

## ASSESSMENT REPORT AY2012-2013

**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 and 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. This project should tie together the skills learned in the community development program as a whole to culminate the program.

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 is designed to be administered to students taking the Neighborhood Development class (GEOG 5530) as part of the final exam of the course. The course was not offered during the 2012/2013 academic year and, therefore, there is no report regarding this assessment instrument for the 2012/2013 academic year.

In spring 2013, four students took the Seminar in Community Development class which involves a capstone project for the Certificate in Community Development. Two of the four projects were judged to be of **superior or excellent** quality and received a grade of "A." These projects were well written, clear projects showing a clear understanding of the community development literature and techniques. Of the two, one stood out as **superior**. This project was particularly well crafted and carried out. Both of these projects were good examples of community development work and should, after perhaps one more draft, serve the students well in marketing their community development skills. The remaining two projects were judged to be **unsatisfactory**. Both received a grade of "C+." The projects differed in terms of their issues. One project was a well thought out but it was not well written and, therefore, requires significant revision to bring it up to an acceptable level. The second project was completed by a student whose work is usually good, but the student was switching back and forth between two project topics and ended up not completing neither project successfully.

### **Decision-making Using Findings**

Two of the four projects that were completed successfully spring 2013 would not stand on their own as marks of the success of the program. While successfully completion of the capstone project has to do with efforts of individual students, it appears that the students in general have difficulty with large projects, such as the capstone project. The Community Development certificate capstone in particular appears to be difficult because it is a relatively practical project within an academic program. The recommendation coming out of this is that faculty should revisit the capstone project requirements to try to set a more realistic goal for the project.

### **Demonstrating Student Learning**

Interest in the community development certificate program is growing. Previously, a total number of only four students completed the Community Development capstone project and thus the Community Development program, i.e., over a period of five years. In spring 2013, four students took the capstone course and two completed the capstone project and thus the certificate successfully. The two students who did not complete their projects successfully are expected to work on their projects and successfully complete their projects in the fall 2013 semester.

### **Publicizing Student Learning**

The Geography unit of the Department of Geography, Sociology, History, African American Studies, and Anthropology has published program outcomes, assessment plans, and the assessment report at its departmental web site.

### **Accomplishments and Challenges**

Although enrollment in the Community Certificate program is growing, the enrollment number need to continue to grow. For this to happen, faculty need to market the program more aggressively, and faculty plans to do that starting in the fall 2013 semester.