

Annual Academic Assessment Report

M.Ed. in Higher Education

2021-2022

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 (restarting this year; was postponed before 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 2021 was the continued implementation of updates based on feedback.

Direct means of assessment for all learning outcomes:

Course projects, including program milestones such as:

- Poster Presentation or Case Study Theory Application Essay (Student Development)
- Professional Development Portfolio (Intro to HESA)

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

Continued implementation from program assessments (out of state focus groups, two research studies on student experiences), and based on feedback from the 2018-2019 academic year from 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 given the pandemic.

Use of Results

Course Projects and Program Milestones

During this academic year, students created conference-style poster presentations or a case study theory application essay (student choice) in Student Development Theory, created a personalized professional development portfolio in Intro to HESA that includes use of professional competencies, a student affairs philosophy statement, and updated resume, 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 2021, 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"). Students met or exceeded expectations overall.

Reflective practice students also completed the 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 last year, but will plan to collect that information in the near future for new graduating classes. 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.

Out-of-State Focus Group

We also held the fourth annual out-of-state student focus group (virtual via Zoom due to pandemic) 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. Student feedback covered the positive recruitment factors of comprehensive GA packages and the prompt, personalized recruitment from the program coordinator and the use of social media in recruiting. The GA process was a big challenge (pandemic adjustments), but they appreciated the virtual option. Students wished for more connection once admitted/accepted (an in-program “buddy” and “swag bag” that occur over the summer to ease transition). Students like the cohort-like feel and want to continue strengthening those connections and community building, and they really wanted program shirts.

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, recent adjustments have been made including moving the program to 36 credit hours, removing the Overview course (some content was 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 2021 due to pandemic). DSA GA days are virtual due to the pandemic (with a later on campus visit date for those who accept offers), 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. Students emphasized the importance of community building and belonging (especially in the pandemic), and as a result we are working on summer bridge efforts such as early “buddy” pairings with senior students and a “swag bag” for UofA pride, and we met the goal of creating HIED M.Ed. t-shirt and sweatshirts (from a student design contest). The program also hosted multiple virtual recruitment sessions for students to meet with the program coordinator and current students. We are also working on a faculty-approved update to comprehensive exam processes.

