

CFCS Undergraduate Program Assessment Progress Report

1. Program name: All majors in Food Science and Human Nutrition: Dietetics, Food Science, and Nutritional Science

2. Program learning goal: Graduates can effectively communicate technical information to professional and lay audiences

3. Description of program/course activities designed to meet this learning goal:

An ad-hoc committee within the department, FSHNComm, has been supported by the ISU Miller Faculty Fellowship program for the 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 academic years to increase the opportunities for students to practice professional communication in FSHN courses, and to improve their performance in these activities. Major accomplishments of FSHNComm are:

- **A needs assessment** was completed in Fall, 2001, including a summary of then-current communication activities in FSHN courses; an evaluation of the desired communication skills in courses from 100- to 400-level; identification of key courses where these skills may be taught, practiced, and evaluated; and discussion of how to evaluate students' communication skills. Oral communication skills were practiced to some degree in all undergraduate FSHN courses. Most courses included interpersonal communication, individual presentations to large groups, and/or work in teams with presentations to the class. Instructors have identified more effective methods of infusing communication experiences into their courses to maximize practice opportunities without compromising disciplinary content.

- **Three 6-hour workshops** about interpersonal communication, group/team communication, and public speaking were presented by Dr. Denise Vrchota, Greenlee School of Journalism and Communication, in August and September, 2001, for FSHN faculty, staff, and graduate assistants. Basic concepts of communication were presented and opportunities to practice specific communication skills were provided.

- **A notebook of resources**, "Learning to Communicate Professionally", was prepared by Dr. Vrchota for the workshops and was distributed to all participants. Instructors in FSHN continue to use this notebook to assist in planning and assessing communication activities in their courses.

- **Individual consultations** were conducted by Dr. Vrchota with FSHN instructors to develop a communication plan for his/her course(s). These plans were compiled into a resource for use by other interested faculty.

- **A comprehensive plan** to infuse various types of communication activities at various levels of complexity into our undergraduate curricula continues to be developed by the FSHN curriculum committee. These communication plans have been revised and improved at faculty retreats in 2001, 2002 and 2003.

- **A workshop on outcomes assessment** was presented by Dr. Mary Huba to FSHN faculty and staff in August, 2002. Assessment strategies and methods were discussed, and each participant wrote specific outcomes statements for his/her course(s).

- **Rubrics** to identify beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels of performance in oral communication, written communication, problem-solving, and group interaction have been prepared by FSHNComm and are available for use or modification by all FSHN faculty.

4. Assessment of efficacy of program/course activities described in 3:

Current FSHNComm activities focus on assessment, particularly the introduction of student portfolios for professional development and assessment purposes:

- **A portfolio class** was taught by FSHNComm faculty members (Jean Anderson, Anne Oldham, Cheryll Reitmeier and Denise Vrchota) in spring 2002 and spring 2003 to members of the 2002-2003 FSHN learning community and other student volunteers. Students began their own portfolios that focused on communication but included all aspects of professional development. Reflections on their accomplishments and areas for improvement are key components of the portfolios. This pilot program will be extended to all FSHN students.

- **Portfolio creation and development has been incorporated into FSHN 110 (Orientation)** by Anne Oldham, course instructor. As Anne is also the academic adviser for all FSHN students during their first two years in the department, she will assist these students individually with their portfolio development.

The success of FSHNComm activities can be partly determined by the following tallies:

- Number of FSHN courses with listed student outcomes
- Number of FSHN courses with documented communication plans
- Number of FSHN courses that identify opportunities for students to produce and reflect on artifacts to add to their portfolios.
- Documented curriculum plan with designated communication-intensive courses
- Identified check points in specified FSHN courses for evaluation of student performance. In particular, the senior seminar class (FSHN 480) requires students to discuss current key issues in food science, nutrition, and dietetics in both oral and written presentations.

Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, students will be taught and allowed to practice self-assessment and self-reflection skills as they review their own communication skills, behaviors, and attitudes. As students compile the evidence of their successes in their portfolios and reflect on their accomplishments, we can evaluate not only the students' individual progress, but also the success of our project from the students' viewpoint.

5. Next steps:

- **An electronic portfolio project** is in process during the 2003-2004 academic year. FSHN is part of the eDoc project on campus in which models for electronic student portfolios are being developed in collaboration with Academic Information Technologies (AIT). Two model portfolios will be developed for FSHN: one for all undergraduate majors and one for the dietetic internship (DI). The FSHN learning community will test the undergraduate e-portfolio, while the dietetic intern class will test the DI e-portfolio, in spring 2004.

Several FSHNComm members have made presentations at national professional meetings about these activities and accomplishments.