Program Improvement Summary Report
Program: Interdisciplinary Programs and Minors

Academic Affairs

Crime, Law, & Society - Minor

Program Improvement Summary

Summary of assessment results with focus on program improvement (to be shared publicly)

The required internship, CRLS 400, is the greatest strength of the Crime, Law and Society program, giving students the opportunity to apply what they learn in their coursework, develop a professional social network and gain insights about the nature of the work they are contemplating. Examples of Internship sites over the years included the City of Charleston Police Department, the Public Defender’s office, the Solicitor’s office, the Department of Juvenile Justice, the Department of Probation, Parole and Pardon Services, the Juvenile Arbitration Program, the Dee Norton Lowcountry Children’s Center, the National Crime Victims Center, Guardian Ad Litem, and the SLED Behavioral Science unit. The internship is a high-impact learning experience and serves as a capstone to the minor. Students keep a journal in addition to structured writing assignments. These require them to think critically about their experience and its relationship to their academic courses. Assignments include topics such as an organizational analysis, a journal article review, a research proposal, a case study, and application of criminological theory. Students also develop their own goals and objectives for the internship and prepare a resume. Interns meet as a group several times during the semester and the director makes site visits as well in order to best mentor and advise the interns. A representative from the Career Center spoke to the interns about how to present their internship on a resume.

In Fall of 2013 there were 6 Crime Law and Society minors registered for Internship credit. Of those 6 students 100% met expectation and two (33%) exceeded expectations. Students were asked to reflect on their internship experience by answering the following question for assessment: “You have learned various criminological theories. Which do you think is most relevant to what you’ve seen in your internship? Why? How do you see this theory applied to practice?” Given that 100% of the students were able to “meet expectations” in their ability to tie theory to practice in the real world, the combination of assignments that require them to think critically about their experience appear to be working. That being said, the student responses will be used to further focus the course goals and objectives to refine this high impact learning experience.

Environmental Studies - Minor

Program Improvement Summary

Summary of assessment results with focus on program improvement (to be shared publicly)

Currently, based on analyzing student responses to key questions in the key content areas of 1) climate change and air pollution; 2) food and water issues; and 3) ecological concepts, we are currently meeting our objectives (students scored above our 80% benchmark in all three content areas). However, our scores in the third area, ecological concepts, were below the level of the other two areas and could be improved. This will be a focus during the next academic year.

The best way to improve the quality of instruction in ENVT 200, and to improve the ENVT minor more generally, would be to hire additional roster faculty to fill our ever-increasing staffing needs. During the past two academic years, 7 out of 16 teaching slots in ENVT were filled by either adjuncts, visiting professors, or staff from the Sustainability Office. As the demand for environmental courses continues to increase, we must have additional faculty support or we will be forced to continue staffing these classes with temporary employees. Although I continue to be impressed by the quality and dedication of our temporary instructors, continued staffing using this model is not in the best long-term interest of our environmental studies program.
Environmental Studies - MS

Program Improvement Summary

Summary of assessment results with focus on program improvement (to be shared publicly)
1. A continuing concern for the MES program is the increasing competition we are facing to recruit the top students. Our limited scholarship/assistantship options leave us at a distinct disadvantage. In this regard, our recruiting efforts are also limited to only what the Graduate School can do on our behalf. We are especially interested in increasing the cultural, ethnic and age diversity of our program.

2. We continue to have a great need for a full time faculty member in the area of Environmental Policy. It is critical at this time to provide an additional faculty line in which the professor would provide at least three or four MES courses per academic year. The college has emphasized the "interdisciplinary perspective" in Strategic planning (see Strategy 3) however despite the MES program's interdisciplinary nature we have had almost no help in this important area.

3. The addition of Dr. Victoria Vazquez as the Program Coordinator has given us an extra new student adviser to assist in improving early matches of students to professors. Dr. Callahan has also initiated skype interviews early on to improve our selection process for new students.

Film Studies - Minor

Program Improvement Summary

Summary of assessment results with focus on program improvement (to be shared publicly)
As part of its program improvement process, the Film Studies Program will collect data from future assessment plans, analyze these data, and implement necessary changes. This process will include ongoing conversations between Film Studies roster faculty and other administrators. The program steering committee will meet regularly to identify issues, analyze assessment data, and offer any needed training, technical assistance, and mentoring to roster faculty to ensure quality of instruction.

Neuroscience - Minor

Program Improvement Summary

Summary of assessment results with focus on program improvement (to be shared publicly)

Goal/SLO 1 Conceptual Knowledge
Neuroscience students in the core courses (Principles of Neurobiology, Neurobiology and Behavior) were evaluated for their ability to demonstrate familiarity with the major concepts, theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and historical developments in neuroscience. Using final exam grades as a metric, 75% of the neuroscience students in Principles of Neurobiology (n=20) scored above 75% with an average of 80%. We are encouraged that the majority of the neuroscience students are doing well using this metric, however, the need for both pre and post course data will be an essential improvement to our assessment. This will allow us to determine specific knowledge gaps and adjust the courses accordingly.

Goal/SLO 2 Research Methods
Neuroscience students were evaluated for their ability to gain a familiarity of laboratory techniques used in neuroscience research. In the senior capstone course, students read, discussed and presented primary literature for which they needed to understand and explain detailed methodology to the class. 100% of the students were able to demonstrate a strong understanding of numerous neuroscience techniques scoring 90% or better. Students appear to be very successful in this learning outcome. However, we plan to develop a survey to assess impact of the course on this learning objective.

Goal/SLO 3 Technical Writing Skills
Students were expected to demonstrate they can effectively communicate using technical writing styles recommended by APA or MLA regarding empirically-based papers. This semester we assessed scientific writing through the Bachelor's Essay, a requirement of the Neuroscience Minor. While all students scored above 90% on their written essay, we were able to identify several weaknesses in their empirical writing ability including visual presentation and written description of results. We plan to assess empirical writing skills earlier in the neuroscience curriculum (junior year core courses) and use these data as well as that of the current semester to guide content of the Neuroscience Seminar for Spring 2015.

Final Summary
We have already observed some weaknesses in our curriculum, but need to gather pre and post course data to determine details regarding student improvement in these objectives to identify target points for program improvement. In the spring of 2015, we will include instruction on data presentation in the Bachelor's Essay to improve the technical writing skills of our students. Over the next year, we will initiate both pre and post course assessment for the courses discussed above.
Performing Arts - MAT

Program Improvement Summary

Summary of assessment results with focus on program improvement (to be shared publicly)
Student numbers in the Performing Arts M.A.T. Choral program dropped off this past year indicating significant problems in recruiting and faculty participation. Considering the outstanding success of our graduates and the tremendous support for the program from the community we feel justified in fighting to keep this innovative program alive. As a consequence, we plan to significantly increase our recruiting efforts with the aid of the Graduate School and emphasize our South Carolina Graduate Scholars award which provides a $5000 scholarship for in state students.

We are very enthusiastically opening the new Theatre Education M.A.T. option for recruiting new students during the 2015 assessment year. Our major goal for 2015 is to hire a full time faculty member with a terminal degree in music or theater education. We desperately need one new person in each of these areas. Since this entire M.A.T. program is interdisciplinary (Strategic plan strategy 3), we are counting on the three primary schools (HEHHP, Arts and Graduate) to work together with us to recruit top new faculty.

Pre-actuarial Studies - Minor

Program Improvement Summary

Summary of assessment results with focus on program improvement (to be shared publicly)

Sciences and Mathematics for Teachers - MEd

Program Improvement Summary

Summary of assessment results with focus on program improvement (to be shared publicly)

Using external grants, summer offerings and an increased number of hybrid and online courses we have been able to successfully address the specific needs of the regional science teaching community. While the SMFT program is strong and has an outstanding positive impact on South Carolina education, we need to increase the number of students, course electives and scholarship/grant support for students.

Finally, the Service and Outreach efforts of our SMFT professors including eight grant supported content workshops have been enthusiastically received by area K-12 teachers in math and science.