

ASSESSMENT REPORT FY2012

Program: Community Development Certificate **Department:** GSEA

Assessment Instruments and Outcomes Being Measured

Three assessment instruments are used to assess student learning: *student self-assessment*, *program assessment*, and a *capstone course*. The first instrument, *student self-assessment*, is for indirect assessment of learning, while the latter two are for direct assessment of learning. The *student self-assessment* instrument surveys student opinions about how much and what specific things student have learned during a specific period of time. The instrument consists of open-ended questions and closed-ended Likert-style survey questions.

The *Program assessment* instrument consists of five essay questions and students have to answer any of the first three and one of the remaining two questions. The assessment is to be delivered as part of Test #1 in GEOG 5530 (Neighborhood Development). The *capstone course*, *Geog 5550, Seminar in Community Development*, involves the creation, design, and implementation of a community development study project involving working closely with a community development organization. A **project portfolio** and a **poster** approved by the instructor of the course must be submitted for a successful completion of the capstone course and the Graduate Certificate in Community Development.

Both the *Program assessment* and the *capstone* project assessment instruments measure the following outcomes:

1. Explain the social and economic processes that affect the dynamics and growth of American cities;
2. Explain how cities are governed and the role that public planning and community development plays within the governance structure;
3. Demonstrate familiarity with the history, theories, and practices of community organizing and community organizations;
4. Demonstrate a familiarity with the history, theories, and practices of community development and community economic development;
5. Use the methods and tools for analyzing the state of cities and their neighborhoods;
6. Design and complete a community development-related research and/or action project.

Methods of Assessment

The *student self-assessment* instrument is distributed to students and students are asked to complete and return them to their instructor. The **program assessment** instrument was administered students in the graduate section of the Neighborhood Development class (GEOG 5530) as part of the spring 2012 final exam; the assessment is based on answers to three essay questions. As indicated above, the *capstone course*, *Geog 5550, Seminar in Community Development*, involves the creation, design, and implementation of a community development study project involving working closely with a community development organization. A **project portfolio** and a **poster** approved by the instructor of the course must be submitted for a successful completion of the capstone course and the Graduate Certificate in Community Development.

Assessment Findings and Improved Student Learning

Although some of the questions in this test instrument are open-ended, a judgment is made by the assessment coordinator whether responses by a particular student would indicate *satisfaction* or *dissatisfaction*. If responses to the questions by the majority of the self-assessing students indicate *satisfaction*, the program gets a *satisfactory* grade. If responses to the questions by the majority of the self-assessing students indicate *dissatisfaction*, the program gets *unsatisfactory* grade. Overall, the program received better than a satisfactory grade. Included on the list of things that students said they could do compared to the previous year were that they could apply GIS to actual real-life situations and community analysis, that they had learned they could do a lot to help their communities, that they had a desire to be more involved in their communities, that they had more hunger for knowledge, that they were more self-motivated, etc.

As pointed out earlier, the **program assessment** test was administered students in the graduate section of the Neighborhood Development class (GEOG 5530) as part of the spring 2012 final exam. There were 11 students in the class. For seven of these students GEOG 5530 was their first course within the community development sequence. For four students, this was their second course. Overall, the results of the assessment were the following: 5 received a grade of “A”; 5 received a grade of “B”; and 1 received a grade of C. Among students for whom this was their first class in the sequence, 4 received a grade of A, 2 received a grade of B, and 1 received a grade of C. Among students for whom this was their second course in the sequence, 4 received a grade of A and 1 received a grade of B. Thus, though the sample was small, it appears that students in their second course had somewhat greater comprehension of the question than those in their first course.

One student completed a capstone project for the Community Development Certificate Program during the 2011-2012 academic year. Overall, the student received a B in her project. The project was well conceived and data collection for it was well carried out. However, the final project lacked depth of analysis and would need some improvements to be delivered to a potential client.

Decision-making Using Findings

Regarding results for the **program assessment** test, since this was the first time the test was given, and since students generally passed, it is recommended that no changes be put into place until at least after the test is given again (during summer or fall semester, 2013).

This was the third time that the Community Development **capstone** was taught and the student that completed the course during the 2011/2012 academic year was the fourth student to graduate from the program. Based on the assessment results, a decision was made that the community development seminar needs to be restructured somewhat, with somewhat less focus on general readings about current issues in community development and somewhat more focus on the capstone project itself. This restructuring will take place the 2012/2013 academic year.

Faculty will continue to modify and improve assignments/exercises to improve student learning.

Demonstrating Student Learning

Student responses to questions in the student self-assessment instrument and results of the two direct assessment of learning tests clearly demonstrate student satisfaction and achievement of the student learning outcomes of the program.

Publicizing Student Learning

The Geography unit of the Department of Geography, Sociology, History, African American Studies, and Anthropology has published program outcomes, assessment plans, summaries of assessment activities and results for the previous three assessment periods and it will do the same with regard to assessment findings and decisions based on assessment findings for this assessment period.

Accomplishments and Challenges

Interest in the community development certificate program is growing. However, students come to the program with a variety of backgrounds and levels of knowledge about urban issues. It will be important to assess how backgrounds incoming students affect success in the program.