Program Mission

The goal of the Human Services Program is to offer a rigorous, liberal-arts focused, professional education to students that cultivates both professional skills and a critical analysis of human services and need. The curriculum of the Human Services Program emphasizes collaboration, community engagement, the acquisition of professional knowledge and skills, and the development of both written and verbal critical thinking abilities.

Department/Program Student Learning Outcomes

Upon graduation, Human Services Program majors have completed a curriculum that reflects standards set forth by the Council for Standards in Human Services Education (see Appendix A or click here). Student learning outcomes based on these standards include the ability to:

1. Examine and describe the dynamics of a variety of structures and systems (e.g., global, community, institutional) and their impact on the human experience
2. Understand the scope of conditions that promote or inhibit human functioning
3. Define and assess processes and dynamics of creating change including historical and contemporary strategies
4. Understand how to critically analyze and evaluate a variety of types of claims and evidence
5. Identify the practical, political, and ethical considerations of working in the field of human services
6. Demonstrate an understanding of a variety of strengths-based approaches to working with people and communities
7. Demonstrate knowledge, theory, and skills pertaining to the administrative aspects of the services delivery system
8. Effectively communicate information verbally, visually, and in writing to a variety of audiences

GUR Student Learning Outcomes

N/A
**Student Learning Outcomes Assessed This Year**

The Human Services Program is the only program in the Department of Health & Community Studies that follows the university specifications regarding assessment. Previously, the Program used an assessment process developed within the Woodring College of Education, but, in the interest of incorporating an assessment focused on program improvement, the Program is transitioning to the university model. While this means the Program does not have previous reports on file with the university, previous assessments within Woodring College helped faculty within the Human Services Program articulate the need for programmatic revision (see Appendix B, all assessments available [here](#)). To date, the weakness in the assessment process was that it focused on passing students through a series of programmatic steps including a benchmark exam before they entered the field studies portion of the Program and a Capstone Portfolio in their final quarter of the program. Assessment mainly measured the proportion of students who succeeded in meeting each milestone.

Data collection over several years found that students did not believe the Portfolio as contributed to their learning; faculty also doubted its value (evaluations are available upon request). Over the last six years, revisions have been made to the Capstone Portfolio, yet students’ evaluations remained relatively similar over time. Over the past year, the Human Services Program undertook a curriculum revision with four goals in mind: to rethink the Capstone Portfolio, to offer students greater opportunity to shape their education to their interests, to strengthen the emphasis on structural explanations for social positions within Program courses, and to examine the possibility of shifting from a cohort model in order to better meet the needs of students with a variety of
academic paths. The table below explains some of the curricular changes, their rationale, and how the program might measure their influence on student experience.

"CLOSING THE LOOP": PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT DOCUMENTATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Change</th>
<th>SLOs Targeted for Improvement</th>
<th>Description of Program Improvement</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
<th>Evidence that will demonstrate if this change improves student learning.</th>
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| Curricular     | 1, 2, 3                     | Revision of curriculum including combining courses (303 & 305, 325 & 345), discontinuing the Capstone Portfolio (HSP 495), and requiring 3 Human-Services related electives to complete program. | The curriculum revision committee reviewed student work, syllabi, and student evaluations, finding that students consistently reported that the Capstone Portfolio did not contribute to their learning. In addition, faculty noted significant overlap in course content of HSP 303 & HSP 305 and HSP 325 and HSP 345. The addition of electives allows students to pursue particular interest areas in more depth (e.g., youth work, international work). | • Senior exit surveys, especially measures that assess the value of coursework and the quality of the major.  
• Quality of work and assignments in courses focused on examining and describing the dynamics of a variety of structures and systems (e.g., global, community, institutional) and their impact on the human experiences, defining and assessing processes and dynamics of creating change, and understanding the conditions that promote or inhibit human functioning. |
| Curricular  | 1, 2, 3  | Transition from a cohort model to better support diverse educational pathways including students who wish to pursue minors, double majors, part-time study, and international opportunities. | Faculty advisors and the curriculum revision committee discussed students frustrations with the lack of flexibility with the cohort model, especially when trying to complete minors or study abroad. A less scripted program would allow students to take advantage of opportunities as they arose. | • Senior exit surveys, especially measures that assess the value of coursework and the quality of the major.  
• Improved time to graduate for double majors and/or students with minors.  
• Number of students with minors, double majors and/or study abroad experiences. |
| Assessment | 1  | Phasing out Capstone Portfolio, using course completion as assessment of particular standards outlined in the CSHSE standards and reflected in the program learning objectives | Students and faculty consistently reported that the Capstone Portfolio did not contribute to their learning and substituting an elective would both contribute to their learning and allow them to pursue particular interest areas in more depth | • Senior exit surveys, especially measures that assess the value of coursework and the quality of the major.  
• All syllabi explicitly state CSHSE standards covered in coursework. |
APPENDIX A

CURRICULUM STANDARDS: BACCALAUREATE DEGREE

1. History

   Standard 11: The curriculum shall include the historical development of human services.

   Context: The history of human services provides the context in which the profession evolved, a foundation for assessment of present conditions in the field, and a framework for projecting and shaping trends and outcomes. Thus, human services professionals must have knowledge of how different human services emerged and the various forces that influenced their development.

2. Human Systems

   Standard 12: The curriculum shall include knowledge and theory of the interaction of human systems including: individual, interpersonal, group, family, organizational, community, and societal.

   Context: The human services professional must have an understanding of the structure and dynamics of organizations, communities, and society as well as the nature of individuals and groups. This understanding is prerequisite to the determination of appropriate responses to human needs.

3. Human Services Delivery Systems

   Standard 13: The curriculum shall address the scope of conditions that promote or inhibit human functioning.

   Context: The demand for services and the funding of educational programs has been closely related to identifiable human conditions including, among others: aging, delinquency, crime, poverty, mental illness, physical illness, chemical dependency, and developmental disabilities. The needs that arise in these conditions provide the focus for the human services profession.

4. Information Management

   Standard 14: The curriculum shall provide knowledge and skills in information management.

   Context: The delivery of human services depends on the appropriate integration and use of information such as client data, statistical information, and record keeping. Information management skills include obtaining, organizing, analyzing, evaluating and disseminating information.

5. Planning and Evaluation

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Standard 15: The curriculum shall provide knowledge and skill development in systematic analysis of service needs; planning appropriate strategies, services, and implementation; and evaluation of outcomes.
Context: A major component of the human services profession involves the assessment of the needs of clients and client groups and the planning of programs and interventions that will assist clients and client groups in promoting optimal functioning, growth, and goal attainment. At regular intervals, the outcomes must be evaluated and necessary adjustments made to the plan both at an individual client and program level.

6. Interventions and Direct Services
   Standard 16: The curriculum shall provide knowledge and skills in direct service delivery and appropriate interventions
   Context: Human services professionals function as change agents and must therefore attain and develop a core of knowledge, theory, and skills to provide direct services and interventions to clients and client groups.

7. Interpersonal Communication
   Standard 17: Learning experiences shall be provided for the student to develop his or her interpersonal skills.
   Context: The ability to create genuine and empathic relationships with others is central to the human services profession. These skills are applicable to all levels of education, and a greater proficiency is expected at each progressively higher level.

8. Administrative
   Standard 18: The curriculum shall provide knowledge, theory, and skills in the administrative aspects of the services delivery system.
   Context: A holistic approach to human services recognizes direct and indirect services as components of the same system. Administrative support (indirect service) is essential to the effective delivery of direct services to clients or client groups.

9. Client-Related Values and Attitudes
   Standard 19: The curriculum shall incorporate human services values and attitudes and promote understanding of human services ethics and their application in practice.
   Context: There are values and ethics intrinsic to the human services profession that have been agreed to as governing principles of professional practice.

10. Self-Development
    Standard 20: The program shall provide experiences and support to enable students to develop awareness of their own values, personalities, reaction patterns, interpersonal styles, and limitations.
Context: Human services professionals use their experience and knowledge for understanding and helping clients. This requires awareness of one’s own values, cultural bias, philosophies, personality, and style in the effective use of the professional self. It also requires an understanding of how these personal characteristics affect clients.

11. **Field Experience**

*Standard 21: The program shall provide field experience that is integrated with the curriculum.*

Context: Field experience such as a practicum or internship occurs in a human services setting. Fieldwork provides an environment and context to integrate the knowledge, theory, skills, and professional behaviors that are concurrently being taught in the classroom. It must be an integral part of the education process.
APPENDIX B

EXCERPT FROM 2014/15 CLOSING THE LOOP REPORT SUBMITTED TO WOODRING COLLEGE

Some areas where faculty would like to focus attention based on feedback from student exit surveys include: Value of the capstone portfolio benchmark, consistency of program effectiveness across all sites, efficacy of Practicum I for those students who enter the major with significant professional experience, and field placement oversight.

Capstone Portfolio
The program will continue to monitor student and faculty feedback regarding the revised content and grading rubric for the Capstone Portfolio. Data from the exit surveys showed that only 35.3% of graduating seniors agreed or strongly agreed that creating a Capstone Portfolio was a valuable part of their learning experience. The exit survey data also showed that 38.8% of the graduating seniors agreed or strongly agreed that a Capstone Portfolio was a good way to assess a student’s learning. Faculty perceptions of the Capstone course mirror the sentiments of the students. To address this pressing issue, the program will engage in critical inquiry and considerations for change during the spring 2015 quarter of Capstone. A committee is being formed to consider alternative (potentially better) ways to assess student learning, and alternative usages for the Capstone overall. Ideas currently range from making Capstone an elective course, for those who wish to have a professional portfolio upon graduation, to having students work on their capstone materials throughout their entire time in the major (for instance through 1-credit courses sprinkled throughout the program), to identifying a different common assignment that will serve as this benchmark assessment (for instance an exam, or paper given in an upper-division course). The committee will bring recommendations to the greater faculty group for consideration – with potential changes as early as the following spring (2016).

Consistency of Program across All Sites:
Faculty have been working to more clearly show that the HS program is ONE program, but with three different sites or modes of delivery (on campus/Bellingham, Everett, and Distance Learning). In the past there seemed to be a general perception that the different programs had different expectations and different deliverables. Assuring quality and satisfaction at all sites is important to the program. Yet, the 2014 data shows that there continues to be variation in student responses based on location. Work will be done to investigate the possibilities here – including the reality that off-campus sites have smaller cohort sizes, and thus outlier scores hold greater weight when looked at based on location; the potential need for more engagement by senior faculty at off-campus sites, and potential need for enhancing “virtual”, or electronic/web-based supports for instructors and students. To address this issue several actions have taken place, and will be monitored throughout the 2014-15 academic year, including: identifying a tenure track faculty member to serve a lead role working with an off-campus advisory committee; increased numbers of Tenured/Tenure-Track, and
Senior-Instructor level individuals teaching courses off-campus; increased visits to off-campus locations by Program Director and other Tenured/Tenure Track Faculty.

**Value of Practicum I for More Experienced Students**
This is an area that is currently being addressed by program faculty. This issue has also been raised at HS Advisory Committee meetings to get input from field supervisors. Data from the exit surveys showed that only 57.7% of graduating seniors agreed or strongly agreed that the Practicum I course was a valuable part of their learning experience. The program will continue to investigate ways of strengthening the field experiences for students – particularly for those who are older and who have more professional experience prior to entering the program. To address this, faculty are creating a policy that will make space for individuals with extensive experience to be able to petition an exemption from that required course. It is expected that this will be piloted/tested during the 2015-16 academic year.

**Field Studies Oversight**
There is a growing concern that given the significance of field studies in the program, coupled with the sensitive nature of such field work (typically working with marginalized and vulnerable populations, and in challenging contexts), there may be a need to designate a staff person (or faculty member) in the role of field studies supervisor or manager. Such a role has existed in the past, and there is a growing sense that this is something that needs to be considered once again. This sense/opinion is based on numerous factors, and for varied reasons ranging from liability issues and importance of community partnership building and sustenance, to student satisfaction of their experiences. For instance, while the vast majority of students believe the internships are a valuable part of their learning experience (91.8%), there is less enthusiasm and support for the ways in which field experiences are supervised by the program. Additionally there has been continued concern from faculty that points to the possibility of a lack of security and consistency in place when it comes to vetting potential placements, supervisors, and roles within agencies. Considering the hundreds of students and community partners and projects in play, and the thousands of hours served in the field, there is significant risk associated with our field studies, which may warrant personnel for oversight. This possibility is being considered and deserves increased attention.