these courses and the ways in which students are expected to demonstrate their understanding. In all cases, lecture was the primary mode of delivery enhanced with videos and discussion. During spring semester, the CFS 39 instructor instituted small group projects including end of semester presentations as a means by which to deliver this content. Student groups were asked to describe and explain a theory’s major premises and illustrate each with an example from their observations of children, readings or videos used in class, personal stories, or other means. During lectures, the instructor made a point of tying in examples drawn from the readings and students’ work. She will continue these efforts in the fall semester and we will conduct a follow-up assessment activity to measure change in students’ performance.

CFS 140 will be taught again in the fall. However, a new hire will be teaching this course as the instructor who conducted the initial assessment activity has left the university. The Outcomes Assessment Coordinator will meet with the new faculty member to share the assessment data and work with her on teaching and assessment strategies. This course will be reassessed in Fall 2008.

Although we were disappointed with the findings in this study, two valuable things were learned. First, that the process we established for embedding activities, collecting data, and sharing the assessment workload was very successful. As a result, we now have a faculty organization on Blackboard that we are using, not only for assessment activities, but as a communication and networking tool. Second, that having assessment data in hand makes real change possible and following an assessment plan that is co-created and has buy-in begins the process of making assessment part of a department culture.

Respectfully submitted by Marianne Jones, Outcomes Assessment Coordinator