

MEMORANDUM

TO: Deans and Department Heads/Chairs

FROM: Jim Coffman

RE: December 1st Deadline for Program Degree-level Student Learning Outcomes

DATE: October 20, 2003

In the beginning of July 2003, a memo was sent to the Deans regarding the implementation of recommendations from the Student Learning Outcomes Task Force. One of the Task Force's recommendations was that student learning outcomes be identified for all degree programs offered at Kansas State University by December 1, 2003. Since July, faculty and professional staff across campus have been engaging in assessment discussions and activities. This is very important and will help the university, as a whole, move forward with the improvement of student learning.

This memo serves as a reminder about the December deadline and as a means of encouraging departments to submit their materials at any time they are ready to do so; *there is no need to wait until December*. While the initial focus will be on program majors, departments should be looking ahead to working on similar lists of outcomes for minors, second majors, certificates, etc. Faculty are encouraged to contact and utilize the assessment resources that are available on campus:

- Cia Verschelden
- Members of the Early Adopters Assessment Committee (chair: Cia Verschelden)
- Ron Downey and Patricia Marsh (Assessment and Program Review)
- www.k-state.edu/apr (assessment materials, tools, examples, etc.)
 - www.ksu.edu/apr/Learning/HowTo.htm (specific examples on writing learning outcomes)

Given the various discussions of this topic across campus, some confusion may exist as to what is expected for the December 1st deadline. What is expected is a completed "Cover Sheet for Degree-level Student Learning Outcomes" for each degree program. The cover sheet will include signatures from the department head/chair, the dean of the college, and the dean of the Graduate School for graduate level programs that are submitted. Within the cover sheet, departments will identify for each degree program:

- the degree program title, which will be matched with the CIP designation code for that program;
- faculty contact(s) for the list of student learning outcomes;
- type of degree associated with the submitted learning outcomes;
- the actual list/attachment of student learning outcomes for that degree program; and
- the level of faculty and/or staff discussion of the submitted learning outcomes.

Additional suggestions regarding student learning outcomes from the Task Force were to: (a) have student learning outcomes identified and implemented for each major course with the degree program; (b) identify the exact assessment methods to be used to assess student learning outcomes at the course and/or degree level; (c) connect degree-level student learning outcomes to the college and university wide student learning outcomes.

These suggestions are encouraged but are not required for the December deadline. They are viewed as part of the natural progression of assessment activities across departments and colleges on campus. In addition, departments should start connecting on-going curriculum changes with the development and assessment of student learning outcomes for their degree programs (e.g., providing reasons for the changes and how the changes relate to the learning outcomes for the degree program). If your department has adopted these suggestions and would like to include the information in the materials being submitted this year, then feel free to include them.

Enclosed is an example from the Social Work degree program illustrating how they connected their degree's student learning outcomes to the proposed university-wide student learning outcomes and where assessment methods will be implemented to assess these learning outcomes.

This will be a labor-intensive process, headed up by the faculty members in each academic degree area. However, it will be time well spent, with the goal of leading us to overall institutional improvement. The educational services we provide to our undergraduate and graduate students are things we do each time we teach a course/lab or alter our curricula. The major changes we anticipate with this new initiative are that the process will be fully specified, organized, documented, and focused on student learning. As we move forward over the next several years in implementing a comprehensive academic assessment process, it is likely that periodic honing of the procedures and processes will be needed. We need to be, and remain, flexible and responsive.

Discussions have been occurring with the units under Institutional Advancement as to the best strategies for integrating student life, student services, and student affairs into the academic assessment initiatives. These areas are of equal importance to the learning opportunities K-State provides to its students.

Please contact Ron Downey or me if you have questions.

Enclosures

cc: VP Institutional Advancement, Ron Downey, Al Cochran, Cia Verschelden, and Patricia Marsh