

Annual Academic Assessment Report

M.Ed. in Higher Education

2020-2021

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 stakeholder

Assessment of Student Learning

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 (postponed spring 2020 due to COVID-19 pandemic).
- The 2018-2019 academic year was the external program review process, and 2019-2020 was the initial implementation phase based on external review feedback. The COVID-19 pandemic impacted this process, but 2020 was the continued implementation of updates based on feedback.

Direct means of assessment for all learning outcomes:

Course projects, including program milestones such as:

- Site Visit and Poster Presentation (Overview)
- Theory Application Essay (Student Development)

- Documentary (History)
- Final issue papers (various courses)
- Reflective practice (internship) site-supervisor and self-evaluations
- Reflective practice (internship) e-portfolios
- Comprehensive master's examination

Program assessments (out of state focus group, two research studies on student experiences) 2020 was the beginning implementation phase based on feedback from the 2018-2019 academic year was the external program review process where reviewers met with faculty, students, and alumni to review learning outcomes and program feedback.

Student Accomplishments

There are many examples of student accomplishments from this academic year such as multiple students being involved on campus and in national professional associations, as well as several students being selected for nationally competitive internships and full time HIED positions, even in the remote pandemic format.

Use 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 engaged in the opportunity to tailor final projects into issue papers on areas of interest within the course topics.

Comprehensive Exams

In 2020, all students who took comprehensive exams passed, although several students required an addendum or rewrite.

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). 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).

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we did not administer the Graduate Exit Survey this year, but will plan to collect that information post-pandemic. The survey data from past years guides program updates, as 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?”

Program updates from the previous versions of the graduate survey center on responses where graduates noted relationships with faculty and classmates as a highlight, as well as meaningful experiences in internships and graduate assistantships, learning about current events in HIED, and learning through a variety of in-class approaches and projects with faculty who demonstrate support and intentional learning efforts. Recent graduates highlighted the internship seminar, especially regarding learning about the job search and salary negotiation, hands-on GA and reflective practice work, and overall time management as key learning opportunities.

Due to COVID-19 adjustments, the spring 2020 graduate exit survey was not done. However, the Program Coordinator completed an open program check-in via Zoom, and students reported 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.

Out-of-State Focus Group

We also held the third annual out-of-state student focus group (virtual via Zoom in 2020) to see what drew students from out of the area (including one international student) 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) and the need to consider requiring a second internship (reflective practice) although most students took a second one as an elective – both of these ideas supporting the desire to keep students in the program for the full two years vs. leaving after 1.5 years to take a full time job mid-year, which also impacts our graduate assistant pipeline. Students also iterated positive reinforcement of our program abolishing the GRE requirement, and the importance of a required Diversity course. 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). Feedback was repeated regarding Overview of HIED being too similar to the Intro to Student Affairs course.

Research Studies with Recent Students and Alumnx

As a part of her research agenda on HESA graduate preparation programs, one of the program faculty members began collecting data in spring 2021 on recent program graduate sense of belonging, including understanding social identities and experiences with the Diversity in HIED course. A separate research study by two program faculty also examines the experiences of students in the Diversity in HIED course. Each study is in the preliminary data analysis stage,

and is informing how program faculty shape in class and out of class experiences for the upcoming academic year.

Action Items

Based on this feedback, adjustments have been made including moving the program to 36 credit hours, removing the Overview course (some content will be folded into newly redone Intro to SA course required for all first semester students), moving Diversity in HIED to a core required course (vs elective), moving Management to an elective course, and adding new breakout small group advising sessions at program orientation (virtual 2020). DSA GA days are virtual in 2021 due to the pandemic, but we are still building in the personal connections student seek via an academic program session and a virtual game night with current students. Faculty also created a HIED M.Ed. alumnx newsletter for alumnx engagement (digital distribution), and a new HIED M.Ed. program handbook outlining program details for all incoming students to reference throughout the program.

Additional action items executed from external program review and internal assessments include the following:

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

Faculty established a committee to revise and update program goals and student learning outcomes for the M.Ed. program, with attention paid to national professional competencies and graduating student-centered professionals.

2. Revise Degree Requirements and Curriculum; Conduct Curricular Mapping

Program faculty established a committee to benchmark and revise the master's degree curriculum in light of feedback and national standards (e.g., ACPA/NASPA Professional Competencies).

3. Greater Inclusion of On-Campus Professionals in Program

In light of the beginning implementation projects noted above, faculty are still considering the new program of study and how it lends to possibilities to improve the intentional inclusion of campus partners in the instruction of the higher education program. This could include selected opportunities to co-teach skill-based courses and a more formalized internship supervisor training and recognition. The entire HIED faculty will consider the most appropriate ways to more fully incorporate campus partners into the program.

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

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, and the program began (spring 2021) a “linktree” to use a QR code and single link to streamline showcasing key program links such as admissions, GA application details, and social media links. 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. Program coordinators are also working with new COEHP graduate recruiter to utilize Slate to also improve recruitment initiatives and prospective students’ knowledge about the HIED Program. The HIED M.Ed. program was one of the first programs on campus to pilot some new Slate features, including a quarterly recruitment email custom-made to highlight the program, campus, and local area. The program also hosted multiple virtual recruitment sessions for students to meet with the program coordinator and current students.