1. Program Learning Outcome Assessed in AY 2007-08

For the academic year 2007-08, the Family and Consumer Sciences department completed an assessment of Program Learning Outcome # 3 – “Students who graduate with a baccalaureate degree in Family and Consumer Sciences will demonstrate analytical thinking and effective problem solving ability”.

2. Methodologies Used to Assess Program Learning Outcome

   a. Measures.

Program Learning Outcome # 3 was assessed both directly and indirectly in Fall 2007 and Spring 2008. The direct assessment was completed using a rubric to review randomly selected assignments completed by students in three different FACS courses. The assignments and courses were determined by faculty to be representative of the three main concentrations in FACS including:

   i. A critique assignment from FACS 139 – Global Apparel Marketing and Design (representing Apparel Marketing and Design)
   ii. A case study from FACS 154 – Issues in Parenting (representing Family Studies)
   iii. A lesson plan and review of topic from FACS 117 – Community Nutrition (representing Nutrition and Food/Dietetics)

The assessment rubric for this outcome was developed by adapting a publicly available rubric based on input and consensus from full-time faculty members in FACS. All full-time faculty members (7 members) were involved in finalizing the rubric and conducting reviews of student work from each of the three different courses described above. Independent reviews and completion of the rubric were conducted on an individual basis over a two week period. A follow-up faculty meeting was then scheduled to compile the results as a group, review and discuss the findings, and plan for anticipated changes resulting from the assessment. A total of 42 student assignments were assessed by 7 full-time faculty members (2 assignments from each of 3 concentrations).

An indirect partial assessment of Program Learning Outcome # 3 was also completed. Results were obtained from an exit survey provided to senior FACS students enrolled in FACS 168 – Senior Seminar. Students were asked to rate how well their FACS classes prepared them to “reflect upon experiences in the field and how these experiences related to concepts and theories in their specialization”. A total of 55 students completed the survey in Fall 2007 and 53 students completed it in Spring 2008.
b. Findings.

The direct and indirect assessments of Program Learning Outcome # 3 revealed strengths as well as areas requiring improvement. Specific elements related to how effectively the FACS program prepares students in the areas of analytical thinking and effective problem solving ability are detailed below.

c. Areas in which students are achieving expectations

It was found that FACS students are generally highly competent (average 81%) or mostly competent (19%) at clearly identifying a problem or issue. It is noteworthy however, that the competency in this skill varied by area of concentration with a range of 71% highly competent (Apparel Marketing and Design) to 93% highly competent in Nutrition and Food Dietetics.

Students are also highly competent (70%) or mostly competent (24%) at selecting and using appropriate methods and resources in their analysis and approach to a given problem. Again however, there is a range between concentrations (57% highly competent in Family Studies and Apparel Marketing and Design to 79% highly competent in Nutrition and Food).

d. Areas in which improvements are needed

It appears that FACS students are mostly competent (48%) and fewer are highly competent at integrating ideas into a coherent argument or solution. A range was present among concentrations with 57% of Apparel Marketing students being highly competent in this area while only 29% and 36% were highly competent in the Family Studies and Nutrition and Foods concentrations, respectively.

An area requiring significant improvement is the need to teach all FACS students to recognize limitations in their solutions to a given problem and to thoroughly considering alternate points of view. It was recognized during the assessment that the FACS program does not address these areas effectively in our students.

Furthermore, only 21% of our students appeared to be highly competent in applying new insights, depth and creativity to a given problem. Even though 61% of students were “mostly competent” in this area it was clear that a greater emphasis would need to be placed on this criterion in the future in order to improve student success.

The indirect assessment based on the senior exit survey showed that 17% of graduating FACS students strongly agreed that their FACS courses prepared them to “reflect upon experiences in the field and how these experiences related to concepts and theories in their specialization”, while 60% agreed and 19% were neutral.
3. **Anticipated Program Changes**

**Description of proposed changes**

At a followup faculty meeting, the results of the assessment for AY 2007-08 were discussed including proposed changes to improve the specific elements in Program Learning Outcome #3, in which students were less than “highly competent”.

As a starting point, faculty discussion centered on the need to improve the ability of our students to recognize limitations and provide alternate points of view in their assessment of a problem and development of a solution. The current assessment revealed that assignments provided to FACS students often do not emphasize the need to address limitations and alternate viewpoints during completion of the assignment even though these may be an important component of in-class discussions. Plans were made to immediately revise the three reviewed assignments to include a graded component that would require students to consider limitations and alternate points of view.

In addition, it was also agreed that it is important to develop in-class activities such as debates and “pro and con” analyses to foster these skills. In Fall 2008 the curriculum in each concentration will be reviewed in area meetings to determine which specific courses are appropriate for adaptation to address the above as well as work on improving integration skills and emphasizing creative approaches in the analytical thought process.

The assessment revealed a disparity between competencies of students in different concentrations in FACS related to Program Learning Outcome #3 and the need for a comprehensive approach in a capstone course shared by all concentrations. The integration of the various specialties within FACS has been an ongoing challenge for the Department. Presently, all students are required to take FACS 50 – a lower division course and FACS 168 – Senior Seminar. In FACS 168 there is a current problem-analysis assignment and discussion shared by all students. A random sample of these completed assignments was reviewed by faculty members but the consensus was that the depth of the current approach does not appear to adequately address Program Learning Outcome # 3 related to analytical thinking and effective problem solving. In Fall 2008 faculty will review the potential for developing a more in-depth approach and reviewing the content of FACS 168 as a possible course for improving and effectively assessing analytical thinking and problem solving ability.

**Determination of future achievement of results**

The ongoing assessment process in accordance with the FACS department assessment plan will be important in determining if the proposed changes are helpful in achieving the results desired result of improving analytical thinking and problem solving ability in FACS students. However, short-term follow-up regarding performance in problem
solving activities, debates etc. in class will also be effective in determining if students are exhibiting these skills. Faculty will be reporting on these activities at the annual curriculum in review in Spring 2009.

4. Other Assessment Activities Completed in AY 2007-08

The FACS department revised and streamlined the FACS Program Learning Outcomes and the Assessment Plan for the department with input from the campus and college assessment coordinators. In addition, the development of a rubric for analytical thinking and problem solving was completed and used in the current assessment of Program Learning Outcome # 3 as described above.

5. Planned Assessment Activities

The FACS Department will be participating in a Program Review in AY 2008-09 and has elected to adopt a pilot format that places a great emphasis on assessment as well as an area of focused inquiry for the department. Assessment will address the integration of the different concentrations in the FACS with a plan to complete a review of Program Learning Outcome #6 stating that students who graduate with a baccalaureate in FACS will have an “awareness of the integration of the different concentrations in FACS and their importance to humans as individuals and groups as a whole”. The integration of the various concentrations with a particular emphasis on the role and future direction of the Family Studies concentration will be an area of focused inquiry for the program review.

In addition, the department will formally review the current indirect assessment tool (senior exit survey) for alignment with the revised Program Learning outcomes and develop an assessment tool to be used in the planned assessment of Program Learning Outcome #6.

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