Assessment Plan of the School of Information Studies

Assessment plan and student learning outcomes and the use thereof in decision-making

SOIS collects data and elicits feedback from its students and recent graduates to evaluate the MLIS program. As a non-departmentalized school, plans for outcomes assessment are universal to the School.

Each course is evaluated by the students each semester. The evaluation involves responses to closed-ended questions, in addition to open-ended comments for each course/instructor.

Periodically, and particularly in preparation for re-accreditation, the School surveys current students and recent graduates of the MLIS program. The School plans to survey graduating BSIST and MLIS students and recent alumni on a more regular basis to provide additional data for learning outcomes assessment.

The senior capstone allows students to integrate and apply what they have learned in prior courses to the development and evaluation of an information product or service.

The comprehensive exam verifies that students can articulate concepts and issues covered in the SOIS curriculum and that impact the profession. An overriding theme like change management is especially important. The exam and preparation for it are opportunities for students to see how all their SOIS experiences mesh with each other and with the students’ goals in a world of change. The thesis allows students to demonstrate expertise in a research topic in library and information science.

All constituencies served are involved in the evaluation process of students. Practitioners participate in three key ways. First, internship and fieldwork evaluations of students and the annual placement survey of alumni offer opportunities for input from practitioners on how well SOIS students are prepared to cope with and manage change in the workplace. Second, members of the School’s Corporate Council, which provides feedback on the programs the School offers, makes it possible for the profession to address higher level issues of student preparation to enter the profession. Finally, employer feedback from focus group sessions provides an indication of the caliber of the graduates produced.

Informal avenues for eliciting evaluation data are also pursued. Faculty and staff will forward suggestions made by students, alumni and practitioners to relevant bodies within the School. In the past, the Dean of the School has made himself available for discussions with students.

The above sources serve as input into the decision-making process within SOIS. Feedback from different constituencies and products of learning such as the senior capstones, theses, and comprehensive examinations help to shape instructional policy and curriculum development. Individually, instructors rely on student performance and course evaluations to improve on course content and learning experiences. Faculty governance bodies, such as curriculum committees, use these information sources to inform policy development.

Senior – level assessment tools

The BSIST senior capstone allows students to integrate and apply what they have learned in prior courses to the development and evaluation of an information product or service. Projects undertaken by students in the senior capstone have benefited the SOIS and UWM community, by providing information systems and services that have been implemented on campus (e.g., SOIS Web page and student database, Center for International Education LAN configuration).

Lifelong learning goals and outcomes of academic programs

The School’s vision statement, mission, goals and objectives recognize the importance of lifelong learning, social responsibility and diversity in our local-global societies. These ideals are exemplified in Goals 1, 2, 3, 8, and 9 for the School of Information Studies along with their associated objectives (particularly for Goal 1). The School of Information Studies (SOIS) will lead in undergraduate and graduate programs preparing
individuals for careers in the information professions, including libraries, information centers, businesses, education and government agencies, archives, and other information-dependent organizations. The School shall contribute locally, nationally, and internationally in information-related education, research, and service. Graduates will be prepared for lifelong learning and inquiry and for ethical engagement and positive participation in the global information society. This vision shall be achieved through the School's mission, goals and objectives, which harmonize with those of The University of Wisconsin.

**Amongst others students will be able to:**

- apply ethical principles in the design, development, implementation and evaluation of information products and services;

- demonstrate information and technology literacy through the analysis of information needs and the use of information technology for the development of information products and services;

- describe and apply principles of information creation, access to information sources representation, organization, storage, retrieval, dissemination, management and

- do evaluations for a variety of information agencies.

**The School focuses also on the following:**

- To prepare professionals who are able to provide leadership and adapt to change in a technological and knowledge-based environment, according to accepted professional standards.

- To enrich the library and information science profession through recruitment of students with strong academic skills from diverse cultural, geographic, and subject backgrounds.

- To facilitate the development, provision, and evaluation of library and information services through consultation to individual organizations and leadership in professional associations locally, statewide, nationally, an internationally.

- To offer opportunities for professionals and the wider community to update their skills and knowledge through advanced and continuing education courses, workshops, and programs offered nationally and internationally.

Graduates of the Schools programs have been successful in pursuing careers in library and information science. For example, in a survey of MLIS program alumni administered in the summer of 2002, 87% indicated that they were currently employed in library and information science, with 13% indicating they were employed in another area or were not employed (percentage of unemployed unknown).

**The use of course evaluations**

Evaluations are conducted in each course to provide feedback to the instructor and the faculty evaluators on the learning experiences presented in the classroom and the effectiveness of the instructor in the learning experience. The evaluation instruments consist of a survey of closed-ended questions dealing with the instructor’s teaching, course content, and the overall learning experience.

Students assess the different aspects of the course and the instructor on a five-point Likert scale. Students are also asked to provide open-ended comments to elaborate on rankings for the closed-ended questions. Results of the course evaluations are used by instructors to gauge the effectiveness of their teaching methods and the course content. Members of the School’s Executive Committee also use course evaluations to assess instructors for annual merit tenure and promotion considerations. The annual review of the course evaluations also makes it possible to identify and recommend areas for instructor improvement.