Program:  Gerontology Graduate Certificate

Number of students enrolled in the program in Fall, 2011: The Graduate Certificate was developed according to national gerontological standards and academic requirements with the intention of providing a stand-alone Certificate as well as facilitating the completion of a Special Masters in Aging and (another department focus) until the University budget allows for the inclusion of a Masters in Gerontology. The Certificate was temporarily suspended Fall 2009, however, four graduate courses were still made available once/year to the students who were admitted to the Graduate Special Masters during this time period. According to departmental data, as of December 15, 2012 there are 12 students actively completing courses offered from this program.

Faculty member completing template:  Cheryl Osborne           Date:  2.3.12

Period of reference in the template:  2006-07 to present

1. Please describe your program’s learning-outcomes trajectory since 2006-07: Has there been a transformation of organizational culture regarding the establishment of learning outcomes and the capacity to assess progress toward their achievement? If so, during which academic year would you say the transformation became noticeable? What lies ahead; what is the next likely step in developing a learning-outcomes organizational culture within the program?

Assessment of Graduate Certificate Learning Outcomes (LO) (listed below in #2) has to date not been required but the Gerontology Program has measured course outcomes in the final Internship Internship/Project course. These course outcomes are the LO approved by the University for the Certificate Program LO in 1999. It is certainly possible to modify this in the future (and formally do a Certificate Program assessment should that be deemed. As noted earlier however the Certificate Program is currently suspended. We are hopeful this will change in the near future based on the growing interest and need in the community for graduate prepared gerontologist specialists. This report, although not complete, does include data that was available – some data available and are similar to the undergraduate programs.

Since the Gerontology Graduate Certificate began in 2000, the Program’s organizational culture has always embraced using learning outcomes to measure student learning. The Graduate Certificate assessment was done in at the course level and at the end of the program in the Internship/Project course where the Program LO were the same as the course outcomes.

2. Please list in prioritized order (or indicate no prioritization regarding) up to four desired learning outcomes (“takeaways” concerning such elements of curriculum as perspectives, specific content knowledge, skill sets, confidence levels) for students completing the program. For each stated outcome, please provide the reason that it was designated as desired by the faculty associated with the program.
In Summary, the broad “takeaways” for students in the Graduate Certificate Program are the same as for the undergraduate degree, just more in-depth. They are: 1.) current evidence-based research knowledge, 2.) applied critical thinking, 3.) awareness and appreciation of others and community (beyond themselves) that is professionally demonstrated in all human interactions, and 4.) effective oral, written, and interpersonal communication.

The following 4 outcomes combine the realigned Gerontology Certificate Program Learning adopted in 1999. This was done in conjunction with the 2010 Program Review. As they all inter-relate, they were not prioritized.

a.) Demonstrate understanding and synthesis of advanced interdisciplinary evidence-based knowledge, theories, skills, values, and current trends as a basis for competent gerontological practice.
Students must be able to transfer and apply what they learn into practice in order to implement the necessary interventions they will use when they encounter the complex issues/challenges faced by elders/their families in a variety of situations/contexts.

b.) Demonstrate highly developed critical thinking when analyzing diverse and complex aging issues and outcomes for elders, families, and society from an interdisciplinary perspective that is grounded in the sciences, social sciences, and humanities.
Working with elders/their families is multidimensional, complex, and ever changing therefore current knowledge-based critical thinking is fundamental when assessing and intervening in the myriad of interdisciplinary situations faced by gerontologists in their professional roles.

c.) Demonstrate social and cultural awareness, sensitivity, respect, and support of multiple perspectives when interacting with others along with exhibiting personal and social responsibility, and ethical and professional behavior in all settings.
These attributes, in part, define an educated, engaged, and contributing individual as well as underpin all successful human interactions. Additionally, employers require these attributes in their employees.

d.) Exhibit effective use of basic communication (written, oral and interpersonal) skills and information technology needed in a global information society.
Gerontologists must have all three communication skill sets in order to successfully complete their professional career tasks and remain employed.

3. For undergraduate programs only, in what ways are the set of desired learning outcomes described above aligned with the University’s Baccalaureate Learning Goals? Please be as specific as possible.

NA

4. For each desired outcome indicated in item 2 above, please (describe the following):
   a. Describe the method(s) by which its ongoing pursuit is monitored and measured.
   b. Include a description of the sample of students (e.g., random sample of transfer students declaring the major; graduating seniors) from whom data were/will be collected and the frequency and schedule with which the data in question were/will be collected.
c. Describe and append a sample (or samples) of the “instrument” (e.g., survey or test), “artifact” (e.g., writing sample and evaluative protocol, performance review sheet), or other device used to assess the status of the learning outcomes desired by the program.

d. Explain how the program faculty analyzed and evaluated (will analyze and evaluate) the data to reach conclusions about each desired student learning outcome.

Demonstrate understanding of advanced interdisciplinary evidence-based knowledge, theories, skills, values, and current trends as a basis for competent gerontological practice.

a) *Method(s) by which its ongoing pursuit is monitored and measured.*

Ongoing monitoring and measurement of this Learning Outcome is accomplished by evaluating the Course objectives (derived from the Certificate Program’s LO); using Grading rubrics for Research papers, Reflective Papers, Critical Thinking Assignments and Service Learning Journals; faculty evaluation of all required aspects of the Internship Portfolio.

b.) *Sample*

All students’ assignments from each Certificate course are analyzed related to the specific Program LOs at the end of the semester the course is offered (once/year). All student, supervisor, and faculty evaluations along with student paper comparisons from various courses presented in the final Internship/Project Portfolio are analyzed (when students take the course) for all LO.

c.) Describe and append a sample (or samples) of the “instrument”

Appended instruments used to measure this LO include: individual (sample) course grading rubrics (Appendix A); the Community Presentation Grading Rubric (Appendix B); the Internship Portfolio Student Self Evaluation form (Appendix C); others were used but not included in this report are Supervisor and Faculty evaluations of Internship student’s experiences.

d.) Explain how the program faculty analyzed and evaluated (will analyze and evaluate) the data to reach conclusions about each desired student learning outcome.

Course faculty members analyze course data related to Program LO once/year when courses are offered and make recommendations. Data are discussed during faculty meetings and any identified changes are agreed on and implemented when the course is offered the next year.

Demonstrate critical thinking when analyzing diverse and complex aging issues and outcomes for elders, families, and society from an interdisciplinary perspective that is grounded in the sciences, social sciences, and humanities.

a) *Method(s) by which its ongoing pursuit is monitored and measured.*

Ongoing monitoring and measurement of this Outcome is accomplished by evaluating the Course objectives (derived from the Program’s LO); using Grading rubrics for Research papers, Reflective Papers, Critical Thinking Assignments and Service Learning Journals; faculty evaluation of all required aspects of the Internship Portfolio; More specific
Demonstrate social and cultural awareness, sensitivity, respect, and support of multiple perspectives when interacting with others along with exhibiting personal and social responsibility, and ethical and professional behavior in all settings.

a) Method(s) by which its ongoing pursuit is monitored and measured.
Ongoing monitoring and measurement of this Outcome, is accomplished by evaluating the Course objectives (derived from the Program’s LO); using Grading rubrics for Research papers, Reflective Papers, Critical Thinking Assignments and Service Learning Journals; faculty evaluation of all required aspects of the Internship Portfolio.

b) Sample
All students’ assignments from each Certificate course are analyzed related to the specific Program LOs at the end of the semester the course is offered (once/year). All student (Appendix C), supervisor, and faculty evaluations along with student paper comparisons from various courses presented in the Internship Portfolio are randomly analyzed when students take the course for all LO.

c) Describe and append a sample (or samples) of the “instrument”
Appended instruments used to currently measure this LO include: individual (sample) course grading rubrics (Appendix A) the Internship Portfolio comparison of a variety of earlier course papers (no rubric yet); the Community Presentation Grading Rubric (Appendix B); Supervisor evaluations of Internship student’s experiences are also used but not included in this report.
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Appendix B); Supervisor evaluations of Internship student’s experiences are also used but not included in this report.

d.) Explain how the program faculty analyzed and evaluated (will analyze and evaluate) the data to reach conclusions about each desired student learning outcome.
Course faculty members analyze course data related to Program LO once/year when courses are offered and make recommendations. Data are discussed during faculty meetings and any identified changes are agreed on and implemented when the course is offered the next year. Along with the undergraduate Program, in order to more systematically measure this LO, Program faculty are exploring standardized methods to measure this LO outcome for future assessment.

Effective use of basic communication (written, oral and interpersonal) skills and information technology needed in a global information society.

a) Method(s) by which its ongoing pursuit is monitored and measured.
Ongoing monitoring and measurement of this Outcome will be accomplished by using the following: Faculty summary of Program approved Written/Presentation Communication Rubric in all Major Core courses; evaluating the Course objectives (derived from the Program’s LO); using Grading rubrics for Research papers, Reflective Papers, Critical Thinking Assignments and Service Learning Journals; faculty evaluation of all required aspects of the Internship Portfolio.

b.) Sample
All students’ assignments from each Certificate course are analyzed related to the specific Program LOs at the end of the semester the course is offered (once/year) using the Program approved Written/Presentation Communication Rubric. All student, supervisor, and faculty evaluations along with student paper comparisons from various courses presented in the Internship Portfolio.

c.) Describe and append a sample (or samples) of the “instrument”
The majority of assessment data for measuring this Learning Outcome are drawn from the Written/Presentation Communication Rubric (Appendix E). As with all other LO, other measures are used and include: individual (sample) course grading rubrics (Appendix A & C) the Internship Portfolio comparison of a variety of earlier course papers (no rubric yet); and Internship Supervisor evaluations of Internship student’s abilities are also used but not included in this report.

d.) Explain how the program faculty analyzed and evaluated (will analyze and evaluate) the data to reach conclusions about each desired student learning outcome.
As for all Program Outcomes, course faculty members analyze course data related to Program LO once/year when courses are offered and make recommendations (Appendix D). Data are discussed during faculty meetings and any identified changes are agreed on and implemented when the course is offered the next year.

5. Regarding each outcome and method discussed in items 2 and 4 above, please provide examples of how findings from the learning outcomes process have been utilized to address decisions to revise or maintain elements of the curriculum (including decisions to alter the
program’s desired outcomes). If such decision-making has not yet occurred, please describe the plan by which it will occur.

Even though not required, outcome assessment and modification were done at the course level in the Graduate Certificate Program. Faculty curriculum meetings provided opportunities to assess, evaluate, discuss, modify and affirm the courses’ strengths, areas for growth, future direction, and to plan for future demographic, student and faculty/staff, and university needs. Program support was strong from students, faculty and SSIS administrators, Community Advisory Council, and there was state and national recognition of the Program at discipline-based conferences and state wide board meetings. This has positioned us to deliver a quality Program as soon as it is reinstated! As some of the graduate certificate courses are shared or cross listed with undergraduate courses, the course level decision making process completed for the 2010 Program Review allowed faculty to make similar decisions in the graduate courses:

a.) Demonstrate understanding of fundamental interdisciplinary evidence-based knowledge, theories, skills, values, and current trends as a basis for competent gerontological practice.

   Changed some textbooks to ones that more clearly reflect current trends in elder health, illness and societal changes; incorporated even more exposure to a variety of interdisciplinary theories/skills throughout class content, assignments and internships; modified assignments to keep pace with changing evidence-based (EB) research such as increasing content on changing housing opportunities and elder health and transportation needs using regional data (Area 4 Agency on Aging) and national research (AOA, NCOA, etc).

b.) Demonstrate critical thinking when analyzing diverse and complex aging issues and outcomes for elders, families, and society from an interdisciplinary perspective that is grounded in the sciences, social sciences, and humanities.

   Modified assignments include more critical thinking/problem solving components; used more case studies; required more focus on EB application in Service Learning and Internship practice and Journals. Program Rubric will be formulated Spring 2012.

c.) Demonstrate social and cultural awareness, sensitivity, respect, and support of multiple perspectives when interacting with others along with exhibiting personal and social responsibility, and ethical and professional behavior in all settings.

   Included specific course objectives to assure components of this LO were addressed. Added topic related discussion in all classes to connect these personal and professional components; added even more variety in practice sites; and included objectives in courses to better measure these attributes.

d.) Exhibit effective use of basic communication (written, oral and interpersonal) skills and information technology needed in a global information society.

   Rubrics were formulated, tested, and used for all Major core course written and presentation assignments and have been used for the past two years (Appendix F). This has helped students to understand the assignment components as well as give direction for grading within the course, and has facilitated more consistent Program data gathering, analysis, and change related to communication.
6. Has the program systematically sought data from alumni to measure the longer-term effects of accomplishment of the program’s learning outcomes? If so, please describe the approach to this information-gathering and the ways in which the information will be applied to the program’s curriculum. If such activity has not yet occurred, please describe the plan by which it will occur.

Alumni Surveys collected data from all Major, Minor and Certificate students for the 2010 Program Review however it was all treated as aggregate data so specific conclusions cannot be drawn about the Graduate Certificate Program. This can be changed when the Program is reinstated.

7. Does the program pursue learning outcomes identified by an accrediting or other professional discipline-related organization as important? Does the set of outcomes pursued by your program exceed those identified as important by your accrediting or other professional discipline-related organization?

The national discipline-related professional organization governing Gerontology at all education levels is the Association of Gerontology in Higher Education (AGHE). Their published curricular standards were used in the original development of all the Gerontology programs/degrees including the Graduate Certificate Program in 1999. These standards were incorporated into all Certificate courses’ class objectives and included in all course Syllabi. This connection is vital to all our Programs because it provides national curricular standardization to assure ongoing currency, student/graduate and program comparability and provides employers with “minimal” knowledge and skill standards for those working with elders and their families. It is also requisite for national recognition as a quality program. Additionally, this involvement positions the Gerontology Program (at all levels) to participate in AGHE’s nationally recognized Program of Merit in the future when budget allows. Furthermore, continued involvement in this organization and use of the newly updated Gerontology Core Competencies (Appendix F) assures curricular compatibility as the national accreditation movement moves forward. Alignment of AGHE Core Competencies with Program LO will be completed and included in Gerontology Certificate Program’s assessment as soon as it is reinstated.

Just as in the undergraduate programs, some of the Graduate Certificate Program Outcomes exceed the basic standards identified by AHGE in that we have implemented specific high impact learning applied assignments, activities, and experiences in all Major core courses to advance the applied science of the discipline. All courses include “writing intensive” level assignments and collaborative assignments, and direct application projects. Two courses use service learning and the internship a is closely supervised academic experience (course syllabus on the Gerontology website). These high impact learning experiences include specific direct application and evaluation of knowledge, skills, and services so students can demonstrate how they take and integrate learning into their practice.

8. Finally, what additional information would you like to share with the Senate Committee on Instructional Program Priorities regarding the program’s desired learning outcomes and assessment of their accomplishment?
Learning occurs at all levels and in all Programs with support from every aspect of an academic community. The following strengths identified for undergraduate student hold true for graduate students in the Certificate or Special Master’s Program and they help students achieve the expected Gerontology LO.

**Students**
- An active, involved, creative growing student body who keep trying to get an education that supports their goals to serve/work with elders
- Passionate students who are committed and willing to learn and apply learning - not just get a degree.

**Faculty & Staff**
- Highly qualified/dedicated long-term part time faculty members who “live and work” in the areas they teach and willingly go above and beyond expectations to enhance student learning and participate in programmatic development and implementation.
- Highly qualified/committed full time interdisciplinary faculty who actively participate in the maintenance and growth of the curriculum in addition to working in their own departments.
- Direct faculty involvement in all community-based programming that insures currency as well as achievement of LO.
- Skilled/dedicated/student-focused staff member.
- Creative/supportive College administration.

**Community**
- Interested/active community members serving on the Gerontology Program/Longevity Center Advisory Council who evaluate Program LO relation in to knowledge/ desired for employment.
- Agency supervisors who devote time/knowledge to student learning and evaluate progress toward LO accomplishment (provide formal and informal data) as well as provide feedback on employability of students they are working with.