

Day 14: Did you know about some of the improvements to academic programs as a result of the assessment of student learning?

[4.B.2/4.B.3] Assessment of learning outcomes for curricular and co-curricular programs and use of outcome information to improve student learning. (Part III)

The obvious importance of assessment lies in how outcome data inform and improve student learning. While CMU continues to identify and implement valid measures of student learning, early data collection has led to improvements made by some academic programs. The following examples of course changes illustrate some of the improvements based upon assessment data.

In Communication, grading writing as well as content, focusing on the use of credible sources and focused instruction on writing are all changes made by three programs (Accounting, Business and Nursing) to increase proficiency in the area of communication. Critical thinking was addressed in Chemistry by requiring students to develop their own experiment instead of a given experiment, while History and Kinesiology majors are expected to formulate their own research and risk questions. Criminal Justice majors were found to consistently score a lower average on the courts unit of CRMJ 370 leading to faculty making adjustments to teaching methods and clarification of concepts prior to the corresponding exam. Classroom management strategies were addressed more fully with Music Education students to better prepare them for student teaching assignments. Meanwhile, research design coursework in Political Science and Psychology was revised. The Senior Seminar for Political Science students now focuses on in-class applied research skill development in a workshop format, while Psychology statistical literacy is being introduced earlier in the curriculum so that program graduates demonstrate stronger skills to potential employers.

Changes based on capstone courses, a part of many majors at the baccalaureate, masters, and doctoral levels, demonstrate progress toward achieving both program and institutional SLOs. Several programs have made changes to address communication deficiencies observed in the capstone courses. Improvements also have included increasing the number of required oral presentations (Geology), creating new courses (HIST 202), writing weekly reflections (Social Work), and requiring professional documents (Theatre Arts). To address the Specialized Knowledge SLO, programs have added a peer-review process to replicate industry norms (Political Science), added scientific projects (Computer Science), participated in industry projects with project updates to industry professionals (Mechanical Engineering Technology), and added additional clinical hours to assist in successful completion of a national certification (Doctor of Nurse Practice).

An external assessment by internship employers occurs for the institutional Communication and Critical Thinking SLOs. When reviewing the employers' ratings, based on a ten-point scale with 10 being the best score, 93% of CMU students scored an 8 or higher in the area of communication. In Critical Thinking, 85% of employers felt students rated at an 8 or

above. With internships ranging from the Grand Junction Police Department, to the Museum of Western Colorado, to regional school districts, to a local brewing company, these percentages demonstrate that outside evaluators are assessing student attainment of these two SLOs at the excellent level. To ensure greater consistency for collecting SLO data across programs, forms are under discussion.

To learn more, log into MAVzone and click on the document link found in the CMU Assurance Argument for HLC channel (top left on the Home tab) for the full text of CMU's Assurance Argument. Links to supporting evidence are identified by underlined words but are not available through the PDF version.

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