

2012-2013 Annual Program Assessment Report

Please submit report to your department chair or program coordinator, the Associate Dean of your College and the assessment office by Monday, September 30, 2013. You may submit a separate report for each program which conducted assessment activities.

College: Social and Behavioral Science

Department: Urban Studies and Planning

Program: N/A

Assessment liaison: Henrik Minassians (Chair), Kenya Covington and Ward Thomas (committee)

1. Overview of Annual Assessment Project(s). Provide a brief overview of this year's assessment plan and process.

During the past five years department's assessment efforts focused mainly on two general education courses, URBS 150 and 310. After fruitful assessment plan for 150 and 310 classes, the assessment shifted its focus to the Urban Studies and Planning students. However, in 2012, in collaboration with the CSBS college's assessment liaison and the department's assessment committee, the department faculty decided it would be more useful to focus on URBS 450 - Urban Problems Seminar. There are several compelling reasons for choosing this particular class. It is the capstone course for the department's majors and is required for graduation. Its prerequisites include the completion of a series of core URBS methods classes (URBS 340A, 340B, and 440) and senior standing. Assessing student performance in URBS 450 allows the department to be able to probe the level of student competencies and skills they have acquired in the prerequisites as they apply these to their research projects in the capstone class – URBS 450.

2. Assessment Buy-In. Describe how your chair and faculty were involved in assessment related activities. Did department meetings include discussion of student learning assessment in a manner that included the department faculty as a whole?

In the department meetings we did discuss which courses we plan to assess and what is the rationale behind it. Subsequently, a faculty member working with the assessment committee submitted possible rubric for assessing URBS 450. This rubric was reviewed and discussed by all department faculty and subsequently approved as the assessment rubric for URBS 450 class. Each year one section of this class is taught in fall and one in spring semester. It was agreed that the faculty teaching these classes in

Fall 2012 and Spring 2013 would use the assessment rubric in grading the final projects in their respective classes and these data would be used by the department to assist in evaluating the effectiveness of the prerequisites for the class as well as the URBS 450 class.

3. **Student Learning Outcome Assessment Project.** Answer items a-f for each SLO assessed this year. If you assessed an additional SLO, copy and paste items a-f below, BEFORE you answer them here, to provide additional reporting space.

3a. Which Student Learning Outcome was measured this year?

Student learning outcome #4: “Students demonstrate knowledge of appropriate methods and techniques to accomplish urban-related research”

3b. Does this learning outcome align with one or more of the university’s Big 5 Competencies? (Delete any which do not apply)

- Critical Thinking - Yes
- Oral Communication - Yes
- Written Communication –Yes
- Quantitative Literacy - Yes
- Information Literacy – Yes

3c. Does this learning outcome align with University’s commitment to supporting diversity through the cultivation and exchange of a wide variety of ideas and points of view? In what ways did the assessed SLO incorporate diverse perspectives related to race, ethnic/cultural identity/cultural orientations, religion, sexual orientation, gender/gender identity, disability, socio-economic status, veteran status, national origin, age, language, and employment rank?

URBS 450 requires students to conduct research on current urban problems. URBS 450 class taught by various faculty members focuses on theories of planning and the relationship between planning, race, gender and various community issues. Characteristically, these classes focus on issues and themes drawn largely from San Fernando Valley communities. By focusing on a wide range of possible communities in the local area, students are forced to confront the varying interpretations and perspectives of different ethnic, racial, social, and economic groups on urban life and community development. These factors require that students

realize that research approaches and methodologies must be “in-sync” or compatible with the communities and groups upon whom their research focuses and as such the class assignments insure that students incorporate diverse perspectives in their work.

3d. What direct and/or indirect instrument(s) were used to measure this SLO?

1. The presence of a research question/problem statement in student papers and work
2. Evidence of a literature review
3. Evidence of the effective communication of data sources, data collection methods
4. Effective presentation of data
5. Demonstrated linkages between the results of data collection and analysis and recommendations to solve a particular problem

3e. Describe the assessment design methodology: For example, was this SLO assessed longitudinally (same students at different points) or was a cross-sectional comparison used (Comparing freshmen with seniors)? If so, describe the assessment points used.

The department has elected to utilize a semi-longitudinal design. By assessing student performance in a research oriented capstone class in the department, the faculty is also able to assess how well prepared students were in the prerequisite classes. In this case these prerequisites are all methods classes where students build a research toolkit over three semesters. The ultimate goal is to assess whether students taking the required courses within the program and acquired skills from these courses are being effectively applied to the senior capstone courses such as URBS 450.

3f. Assessment Results & Analysis of this SLO: Provide a summary of how the results were analyzed and highlight findings from the collected evidence.

The results from the first academic year (two class sections were evaluated) demonstrated that the students assessed in URBS 450 either met or exceeded expectations in understanding and executing the research process. These results suggest that the skills acquired in URBS 340A, URBS 340B, and URBS 440 classes are retained and can be employed subsequently.

1. We utilized a rubric employing a Likert Scale of 1-3. On the scale, 1 is below expectation, 2 meets expectation, and 3 above expectation.
2. 39 students were assessed in URBS 450 classes – one in Fall 2012 and one in Spring 2013.

Specifics:

1. The evidence suggests that for students the syllabus was clearly designed and communicated the course requirements and rubrics utilized for assessing student work.
2. Evidence suggests that students were able clearly to identify a problem statement.
3. Evidence suggests that majority of students were able to create a literature review that effectively documented other research and knowledge pertinent to the research topic. However, the quality of structure requires more work and attention from faculty teaching URBS 340A and 340B.
4. Students clearly were able to utilize variety of data for presentation purposes. However, where they require more practice is in the area of clarifying the meaning of data during their presentations.
5. Evidence suggests that students were able to utilize collected data to make recommendations which addressed the problem statement (research question).
6. The area that students need greater amount of work and practice is the presentation of data in a clear form and their ability to link the data to the recommendations.
7. Student performance weak in some areas – especially in the organization of the literature review, in the variety of data, and in linking evidence to conclusions and recommendations.

Frequency– Fall 2012 & Spring 2013

Rubrics for SLO #4		Above expectations %	Meets expectations %	Below expectations %
Research question problem	Clarity	30.8	69.2	
Literature Review	Quality of sources	30.8	66.7	2.6
	Quality of Structure	17.9	61.5	20.5
Data Sources/Data collection Methods	Fittingness with the problem statement	20.5	74.4	5.1
Presentation of data	Variety	10.3	74.4	15.4

	Clarity	33.3	43.6	23.1
Recommendations/ Conclusions	Link to evidence	10.3	61.5	28.2
	Addressing of the problem	12.8	69.2	17.9

8. The data presented above suggests that in URBS 340A, 340B, and 440 students should receive more emphasis and practice in linking evidence to recommendations and addressing problems. In addition they need to work with students to improve quality of structure of the literature review in their research papers.

3g. Use of Assessment Results of this SLO: Describe how assessment results were used to improve student learning. Were assessment results from previous years or from this year used to make program changes in this reporting year? (Possible changes include: changes to course content/topics covered, changes to course sequence, additions/deletions of courses in program, changes in pedagogy, changes to student advisement, changes to student support services, revisions to program SLOs, new or revised assessment instruments, other academic programmatic changes, and changes to the assessment plan.)

1. One year's worth of data (from just two class sections) provides a limited basis for analysis and programmatic change. Nevertheless, in the Fall 2013, the department faculty will have conversation around the issue of how to improve student writings in the department's classes, how to improve their data collection and methods of use for variety of data, and finally how to link the findings with better evidence to the recommendations and conclusions. The department will discuss and strategize how to improve assessment plans for 2013-14 academic year.

4. Assessment of Previous Changes: Present documentation that demonstrates how the previous changes in the program resulted in improved student learning.

N/A

5. Changes to SLOs? Please attach an updated course alignment matrix if any changes were made. (Refer to the Curriculum Alignment Matrix Template, http://www.csun.edu/assessment/forms_guides.html.)

N/A

6. Assessment Plan: Evaluate the effectiveness of your 5 year assessment plan. How well did it inform and guide your assessment work this academic year? What process is used to develop/update the 5 year assessment plan? Please attach an updated 5 year assessment plan for 2013-2018. (Refer to Five Year Planning Template, plan B or C, http://www.csun.edu/assessment/forms_guides.html.)

In the past, for the faculty it was important that the gateway courses be streamlined so that there is some continuity in knowledge being taught. There was some evidence that new majors were most often being recruited from these courses (URBS 150 and URBS 310). Improving the student experience and learning in these courses was a concerted effort to recruit more majors (grow the department).

However, the department decided to assess upper division courses within the major in order to identify whether knowledge acquired in the early courses are being applied and demonstrated in upper-division courses. Thus we have opted into assessing an upper-division course required by the graduating seniors.

9. Has someone in your program completed, submitted or published a manuscript which uses or describes assessment activities in your program? Please provide citation or discuss

Not at this point.

10. Other information, assessment or reflective activities or processes not captured above.

N/A