

Integrative Health Studies Program Learning Outcomes Assessment Overview - 10.2015

The M.A. degree program in Integrative Health Studies has established biweekly faculty and staff departmental meetings for the first time in fall 2016, now that there are two half-time core faculty to meet with the one full-time core Chair and Program Manager. They address curriculum design, student concerns, extra-curricular opportunities, guest lecture series, retreat agendas, expanding internship sites, and reflect and refine the methods for PLOs assessments.

The program just completed a Program Review last year, and finalized the Memo of Understanding this fall. Several items regarding diversity and inclusion became apparent, and faculty and staff are establishing a student diversity committee to further the goals throughout the program. This is in alignment with our PLO for multicultural competency. We also discuss as a faculty and staff creative ways to advance the diversity training among our adjunct faculty (six individuals) who never seem to make it to the formal diversity trainings offered at CIIS. This remains a challenge within IHL.

There is also an ongoing dialogue about how we can make the required coursework a more integrated, coherent, whole, refining how we are providing introductory, intermediate and advanced courses that bring students along in a step-by-step fashion toward the five chief competencies. We discovered that there were too many introductory type courses, and not enough emphasis on advancement of knowledge and skills for professional training. We found in our discussions that some faculty had acquiesced, within too many supposed “advanced” courses, to a few under-performing students and lowered expectations for academic rigor; we also found that there may have been some grade inflation as a result. An IHL PLO on scholarship needed to be reinforced, along with distributing the curricular map to all faculty, emphasizing where their courses were situated on the progression scale.

Another way in which we visit PLOs is through the mandatory faculty advising sessions each student receives each semester. We have developed a PLO rubric that accompanies the advising sheet, and we ask students to critically reflect on the development of their PLO competencies. Our ongoing work in developing a relevant health and science-based comprehensive exam started last year, and expects to be completed this March 2016. This has been a large undertaking involving discussions and study with both core and adjunct faculty.

Our next discussions aim to reflect on ways to support more academic writing within the first semester besides relying on the Center for Writing and Scholarship. We uncovered a growing number of incoming students who express anxiety about academic writing. We are looking at the IHL PLO on scholarship, and may adjust objectives to reflect the report writing within professional settings (wellness programs, hospitals, clinics) for the case write-ups, business plans, and strategic plan updates expected of graduates.