

Annual Academic Assessment Report

M.Ed. in Higher Education

2019-2020

Program Goals and Objectives

HIED-MED program equips students with the skills and knowledge to be able to:

1. Exhibit professional competencies as practitioner scholars and educators at postsecondary institutions, including a commitment to continuous professional development.
2. Make evidence-based decisions and solve problems through processes that recognize a wide variety of environmental factors, constituents, and influences.
3. Communicate effectively through written and verbal means and via technology to a variety of audiences and stakeholders.
4. Contribute to more diverse and inclusive institutions, programs, and policies for students, faculty, and staff.
5. Understand basic tenants of research and interpret findings to inform practice.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the HIED-MED program, students will be able to:

1. Understand the relationship between postsecondary education institutions and social, economic, and political systems.
2. Apply knowledge from the field of higher education and student affairs to solve problems and make decisions.
3. Appreciate how historical and contemporary trends and inequities affect access to and experiences in higher education.
4. Operationalize a theory-practice-theory approach to work, especially as it relates to promoting student development.
5. Assess risk and develop strategies for creating acceptable levels of legal risk.
6. Conduct themselves in a professional, thoughtful, and ethical manner with students, colleagues, and stakeholders.

1. Timeline and process for assessment and analysis:

- Completion of internships occurs each semester (spring, summer, fall) throughout the academic year.
- Program graduate exit survey occurs in the last month of the graduating semester (delayed spring 2020 due to COVID-19).
- The 2018-2019 academic year was the external program review process, and 2019-2020 was the initial implementation phase based on external review feedback.

2. Direct means of assessment for all learning outcomes:

- Course projects, including program milestones such as:
 - a. Site Visit and Poster Presentation (Overview)

- b. Theory Application Essay (Student Development)
- c. Documentary (History)
- d. Final issue papers (various courses)
- Reflective practice (internship) site-supervisor and self-evaluations
- Reflective practice (internship) e-portfolios
- Comprehensive master's examination
- Program graduate exit survey
- The 2018-2019 academic year was the external program review process: Reviewers met with faculty, students, and alumni to review learning outcomes and program feedback. 2019-2020 was the implementation phase based on external review feedback.

3. Reporting of Results

Course Projects and Program Milestones

During this academic year, students completed a site visit project covering various college and university campuses, and also created poster presentations in the Overview of American HIED course. Master's students successfully completed a student development theory application essay final project, completed a History documentary, and in other courses they engaged in the opportunity to tailor final projects into issue papers on areas of interest within the course topics.

Students and faculty also adjusted to a mid-semester shift to virtual instruction in spring 2020 due to COVID-19 regulations.

Comprehensive Exams

In fall 2019 and spring 2020, all students who took comprehensive exams passed, although several students required an addendum or rewrite, which is a normal outcome each semester.

Reflective Practice Internships

Student performance in Reflective Practice internships (HIED 5643 *Reflective Practice in Higher Education and Student Affairs*) is reflected in course final surveys. In the site supervisor evaluation, students are rated on a 4-point scale (1 = "Did not meet minimal performance expectations" to 4 = "Performed at an exceptional level"). All students met or exceeded expectations overall.

Reflective practice students also completed the recently updated Reflective Practice (internship) portfolio, which includes an online capstone project that is reflective in nature and includes the ACPA/NASPA technology competency (such as a blog or webpage developed for the course).

Graduate Exit Survey

An online HIED MEd recent graduate exit survey was created two years ago (May, 2017), and the program will again ask 2020 graduates to answer questions about experiences in the program ranging from "What did you enjoy most about the program," to "What was the most meaningful learning opportunity you experienced during the program," and "Can you think of a skill or ability that you wish your experience as a graduate student had better developed?" to "What are your main, specific suggestions for improving the program?"

Due to COVID-19 adjustments, the spring 2020 graduate exit survey was not done before the completion of this report. However, the Program Coordinator sent a check-in email over the program list serv and one graduating student confirmed what faculty were hearing regarding students appreciating faculty support during the uncertain job search, as well as appreciation for Division of Student Affairs and all Graduate Assistantship partners who were being flexible and supporting recent graduates. Updated graduate exit survey information will be included in next year's report.

Out-of-State Focus Group

The Program Coordinator held the third annual out-of-state (including international) student focus group to see what drew students from out of the area to our program, and to learn more about what they experienced when searching with other programs. This feedback, coupled with the external program review process, reflected common student feedback regarding the number of courses required for the program (lower credit hours than many peer institutions), reinforcement that they sought a program without a GRE requirement (Fall 2019 was our first semester without the GRE requirement), and a desire for a required Diversity course (our course was newly created a few years ago, and up until now has been an elective – as a result of external program review, the course is proposed as a core course moving forward). Students in the focus group iterated what previous groups noted regarding the program standing out among competitors due to prompt, personalized follow up from the program coordinator throughout the prospective student and application process. Students also gave feedback about the Division of Student Affairs (DSA) GA application and visit day process, which the program coordinator shared with the DSA liaison, resulting in many improvements to the process (easier application process, extended visit time on campus with more built in time with the academic program, current students hosting prospective students, etc).

Additional feedback from the external program review includes the following:

1. Out-of-Date Program Goals and Student Learning Outcomes

We met the planned Departmental Response/Strategy noted last year, including revising and updating program goals and student learning outcomes (as noted above), with attention paid to national professional competencies and graduating student-centered professionals. A sub-committee with the Program Coordinator as point person was formed, and then the entire HIED faculty approved the revised goals. 2 more years from now (3 years from external program review), program faculty will revisit the goals to determine their relevance and make any adjustments as the next program review approaches.

2. Revise Degree Requirements and Curriculum; Conduct Curricular Mapping

We met the planned Departmental Response/Strategy noted last year, including that a sub-committee with the Program Coordinator as point person to benchmark was formed, and then the entire HIED faculty approved the revised master's degree curriculum. The committee compared our overall credit-hour requirement along with curriculum to peer institutions, while being sensitive to the curricular strengths noted in the external review. As brought up in the external review, the committee was attentive to the possibilities for students to learn assessment (offered

doctoral elective M.Ed. students can take), budgeting (offered doctoral elective M.Ed. students can take), and cross-cultural/diversity skills (current Diversity elective voted to be core course moving forward) in the revised curriculum. As a part of this process, we determined which courses advance program goals and meet national standards (e.g., ACPA/NASPA Professional Competencies). Two more years from now (3 years from external program review), program faculty will revisit the curriculum to determine its relevance and make any adjustments as the next program review approaches.

3. Greater Inclusion of On-Campus Professionals in Program

We began the planned Departmental Response/Strategy noted last year, to consider possibilities to improve the intentional inclusion of campus partners in the instruction of the higher education program (process ongoing after a revised curriculum is implemented in a year). The campus partner inclusion could include selected opportunities to co-teach skill-based courses and a more formalized internship supervisor training and recognition (new intern supervisor guide is drafted for upcoming academic year, and program alumni newsletter was sent in spring 2020 to highlight student opportunities and successes – many program alumni are campus partners who read the newsletter which was also shared via program social media). The entire HIED faculty will continue considering the most appropriate ways to more fully incorporate campus partners into the program.

4. Lack of Online Course Offerings

We completed the planned Departmental Response/Strategy to have the Higher Education faculty collaborate with colleagues in Adult and Lifelong Learning to establish a master's degree in Community College Leadership that launched in Spring 2020. The Higher Education faculty anticipate that this program will help us advance the University of Arkansas's land-grant mission by reaching students who need advanced degrees for their career goals but are unable to physically attend the University of Arkansas. This online degree for community college educators also enables us to maintain face-to-face graduate programs for those who anticipate working at 4-year colleges and universities.

5. Lack of Website Visibility/Logical Navigation; Improved Strategic Approach to Marketing and Recruitment

We began the planned Departmental Response/Strategy noted last year, as the Higher Education Program faculty share the concern that the name of their current department does not lend itself to logical navigation of prospective students. However, the department name and website layout are beyond the realm of what HIED faculty can update. With the ongoing conversations about overall COEHP restructuring, perhaps a departmental name change will be an option in the future. Although, it seems unlikely that, even if the department renames itself, "higher education" would become part of its official name. Once a prospective student does find the departmental website (<http://rhrc.uark.edu>), academic programs are prominently featured. The Program Coordinator worked with the program GA to collaborate with the website designed in GRAD to continue making allowable updates to the page (streamlining the sidebar menu,

updating photos, making accessibility a priority with images, updating links, and streamlining text for a user-friendly program page).

In addition, the HIED Program implements several efforts to improve the visibility of the program. First, the Program maintains active social media on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. The Program's social media engagement compares very favorably to nationally-prominent programs. In addition, the Program advertises its website (<http://hied.uark.edu>) as much as possible. Finally, the program coordinators annually (or as appropriate) send e-mails to regional higher education and student affairs leaders and program alumni that encourage them to send students to the program. The program coordinator also worked with COEHP graduate recruiter to utilize Slate to improve recruitment initiatives and prospective students' knowledge about the HIED Program. The HIED M.Ed. program is one of the "pilot" programs for Slate initiatives, including the Program Coordinator creating quad-annual recruitment messaging tailored to that time of year sent via Slate to prospective students.

Student Accomplishments

Finally, there are many examples of student accomplishments from the prior academic year such as multiple students participate in national professional associations (including winning a national conference case study competition), as well as several students being selected for nationally competitive internships and one international summer internship (now cancelled due to COVID-19). We also had a first year HIED M.Ed. student win a national association (NASPA) Rising Star Award.