**DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION**

**Strategic Outcomes Assessment Report, AY 2015-16**

**1. What learning outcome(s) did you assess this year?**

Goal 3, Learning Outcome 1. Students will demonstrate proficiency in the communication principles and ideas central to personal and professional growth. Students will be able to identify the processes, strategies, and techniques influencing interpersonal and family relationships.

Goal 4. Students will demonstrate competency in personal, narrative, and research writing.

**2. What instruments did you use to assess them?**

Papers from twenty-seven students enrolled in Communication 188T (The Dark Side of Close Personal Relationships) were assessed. This assignment required students to present a case study pertaining to a problematic issue in a close relationship. Then they were required to analyze the problem, presenting scholarly research related to the problem and applying that research to communication behaviors in the case study. Finally, students were required to present advice (grounded in scholarly research) for how the participants in the case study should address the communication problems they were experiencing.

A rubric was developed to assess the students’ ability to apply scholarly research in the field of interpersonal communication to assess the communication behaviors in their case study and propose students. The rubric also assessed students’ writing style and adherence to APA format.

The rubric contained a 4-point scale to assess each student’s performance on the paper and on each subcategory of the assessment.

4—Accomplished

3—Competent

2—Developing

1—Beginning

Students were evaluated in four areas: problem analysis, solution to problem, use of APA format, and style/organization.

It was expected that 75% of students would score 2.5 or higher (competent) on the overall assessment and on each subcategory of the assessment.

**3. What did you discover from these data?**

Students were evaluated based on the following scale:

3.5 to 4.0--Accomplished

2.5 to 3.4--Competent

1.5 to 2.4—Developing

0 to 1.4—Beginning

Based on this scale, the number of students in each category was as follows:

Accomplished 9

Competent 14

Developing 4

Beginning 0

With respect to the subcategories, the mean student scores were:

Problem Analysis 3.29

Solution 3.17

Style and Organization 2.61

APA Format 2.40

The data indicated that twenty-three of twenty-seven students (85.1%) had work that was rated accomplished or competent overall. This exceeded the goal of 75%.

The data with respect to the subcategories indicated that as a whole, the students demonstrated a sound understanding of course content relating to interpersonal and family relationships. Mean scores on the problem analysis and solutions category were well into the competent range (3.29 and 3.17) and not far from the 3.5 standard for accomplished. The data indicate that students are able to use theories and principles that they are learning in class to analyze a case study in interpersonal communication and propose viable solutions.

The data with respect to style and organization and APA format indicated that on the average, students were at the lower end of the competent range (2.61 on style and organization and 2.40 on APA format).

**4. What changes did you make as a result of the findings?**

The data did not necessitate changes in our interpersonal communication courses. They indicate that students are learning course concepts and that they are able to apply them to case studies.

The data do indicate a need for continued efforts to strengthen our students’ writing skills. Student writing was a major topic of discussion at an all-day department retreat. A new course was created for first-semester graduate students that would emphasize scholarly writing skills. At the first fall 2016 faculty meeting, undergraduate writing was discussed and pedagogical strategies for improving writing were shared. Plans were made to have a faculty meeting that focuses exclusively on undergraduate writing and strategies for teaching and providing feedback on student writing.

**5. What assessment activities will you be conducting in the 2016-17 academic year?**

Our major is broken down into three areas of emphasis, communication in personal/relational settings (which was assessed in 2015-16), communication in public advocacy, and communication in organizational/professional settings. Students are required to take coursework in all three areas. Because students demonstrated proficiency in personal/relational settings in the 2015-16 assessment, we will move on to communication in public advocacy and assess Goal 3, Learning Outcome 4 (students will be able to use theoretical perspectives to analyze and produce effective persuasive discourse).

The department will continue to assess Goal 4, students will demonstrate competency in personal, narrative, and research writing.

**6. What progress have you made on items from your last program review action plan?**

Our last program review action plan proposed that the department would revise undergraduate learning objectives to better reflect language of learning outcomes, coordinate department assessment goals with GE goals and outcomes for area A1 and revise standards and methodology for assessment. The department completed these changes and promulgated a revised SOAP plan. The department has used the revised learning outcomes in subsequent annual assessments.