

SPEA BS in Public Affairs

Program Assessment Plan (completed November 2005)

I. IDENTIFIED MEASURABLE EDUCATIONAL GOALS

Mission Statement

The BSPA degree provides a liberal arts education with a professional orientation that will empower students as critical thinkers, effective written and oral communicators, and entry level managers in public, nonprofit, and private organizations.

Goals

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the basic concepts of bureaucratic organizations and service delivery.
2. Demonstrate the ability to analyze public policy issues as they pertain to managing an organization.
3. Relate management concepts learned in the classroom to workplace situations.
4. Exhibit a basic understanding of how bureaucracies are organized and limited, budgeting, public finance, human resource issues, and public law.
5. Demonstrate competency in oral and written communication.

II. METHODOLOGY FOR MEASURING THE ATTAINMENT OF GOALS

The BSPA program assesses students through evaluating their work on course assignments which include short papers, projects, presentations, research papers, and exams. In V170 Introduction to Public Affairs, V263 Public Management, and V264 Urban Structure and Policy, students become familiar with bureaucratic organization, American public policy systems and processes, how public services are determined and delivered, and the basic theories of leadership and management. The research and statistics courses (V370 and K300) require students to demonstrate the ability to apply basic research concepts to questions in and debates about public policy. Assignments in the other core courses require students to demonstrated their understanding of public budgeting and finance (V371 and V372), human resources (variety of courses), and public law (V376).

We implemented an alumni survey that will be conducted every three years beginning in 2005. Question topics include:

- General feedback on classroom experiences
- Comments on applicability of courses to the workplace
- Evaluation of advising
- Strengths and weaknesses of the program
- Employment goals
- Plans for graduate education

We complete a self-study and external review of this program every five years, last completed in the spring 2002.

The SPEA Community Advisory Council serves as a proxy for employers with representatives of the public, nonprofit, and private sectors. In meetings twice each semester, this group reviews program goals, meets with the faculty, helps develop marketing strategies, and evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of the program.

We examine the course evaluations for each course in the BSPA core and concentration, particularly the responses to open-ended questions. Faculty members use this information to make adjustments to courses.

For the two prerequisite courses (V170 and V263), we are in the process of developing a set of basic content and skill components that students will be expected to satisfactorily accomplish. This will be adopted by fall 2006 and will include a rubric for student assessment.

We plan to develop a senior exit survey in time for trial implementation in the spring 2006.

We are also exploring the possibility of an on-line assessment instrument for faculty advising. This may be implemented by the end of the spring 2006 semester.

III. PROCESS FOR USING ASSESSMENT FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT

Reports on all assessment activities are shared with the faculty and Dean.

Respondents to the Alumni Survey indicated that more core courses need to be offered in the evenings; over the next two years, every core course and many electives will be added to the evening rotation. A weakness in helping students prepare for careers and job searches was also identified; we have changed the way student advisors are assigned and have discussed ways to bring career exploration into various courses (particularly in V170 and V263).

We are aware of inconsistencies in the way V170 and V263 are taught and plan to remedy that problem as described above.

IV. PARTICIPATION OF ALL CONSTITUENCIES

Faculty

All full-time faculty are involved in the development of assessment activities through discussions at faculty meetings and at the annual retreat. Our goal is for adjunct instructors to meet once each semester with the Dean and faculty.

Students

Students are involved by participating in course evaluations and surveys.

Alumni

Alumni have the opportunity to participate in the newly developed survey and in the Alumni Council which meets once each semester with the Dean.

Community Advisory Council

The CAC meets four times each year to review policy, plans, help with faculty recruitment, and assist in fund-raising.

V. RECORD KEEPING

All assessment documents are kept in the Dean's office and, when appropriate, forwarded to the IUSB Assessment Committee.