Applied Behavioral Science (ABS) Masters Degree

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ACADEMIC YEAR COVERED BY THIS REPORT: 2020-2021

I. PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will demonstrate the capacity to apply research methods and findings to the criminal justice system and/or social problems.

II. PROCEDURES USED FOR ASSESSMENT

A. Direct Assessment

Proposals from ABS 7120 and completed research projects and theses were evaluated. Outcome will be considered met if the average score on the rubric is at least 80%. There were nine ABS Program culminating research papers (three theses and six projects) evaluated by the ABS Assessment committee using a rubric developed for that task. Three theses and two projects were completed during the Fall 2020 semester and four projects were completed during the Spring 2021 semester.

B. Scoring of Student Work

Nine documents (6 projects and 3 theses) were analyzed using Rubric to Evaluate ABS Projects and Theses. This rubric evaluates the documents on six items (presence or absence) for content and format. These six items were Research involves analysis of acceptable data; Involves a clear and explicit research question or hypotheses; Documents contains (when appropriate) a title, abstract, literature review, theory, statement of methodology, description of data and findings, discussion and conclusions drawn from the data and applied implications of the research; Citations, notes and references in an acceptable style; Relatively error free in terms of grammar and punctuation; Graphs, charts, tables are in APA or other approved style. Scoring of papers was done by

members of the ABS Assessment committee. Members evaluated projects/theses for students they had not been involved with to maintain objectivity. Of the nine papers examined, the average score on the rubric was 5.44 points out of 6 points or 90.7%.

C. Indirect Assessment

The program sends an alumni survey to all graduates every five years. The last alumni survey was conducted in 2016. The alumni survey was sent electronically to all graduates of the past ten years in the spring semester 2021. There were 39 from 161 requests - a 24% response rate. Outcomes measured a. Students will master graduate level knowledge concerning computer based research skills. Graduates were asked to respond to the statement "The ABS program has aided my computer-based research skills." Most agreed with 45.16% strongly agreeing and 38.71% agreeing somewhat. Only 6.45% disagreed and almost ten percent (9.68) were neutral. The benchmark of 80% approval was met (83.87% agreement). d. Students will master the skills of reviewing applied programs (e.g., a program for felons whose crimes are tied to alcohol abuse) in terms of the extant literature, logical cohesion and current empirical knowledge. Respondents were asked to respond to the statement "The program has provided me with the necessary skills to evaluate applied programs." Most agreed (42.42% strongly agreed, 36.36% somewhat agreed) while 6.06% were neutral and 15.15% disagreed (12.12% somewhat disagreed, 3.03 strongly disagreed). The benchmark of 80% was not quite met with only 78.78% agreeing that they had mastered the skills of reviewing applied programs. e. Students will be able to use their skills in the creation and administration of applied programs in both public and private agencies. Subjects were asked to respond to the statement "The program has helped me acquire skills that would be helpful in the creation and administration of applied programs." Most agreed (42.42% strongly agreed, 27.27% somewhat agreed) while 15.15% were neutral and 15.15% disagreed (12.12% somewhat disagreed, 3.03 strongly disagreed). The benchmark of 80% was not met with only 69.69% of respondents agreeing that they had acquired skills helpful in the creation and administration of applied programs.

III. ASSESSMENT RESULTS/INFORMATION:

Nine projects and theses were evaluated on whether or not they met six criteria using a rubric to determine if students demonstrated the capacity to apply research methods and findings to the criminal justice system and/or social problems. An alumni survey was conducted to measure three outcomes - one met the 80% agreement benchmark, but the other two did not. Graduates were asked to respond to a Likert scale statement about mastering graduate level knowledge concerning computer based research skills (benchmark met), whether they had been provided the necessary skills to evaluate applied programs (benchmark almost met) and whether they had gained the ability to use their skills in the creation and administration of applied programs in both public and private agences (benchmark not met).

The evaluation of projects and theses exceeded the benchmark. The average score was 5.44 points or 90.7%, the benchmark was set at 80%. Future assessment will include materials from courses in addition to projects and theses on a rotating basis. The ABS Advisory Committee has updated the learning outcomes for the ABS program assessment plan and calls for the examination of materials from different core classes in the program. For the next assessment cycle, proposals from ABS 7100 and 7120 will be requested and evaluated. Only one of the three objective measures from the Alumni Survey met the benchmark of 80% agreement. Graduates agreed they had mastered graduate level computer based research skills, but while the majority agreed they had been provided the necessary skills to evaluate applied programs and gained the necessary skills to create and adminster applied programs, neither met the benchmark of 80% agreement. The focus of the program has changed as we have lost personnel through retirement and budgetary pressures. In addition, because of issues with credentials of those teaching in the program with the accrediting body of the university, it has become more difficult to use professionals in the field of criminal justice who may not have academic credentials or experience to teach, thus impacting the ABS program's ability to offer students a more applied orientation to the field of criminal justice. The ABS program needs to reconsider their programming in light of these changes and definitely consider modifying assessment to accurately reflect the current program. The ABS assessment plan needs revision we need to add subjective or indirect measures that more accurately reflect the current programming. And to determine a system of rotation for the direct or objective measures.

The outcome (Students will master the ability to create objective, critically engaged written communications appropriate to the target audience) was met.

IV. ACTIONS TO IMPROVE STUDENT LEARNING

The assessment report will be shared with ABS Advisory Committee in spring 2022 meeting. The ABS assessment plan needs revision - we need to add subjective or indirect measures that more accurately reflect the current programming. And to determine a system of rotation for the direct or objective measures. Both of these items can be discussed and acted upon by the Advisory Committee in the Spring 2022 semester.

V. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Additional documentation, when provided, is stored in the internal Academic Program Assessment of Student Learning SharePoint site.