

# University of Louisiana at Lafayette

## Detailed Assessment Report 2015-2016 Applied Language and Speech Sciences PhD

As of: 11/07/2016 09:20 AM CENTRAL

(Includes those Action Plans with Budget Amounts marked *One-Time, Recurring, No Request.*)

### Mission / Purpose

Our mission is to advance knowledge of how human communication works, how it sometimes breaks down, and how breakdowns can be remediated and/or managed.

### Student Learning Outcomes/Objectives, with Any Associations and Related Measures, Targets, Findings, and Action Plans

#### **SLO 1: Depth and Breath of Disciplinary Knowledge**

Students who complete this program will demonstrate a depth and breadth of knowledge within the areas of specialization emphasized in their program of study.

#### **Strategic Plan Associations**

##### **University of Louisiana at Lafayette**

2.1.4 Students KPI 4: Improve student success through engagement in high impact practices.

2.3.2 Students KPI 10: Promote a comprehensive chain of research mentoring for graduate students via student-faculty interactions, peer activities, and apprenticeships.

#### Related Measures

##### **M 1: Comprehensive Exams - Research Proposal**

Written and oral comprehensive exams or preparation and oral defense of a research grant proposal will be evaluated by the students' advisory committees which consist of least 3 members of the departmental graduate faculty. Written comprehensive exams and grant proposals will be rated using a 4 point scale (Appendix A) evaluating both content knowledge and application of content knowledge. Oral defenses/oral examinations will be rated using the same scale plus the CODI Presentation Rubric (Appendix B). Comprehensive exams are taken after students have completed all required coursework for the PhD degree. The goal will be assessed every third year beginning 2010. (will be assessed in 2010 - 2011)

Source of Evidence: Comprehensive/end-of-program subject matter exam

#### **Connected Document**

[Rubrics and Discussion of their Use](#)

**Target:**

90% of students will be rated as Competent or above on both aspects of the comprehensive exam scale and the presentation scale (if applicable). 50% of students will be rated as exemplary or highly competent.

**Finding (2015-2016) - Target: Not Met**

Six PhD students took written comprehensive exams or defended a grant proposal this academic year. Of these students, 67% (4/6) were rated as competent, with 1 person rated as marginal and one person rated as poor.

**Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):****Adjustments in Core Requirements of the ALSS Program**

Based on a previous action plan, the comprehensive exam procedure was changed to give students additional time to respond to the posed questions. Students now write in 3 areas and complete an essay and a short answer in each of the areas. They write for 3 hours on two sequential days with 3 questions per day. This seems to be working well as all students this year performed at the competent level or above. In an effort to expand the depth and breadth of knowledge for our students, the graduate faculty plans to re-evaluate the curriculum requirements for the degree. Areas for review include the theoretical core (3 classes chosen from 5 possible classes) and the statistical core (3 classes in research design and/or statistics) as well as seminars to provide students with a variety of topics to meet the requirements of at least 12 hours at the graduate level focused on a major area of emphasis. With the loss of 2 senior level faculty members and searches open to find replacements, the faculty feels this is a good time for a retrospective look at what has worked well and what may need changing in the doctoral curriculum for the future.

**Established in Cycle:** 2013-2014

**Implementation Status:** In-Progress

**Priority:** High

**Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):**

**Measure:** Comprehensive Exams - Research Proposal |

**Outcome/Objective:** Depth and Breath of Disciplinary Knowledge

**Implementation Description:** One of the 2 senior level positions was filled beginning in the Spring semester, 2016. Changes were made to the theoretical core - deleting one of the core and replacing it with a class taught by the new faculty member. Additional classes were created to add to the statistical core such that students have a choice of classes to meet this requirement. It will take several semesters - possibly years to evaluate whether or not this makes a change in student performance on comprehensive exams.

**Modify Comps**

The students who were not as successful as hoped on the PhD comprehensive exams opted for the grant proposal rather than traditional written/oral comps. For several years, faculty in general have become concerned with the uneven performance of our students on this option. Because it is treated as an exam, students are not allowed to receive input on their proposal prior to defending it to their committee. While faculty were still committed to the pedagogical value of students learning the process of grant preparation, it was thought that this could

be better handled in a course. The faculty decided to put a moratorium on the use of the grant proposal as a comprehensive exam option and institute a seminar on grant writing/preparation.

**Established in Cycle:** 2015-2016

**Implementation Status:** Planned

**Priority:** High

**Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):**

**Measure:** Comprehensive Exams - Research Proposal |

**Outcome/Objective:** Depth and Breadth of Disciplinary Knowledge

## **SLO 2: Ability to Design Research Project**

Students who complete this program will be able to design a qualitative, experimental or mixed methods research project that has the potential to contribute new knowledge within the student's area of specialization.

### **Strategic Plan Associations**

#### **University of Louisiana at Lafayette**

2.1.4 Students KPI 4: Improve student success through engagement in high impact practices.

2.3.2 Students KPI 10: Promote a comprehensive chain of research mentoring for graduate students via student-faculty interactions, peer activities, and apprenticeships.

### Related Measures

#### **M 2: Dissertation Defense**

Written dissertation and oral defense of the dissertation. The final draft of the dissertation and the oral defense will be evaluated by two faculty members other than the dissertation chair using the CODI Investigation Quality Rubric (Appendix C) and the CODI Presentation Rubric (Appendix B). Dissertation defense takes place in the final semester of the degree program. The goal will be assessed every third year beginning in 2010.

Source of Evidence: Senior thesis or culminating major project

#### **Connected Document**

[Rubrics and Discussion of their Use](#)

#### **Target:**

100% of dissertations will be rated as proficient using the Investigation Quality Scale. 100% of students will be rated as competent using the presentation scale.

#### **Finding (2015-2016) - Target: Not Reported This Cycle**

This outcome was not evaluated this cycle.

#### **Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):**

##### **Increase expectations**

We will increase the expectations for the doctoral students the next time this learner outcome is measured. Students are now consistently

presenting dissertations that place them solidly at the proficient level which is to be expected as dissertation advisers work closely with the students to present quality work to the committees and the faculty in general at the dissertation defense. Instead of rating overall quality, two aspects of the current rubric lend themselves to separating good dissertations from exceptional dissertations. First, the analysis strategy and second, the conclusions drawn from the investigation. For the next cycle, we will set a goal that 50% of the dissertations will reflect an analysis strategy that has depth and may consider material from content areas outside of the main focus of the questions and goals of the project AND have convincing conclusions that demonstrate an understanding of theory as well as how to apply it beyond the current project.

**Established in Cycle:** 2014-2015

**Implementation Status:** Planned

**Priority:** High

**Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):**

**Measure:** Dissertation Defense | **Outcome/Objective:**

Ability to Design Research Project

**Projected Completion Date:** 05/2018

### **SLO 3: Prepare Publishable Article**

Students who complete this program will demonstrate writing skills sufficient to prepare a manuscript adequate for submission to a peer-reviewed publication within the student's area of specialization.

#### **Strategic Plan Associations**

##### **University of Louisiana at Lafayette**

2.1.4 Students KPI 4: Improve student success through engagement in high impact practices.

2.3.2 Students KPI 10: Promote a comprehensive chain of research mentoring for graduate students via student-faculty interactions, peer activities, and apprenticeships.

#### **Related Measures**

##### **M 3: Research Paper Evaluation**

Original research papers submitted for class assignments in at least 2 different courses of the ALSS program will be evaluated by 2 faculty members independently using the CODI Writing Rubric (Appendix D). Papers may be drawn from those submitted for CODI 601, 603, 605, 606, 607, 608, 610, 611 or 612. Papers drawn for rating will be from students in at least the second semester but preferable the second year of doctoral study. The goal will be assessed every third year beginning in 2010 (will be assessed again in 2012-13)

Source of Evidence: Writing exam to assure certain proficiency level

#### **Connected Document**

[Rubrics and Discussion of their Use](#)

**Target:**

70% of students will achieve the effective level on 5/6 aspects of the CODI writing rubric. 30% of students will achieve the outstanding level on 4/6 aspects of the CODI writing rubric.

**Finding (2015-2016) - Target: Not Reported This Cycle**

This program outcome was not evaluated this cycle. It will be evaluated in 2016-17.

**Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):**

**Increase target**

Since this goal was met this year, we will increase our expectations to 70% of students achieving the effective level on all aspects of the CODI writing rubric and 30% of students achieving the outstanding level on 4/6 aspects of the CODI writing rubric. In addition, the range of classes sampled will include 611 seminars and papers sampled will be from students in at least second semester but preferably second year of doctoral study. In this way, students will have some practice writing research papers and have received feedback on their writing skills prior to being evaluated for achievement of this learner objective.

**Established in Cycle:** 2012-2013

**Implementation Status:** In-Progress

**Priority:** High

**Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):**

**Measure:** Research Paper Evaluation | **Outcome/Objective:**  
Prepare Publishable Article

## **Analysis Questions and Analysis Answers**

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**How were assessment results shared and evaluated within the unit?**

Reports for all 3 degree in the department were compiled and printed and distributed to faculty members at the first faculty meeting of the 2016-17 semester. For the PhD program, the results were discussed at the meeting of the graduate faculty. The assessment coordinator discussed the learner objective that was evaluated this year and gave the results. The status of all active action plans, including one that had been completed during the year were also reviewed. Faculty had the opportunity to ask questions and make comments on the findings. The findings were not a surprise to members of the faculty currently directing doctoral students and possible solutions were discussed.

**Identify which action plans [created in prior cycle(s)] were implemented in this current cycle. For each of these implemented plans, were there any measurable or perceivable effects? How, if at all, did the findings appear to be affected by the implemented action plan?**

During this assessment cycle, the action plan calling for a comprehensive review of the ALSS curriculum and possible adjustments in core requirements was implemented. This action plan was created after the 2013-14 cycle but not put on hold until 2 senior level faculty were replaced. Only one position was filled, but we felt it was time to move forward, especially with the poor performance we were seeing on comprehensive exams despite format changes that gave students additional time to take the exams. New courses were added to the 5 course theoretical core and the 3 course research core. A professional issues colloquium was added to accompany the existing research colloquium. They will be offered every semester and students will enroll in both courses until they reach doctoral candidacy. Seminar courses were expanded to include the neurosciences, speech sciences and disorders and language sciences and disorders. It is thought that these new

courses will broaden the knowledge base of our students in the basic sciences. They are typically quite strong in the applied science area - which is the focus of the program - but sometimes lack broad basic knowledge needed to understand and apply the theoretical concepts. The changes were just approved this cycle by the graduate faculty and are now being sent to the graduate curriculum committee for approval, so we were not able to implement the changes yet. We anticipate that it may take at least another cycle before the changes will actually be implemented and perhaps 2 more cycles before measurable or perceivable effects will be detected.

**What has the unit learned from the current assessment cycle? What is working well, and what is working less well in achieving desired outcomes?**

The graduate faculty of the department has learned that the loss of 2 key members of the graduate faculty and the promotion of the most prolific dissertation director in the department to a position in the research office, has forced us to look at our degree program and see that we needed to make changes. Many of the members of the faculty had voiced concerns but until we saw the assessment results and the decline in student performance on comprehensive exams over a two year period, it was felt that it was a temporary problem that we could fix by recruiting new faculty members. This year, the ad-hoc committee that looked at what was working well in the program (successful dissertation defenses) and what was not working as well (preparation of students attempting to write grant proposals in lieu of comprehensive exams) led us to make some dramatic changes. In addition to the curriculum changes previously described, a proposal to remove the grant option for comprehensive exams was voted on and approved by the faculty. While we still recognize the importance of grant writing in doctoral education, we decided that we were not doing a good job of preparing our students to do this. To correct this we plan to offer a seminar in grant writing taught by a faculty member with an excellent record in this area. The students will still prepare a sample grant proposal - as they did as part of their comprehensive exam - but they will do so with guidance and consistent feedback on their efforts. What we don't want to change is the close mentor relationships that our students have with their dissertation directors. This mentorship is evident in the number of highly competent dissertation defenses we have had in the same 2 year period in which we saw comprehensive exam performance decline. Recent graduates have also been successful in finding academic positions and many are doing quite well in obtaining tenure, presenting research at conferences and having articles accepted by their peers. We also want our graduates to be expert in teaching also and we feel that improving breadth of knowledge in their areas of expertise (as tested by traditional comprehensive exams) is one way to move them in this direction. The addition of a professional colloquium to accompany our research colloquium should also help our graduates be able to move into faculty positions and be successful in all aspects of academic life.