Expected Outcomes: MS-NT Level of Performance in Biology

Assessment methods

**Method: Understanding of discipline**

Auburn MS-non-thesis graduates will demonstrate an advanced understanding of the fundamental aspects of a discipline within Biological Sciences as determined by passing a final oral exam given by their advisory committee as well as sponsor survey.

**Findings:**

100% of MS-NT graduates in 2011-2012 (n=10) displayed an acceptable or higher knowledge of their sub-discipline as indicated by successfully passing their final oral exam and from assessment from major professor surveys. Including the last 2 reports (2009-2011) with the current data, 21 of 21 MS-NT students have successfully passed their final oral exam.

**How did you use findings for improvement?**

A summary of these results are presented to the faculty annually. The degree program was discussed at a Faculty retreat Spring 2010. Based on the success of the program, it was voted viable by the faculty but we have instituted paperwork to change the name of the degree from MS-NT to MA to distinguish it from the MS thesis degree. However, there has been no progress in getting this degree name change approved by the higher administration. This point was brought in in the annual faculty retreat in Summer, 2011. The newest data were presented to the faculty in a retreat in Spring 2012. The degree is doing well and there did not seem to be much impetus to change the name.

**Additional comments:**

The Graduate Studies Committee fashioned a rubric for the final exam of the MS-NT students to get a more quantitative idea of their performance rather than just pass/fail. We used this rubric for a total of 7 exit exams. The rubric asked the committee to rate the student on a scale of 1-5 on 4 attributes. All the students averaged at the ‘Meets Expectations’ scale of the 4 examined attributes. The Graduate Studies Committee reviewed the faculty ratings and comments on the forms, assessed the ease of use of the rubric, and have reformatted it to be easier to use. Unfortunately, all our assessment is with the old rubric. We have started the new rubric this Fall Semester.

**Method: Application of scientific training**

MS NT graduates will demonstrate a MS-NT level proficiency to such a degree as to be successful in obtaining employment within their chosen field of study or emphasis area, or be able to enter a post-graduate program to pursue a higher degree within their research area within 2 years of graduation. This goal will be determined by tracking records.

**Findings:**

40% of MS NT graduates in 2011-2012 (n=4 of 10) continued their education within their subdiscipline area. One is pursuing a PhD graduate degree in Biology, 1 is in nursing school, 1 in dental school, and 1 is in PA school. 20% have a job in the biological field. 2 of the graduates
How did you use findings for improvement?

60% of our MS-NT degree graduates are continuing on in their field by either being employed or seeking higher education. Our overall percentage of graduates in this category is 87%. We are doing well but we always report these results to the faculty annually and try to be diligent about helping graduates reach a point where they can move forward in their field.

Additional comments:

We had lost our Graduate Secretary last year but she has now been replaced and has re-instituted our tracking records and follow-up.

Method: Quality Educational Experience

Students will undergo quality educational experiences within a discipline of Biological Sciences through formal lecture settings, seminars, laboratory based instruction, and/or individual research experiences. Graduates will be surveyed and asked to score their academic program on the extent it met or exceeded their expectations.

Findings:

Four of the 10 MS-NT graduates completed an exit survey. Again the low compliance was the gap between losing our long-time Graduate Secretary and the completion of training of our new secretary. Some students were allowed to graduate without completing the form. All 4 of the students who completed the form indicated that their training and course work 'Exceeded Expectations'.

How did you use findings for improvement?

It seems as though we are doing a good job providing a Quality Educational Experience but we only obtained results from 40% of the graduates. We will be more vigilant to insure that all graduates provide us feedback before they graduate.

Additional comments:

We will try to be more diligent in getting graduates to complete the form before the leave our campus.