

Using Assessment Data for Departmental Decision Making

ASTE faculty review student feedback, senior project successes, and program structure annually at the conclusion of spring term. Curriculum adjustments are suggested and necessary information is gathered over the summer for discussion and implementation actions in the fall. Standardized data available from the University assessment office is used to assist in guiding recruitment efforts and in viewing enrollment trends. Faculty in the ASTE department should carefully review the assessment plan on an annual basis. Dr. Rudy Tarpley is the ASTE department assessment “czar” and he will guide and assist the faculty in interpreting data.

2008-09 Q-Sort Study

As part of the ASTE department’s ongoing assessment efforts, ASTE faculty met on September 5, 2008 for the purpose of prioritizing the departmental curriculum agenda. At the retreat, 32 previously identified curriculum statements were prioritized utilizing a Q-sort methodology (refer to the Outcomes Data section of the ASTE Assessment website). The top five curricular items ranked by ASTE faculty were (1) Teach critical thinking, data analysis, and information gathering ($M = 5.63$), (2) More synthesis/problem solving-project-based curriculum ($M = 5.43$), (3) Expand hands-on laboratories experiences ($M = 4.88$), (4) Increase recruitment of urban and suburban students ($M = 4.86$), and (5) Teach team building and leadership development ($M = 4.75$). As a result of the study, faculty members have infused more critical thinking activities into the courses. Further, leadership activities have been further added to the courses. For a specific list of the decisions and changes made as a result of the Q-Sort study, please refer to the table (Examples of Changes Made as a result of Assessment) found within this document.

Decisions as a Result of the Assessment Process

The assessment process has impacted the ASTE department across all programs. As a result, programs have experienced significant changes observed by students and faculty alike. Following are some documented changes to specific ASTE programs.

Agricultural Communication and Journalism (ACAJ)

Since the ACAJ is the newest program, all activities are relatively new as a result of the assessment process. With respect to data-based decisions, the orientation class (ASTE 1710) was completely overhauled to reflect comments recorded on student evaluations. Specifically, students now complete more assignments important to their careers (news stories, radio broadcasts & press releases). Student evaluations will continue to serve as a primary means of measuring the effectiveness of the courses. In order to provide more industry-based activities on campus, ACAJ students have been involved with writing articles for the USU College of Agriculture Newsletter published annually as well as the monthly newsletter published by the College of Agriculture student council. Further, the professional student organization (Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow –

ACT) will be advised by a graduate research assistant in the department. This is intended to make the organization more active.

Agricultural Education (AgEd)

Faculty members in the AgEd program have responded to student comments generated from the assessment process. We have also listened to agriculture teachers in the area and will make necessary changes in order to improve the program. These changes include the attempt to keep the AgEd student teachers clustered with respect to geography. This should allow student teachers, cooperating teachers as well as university supervisors to better coordinate activities, visit students and provide feedback. Two professional organizations serve AgEd majors, Collegiate FFA and Alpha Tau Alpha. Alpha Tau Alpha, the professional honorary association for agricultural education and extension students, has undergone a re-visioning process over the past few years. The organization works closely with Collegiate FFA, in terms of social, service, and fundraising activities. The new focus for Alpha Tau Alpha is to provide activities that are professional in nature and focused on meeting the needs of the students. Meetings have included guest speakers and hands-on activities focusing on current topics in agricultural education and the teaching profession. Recent activities have included a panel of those who have recently completed student teaching, a hands-on experience related to surveying and GPS technology, a presentation by a current agriculture teacher related to the management and assessment of students in secondary school based welding courses, and a hands-on experience related to floral design. Alpha Tau Alpha has also developed a website including upcoming activities and information about past activities, but most importantly hosts a resource library for pre-service and inservice teachers. The website is found at www.usu.edu/ata.

Agricultural Machinery Technology / Agricultural Systems Technology (AST)

The AST programs have implemented significant changes as a result of the assessment process. This is explained, in part to the active advisory committee that meets regularly on the program's behalf. Changes include answering a call from local industry to update the laboratories. As a result, the mechanics laboratories now include wireless Internet service computers, new and updated tools and instruction in the latest diagnostic machinery and methodology. The student organization (Ag Tech Club) has seen a significant increase in membership and activity. The assessment process indicated an obvious need for ASTE student groups to cooperate in a year-end awards activity. As a result, the department now hosts a banquet organized and conducted by students from ACT, FFA, ATA and the Ag Tech Club. Leadership responsibilities are shared and all students in the department benefit.

Family and Consumer Sciences Education (FCSE)

Several changes have been made in the FCSE program as a result of data collected through the assessment process. These changes are intended to better meet the needs of the students. One example includes a student resource center created by faculty and staff members within FCSE. The center was designed around student suggestions and implemented utilizing existing models in the profession. Faculty visits to student teachers are being conducted through a different structure designed to keep full-time instructors on the Logan campus. Finally, the assessment process revealed a need for a professional and social student organization within the program. Faculty members are in

the development stages of such an organization which will be organized under the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) or Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA).

ASTE Graduate Program

Over the past three years the graduate faculty in the ASTE department has been working to improve the Master of Science degree program in Agricultural Systems Technology. The emphasis has been in improving the rigor and relevance of the program, while meeting the needs of students. Many of those in the program are currently teachers in agricultural education, family and consumer sciences education, and religious education. Most are at a distance, so the program is delivered via interactive distance delivery technologies. Five years ago separate programs existed for FCSEE and Agricultural Education. Part of the revision process has been to look closely at course offerings, course objectives, and course titles. Two years ago a matrix was developed to offer the courses in a structured and systematic way, with students being able to enter the program at any point. Courses are now offered on alternating years, allowing students who are teachers and/or at a distance to complete the program in six semesters while teaching. This approach has allowed for more effective allocation of faculty time and has provided a better structure for students in completing their program of study. Most recently, course titles were updated to better represent course content and the current structure of the program.

Examples of Changes Made as a result of Assessment

Semester	Change
Spring 2004	Acquired digital cameras for use by student teachers
Fall 2004	Required students to attend state professional organization meetings
Fall 2004	Moved student teaching seminar to on-line weekly prompts and discussions
Spring 2005	Sold jackets, shirts and bags with our logo to advertise the program
Spring 2005	Gather student assignments and burn to CD's for distribution
Summer 2005	Created a resource room (library) specifically for our majors
Summer 2005	Incorporated use of WebCT/Blackboard into courses.
Fall 2005	Outlined a new course, FCSE 3080 that meets DHA (bottleneck) requirements
Fall 2005	Incorporated field trips for students in methods classes
Fall 2005	Got new fridge and stove for demonstration lab
Spring 2006	Re-aligned the clinical experience to give students more options in filling their clinical hours
Summer 2006	Obtained new copy machine for our offices to facilitate teaching
Summer 2006	Obtained fax machine for office

Fall 2006	Re-wrote Ag Machinery Hydraulics course outline to include the latest technology
Fall 2006	Re-wrote Ag Machinery Engine course outline to include the latest technology
Fall 2006	Re-wrote Hay and Forage course outline
Fall 2006	Re-wrote the Electrical course outline
Fall 2006	Start collecting service equipment books on CD
Fall 2006	Start design and building a engine training and diagnosis aid
Fall 2006	Obtain a scanner for scanning images used in class room training
Fall 2006	Created a student lounge-study room with a computer, scanner, printer for students
Fall 2006	Placed entry code boxes on sewing lab and study room (can't leave rooms unlocked, but the students need access)
Fall 2006	Re-evaluated nutrition requirements by meeting with nutrition teachers
Fall 2006	Updated all classrooms with current IT equipment
Fall 2006	Re-evaluated and made a set outline for graduate program
Fall 2006	Re-structured the education classes for our major (students were complaining that they didn't get the information from secondary ed)
Spring 2007	Put together a new recruitment flyer for distribution to high schools
Spring 2007	Start design and building a air conditioning / electrical training aid
Spring 2007	Had new series engine donated by Kubota for training aids
Spring 2007	Incorporated field trips for students in methods classes
Spring 2007	Re-wrote the auxiliary system course outline
Spring 2007	Created new Interior Design Teaching Course
Spring 2007	Obtained interior design resources for student use
Spring 2007	Re-wrote the Irrigation course outline
Summer 2007	Add computers on the shop for recording time, looking up parts and service information
Summer 2007	Created a new sewing class to meet needs of students
Fall 2007	Incorporating Blackboard Vista into the course
Fall 2007	Formed professional student organization
Fall 2007	Required students to join at least one professional organization
Fall 2007	Coordinating clinical site and student teaching site
Fall 2007	Rewrote Textiles curriculum to fill QI requirements
Spring 2008	Involved mores AJAC students in the development of the College of Agriculture Alumni Newsletter
Spring 2008	Expanded the internship opportunities for ACAJ students
Summer 2008	Placed more ACAJ and AgEd students in summer internships
Fall 2008	Encouraged all teacher education courses in AgEd and FCSE to include individual presentations

Fall 2008	Encouraged all teacher education courses in AgEd and FCSE to include group presentations
Fall 2008	Updated the engine troubleshooting activities within the Agricultural Systems courses
Fall 2008	Attended Agricultural Education and Family and Consumer Sciences national conferences for the purpose of recruitment of potential students
Fall 2008	Brought more Agricultural Journalists to the ASTE 1710 – Introduction to Agricultural Communication course
Spring 2009	Incorporated a team-building activity (the Cornflake exercise) into the leadership class
Spring 2009	AgEd and FCSE methods courses were combined for multiple units which included critical thinking across disciplines, making connections across career and technical education studies, and learning styles
Spring 2009	AST faculty members increased the program visibility by hosting FFA activities specific to agricultural systems
On-going	Held a Dealer advisory meeting to evaluate our curriculum and industry needs
On going	Incorporated field trips for students in methods classes
On going	Update tooling in the shop and add new digital torque wrenches
Ongoing	Upgraded sewing machine lab equipment (machines, chairs, etc.)
On-going	Submitted name changes to better reflect course content
On-going	Update website and requirement page

Department Website

The departmental assessment efforts continue to evolve. The department technology coordinator will update the department website as needed to reflect our efforts. Posting to the website will be a visible means of reflecting upon our assessment efforts.