

**THE PROCESS OF EVALUATION OF  
ACADEMIC PROGRAMS**

**COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES**

**DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY**

**2002-2003**

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## **Introduction**

From time to time the University is required by accrediting agencies and other constituencies to demonstrate that degree programs are appropriate for college level work. Some programs (art, chemistry, music, social work, teacher education) respond to standards of professional accrediting agencies. Others have no professional standards for accreditation.

Degree programs that are not accredited by a professional association, rely on the skills and expertise of the chair and faculty to evaluate undergraduate and graduate degree programs to determine that they are appropriate and up-to-date and that they prepare our students for their chosen careers.

Some of the common methods of evaluation include the following:

- Comparison with peer institutions
- Contact with faculty at other institutions
- Contact with professional associations
- Activity of our faculty with professional associations
- Activity of our faculty with colleagues at other institutions
- Responses from alumni who are successful in their careers
- Discussions with potential employers
- Success of our students with college-level textbooks and other instructional materials
- Keeping informed of trends through professional journals, meetings, etc.

## **PROGRAMS EVALUATED BY EXTERNAL ACCREDITING AGENCIES**

**Art** (National Association of Schools of Art and Design)

**Chemistry** (American Chemical Society)

**Music** (National Association of Schools of Music)

**Social Work** (Council on Social Work Education)

**Art Education** (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education)

**Biology Education** (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education)

**Chemistry Education** (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education)

**English Education** (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education)

**Foreign Language Education**(National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education)

**General Science Education** (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education)

**History Education** (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education)

**Mathematics Education** (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education)

**Music Education** (National Association of Schools of Music)

**Social Science Education** (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education)

## **DEPARTMENT OF AEROSPACE STUDIES**

All AFROTC course materials are developed and provided by the Air Force to prepare college level students for a full career. The courses orient the student on the mission, language, customs and courtesies, programs, opportunities, leadership development, benefits, locations, and overall requirements of life in the Air Force. Courses are updated roughly every two years based on changing Air Force requirements, student and faculty critiques, and world events. Courses lay the foundation for a successful career as Air Force officers.

## **DEPARTMENT OF ART**

The Art Department's curriculum meets all National Association of Schools of Art and Design standards for degree programs in higher education. Periodic accreditation evaluation involves a self-study process in which the curriculum is re-examined to ensure its validity and adherence to the agency's standards. The department is visited by an accrediting team, which looks closely at the curriculum and offers suggestions for improvement when necessary. Additionally, the Association encourages departments to incorporate future planning as a regular device to address changes within the profession.

The Art Department has several methods of determining that programs are up to date and appropriate for higher education. All studio concentration majors must complete a thesis process that involves writing a thesis, and creating and exhibiting a body of work that demonstrates a professional level of artistic development. The thesis advisor and thesis committee use the meetings with the student, the final thesis defense, and the result of the student's artistic production as a way of determining if changes or improvements to the program are necessary. Copies of the student's thesis and visual documentation of the work are kept on file as a reference source.

In graphic design, students are required to intern with a design agency for 240 hours. The internship employer is required to evaluate the student and is asked to offer suggestions for improvement. The student keeps a journal and writes a reflective evaluation of the internship, their preparation, and ways to improve the curriculum. The graphic design faculty use this information along with the student exit interview to evaluate the courses and program. Internship journals, and graphic design student portfolios are stored in the department for referral.

## **DEPARTMENT OF AUDIOLOGY AND SPEECH PATHOLOGY**

The undergraduate program in Audiology/Speech Pathology is current and has a coherent course of study, as shown by the following:

1. The curriculum was modified during the past two years, reducing the practicum component and adding content courses such as "Neurogenic Communication Disorders" (whose importance has grown tremendously in our profession in recent years) and two in "Sign Language" (a valuable tool for speech-language pathologists).

2. The sequencing of courses and corresponding course numbers have been changed to reflect a more logical system for matriculation of students.

3. Each student completes a Student Study Plan (SSP) in the first semester of enrollment, so that transfer credit (if applicable) is evaluated and students can see clearly what they must do to complete the Program.

4. These modifications were based on information from the accreditation guidelines from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. Although that organization only accredits graduate programs, our graduates go on to those programs and undergraduate preparation is crucial in meeting those requirements. Information and suggestions have also been obtained from two organizations in which our Program has membership: the Council of Academic Programs in Communication Sciences and Disorders, and the National Academy of Preprofessional Programs in Communication Sciences and Disorders. Additional information has come to the AUP Department Chair informally through attendance at Conferences and Meetings of those three organizations.

5. The faculty have appropriate credentials for offering the courses in this curriculum (see AUP faculty vitae).

6. Graduates of the Program have been successful in admission to and completion of, accredited graduate programs in Speech-Language Pathology, e.g., in the Spring, 2002, all graduates of this Program were admitted to an accredited graduate program. Also, the Chair of the Department of Communication Disorders of the flagship university (U. of Mississippi) of this state has made a special visit to our Department to recruit our students.

## **DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES**

The Department of Biological Sciences offers four degree options: BSE in Biology Education; BS in Biology; BS in Environmental Science; and MSNS in Biology (for science educators).

The BSE in Biology Education and the MSNS in Biology are NCATE approved programs.

The BS in Environmental Science is designed to educate students interested primarily in environmental biology and environmental chemistry. This is a very diverse area in terms of employment opportunities. Because accreditation is not available, we must assure appropriateness through maintaining general awareness of requirements of other academic programs and employers. Our strategy is to provide a strong central core of general biology and chemistry and then the opportunity for specialization in accordance with a student's interest area. We utilize information that is generally available to us through job announcements and in graduate program entrance requirements. Additionally, many of us belong to professional societies where workforce professionals make known the various requirements for positions in their respective areas. Attendance by our faculty at state, regional, or national meetings of these associations provide for this exchange of information with professionals as well as other educators. Trade journals and other publications carry job listings that specify requirements. We offer an environmental internship program that also brings us into contact with professionals who use our students in that capacity. The feedback from those professionals provide important guidance relative to the appropriateness of our student's preparation. Finally, we receive feedback from our graduates who express satisfaction with their degree relative to their ability to find related employment.

The BS in Biology is a generalist degree with options in pre-medicine, plant sciences, and industrial biology. Again, this degree does not lend itself to certification. The strategy has been to offer a core curriculum and elective opportunities that generally meet the guidelines published in several national publications that focus on the standards for biological literacy. The core is generally that which you would expect to find in any general biology program, with electives offered that maintain a broad exposure to biology. The student may additionally elect courses that will lead to preparation for entrance into graduate school, health professions schools, or employment. Specified requirements for students planning to enter graduate programs in various disciplines of biology (biotechnology, botany, zoology, etc.), thus provide the guidance for what diverse courses we should offer in our program. Likewise, students entering into health

professions are required to complete specific requirements at our institution prior to application (for example, medical schools). We therefore, stay in constant contact with professional schools to make sure that we offer appropriate courses as part of our biology program. The industrial biology option is aimed at preparing students for careers in industry. We maintain contact with local industries as well as national trade journals to assess the course requirements, skills, and knowledge required in applicants for such positions. Our acceptance rate of graduates into health professions programs, industrial and other workforce positions, and graduate schools attest to the appropriateness of the program offerings in biology.

## **DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY**

The responsibility for maintaining programs appropriate for college-level work begins with the department's curriculum committee. The committee's primary source of data has been a survey of history alumni conducted every five years. Several on the survey questionnaire ask alumni to evaluate the adequacy of course offerings and program requirements in light of their experience since graduation. The most recent survey led to several revisions in course offerings and degree requirements. This process is supplemented by individual faculty members' insights derived from contacts with colleagues at other institutions primarily, though not exclusively, through professional associations.

## **DIVISION OF LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE**

The Division of Languages and Literature's Curriculum Committee, made up of an overall chair and subcommittees (also with chairs) from each of the disciplines, plays a major role in maintaining a coherent and appropriate course of study. All proposals for curriculum changes are screened by this committee. Often changes originate within the subcommittees and are based on current innovations in the disciplines. Disciplines within the Division are: English, Foreign Languages (French, German, Spanish), Journalism, Philosophy, and Speech Communication. Forms documenting the process are on file in the Division office.

An annual survey of graduating seniors indicates how well graduates believe that the objectives of the various degree programs in the Division have been met. These are on file as well.

The NCATE study completed last year included a review by subject area disciplines, in our case the National Council for Teachers of English. Recommendations for curriculum changes were acted on and included adding courses in Young Adult Literature and World Literature.

## **DEPARTMENT OF MATHEMATICS**

The B.S.E. program meets the recommendations of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, which are used by NCATE for certification. Course syllabi contain objectives and the corresponding performance data and experiences for each objective. Other measures are the Math Specialty Test of the Praxis and STAI indicators.

The B.S. program is evaluated through the capstone course, MAT 490, questionnaires sent to employers of graduates, and questionnaires sent to our graduates who attend graduate school.

The pre-engineering program is evaluated by Mississippi State University and the performance of our students who transfer there. All courses in that program have been approved by MSU.

We no longer admit students to our graduate program as a result of student and program evaluations.

## **DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC**

We do a number of things. One is that we maintain national accreditation. This insures that we are teaching the music competencies that the National Association of Schools of Music deem essential. Outside visitors and an accreditation board examine every phase of our program.

We have sent out questionnaires to our graduates and their bosses to see if they felt that we taught them the skills necessary to do their jobs. We have had faculty members take the standardized tests required of music education graduates to insure that we are teaching the material necessary to pass these tests.

We note that our students make good teachers, that those who go to graduate schools do well in academic work. For those who perform, we have records of success there as well.

As a result of these assessments, we have changed out curriculum and what we teach, and where. We have also had a in depth look at our degree requirements and have changed them to be more in keeping with what we feel our graduates need to know.

We have also eliminated our masters' degree when we felt this was necessary.

## **DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICAL SCIENCES**

The Department of Physical Science offers a coherent course of study at the undergraduate level in chemistry for the Bachelor of Science degree. This course of study follows the one recommended by the American Chemical Society with several options to match the interests of the student. Our program of study is equivalent in depth and substance to similar course offerings at other colleges, both in state and out of state. Our students have experienced no difficulties in transferring courses or gaining acceptance at any graduate, health-care professional school.

The Department of Physical Sciences also offers a program of study at the graduate level in physical sciences for a Master of Natural Sciences degree. There are no specialized accrediting association for a graduate degree in natural sciences, but our graduate course offerings are accepted by the Mississippi Department of Education and by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) to meet certification requirements at area secondary schools and community colleges.

## **DIVISION OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

The undergraduate and graduate programs in the Division of Social Sciences are intended to provide a broad-based education for students in the field of social sciences. The undergraduate and graduate curriculum committees are responsible for program improvements and evaluations. This consists of periodic and systematic review of the following programs: 1) Bachelor of Arts in Political Science, 2) Bachelor of Science in Social Sciences, 3) Bachelor of Science in Social Science Education (NCATE approved), 4) Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice, 5) Master of Science in Community Development, 6) Master of Science in Criminal Justice, and 7) Master of Science in Social Science Education (NCATE approved). Each curriculum is examined to ensure its validity. Efforts aimed at program improvement include collaboration with other higher

education programs and faculty. These efforts also include joint substantive projects and comparative evaluation of degree programs with other social science scholars (see 2001-02 annual report).

The Division of Social Sciences has several methods of evaluating its programs. Every graduating major in the Division is required to complete a portfolio. This portfolio assessment helps the faculty members mark progress within their program and identify areas for future development. Each student is required to answer the following questions:

1. In what areas and to what extent has your social science knowledge developed since entering this program? Examples: courses or subject areas in which you have made the most progress, reading/practice outside the classroom that have social science significance.
2. What organizations or activities do you engage in outside the classroom in which you have to use social science skills? Examples: Social Science Club or professional organizations, civic organizations, internships, social movements, volunteer work, etc.
3. Cite an instance in which you encountered a common everyday issue with a social science explanation.
4. Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the degree program.

In addition to the questions above, students must attach a copy of a paper which they feel reflects their ability to organize and discuss social science ideas. This paper must be one they have completed for a course in the Division of Social Sciences. A copy of each student's portfolio is kept on file as a reference source. Information is also gained from students through their committee assignments in the Division. Students serve on the graduate curriculum committees and help make decisions on curriculum matters.

In addition, students are encouraged to engage in applied research and outreach activities with the assistance of faculty members. For example, students in the Community Development program work with the scientists and staff in the Center for Community Development (DSU) and numerous public and private organizations.

Faculty members in the Division also measure divisional programs by participating in regional, national and international scholarly organizations. In addition to providing an avenue for presenting research and developing networks, activity within these organizations allows faculty and students to keep informed on changes and "best practices" in the field.

In addition, faculty members who teach in the graduate programs (Master of Science in Community Development and Criminal Justice) formulate strategic partnerships with public and private organizations in the local community and at the larger regional, state and national levels. This provides faculty and students with the opportunity for making meaningful contributions to these areas. These partnerships also allow continuous

monitoring of the fit between program curriculum and the education and skills needed for people working in the field.

## **DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK**

The Department of Social Work has several methods used to evaluate the program.

1. The Council on Social Work Education (the social work accrediting body) evaluates the Department of Social Work every eight years.
2. We have an alumni survey that is mailed every three years. The department educational objectives are used as the items on the survey.
3. We have an employer survey that is mailed every three years. The department educational objectives are used as the items on this survey too. The employer survey is mailed to employers who rate our graduates, who have worked for them, as a group.
4. We used the Baccalaureate Evaluation Assessment Program (BEAP) developed by the Association of Baccalaureate Social Work Program Directors (BPD). This assessment is part of a national evaluation process that allows measurement of Delta State University (DSU) student responses against social work majors nationally. This process measures 12 of the 15 DSU social work department learning objectives. Students complete two different evaluation tools when they enter the program and two prior to graduation from the program. Their completed surveys are mailed to BPD where the results are analyzed and the results are sent to us.

How do we use this information? The faculty acts as a committee of the whole and forms the Outcome Evaluation Committee. We meet at the end of the fall and spring semesters. At the fall meeting, we review alumni and employer surveys (if completed) and BEAP data. At the end of the spring semester, we review BEAP data completed and student exit interview comments. Minutes of these meeting are kept on file, and we include in the minutes the evaluation tool used, the results of the evaluations, and how results are used to make changes in the program.