

AY 2017-2018 Assessment

Program - Homeland Security Master's Program

College: Arts and Sciences

Prepared by: Dr. Mark Melder / Mr. Frank Hall

Date: 1 June 2018

Approved by: Greg Handel, Dean

Date: 6 July 2018

Northwestern Mission. Northwestern State University is a responsive, student-oriented institution that is committed to the creation, dissemination, and acquisition of knowledge through teaching, research, and service. The University maintains as its highest priority excellence in teaching in graduate and undergraduate programs. Northwestern State University prepares its students to become productive members of society and promotes economic development and improvements in the quality of life of the citizens in its region.

College of Arts and Sciences' Mission. The College of Arts & Sciences, the largest college at Northwestern State University, is a diverse community of scholars, teachers, and students, working collaboratively to acquire, create, and disseminate knowledge through transformational, high-impact experiential learning practices, research, and service. The College strives to produce graduates who are productive members of society equipped with the capability to promote economic and social development and improve the overall quality of life in the region. The College provides an unequaled undergraduate education in the social and behavioral sciences, English, communication, journalism, media arts, biological and physical sciences, and the creative and performing arts, and at the graduate level in the creative and performing arts, English, TESOL, and Homeland Security. Uniquely, the College houses the Louisiana Scholars' College (the State's designated Honors College), the Louisiana Folklife Center, and the Creole Center, demonstrating its commitment to community service, research, and preservation of Louisiana's precious resources.

Department of Criminal Justice, History, and Social Sciences. The Criminal Justice, History, and Social Sciences Department at Northwestern State University is dedicated to the development of students for roles in academic, leadership, professional, and research careers in the challenging fields of criminal justice, history, public safety, law, and public service. Utilizing transformational, high-impact experiential learning practices, research and service the department produces graduates equipped to be productive members of society and a driving force in the economic development and improvement of the overall quality of life in the region. The department delivers Bachelor of Arts degrees in Criminal Justice and History and Bachelor of Science degrees in Unified Public Safety Administration with concentrations in Law Enforcement Administration, Fire and Emergency Medical Services Administration, Emergency Management Administration, and Public Facilities Management. Certificate programs in Pre-Law and Paralegal Studies and Public Policy and Administration are also available in addition to a Pre-law and Paralegal Studies concentration and minor. The department

AY 2017-2018 Assessment

also delivers a Master of Science degree in Homeland Security, and a Post-Master's Certificate in Global Security and Intelligence.

Homeland Security Program Mission Statement: From the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to the current National Security Strategy, students will gain a distinct appreciation for the complexities of homeland security organizations, leadership, policies, ethics, and challenges, through the review of pertinent literature, critical thinking, research, and reflective analysis and evaluation. The Master's Degree in Homeland Security is unique in that it pushes students to develop plausible solutions to the inexorable national, international, and transnational, threats currently challenging global security through the innovative delivery of transformative student learning experiences which prepare our graduates for life and career success in this ever-growing occupational field.

Purpose: The master's program will prepare students to engage in research from a cross-national and global perspective. It prepares students for entry positions in government and the private sector in which the ability to comprehend, influence, and respond to government policy from a national, international, and global security perspective is increasingly critical. It will also prepare interested students for the pursuit of further / additional advanced degrees in Homeland Security, Political Science, Strategic Leadership, or International Relations at other institutions.

Methodology: The assessment process for the MA/MS program is as follows:

- (1) Data from assessment tools (both direct – indirect, quantitative and qualitative) are collected and returned to the program coordinator;
- (2) The program coordinator will analyze the data to determine whether students have met measurable outcomes;
- (3) Results from the assessment will be discussed with the program faculty;
- (4) Individual meetings will be held with faculty teaching core graduate courses if required (show cause);
- (5) The Program Coordinator, in consultation with the HS Advisory Committee, will propose changes to measurable outcomes, assessment tools for the next assessment period and, where needed, curricula and program changes.

Note: The Homeland Security Degree program assessment leverages five Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) expressing what the student will know, be able to do, or be able to demonstrate when they complete the program. Every course within the program is nested in a student's learning outcome attainment. However, HS 5000, HS 5050 and HS 5200 are foundational – weighted courses, and as such is explicitly addressed in the first two SLOs due to the magnitude of the effect they have on a student's overall success in the program. The data derived from these courses are especially helpful in the overall program design, both today and in the future.

AY 2017-2018 Assessment

Student Learning Outcomes:

SLO 1. First and second-semester students will be able to describe the historical evolution and context of early American domestic homeland security challenges from the establishment of the Department in 2002 through today's international and globalization challenges.

Course Map: Tied to course syllabus objectives.

HS 5000: International Terrorism, Transnational Organized Crime, and Covert Ops
(Foundational Course)

HS 5050: Homeland Security **(Foundational Course)**

HS 5650: International Security and Globalization **(Support Course)**

Measure 1.1. (Direct – knowledge)

On an annual basis, students enrolled in HS 5000, and HS 5050, required courses for HS Master's students, and HS 5650, a support course, will be administered their initial course exam containing a module of questions taken from a bank developed by a faculty committee and designed to evaluate the student's knowledge and understanding of the foundational concepts, theories, strategies, and challenges of Homeland Security from early America through current international and globalization challenges. Seventy-five percent (75%) of enrolled students will be able to describe a basic understanding by scoring 70% or higher on the exam.

Findings

AY 2016-2017 HS 5000 Target not met. 72% of students achieved 70% or higher

AY 2017-2018 HS 5000 Target met. 76% of students achieved 70% or higher

AY 2016-2017 HS 5050 Target met. 77% of students achieved 70% or higher

AY 2017-2018 HS 5050 Target met. 79% of students achieved 70% or higher

Analysis:

HS 5000 AY 2016-2017 results were a failure to reach our target of 75%, with only 72% of students achieving a 70% or greater score on the measures. For AY 2017-2018 76% of students met our target of scoring 70% or higher on 1.1, an improvement of 4 percentage points and achieving our target for this measure. Based upon the analysis of the results of the 2016-2017 data the faculty instituted the following changes for 2017-2018: Redesigned and restructured the course modules on the development of Homeland Security and increased the exposure of the students to the current and historical responses to terrorism; integrated reviews of the key learning objectives throughout the course; enhanced the literature contained in the reading list for the courses to more fully immerse the students in the contextual knowledge required. These changes resulted in a 4% increase in the number of students who scored 70% on the measure. This demonstrates that the planned restructuring of the course and the

AY 2017-2018 Assessment

implementation of revised and improved modules to increase exposure of the students to the current and historical responses to terrorism have been effective and have demonstrably improved student success on this SLO.

Decision:

For SLO 1 measure 1.1 in HS 5000, the students did not reach our AY 2016-2017 target of 75% earning a 70% or better on the measure, with only 72% meeting the target. For 2017-2018 76% met the target and support the modifications to the courses that were implemented based on AY 2016-2017 data. These modifications included: increasing the exposure of the students to the current and historical responses to terrorism; integrating reviews of the key learning objectives throughout the course; and, enhancement of the literature for the courses to more fully immerse the students in the contextual knowledge required. The achievement of our target of 75% or more scoring 70% or better on the measures demonstrates that the planned restructuring of the course modules is successful, and the increase from 72% of students in AY 2016-2017 to 76% of students in AY 2017-2018, surpassing our target, supports our implementation of these changes. Looking ahead to AY 2018-2019, and in keeping with our continuous improvement model, the program will be hiring two new faculty, one credentialed in the field of Constitutional law specializing in domestic terrorism and the other in credentialed in Homeland Security program analysis. With these additions to our current faculty the program will be able to better align faculty to their areas of expertise. We now have a better mix of academic and practitioner skillsets that will broaden our student's learning experience.

AY 2016-2017 HS 5050 Target met. 77% of students achieved 70% or higher

AY 2017-2018 HS 5050 Target met. 79% of students achieved 70% or higher

Analysis:

HS 5050 AY 2016-2017 results for SLO 1 measure 1.1 were that the target was reached with 77% of students achieving a 70% or greater score on the measures. For AY 2017-2018 79% of students met our target of scoring 70% or higher on 1.1, an improvement of 2 percentage points and again achieving our target for this SLO. Based upon the analysis of the results of the 2016-2017 data the faculty instituted the following changes for 2017-2018 to drive further improvement in student learning: Redesigned and restructured the course modules on the development of Homeland Security and increased the exposure of the students to the context in which the Department of Homeland Security was established and the ongoing debate that is taking place in America concerning the threat of terrorist attack (s) on the US homeland. Expansion of the module addressing the historical evolution and context of early America domestic homeland security challenges from the establishment of the Department in 2002 through today's international and globalization challenges was also implemented. These changes resulted in a 2% increase in the number of students who scored 70% or greater on the measure. This demonstrates that the planned restructuring of the course

AY 2017-2018 Assessment

and the implementation of revised and improved modules to increase exposure of the students to the current and historical responses to terrorism have been effective and have demonstrably improved student success on this SLO.

Decision:

For SLO 1 measure 1.1 in HS 5050, the students did reach our 2016-2017 target of 75% earning a 70% or better on the measure, with 77% meeting the target. For 2017-2018 79% met the target and support the modifications to the courses that were implemented based on AY 2016-2017 data. These modifications included: Redesigned and restructured the course modules on the development of Homeland Security and increased the exposure of the students to the context in which the Department of Homeland Security was established and the ongoing debate that is taking place in America concerning the threat of terrorist attack (s) on the US homeland. Expansion of the module addressing the historical evolution and context of early America domestic homeland security challenges from the establishment of the Department in 2002 through today's international and globalization challenges was also implemented. The achievement of our target of 79% or more scoring 70% or better on the measures demonstrates that the analysis-driven restructuring of the course modules is successful, and the increase from 77% of students in AY 2016-2017 to 79% of students in AY 2017-2018, surpassing our target, supports our implementation of these changes. Looking ahead to AY 2018-2019, and in keeping with our continuous improvement model, we will continue to update our course materials with the most current research and this in conjunction with our two new faculty members will support our improvement goals. We will raise our target score to 80%, keeping our target percentage of students achieving this score at 75%. We will also be monitoring the effects of our program redesign that is described below.

Measure 1.2. (Direct – Skill / Ability)

Students will demonstrate their critical thinking and problem-solving skills through scenario-driven exercises in which they are required to analyze and develop a response to a homeland security situation. In this response, they must create a plan that contains relevant, justifiable, feasible, and actionable recommendations based on the information presented. Seventy (70%) of the students will score 12.8 (80%) or higher (max is 16) on the *Critical Thinking – Problem Solving Rubric*

Findings:

AY 2016-2017 HS 5000 Target met. 100% scored 12 or higher on the rubric

AY 2017-2018 HS 5000 Target met. 72% scored 12.8 or higher on the rubric

AY 2016-2017 HS 5050 Target met. 90% scored 12 or higher on the rubric

AY 2017-2018 HS 5050 Target met. 85% scored 12.8 or higher on the rubric

AY 2017-2018 Assessment

Analysis:

HS 5000 AY 2016-2017 results for SLO 1 measure 1.2 was 100% of students earning a score of 12 (75%) or higher on the rubric, which lead us to raise the target to 70% of students earning a 12.8 (80%) or higher on the rubric. AY 2017-2018 target was met although at a lower rate (72% v. 100%). Based upon our findings in the previous assessment, and to enhance student opportunities to achieve the new target the course materials were augmented with the inclusion of activities designed to facilitate an earlier development of the objective detachment needed for this type of exercise. Although the percentage of students achieving our new target score is somewhat lower, the data indicate that raising our target score to 80% and acting upon our decision in our AY 2016-2017 assessment to modify the course materials has led to a better delivery of information and an enhanced understanding of the goals of the course by our students.

Decision:

HS 5000 For AY 2017-2018 72% of students met our target of scoring 80% or higher on SLO 1 measure 1.2, a lower percentage of students achieving the target overall, but with the raising of the target score from 75% to 80%, this is to be expected. Based upon the analysis of the results of the 2016-2017 data the faculty instituted the following change for 2017-2018: inclusion of activities designed to facilitate an earlier development of the objective detachment needed for this type of exercise. 2016-2017 data demonstrated that the early assignments tended to be more subjective in nature, a situation that has been reduced in the early assignments in 2017-2018. This demonstrates that the planned restructuring of the course and the implementation of revised and improved modules to include activities to increase objective evaluation of situations have been effective and have demonstrably improved student success on this SLO. Looking ahead to AY 2018-2019, and in keeping with our continuous improvement model, we will continue to update our course materials with the most current research and this in conjunction with our two new faculty members will support our improvement goals. We will maintain our current course design and keep our target score at 80%, keeping our target percentage of students achieving this score at 75%. We will also be monitoring the effects of our program redesign that is described below.

Analysis:

HS 5050 FY 2016-2017 results for SLO 1 measure 1.2 was 90% of students earning a score of 12 (75%) or higher on the rubric, which leads us to raise the target to 70% of students earning a 12.8 (80%) or higher on the rubric. AY 2017-2018 target was met although at a lower rate (85% v. 90%). Based upon our findings in the AY 2016-2017 assessment, the course materials were modified to extend and diversify the types of scenarios presented to the students to tax their skills and encourage more imaginative approaches to the situations presented. Although the percentage of students achieving our new target score is somewhat lower, the data indicate that raising our target score to 80% and acting upon our decision in our AY 2016-2017 assessment to modify the

AY 2017-2018 Assessment

course materials has led to a better delivery of information and an enhanced understanding of the goals of the course by our students.

Decision:

HS 5050 For AY 2017-2018 85% of students met our target of scoring 80% or higher on SLO 1 measure 1.2, a lower percentage of students achieving the target overall, but with the raising of the target score from 75% to 80%, this is not unexpected. Based upon the analysis of the results of the 2016-2017 data, the faculty instituted the following changes for AY 2017-2018: the course materials and modules were modified to extend and diversify the types of scenarios presented to the students to tax their skills and encourage more imaginative approaches to the situations presented. Although overall rates were slightly lower, the ability of the students to achieve the higher target score is encouraging and demonstrates that the planned implementation of revised and improved modules have been effective and have demonstrably improved student success on this SLO. Looking ahead to AY 2018-2019, and in keeping with our continuous improvement model, we will continue to update our course materials with the most current research and this in conjunction with our two new faculty members will support our improvement goals. We will raise our target score to 85%, and our target percentage of students achieving this score to 80%. We will also be monitoring the effects of our program redesign that is described below.

Measure 1.3. (Direct – Knowledge / Ability)

At the end of each semester, students enrolled in HS 5000 and HS 5050, foundational required courses for all HS Master's students, will be administered their final course exam. A module of questions taken from a bank developed by a faculty and designed to evaluate the student's knowledge and understanding of the foundational concepts, theories, strategies, and challenges of Homeland Security are included. Ninety (90%) of enrolled students will demonstrate a fundamental knowledge by scoring 90% or higher on the exam.

Findings:

AY 2016-2017 HS 5000 Target not met. 72% of students scored 90% or higher

AY 2017-2018 HS 5000 Target not met. 78% of students scored 90% or higher

AY 2016-2017 HS 5050 Target met. 100% of students scored 90% or higher

AY 2017-2018 HS 5050 Target met. 98% of students scored 90% or higher

Analysis:

HS 5000 AY 2016-2017 results for SLO 1 measure 1.3 was a failure to reach our target of 90%, with only 72% of students achieving a 90% or greater score on the measure. For AY 2017-2018 78% of students met our target of scoring 90% or higher on 1.3, an

AY 2017-2018 Assessment

improvement of 6 percentage points, but again not achieving our target for this measure. HS 5050 met target scores. Based upon the analysis of the results of the 2016-2017 data, the faculty instituted the following changes for 2017-2018: Redesigned and restructured the course modules in HS 5000 on the development of Homeland Security and increased the exposure of the students to the current and historical responses to terrorism; integrated reviews of the key learning objectives throughout the course; enhanced the literature contained in the reading list for the courses to more fully immerse the students in the contextual knowledge required. These changes resulted in a 6% increase in the number of students who scored 90% on the measure. This demonstrates that the planned restructuring of the course and the implementation of revised and improved modules to increase exposure of the students to the current and historical responses to terrorism have been effective and have demonstrably improved student success on this SLO. However, we have yet to meet our target for this measure in HS 5000.

Decision:

For SLO 1 measure 1.3 in HS 5000, the students did not reach our AY 2016-2017 target of 90% earning a 90% or better on the measure, with only 72% meeting the target. For 2017-2018 only 78% met the target, an improvement of 6% that still does not meet our goal. This improvement is significant and supports the modifications to the courses that were implemented based on AY 2016-2017 data analysis. These modifications included: increasing the exposure of the students to the current and historical responses to terrorism; integrating reviews of the key learning objectives throughout the course; and, enhancement of the literature for the courses to more fully immerse the students in the contextual knowledge required. The increase of the percentage of students achieving of our target of 90% or more scoring 90% or better on the measures demonstrates that the restructuring of the course modules is moderately successful, and the increase from 72% of students in AY 2016-2017 to 78% of students in AY 2017-2018, supports our implementation of these changes. Looking ahead to AY 2018-2019, and in keeping with our continuous improvement model, we will increase the exposure of our students in HS 5000 to the foundational concepts, theories, strategies, and challenges of Homeland Security by increasing the course modules depth of coverage in these areas. We will also be monitoring the effects of our program redesign that is described below.

Analysis:

HS 5050 AY 2016-2017 and AY 2017-2018 results for SLO 1 measure 1.3 are that target scores were met for both assessment cycles. Based upon the analysis of the results of the 2016-2017 data, and to ensure the best learning opportunity for our students the faculty instituted the following changes for 2017-2018: Redesigned and restructured the course modules in HS 5050 on the foundational concepts, theories, strategies, and challenges of Homeland Security; integrated reviews of the key learning objectives throughout the course; enhanced the literature contained in the reading list

AY 2017-2018 Assessment

for the courses to more fully immerse the students in the contextual knowledge required. Plans for changes going forward as part of our continuous improvement goals are included in our decision directly below.

Decision:

For SLO 1 measure 1.3 in HS 5050, the students reached our AY 2016-2017 target of 90% earning a 90% and for AY 2017-2018 only 98% met the target. Based on AY 2016-2017 data and to provide additional learning opportunities for our students several changes were implemented. These modifications included: increasing the exposure of the students to the current and historical responses to terrorism; integrating reviews of the key learning objectives throughout the course; and, enhancement of the literature for the courses to more fully immerse the students in the contextual knowledge required. Examination of the data for AY 2017-2018 leads the program faculty to consider modifying this measure for AY 2018-2019. The changes made to the program, detailed in our summary below, also come into play in both HS 5000 and HS 5050 as these will both be required courses for all incoming students in contrast to the undergraduate degree dependent tracks for prior incoming students.

SLO 2. Third-semester students will know the role and functions of the various agencies comprising DHS and the U.S. intelligence agencies in assessing foreign, domestic, and cyber threats, what counterterrorism strategies are in use to thwart terrorist aggression and the constitutional issues associated with these strategies.

Course Map: Tied to course syllabus below.

HS 5100: Venue and Event Security

HS 5150: Domestic Terrorism Prevention and Analysis

HS 5300: Constitutional Issues and Global Security

HS 5400: Network Security and Cyberterrorism

HS 5750: Homeland Security Policy Seminar

Measure: 2.1. (Direct – knowledge)

On an annual basis, a sample number of research papers and/or projects from the courses above will be evaluated by a panel of faculty members, using a standardized *research paper rubric* (attached). The papers and/or projects will be evaluated to determine if students can demonstrate a basic knowledge of fundamental principles of homeland security policy, domestic and international trends in terrorism, the evolving nature of cyberspace, and how the homeland security associated laws affect the operations of law enforcement and intelligence operations. At least 80% of students sampled will score 90% or higher on the evaluation.

AY 2017-2018 Assessment

Findings:

AY 2016-2017 Target met. 80% of students scored 75% or higher.

AY 2017-2018 Target not met. 78% of students scored 90% or higher

Analysis:

Based on an analysis of our AY 2016-2017 results that 80% scored 75% or higher on the research paper rubric we increased our target percentage to 90% or higher on the rubric. For AY 2017-2018 only 78% of papers sampled achieved this goal. In AY 2017-2018, the target was not met for SLO 2 measure 2.1 across all four courses assessed for this measure. This reflects the change that was made to the target and we interpret the current findings as indicative of an improvement in our process, as in earlier measures, the near-attainment of our increased scoring target demonstrates that our continuous improvement goals are being met. The encouraging of students to enroll in English 3230, Technical Composition, or 3210 Advanced Composition to refine their writing skills has met with limited success due to resistance on the part of students to take courses which are at this time outside the degree program.

Decision:

Although the new target score was not met by the desired percentage of students, improvement in our student's performance is demonstrable. The program-wide changes that have been put into effect, from the modification of course content to the systematic utilization of evaluation rubrics have resulted in students learning in greater detail and demonstrating a better grasp of the writing process and the expectations of the program faculty. The utility of the rubrics to enhance student's writing process is significant. Empowering our students with the tools necessary to be successful is at the core of our continuous improvement goals. Our program assessment plan for AY 2018-2019 will keep in place the current target of 80% of students achieving 90% or better scores on the evaluation rubric which will enable analysis of the impact of the program redesign that takes effect in Fall of 2018.

Measure: 2.2. (Indirect – Attitude)

At the end of each semester, the program will sample students with a survey, which will state: "In my homeland security courses I was provided a master's level of understanding of homeland security policy, strategy, threat assessment and trends, associated law and procedures, and how the various agencies interact across the spectrum of operations." Respondents will be able to respond with strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree. At least 85% of students will respond that they strongly agree or agree with the statement.

Findings:

AY 2016-2017 Target met. 85% of respondents agreed with statements.

AY 2017-2018 Assessment

AY 2017-2018 Target met. 87% of respondents agreed with statements

Analysis:

Student responses continue to be positive regarding the content of their courses. The percentage of responses in the strongly agree or agree categories have risen from 85% in AY 2016-2017 to 87% for AY 2017-2018. There is some difficulty in comparing across assessments due to the evolution of the questions being asked. These changes are based upon our data from the AY 2016-2017 assessment and the fact that this part of our assessment process is new to the program. The formalization of the process in the current assessment period will allow us to better interpret and disentangle the effects of the program changes that have taken place based upon our earlier assessment findings and the Ay 2017-2018 assessment plan.

Decision:

The increase in positive responses to the course content and learning process from 85% to 87% is reflective of the data-driven changes that have been effected in individual courses and the program as a whole. As part of our continuous improvement model, the semester surveys will be utilized in a course-specific model which will give us more granular detail on the effects of the improvement of content. We will maintain the same targets for the next year.

SLO 3. Fourth-semester students will demonstrate that they understand the current policies and procedures to mitigate, prevent and respond to a disaster, analyze and implement regimens for safety and risk reduction, the ethics of care and compassionate leadership, and the mechanisms for measuring all-hazards threat and recovery.

Course Map: Tied to course syllabus below.

HS 5200: Research Design and Methods in Homeland Security
HS 5350: Executive Leadership, Diplomacy, and Ethics in Homeland Security
HS 5500: Counter-Terrorism, Intel Analysis, and Advanced Criminal Investigations
HS 5550: Advanced Cyber-forensics and Cyberwarfare Issues
HS 5600: Managing Chaotic Organizations
HS 5700: Peace Studies, Conflict Transformation, and Global Security

Measure 3.1. (Indirect – Knowledge / Attitude)

At the end of their fourth semester, the department will sample students with a *performance survey*. One question on this survey states: "The Homeland Security program at NSU has enabled me to conduct risk assessments, implement mitigations measures, navigate leadership challenges, and know the foundational concepts of the all-hazards approach to the emergency management process." Respondents will be

AY 2017-2018 Assessment

able to respond with strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree. At least 85% of students will respond that they agree or strongly agree with the statement.

Findings:

AY 2016-2017 Target met. 85% of students agreed with statements.

AY 2017-2018 Target met. 85% of students agreed with statements

Analysis:

For SLO 3 measure 3.1 AY 2016-2017, the target was met with 85% of the students agreeing with the evaluative statements. This target was also met for AY 2017-2018. Based upon feedback from students the survey has undergone several revisions and in its current form has been administered to our most recent fourth-semester students. Student responses continue to be positive regarding the content of their courses and their overall assessment of the program. The percentage of responses in the strongly agree or agree categories has not changed from AY 2016-2017 to AY 2017-2018. As discussed in the preceding analysis of SLO 2 measure 2.2 there are difficulties in comparing across academic assessments due to the evolution of the questions being asked. These changes are based upon our data from the AY 2016-2017 assessment and the fact that this part of our assessment process is new to the program. The formalization of the process in the current assessment period will allow us to better interpret and disentangle the effects going forward of the program changes that have taken place based upon our earlier assessment findings and the AY 2017-2018 assessment plan.

Decision:

The lack of change in the percentage of positive responses to the course content and learning process is difficult to interpret, essentially due to multiple changes in the instrument during its development. We know the continued positive responses are reflective of the data-driven changes that have been implemented in individual courses and the program. As part of our continuous improvement model the surveys will be utilized and going forward the stabilization of the content of the survey will allow more robust comparisons of the results. Based upon current results we will maintain the same targets for the next year.

Measure 3.2. (Direct – Skill / Ability)

Two or more faculty members will review position paper submissions by students using *Critical Thinking – Problem Solving Rubric* (attached), in which they are required to analyze and respond to some aspect of Homeland Security, Policy, Strategy, or Leadership. The paper requires all students to demonstrate the capacity to critically analyze information in an objective manner and engage in the development, assessment, determination, compilation, and selection of a potential solution which best

AY 2017-2018 Assessment

supports their position. At least 85% of projects, papers, and presentations evaluated will score 85% or higher.

Findings:

AY 2016-2017 Target met. 87.5% of papers scored 14 or higher on rubric

AY 2017-2018 Target met. 90% of papers scored 14 or higher on rubric

Analysis:

For SLO 3 measure 3.2 the target was met for AY 2017-2018, with an increase of 2.5% from the AY 2016-2017 assessment, from 87.5% of papers achieving the target score to 90% achieving an 85% or higher on the critical thinking-problem solving rubric. Based upon our decision from 2016-2017 no changes were made to the outcome, measure or target. We did, however, make significant changes to the courses in the program based on the findings from our AY 2016-2017 assessment which can directly explain the increased percentage of students scoring 85% or better on the rubric. The program-wide changes that have been put into effect, from the modification of course content to the systematic utilization of evaluation rubrics have resulted in students learning in greater detail and demonstrating a better grasp of the writing process and the expectations of the program faculty. The utility of the rubrics to enhance student's writing process is significant. Empowering our students with the tools necessary to be successful is at the core of our continuous improvement goals. The modifications described above resulted in a great success rate for our students in addressing the requirements of this SLO and measure.

Decision:

For SLO 3 measure 3.2 there has been an increase in students achieving the target of scoring an 85% or better on the rubric, from 87.5% in 2016-2017 to 90% for 2017-2018. The modifications made to our courses based upon earlier data appear to be paying off in the form of increase success by our students. Based upon this assessment finding and as part of our continuous improvement model we will be raising the target rubric score to 90% for AY 2018-2019. Looking ahead to AY 2018-2019, we will continue to update our course materials with the most current research and this in conjunction with our two new faculty members will support our improvement goals.

SLO 4. Students will demonstrate proficiency in evaluating and analyzing Homeland Security research and being able to frame their own research questions.

Course Map: Tied to course syllabus below.

HS 5200: Research Design and Methods in Homeland Security

HS 5900: Graduate Seminar for Thesis Research and Writing Methods in HS

AY 2017-2018 Assessment

Measure 4.1. (Direct – Knowledge)

Eighty percent (80%) of students taking the comprehensive examination will demonstrate proficiency on Part I of the exam, which requires students to analyze and critique two foundational and standardized questions.

The evaluation is based on a skill assessment *Comprehensive Exam Rubric (attached)*. The rubric consists of five skill assessment areas, which faculty grading the exam will score from zero (low proficiency/fail) to three (Accomplished proficiency). A combined score of 20 (minimum of 10 points per question) and above on the rubric will demonstrate student proficiency on this part of the comprehensive exam.

The Graduate Program Coordinator evaluates and reports scores. Students need a minimum score of 30 (10 points per question) to pass the three remaining questions focused on their specific areas of interest.

Findings:

AY 2016-2017 Target met. Average rubric score of 11.3 per question

AY 2017-2018 Target met. Average rubric score of 11.9 per question

Analysis:

For SLO 4 measure 4.1 the target was met for AY 2016-2017 with an average rubric score of 11.3 (75%) per question for a combined score of 22.6. The target was also met AY 2017-2018 with an improvement in average score of .6 points per item (79.3%). This improvement can be attributed to the revisions to the HS 5200 course enacted after the results of the 2016-2017 assessment, as well as the inclusion of the various rubrics that are now standard for all courses in the program, enhancing our student's understanding of expectations of the faculty for each stage of the program. Overall scores have been Satisfactory with rubric values for individual questions ranging from 10 to 13 with an average of 11.9 (Comprehensive Examination Rubric attached) with deficiencies noted in element 5 (Quality of Writing). As mentioned above, the HS program has undergone extensive revision over the previous two years. This includes both the content and assessment processes for the general exam. More data are needed as the comprehensive examination has been expanded to include additional concentration/sub-field questions in the second portion of the examination. This format has been in effect for Fall 2017 and Spring 2018 and has been completed by 12 graduates.

Decision:

For AY 2017-2018 we noted an increase in student average scores on all assessed elements of the comprehensive examination, from a rubric score of 11.3 to 11.9. We

AY 2017-2018 Assessment

have noted that this increase can be attributed to changes in the HS 5200 course design as well as the program-wide usage of the various rubrics to ensure consistency of instruction and to clearly communicate expectations to our students. As part of our continuous improvement model, we will be expanding this measure to include all questions on the comprehensive exam for AY 2018-2019. There will be no changes in the values for the measure or the target, simply an expansion of data points by the inclusion of the specialty sub-field questions in the measure. Looking ahead to AY 2018-2019, and in keeping with our continuous improvement model, we will continue to update our course materials with the most current research and this in conjunction with our two new faculty members will support our improvement goals.

Measure 4.2. (Direct - Knowledge)

Ninety percent (90%) of thesis and non-thesis proposals will demonstrate student proficiency in developing research questions about political-security phenomena that directly relate to and expand upon an existing theoretical body of knowledge.

At the end of each thesis and non-thesis proposal, committee members will score the proposal using the *Thesis – Non-Thesis Assessment Rubric* (see attachment). The rubric consists of twelve skill assessment items, which the thesis committee members will score from low proficiency to high proficiency. A cumulative score of 125 or more will demonstrate proficiency.

Findings:

AY 2016-2017 Target met. 100% of proposals have a rubric score of at least 125

AY 2017-2018 Target met. 100% of proposals have a rubric score of at least 140

Analysis:

For AY 2016-2017 the target for SLO 4 measure 4.2 was met with all proposals attaining a rubric score of 125 points out of 200 and for AY 2017-2018 the target was also met, with rubric scores for all proposals increasing to 140 points out of 200. This increase of 15 points overall for the proposals came largely from improvement in the values attained for the rubric sections: “claims supported by research or experience”; “credible research sources”; and, “Grammar, Spelling, Organization, and Terminology”. The modifications made to the HS 5200 course based upon AY 2016-2017 data have had a significant impact on the quality of proposals and improved student learning in our program. These changes included an expansion of the literature examined in the course and most importantly the final paper in the course is the student’s proposal for their thesis, Paper in Lieu or final Project. This change has brought the course in line with common practices for methods courses in other disciplines and has greatly enhanced the experience and the final research project for our students.

AY 2017-2018 Assessment

Decision:

For AY 2017-2018 the target for measure 4.2 was again met, and a substantial improvement of 15 points on the rubric has been achieved. The changes implemented for 2017-2018 based upon our 2016-2017 assessment have had a positive impact on student learning and the student's ability to demonstrate proficiency in developing research questions. The change of overall focus of the HS 5200 course toward a completed proposal has had a positive effect on the students in our program and indicates that our continuous improvement plan is producing enhanced learning for our students. For AY 2018-2019 we will be reevaluating this SLO with the goal for refining it to more closely focus on the proposal process.

Measure 4.3. (Direct - Knowledge)

Ninety percent (90%) of student thesis and or non-thesis papers will use the most appropriate methodology for the research question/hypotheses addressed. At the end of each thesis, Paper-in-Lieu, or Project, committee members will score the submission utilizing the *Thesis – Non-Thesis Assessment Rubric* (see attachment). The rubric consists of twelve skill assessment items, which the thesis committee members will score from low proficiency to highly proficient. A score of 125 or higher will demonstrate proficiency. The Program Coordinator will evaluate and report scores.

Findings:

AY 2016-2017 Target met. Average rubric score 164 or higher

AY 2017-2018 Target met. Average rubric score 175 or higher

Analysis:

For AY 2016-2017 the target for SLO 4 measure 4.3 was met with all papers attaining a rubric score of 164 points or higher out of 200 and for AY 2017-2018 the target was also met, with rubric scores for all papers increasing to 175 points out of 200. This increase of 11 points overall for the papers came largely from improvement in the values attained for the rubric sections: "claims supported by research or experience"; "credible research sources"; and, "Grammar, Spelling, Organization, and Terminology". The modifications made to the HS 5200 course based upon AY 2016-2017 data have had a significant impact on the quality of papers and improved student learning in our program. These changes included an expansion of the literature examined in the course and most importantly the final paper in the course is the student's proposal for their thesis, Paper in Lieu or final Project. These improvements allow the student/teacher interactions during the thesis/PIL/Project completion phase of the program to focus more on the actual writing process rather than formulating a research question or project area as was the case before the institution of these changes.

AY 2017-2018 Assessment

Decision:

For AY 2017-2018 the target for measure 4.3 was again met, and an improvement of 11 points on the rubric has been achieved. The changes implemented for 2017-2018 based upon our 2016-2017 assessment have had a positive impact on student learning and the student's ability to demonstrate proficiency in developing research questions. The change of overall focus of the HS 5200 course toward a completed proposal has had a positive effect on the students during their final semesters in our program and indicates that our continuous improvement plan is producing enhanced learning for our students. The ability for the thesis/PIL and the Project courses to solely focus on the writing process instead of trying to first formulate research topics or question has greatly improved the student's learning experience. For AY 2018-2019 we will be reevaluating this SLO with the goal for refining it to more closely focus on the completion of the thesis/PIL/Project process to enhance our goals of continuous improvement in the program.

SLO 5. Students will demonstrate appropriate communication skills.

Course Map: Tied to course syllabus below.

HS 5900: Graduate Seminar for Thesis Research and Writing Methods in HS.

Measure 5.1. (Direct - Skill)

Eighty percent (80%) of students will demonstrate proficient written communication skills. Student thesis and non-thesis research papers will be used to evaluate their written communication skills by rating the quality of the writing on the *Thesis – Non-Thesis Assessment Rubric* (see attachment). Eight components will be used to measure written communications skills on a scale from low proficiency to high proficiency. Proficiency will be demonstrated by a combined score of at least 94 on sections 1-4, 7 - 9, and 11 of the rubric.

Findings:

AY 2016-2017 Target met. An average rubric score of 123

AY 2017-2018 Target met. An average rubric score of 124

Analysis:

For AY 2016-2017 the target for SLO 5 measure 5.1 was met with all papers attaining a rubric score of 124 points out of a possible 155 and for AY 2017-2018 the target was also met, with rubric scores for all papers increasing to 125 points. This increase for the paper came largely from improvement in the values attained for the rubric sections: "claims supported by research or experience"; "credible research sources"; and,

AY 2017-2018 Assessment

“Grammar, Spelling, Organization and Terminology”. The modifications made to the HS 5200 course based upon AY 2016-2017 data have had a significant impact on the quality of papers and improved student learning in our program. These changes included an expansion of the literature examined in the course and most importantly the final paper in the course is the student’s proposal for their thesis, Paper in Lieu or final Project. These improvements allow the student/teacher interactions during the thesis/PIL/Project completion phase of the program to focus more on the actual writing process rather than formulating a research question or project area as was the case before the institution of these changes.

Decision:

For AY 2017-2018 the target for measure 5.1 was again met. For AY 2016-2017 interpretation of the analysis was suspect due to the small number of students who were engaged in their final project or paper during the assessment period. We have much more confidence in the robustness of our analysis for AY 2017-2018 as we had 23 students complete the program in this period. Based upon this we will be making changes to measure 5.1, specifically in regard to our target rubric score, which we will raise to 125 points out of 155 available. The faculty believes that we now have sufficient data to make this change. The changes implemented for 2017-2018 based upon our 2016-2017 assessment have had a positive impact on student learning and the student’s ability to demonstrate proficiency in developing research questions. The change of overall focus of the HS 5200 course toward a completed proposal has had a positive effect on the students during their final semesters in our program and indicates that our continuous improvement plan is producing enhanced learning for our students. The ability for the thesis/PIL and the Project courses to solely focus on the process instead of trying to first formulate research topics or question has greatly improved the student’s learning experience. For AY 2018-2019 we will be reevaluating this SLO with the goal for refining it to more closely focus on the completion of the thesis/PIL/Project process to enhance our goals of continuous improvement in the program.

Measure 5.2. (Direct - Knowledge)

Eighty percent (80%) of graduates will demonstrate proficiency in oral communication skills. Thesis and non-thesis defenses and project presentations will be used to evaluate students' oral communication skills by rating the quality of the presentations on *Thesis – Non-Thesis Assessment Rubric* (see attachment). Sections 1-4, 7 - 9, and 11 of the rubric will also measure oral communication skills on a scale of low proficiency to high proficiency. Proficiency will be demonstrated by a combined score of at least 94 on sections 1-4, 7 - 9, and 11 of the rubric.

Findings:

AY 2016-2017 Target met. An average rubric score of 123

AY 2017-2018 Assessment

AY 2017-2018 Target met. An average rubric score of 124

Analysis:

For AY 2016-2017 the target for SLO 5 measure 5.2 was met with all presentations attaining a rubric score of 124 points out of a possible 155 and for AY 2017-2018 the target was also met, with rubric scores for all presentations increasing to 125 points. This increase for the presentations came largely from effective use of information and a better overall grasp of the process that stems from improvement in the rubric sections: “claims supported by research or experience”; “credible research sources”; and, “Grammar, Spelling, Organization and Terminology”, increasing the professionalism of the students. The ability of the instructor to focus more on the process than finding topics and research questions allowed a more fruitful collaboration with the students, increasing the student’s confidence in their understanding of their subject matter and producing a more positive experience for them.

Decision:

For AY 2017-2018 the target for measure 5.2 was again met. For AY 2016-2017 interpretation of the analysis was suspect due to the small number of students who were engaged in their final project or paper during the assessment period. We have much more confidence in the robustness of our analysis for AY 2017-2018 as we had 23 students complete the program in this period. Based upon this we will be making changes to measure 5.2, specifically in regard to our target rubric score, which we will change to 125 points out of 155 available. We will also be seeking a better rubric for evaluating the oral portion of the final defense, as the methods we currently employ are better suited to evaluation of written work. The faculty believes that we now have sufficient data to make these changes. Our continuous improvement plan is producing enhanced learning for our students. The ability for the thesis/PIL and the Project courses to solely focus on the process instead of trying to first formulate research topics or question has greatly improved the student’s learning experience. For AY 2018-2019 we will be reevaluating this SLO with the goal for refining it to more closely focus on the completion of the thesis/PIL/Project process to enhance our goals of continuous improvement in the program.

Comprehensive Summary of Key Evidence of Improvement Based on Analysis of Results

For AY 2016-2017 and AY 2017-2018, the Homeland Security Master’s Degree program assessment committee examined 12 measures for five Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs). Decisions that were implemented for AY 2017-2018 are:

- Program-wide changes that have been implemented, from the modification of course content to the systematic utilization of evaluation rubrics have resulted in

AY 2017-2018 Assessment

students learning in greater detail and demonstrating a better grasp of the writing process and the expectations of the program faculty. The utility of the rubrics to enhance student's writing process is significant. Empowering our students with the tools necessary to be successful is at the core of our continuous improvement goals.

- Redesigned the course modules on the development of Homeland Security as a concept and increased the exposure of the students to the current and historical responses to terrorism; integrated reviews of the key learning objectives throughout the course; enhanced the literature contained in the reading list for the courses to more fully immerse the students in the contextual knowledge required.
- Redesigned the course modules to increase the exposure of the students to the context in which the Department of Homeland Security was established and the ongoing debate that is taking place in America concerning the threat of terrorist attack (s) on the US homeland. Expanded the module addressing the historical evolution and context of early America domestic homeland security challenges from the establishment of the Department in 2002 through today's international and globalization challenges was also implemented.
- Based upon our findings in the previous assessment of the briefing note assignments the course materials were augmented with the inclusion of activities designed to facilitate an earlier development of the objective detachment needed for this type of exercise.
- Course materials were modified to extend and diversify the types of scenarios presented to the students to tax their skills and encourage more imaginative approaches to the situations presented.
- The modifications made to the HS 5200, a research methods course, based upon AY 2016-2017 data have had a significant impact on the quality of proposals and improved student learning in our program. These changes included an expansion of the literature examined in the course and most importantly the final paper in the course is the student's proposal for their thesis, Paper in Lieu or final Project.
- These changes in HS 5200 allow the student/teacher interactions during the thesis/PIL/Project completion phase of the program to focus more on the actual writing process rather than formulating a research question or project area as was the case before the institution of these changes.

Based on these changes, implemented at the conclusion of the AY 2016-2017 analysis and continued in AY 2017-2018, the targets for ten of the measures were met in AY 2016-2017. In the AY 2017-2018 assessment two targets were not met, in both instances the target score had been increased based upon the 2016-2017 data, which mandates that we collect more data on these before making any changes. For AY 2017-

AY 2017-2018 Assessment

2018 our findings support the decisions that were made based upon the AY 2016-2017 assessment and drive us forward with our goal of continuous improvement of our program and the resulting gains in student learning.

Plan of Action Moving Forward

Based on the AY 2017-2018 assessment report we have made changes to our program and will be making changes to several student learning outcomes and their attendant measures. The biggest change is a redesign of the program to restructure the required/elective matrix to ensure that all students are exposed to courses that have been identified by students as key to their success. Previously several of these courses were chosen based upon the student's prior educational program but we will now require them for all incoming students. We have also changed the hours required for each track in our program, both the Thesis/PIL option and the course-work only option. We have reduced the hours for each by six, making the paper option a 30-hour course of study and the course-work only option a 36-hour course of study. These changes were made based upon our findings in the AY 2016-2017 and AY 2017-2018 assessments, primarily in the student surveys. We are also piloting two hybrid courses, HS 5000 and HS 5050 will be offered this fall as distance learning courses with the availability of WebEx interaction by our online-only students, we are using these courses as a vehicle to test the impact of more traditional style student/student and student/instructor interaction on student learning outcomes.

Looking ahead to AY 2018-2019, and in keeping with our continuous improvement model, the program will be hiring two new faculty, one credentialed in the field of Constitutional law specializing in domestic terrorism and the other in credentialed in Homeland Security program analysis. With these additions to our current faculty the program will be able to better align faculty to their areas of expertise. We now have a better mix of academic and practitioner skillsets that will broaden our student's learning experience.

Changes to student learning outcomes will continue to be primarily concentrated on the target scores and desired percentage of students achieving these goals. Based on our current and prior results we believe that our outcomes are addressing the area's most important to student success. For SLO 4 measure 4.2 we will be expanding the questions considered on the comprehensive examination from the required questions (Part 1) model we have used in the previous two assessments to include all the questions (Parts 1 & 2) submitted, keeping the target score for each item the same. We will be developing a new rubric for SLO 5 measure 5.2 to better reflect the qualities of the oral defense. As a key component of our continuous improvement model we will continue surveying students in every course to ensure that our goals for their learning are being met.