

## **2006-07 ANNUAL REPORT ON ACADEMIC PROGRAM ASSESSMENT**

### **SCHOOL OF HUMAN ECOLOGY UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON**

(Submitted by Wendy L. Way, Associate Dean – August 1, 2007)

#### **1. Describe any revisions or updates to the SoHE Assessment Plan during the past year.**

School of Human Ecology departmental assessment plans were updated during the 2005-06 academic year and submitted with the last assessment report. These plans include: a) statements of student learning outcomes for each major, b) an indication of the specific courses in which students have opportunities to develop the skills and abilities reflected in the learning outcomes, and c) a summary of the direct and indirect forms of evidence that are collected to help ascertain the extent to which student learning outcomes are being achieved. No further updates were made to these plans during 2006-07, however, a good deal of effort was devoted to developing the methodology for gathering data needed to make judgments about student achievement of learning outcomes.

#### **2. Describe assessment activities conducted for unit-wide programmatic or curricular review.**

The major assessment activity for the year consisted of finalizing the SoHE undergraduate alumni survey, designing the survey methodology, collecting the survey data, and examining preliminary school-wide summary results within the SoHE Academic Planning Council. For the first time, the undergraduate survey requested student input on the extent to which their academic programs helped them achieve specific learning outcomes. This involved constructing several versions of the survey in order to request input on the extent to which students had acquired disciplinary content knowledge, skills, and abilities related to their majors as well as general outcomes in such areas as communication, problem solving, perspective-taking, and leadership. The survey also collected more general information reflecting students' perceptions of the value of UW-Madison and SoHE experiences such as employment-related internships and career planning and placement activities. All SoHE graduates from 2002-2005 (n = 907) were surveyed via regular U.S. mail with the assistance of the UW-Madison Survey Research Center. After an initial mailing and two follow-ups, a total of 359 responses were received for a response rate of 39.6%. This far exceeded the response rate achieved in a recent pilot effort to survey alumni using e-mail distribution.

Preliminary results of the survey (attached) were shared with the SoHE Academic Planning Council and distributed to SoHE departments for further review. The APC recommended that additional sub-group analyses be completed next year to examine outcomes within and across majors and according to various student characteristics

(e.g., by gender, age, and/or whether or not the student completed an internship) for use in departmental and school-wide strategic academic planning.

During the past year, the SoHE Graduate Program Council also developed a graduate alumni survey to gather data needed for the 10-year review of the SoHE Graduate Program which is scheduled to take place in 2009. Data collection is in process and further development of this survey instrument, is planned for next year.

### **3. Describe the assessment activity in your academic programs and departments.**

During last year's efforts to devise undergraduate alumni surveys to collect feedback on specific programmatic learning outcomes, SoHE faculty and staff discovered that the existing system of naming majors in SoHE did not optimally communicate the academic foci of the programs for students or others. Further, the naming system made it difficult to identify the major(s) of the students for purposes of sub-group analyses of survey data. So, an effort was undertaken to examine how majors could be re-titled to communicate their foci clearly and consistently within and across programs and departments. The result was a proposal for rationalizing the system of naming SoHE majors which was considered and approved by the University Academic Planning Council in June of 2007 (attached). This new system, when fully implemented, should make it much easier to gather major-specific data about student learning outcomes for use in both data analysis and strategic planning.

One particularly exciting department-level assessment activity consisted of examining the existing Community Leadership program option in the Family, Consumer and Community Education major in the school in terms of how it might better serve the needs of students interested in leadership and management of nonprofit organizations. The Department of Interdisciplinary Studies, which was represented on a campus Task Force examining the feasibility of developing a Center for Nonprofit Leadership, participated in several activities that examined the need for and possible activities that might be affiliated with such a center, including an academic program. The feasibility study incorporated community focus group meetings, a campus forum with Council on Foundations President Steve Gunderson, a campus meeting with representatives from the American Humanics program, and site visits to several other institutions with academic programs related to community and nonprofit leadership. As a result, the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies sought University Academic Planning Council approval to submit a proposal for an undergraduate major in Community and Nonprofit Leadership using the UW-System expedited program development process. This request was approved by the UAPC in June of 2007 and the proposal will likely be submitted in the fall. The program represents a further revision/evolution of the now non-transcripted community leadership option in the Family, Consumer, and Community Education major and will incorporate important components of the Family and Consumer Communication major, which was discontinued by action of the UAPC in June.

**4. Describe plans for academic assessment activities for the coming year in your school/college.**

Two major activities are planned for the 2007-08 academic year. One is to carry out additional sub-group analyses of the undergraduate alumni survey data gathered during 2006-07. This will allow SoHE faculty/staff to determine whether student perceptions of achievement of major-specific learning outcomes differ according to such variables as gender, age, or internship experience; and whether common learning outcomes differ across majors and/or by gender, age, and internship experience. Results of the data analysis will be used to: identify immediate targets for program improvement; b) identify gaps in information and needs for additional data; and c) fine tune the process for collecting and using undergraduate student feedback on learning outcomes to facilitate on-going within-major and cross-major discussions focused on program improvement.

The second activity will focus on enhancing the student assessment system related to SoHE graduate programs. During the past year, the SoHE Graduate Program Council has been developing plans for gathering data needed for the 10-year review of the SoHE Human Ecology graduate program which is scheduled to take place in 2009. The GPC has developed an alumni survey and is using it to collect input on graduate student experiences at UW. Graduate student learning outcomes are stated more implicitly than explicitly in the existing data collection system, however. So, the plan is to engage the GPC and departments in identifying student learning outcomes for the master's and doctoral programs and identify future strategies for collecting and using information which specifically examines the extent to which students are achieving these learning outcomes in the graduate program.