



Adult and Higher Education Program
2013-14 Closing the Loop Assessment Report
By Sondra Cuban, AHE Program Director

Section 1: Program Assessment Plan Transition Point Assessments

There were 63 AHE students in 2013-14.¹ The make-up of the AHE program over the last several years shows the average student is in their 30s, female, white, and employed. More males have entered the program and in 2013, were close to half of the student body. The population is slowly diversifying in race and ethnicity, but is still only 16% non-white. Diversifying the department, Woodring and WWU is a larger effort with which AHE is engaged. To this end, the program team changed the curriculum, with three courses now devoted exclusively to diversity, created an advisory committee committed to diversity, changed the program Learning Outcomes, and developed marketing videos promoting diversity: <https://wce.wvu.edu/ahe/student-testimonials> in addition to new recruiting techniques.

Previous evaluations of AHE in 2011 (*Closing the Loop*) and 2012 (Lai, Lee, Lo, & Prody) profiled it as having an enthusiastic and tight community of students that were successfully employed, with active alumni. However academically rigorous, consistent, and systematic policies and practices were lacking. Additionally the title of the program, Continuing and College Education (CCE), lacked name recognition and was not transparent especially in its new home, HSR. Recommendations focused on upgrading the quality of program practices. In following from these recommendations and with a new director in the Fall of 2013, the program team began to innovate to improve the program infrastructure by cancelling a poorly enrolled distance learning track, streamlining the program by replacing rolling admissions with dual entry routes and bringing in better systems of management and marketing, updating program curriculum to make it relevant and aligned to professional standards in the field as well as changing the approach from that of a human resources perspective to one that was inquiry-based, with two routes, one for higher education and the other for adult education that reflected student profiles and goals.

In 2014, the program team conducted three student assessments of needs and goals, and the program underwent an appraisal by the WWU Graduate School. An MBA team conducted the first assessment with research about the needs of the AHE student population as well as alumni and the benefits---intrinsic and extrinsic--- to assist the program in understanding its 'story' and place within the Woodring, Western, Bellingham, and in the Washington state workforce. 69 students and alumni were surveyed for socio-demographic data and a sample interviewed in addition to employers. They found that the program fit the goals and needs of students and recommended an approach that built on its assets including: community, flexibility and skill adaptation. The second and internal assessment consisted of 21 students and with the new

¹ These were considered to be "active" students taking courses in the program during 13/14. As part of the Graduate School requirements to gain approval by all students for the CCE to AHE name change, we discovered nine more students who had not participated in some time and did not intend to complete AHE.

approach on inquiry-based learning, the aim was to assess the research, information-seeking, digital, and writing skills of students, to which a major finding was that only half of the students felt comfortable with the online aspects of their work. The third internal assessment was conducted on a majority of the students in AHE. A major finding was that nearly half were planning to attend a doctoral program.

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| Admission | <p>There is no minimum MAT score for acceptance-internal policies are that if MAT scores are low we will interview applicant. The minimum GPA for admission is 3.00 and if students score slightly below this they may be provisionally admitted to AHE.</p> <p><u>Admission Data</u></p> <p>Number of Applicants: 27 Number of Accepted/Admits: 22 Number of Matriculated: 19</p> <p><u>GPA Data</u></p> <p>Average GPA of Applicants: 3.44 Average GPA of Accept/Admits: 3.46</p> <p><u>MAT Test Data</u></p> <p>Average MAT of Applicants: 412.4 Average MAT of Accept/Admits: 412.5 Average MAT of Matrics: 412.6</p> <p>Although historically there has been a range of quality among students applying to and admitted to AHE, this GPA and MAT profile in 2013-14 demonstrates that students are attracted to, and entering the program with good academic backgrounds and are well-prepared to learn.</p> |
| Retention | <p>The Graduate school tracks quarterly GPA (3.00) and notifies students whose grades dip below the minimum requirement. We do track “stopped out” students internally and have bi-quarterly program meetings focused on student progress in addition to bi-monthly Coordinator meetings focused on student progress and issues. See below for average GPA of students in the program, demonstrating our students are doing well.</p> <p>Average GPA of Matrics: 3.41</p> |
| Entry to Fulltime Internship or Culminating Project | <p>Students must complete and pass all core courses before entering the culminating project course, AHE 588 Portfolio and Applied Research. AHE has no formal internship. However students take “Field Experience” and this will be a new requirement as of Fall, 2015</p> |
| Completion | <p>AHE 588 is the culminating project for the AHE program and entails portfolio assessment as designed by the instructor and which fulfills the entire program Learning Outcomes. More than one faculty member grades student projects and presentations. In 13/14, 16 students graduated, with all of them passing the AHE 588 course. AHE students, on average, take 12 terms to complete due to many students using waivers and the fact that most students in AHE are employed while studying.</p> |
| Post Completion | <p>In 2014, the program consulted with an MBA team to conduct a survey and interviews with current and alumni students, as well as with local employers (see description above). Career services data (from 13/14) show that 14/16 graduating students were employed after graduating, nearly all in fields related to their studies.</p> |

Section 2: Use of Data for Improvements of Programs and/or Operations

Admission-In 2013, the staff overhauled the website to “message” the program approach better with a visual representation of the Learning Outcomes and relevant information to attract better and more diverse students which could account for the good application profile in addition to making it more clear to prospective students what is expected in the program; developed web-based contact system in 2014 to recruit prospective students in addition to presentations to senior undergraduates in Human Services. The pattern of higher GPAs over the years shows that students who are accepted to the program are consistently carrying higher GPAs, which goes to the team’s newer policies to ensure that admitting students have adequate GPAs to succeed in the program; and all students with lower MAT scores were interviewed by faculty members to assess their academic skill levels to ensure their success in the program; the new dual entry periods (Fall and Spring) enable students to reflect more on their decision to enter the program as opposed to the rolling admissions with its high uptake of applicants; reducing the high amount of non-matriculated students in the program was another advantage to ensure a good student profile of ones that were intending to complete the program

Retention- new student orientations since 2014 were mandated in order to ensure that *all* new students are provided with program policies, a newly devised Handbook, and university resources such as the disability center, the writing center, the library, and the Canvas support team---this aligned to the findings in the internal academic survey showing that students were needing more online academic support and this was emphasized on the website and in other student communications---this orientation was run by students in order to translate the culture of the program and give advice to those who are new so that they are academically well-prepared to transition to graduate students; before a student receives the unsatisfactory academic progress notification from Graduate School, AHE program instructors identify areas that need improvement and refer student to appropriate university resources; each summer the Coordinator reviews student progress with regard to their Plans of Study and with the Director creates the schedule of course offerings and advises students; courses are regularly appraised by the AHE program team and changes are made to update the curriculum in particular for issues of diversity and to create a route for those students who are interested in pursuing doctoral degrees with more academic and administrative type courses; there is greater sequencing of courses emphasizing foundational knowledge with students having to take core courses first; with the new inquiry-based approach, students are given more opportunities to conduct action research in their courses which builds on the findings of the MBA team in creating greater skill adaptation and creating a community of learning that connects to their work and lives---one example was the food justice symposium which used popular education and connected to Human Services, with students, alumni and faculty participating across the department

Completion- The program team has changed the Learning Outcomes to make the culminating projects for AHE 588 Portfolio and Applied Research more rigorous and applicable to students moving into higher education in particular. Each project and presentation is assessed by at least two faculty members who discuss their work.

Post-completion-As previously discussed, data shows that most students are employed both during and after their tenure in AHE; the MBA marketing team’s research culminated in AHE’s first advisory committee, which met on December 5, 2014, with the purpose of using the assessments to improve the program and to receive advice about deepening its approach. A

Graduate School Appraisal was completed and submitted in May 2014, which enabled the program team to evaluate and report all aspects of the program. For more detailed information about the AHE program, please consult the document, *AHE Program Appraisal for the Graduate School* (May, 2014). The feedback for the AHE program will be given in spring term, 2015.