Institutional Effectiveness
2019-2020

Program: Professional Studies BS

College and Department: College of Interdisciplinary Studies – School of Professional Studies

Contact: Dr. Joe Roberts

Mission: The Professional Studies Program is committed to serving and providing traditional and non-traditional students with an intellectually engaging and effective undergraduate, educational experience utilizing technology through on-ground, hybrid, and online delivery systems as they enhance their knowledge, analytical abilities, critical thinking, and communication skills for upward mobility in their professional field.

This undergraduate degree consists of 120 hours of interdisciplinary course work and is available in four concentrations:

- Health Administration prepares students interested in entering the health care field in an administrative capacity planning, coordinating, and supervising the processes of medical facilities/offices.
- Information Technology is designed to prepare managers and non-managers to use information for decision-making as well as improve proficiency in software, operating systems, and management of networking systems.
- International Organizational Leadership prepares students to lead in a global economy spanning differing management styles, business practices, and cultural awareness.
- Organizational Leadership develops a student's foundation of leadership skills through a variety of communication outlets, critical thinking and problem-solving situations applicable in real-world businesses and organizations.

Student Learning Outcomes:

1. Professional Studies majors will demonstrate critical thinking skills, as measurable through the Senior Exit Exam.

2. Students will successfully demonstrate the synthesis of knowledge from their program of study with a focus from their concentration area in a Culminating Project during their senior year.

3. Professional Studies majors will demonstrate real-world problem solving and communication by identifying and developing a research project in his/her concentration area.

A departmentally developed curriculum map can be found in Appendix 1 that shows the connections between courses and student learning outcomes.

Assessment Methods:

1. *Senior Exit Exam:* The Senior Exit Exam is administered to every student who graduates from TTU, with the exception of non-traditional students. This assessment evaluates students in the area of critical thinking. Scores are aggregated by major and reported annually. The California Critical Thinking Test is a well-tested measure of critical thinking and is accepted by the University as a whole. (It must be noted that the exception of Non-traditional student scores is a university policy and not one of the SOPS. The exemption leads to the exclusion of many of our majors from the data. It's our goal to work toward the inclusion of all SOPS students.)

   The School of Professional Studies uses the Senor Exit Exam to evaluate majors in Critical Thinking. The goal is to have an increasing score in the Exam annually, and to meet or exceed the university average score.

   Results are distributed to the Dean of the College and discussed among faculty and School Directors.

2. *Student Success Rates*: Although not the only measure, one measure of student learning outcomes is student success rate in courses.

3. *BPS Professional Culminating Project:* The Senior Culminating Project or Capstone course is required of all Professional Studies majors. Each student must complete either a 6000 word research paper or a real-world project that demonstrates a synthesis of knowledge from their program of study from their concentration area.

   Faculty members complete the rubric on each student that completes the course, entering a score based on the rubric. The scores are combined to get an overall score for each semester's cohort of students.

   Data from the rubric is used to assess overall preparedness for the senior project, and student development in research question development, analysis, integration and synthesis of concentration areas, documentation, and critical thinking. Data is also used in program evaluation to assess areas of needed improvement. A score of 2.5 is adequate, 3.0 is considered acceptable, 3.5 advanced, and 4.0 stellar.

Results:

Student Learning Outcome 1: Professional Studies majors will demonstrate critical thinking skills, as measurable through the Senior Exit Exam.

The Senior Exit Exam (California Critical Thinking Test) is administered to every student who graduates from TTU, with the exception of non-traditional students. This assessment evaluates students in the area of critical thinking. Scores are aggregated by major and reported annually. The California Critical Thinking Test is a well-tested measure of critical thinking, and is accepted by the University as a whole. (It must be noted that the exception of Non-traditional student scores is a university policy and not one of the SOPS. The exemption leads to the exclusion of over 40% of our majors from the data. It is our goal to work toward the inclusion of all SOPS students.)

	2018-2019		2019-2020	
	Mean	N*	Mean	N*
Professional Studies BS	71.1	11	75	6
TTU Average	76	1515	75	1365
CCTST National Average	74		74	

Student Learning Outcome 2: Students will successfully demonstrate the synthesis of knowledge from their program of study with a focus from their concentration area in a Culminating Project during their senior year.

Faculty members complete the rubric on each student that completes the course.

Senior Capstone Rubric Scores

Area	Fall 2015	Spring 2016	Fall 2016	Spring 2017	Fall 2017	Spring 2018	Fall 2018	Spring 2019	Fall 2019	Spring 2020
Information Seeking Selecting and Evaluating	3.43	3.39	-	3.51	3.56	3.48	3.58	3.24	3.50	3.64
Synthesis	3.38	3.41	-	3.51	3.37	3.46	3.48	3.4	3.32	3.29

Student success in these courses indicates that, at least from this measure, students are meeting the outcomes established for the professional core. The lowest success rates were for the Computers, Writing & Literature (73%) and International Context (82%) areas. The success rate for International Context has improved slightly.

Student Success for Professional Core Courses

		Success Rate (%)	
Professional Core Area	**Course**	**2015-19***	**2019-20**
Administration and Supervision	BMGT 3610 - Principles of Management	97	-
Organizational Systems	PM 4120 - Organizational Theory & Behavior	88	100
Team & Organizational Relationships	COMM 3010 - Integrated Corporate Communication	87	100
Statistical Methods	SOCI 4510 - Introduction to Social Research	76	100
Written Communications	ENGL 3134 - Computers, Writing & Literature	86	73
	ENGL 3250 - Professional Communication	89	92
International Context	SPAN 3550 - Latin America: The Countries and the Peoples	72	82

* Fall 2015-Spring 2019

Note: Table includes only the most frequently chosen professional core courses. The success rate shown is based on completion of the course with a grade of A, B, or C. For the purposes of this study, students that receive a grade of D or F, or withdraw from the course, have been deemed to have not successfully completed the course.

Student Learning Outcome 3: Professional Studies majors will demonstrate real-world problem solving and communication by identifying and developing a research project in his/her concentration area.

Faculty members complete the rubric on each student that completes the course.

Senior Capstone Rubric Scores

Area	Fall 2015	Spring 2016	Fall 2016	Spring 2017	Fall 2017	Spring 2018	Fall 2018	Spring 2019	Fall 2019	Spring 2020
Thesis/Problem Question	3.59	3.59	-	3.66	3.61	3.48	3.6	3.65	3.58	3.65
Analysis	3.32	3.43	-	3.35	3.33	3.39	3.39	3.28	3.26	3.46
Documentation	3.26	3.39	-	3.27	3.51	3.33	3.33	3.18	3.24	3.41
Product Process	3.15	3.27	-	3.32	3.18	3.33	3.38	3.11	3.30	3.50
Critical thinking	3.26	3.15	-	3.51	3.37	3.46	3.44	3.56	3.38	3.49

Modifications for Improvement:

BPS completed a program review this past year. The Reviewer's Report is provided in Appendix 3. The Reviewer provided General and Program specific recommendations for the program to consider.

Student Learning Outcome 2 & 3

In Fall 2020, a new pre-capstone course was offered with the goal of increasing the preparedness of our students for the challenge and rigor of the capstone experience. The new course, LIST 4994, is being offered each semester. The course targets:

Synthesis of learning in Emphasis Areas

Discovering quality sources

Organizing results of a literature review

Documentation of sources

Development of research ideas into a workable proposal

Appendices

1. Curriculum Map
2. BPS Culminating Project Rubric
3. BPS Program Reviewer's Report

Appendix 1: Curriculum Map

Course Number	Course Title	Student Learning Outcomes		
		SLO1: Critical Thinking	SLO2: Synthesis of Knowledge	SLO3: Problem Solving
Professional Core (choose courses from each area): 21 credit hours				
One Administration and Supervision Course				
LIST 4093	Special Topics and Leadership		X	X
MGMT 3610	Principles of Management		X	X
PADM 3601	Public Administration		X	X
TECH 4381	Principles of Supervision		X	X
One Organizational Systems Course				
PADM 4226	Introduction to Nonprofit Organizations		X	
PM 4120	Organizational Theory & Behavior		X	
Team & Organizational Relations				
COMM 3010	Integrated Corporate Communication		X	
One Statistical Methods Course				
PBRL 4410	Public Relations Research	X	X	X
SOAA 3350	Social Statistics	X	X	X
SOCI 4510	Introduction to Social Research	X	X	X
Two Written Communications Courses				
ENGL 3134	Computers, Writing & Literature		X	X
ENGL 3250	Professional Communication		X	X
PBRL 3421	Public Relations Writing		X	X
One International Context Course				
JOUR 4712	Mass Media & Cultures		X	
POLI 4350	International Law		X	
PS 3510	International Political Economy		X	
SPAN 3550	Latin America: The Countries and the Peoples		X	
Culminating Special Project Course				
UNIV 4995	Culminating Special Project	X	X	X

Information Technology Concentration (choose one course from each area)				
Management Information Systems Overview				
PTMA 3020	Management Information Technology		X	X
MGMT 3220	Management Information Systems		X	X
UNIV 3713	Freedom, Openness and the Internet		X	X
Software				
CSC 3700	Software Analysis & Design	X	X	X
UNIV 4706	Managing Software Development	X	X	X
Files/Operating Systems				
INFS 3700	Introduction to System Analysis and Design		X	X
Database Management				
CSCI 3222	Database Management Systems	X	X	X
UNIV 4708	Introduction to Business Intelligence	X	X	X
Networks				
CSCI 4017/5017	Introduction to Information Assurance		X	X
INFS 4900	Seminar in Data Communications	X	X	X
UNIV 4995	Culminating Special Project	X	X	X
Organizational Leadership Concentration (choose 5 courses)				
BMGT 3600	International Management		X	X
BMGT 3630	Human Resource Management		X	X
COMM 3560	Intercultural Communication		X	X
PBRL 3400	Introduction to Public Relations		X	X
PBRL 3409	Public Relations Case Studies	X	X	X
LDSP 3000	Leadership Development	X	X	X
MGMT 4800	Corporate Etiquette		X	X
PADM 4401	Comparative Public Administration		X	X
PSY 3590	Psychology of Personality		X	X
PSYC 3210	Abnormal Psychology		X	X
SW 3200	Cultural Diversity		X	X

International Organizational Leadership (all courses required)				
BMGT 3600	International Management		X	X
COMM 3560	Intercultural Communication		X	X
POLI 4350	International Law	X	X	X
POLS 4508	Theories and Concepts in International Relations		X	X
PS 3510	International Political Economy	X	X	X
Health Administration Concentration (all courses required)				
HETH 4210	Healthcare Research	X	X	X
HETH 4211	Healthcare Leadership and Management		X	X
HETH 4212	Trends and Issues in Healthcare	X	X	X
HETH 4213	Community Health: Issues & Services	X	X	X
COBH 4707	International Health: Problems and Issues	X	X	X

Appendix 2: BPS Culminating Project Rubric

Rubric for UNIV 4995 Paper/Project

	Thesis/ Problem/ Question	Information Seeking/Selecting and Evaluating	Analysis	Synthesis	Documentation	Product/Process	Critical Thinking
4	Student posed a thoughtful, creative question that engaged them in challenging or provocative research. The question breaks new ground or contributes to knowledge in a focused, specific area.	Student gathered information from a variety of quality electronic and print sources, including appropriate licensed databases. Sources are relevant, balanced and include critical readings relating to the thesis or problem. Primary sources were included (if appropriate).	Student carefully analyzed the information collected and drew appropriate and inventive conclusions supported by evidence.	Student demonstrated a quality synthesis of materials from both emphasis areas. Ideas were organized in a logical manner and conclusions show a strong integration of ideas drawn from multiple sources.	Student documented all sources, including visuals, sounds, and animations. Sources are properly cited, both in-text/in-product and on Works-Cited/Works-Consulted pages/slides. Documentation is error-free.	Student effectively and creatively used appropriate communication tools to convey their conclusions and demonstrated thorough, effective research techniques. Product displays creativity and originality.	Student demonstrated critical thinking by asking appropriate questions, considering legitimacy of information and sources, and evaluating/including multiple perspectives.
3	Student posed a focused question involving them in challenging research.	Student gathered information from a variety of relevant sources--print and electronic.	Student (s) product shows good effort was made in analyzing the evidence collected.	Student included both concentration areas in the development of the project. Student logically organized the product and made good connections among ideas.	Student documented sources with some care, Sources are cited, both in-text/in-product and on Works-Cited/Works-Consulted pages/slides. Few errors noted.	Student effectively communicated the results of research to the audience.	Student demonstrated critical thinking by asking appropriate questions, and considering legitimacy of information and sources.
2	Student constructed a question that lends itself to readily available answers.	Student gathered information from a limited range of sources and displayed minimal effort in selecting quality resources.	Student conclusions could be supported by stronger evidence. Level of analysis could have been deeper.	Student did not effectively draw from both concentration areas. Greater effort could have been put into organizing the product and drawing conclusions.	Student needed to use greater care in documenting sources. Documentation was poorly constructed or absent.	Student needed to work on communicating more effectively.	Student needed to ask more critical questions in the process of developing the project.
1	Student relied on teacher-generated questions or developed a question requiring little creative thought.	Student gathered information that lacked relevance, quality, depth and balance.	Student conclusions simply involved restating information. Conclusions were not supported by evidence.	Student work is not logically or effectively structured.	Student clearly plagiarized materials.	Student showed little evidence of thoughtful research. Product does not effectively communicate research findings.	Student did not apply critical thinking to the topic or the information used in the research.

Appendix 3: BPS Program Review – Site Visit Report

Prepared by Jonathan E. Taylor, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, Department of Educational Foundations and Technology Auburn University

April 3, 2020

This report is being submitted after visiting the campus of Tennessee Tech from March 4-6, 2020 for the purpose of providing an external program review of the Bachelor of Science in Professional Studies (BSPS), in the School of Professional Studies, and the College of Interdisciplinary Studies. In advance of the site visit, I was provided documentation concerning the program and its connection and collaboration through TN eCampus. Although the timing of the visit coincided with tragic loss for the local and college community due to a significant tornado in Cookeville on March 3, and in fact, the campus courses were temporarily suspended, I was provided access to a significant number of knowledgeable individuals with which to discuss the program, and to which I could direct my questions. Dean Mike Gotcher, and Dr. Steve Sharp provided access to program faculty, course designers, student services personnel, IT professionals, administrative office staff, a former director, and, importantly, multiple students. I interviewed and dialogued with all of these individuals throughout a series of meetings and was able to ask any questions that I had, and have them answered clearly and from multiple perspectives. The supporting documentation, most notably the program report prepared by Dr. Steve Sharp and others in the department, was consistent with the information I found in my interactions throughout the time I spent on campus.

Overall, I found the program to be very well structured, and a solid match for the needs of its students, the local community, and the State of Tennessee. The students I spoke with and the data provided in the report indicate that students are pleased with the academics, value the faculty, and feel deeply supported by all of the faculty and staff who are positioned to help students navigate the degree program and the TN eCampus system. Those involved in student advising seem genuinely concerned for the wellbeing of those they advise, and likewise, faculty are show dedication to facilitating success in their students. The learning outcomes and program objectives are consistent with the mission and vision of the university, the college, and the school in which it is embedded.

This report is being provided in addition to the initial Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) Program Review Rubric, which was submitted directly to the Associate Provost, Dr.

Sharon Huo, at the exit interview Friday morning, March 6th. All categories of that rubric with one exception (resources) had the highest possible mark. I was able to connect every single item on the rubric to a specific, clearly annotated section in the program report provided by the Dean and Dr. Sharp. It cannot be overstated just how excellent the program review report prepared by Dr. Sharp and his committee was. The remainder of this report will consist of a listing of program strengths, from my perspective as an external reviewer, a set of program-specific recommendations intended to strengthen the program, a few broader recommendations pertaining to the potential hazards of online learning programs in general, and a brief conclusion.

Program Strengths (selected)

- The administration, faculty, and staff involved in the program demonstrate a rare coherence and team-like spirit. I found all members to be transparent, friendly, and respectful of one another throughout the process. I am not speaking only of the interactions during the time I was there but also the evidence as seen through the various moving parts of the degree program itself. The students I spoke with provided unsolicited support for those involved at all levels of the program, school, and college. A team this solid can only continue to be successful over time and that translates to a long-term, stable program that will ultimatley reflect well on the entire university across the state of Tennessee, nationally, and internationally.

- The online nature of the program extends its reach and provides access to students all over the state and country who would otherwise be unable to enroll in the program, or the university at large.

- The student services, both in terms of the structures and mechanisms that are in place, as well as the personnel that serve the students in that capacity, are well-organized, student-centered, and forward-thinking.

- The curriculum review process is structured, and rolling reviews of the content and the instruction are ongoing with an eye toward perpetual improvement.

- Faculty are provided support and opportunities for personal and professional development.

- The Tennessee Tech collaboration with TN eCampus is being carried out in ways that offset the normal complications arising from such multiple institution efforts. A number of faculty and staff are embedded in ways that allow them to serve the interests of Tech students even while they are taking courses offered on other campuses and taught by outside faculty. This is a strength of the program and seems to be working very well for the individual students. Online students require a different kind of support throughout their studies, but they do require support. The students in this program are clearly being provided that support regularly and effectively.

- Perhaps one of the greatest strengths of this program is that it can provide a stellar example to programs throughout the rest of the university as the pressure to teach in many different modalities continues in the U.S. and across the world.

Program Specific Recommendations

- While the program itself has shown consistently healthy and stable enrollments, the students are mostly spread across three of the four concentrations, leaving a fourth, the International Organizational Leadership lightly populated. I would recommend collecting data from current and prospective students through a methodologically-sound process, to determine why students are not choosing that concentration. I would not recommend dropping the concentration because the present time is one in which most universities across the United States are placing a strong emphasis on “internationalizing” and fostering

international interest and competence in students. Often when majors, minors, or, in this case, concentrations are not popular, they are simply dropped from the books over time. I recommend finding out specifically why the interest is lighter in this area and then adjusting the concentration accordingly. It may also be that selective, targeted marketing of the concentration would be helpful, given the necessary resources from the University.

- Because of the way the program is set up with TN eCampus, being taught by different faculty from different institutions, on different campuses (online), for any one institution there is a single-point failure when a course is dropped or removed by another institution because of a lack of enrollment. The BSPS program might have three students who are in clear need of a course that another institution decides not to offer. When that happens, those in the program at Tennessee Tech often do not have faculty to teach such a course, and the students are forced to navigate through schedule "gymnastics" to graduate on time and with the required courses. In speaking with students and administration, faculty, and staff of the program, it seems that so far this problem has been minimal, but as the program continues to mature, and as TN eCampus collaborators evolve in their own needs, this could become problematic. I would recommend mapping out multiple contingencies for the core courses where this could be a concern. One solution might be to provide a mechanism for a faculty member in the School of Professional Studies (or College of Interdisciplinary Studies) to teach the course as an independent study, using the official course numbers. That may require changing the catalogue to reflect that the course can be taught that way in addition to finding faculty who can actually teach these courses. This plan would not require that faculty be dedicated specifically to each of these courses, just that there are backup faculty who could teach a section of 1-2 if an urgent student need presented itself. There may also be other ways this can be mitigated, but I would strongly recommend that someone, perhaps a committee, work to put in place contingency plans to meet this need if it occassionally reveals itself.

- Funding is scarce in nearly all universities, colleges, and programs. While obtaining more funding is always a complicated and difficlult proces, and I would not suggest more funding with a cavalier attitude, I would suggest that more financial resources be provided for the program by the university. I make this suggestion for the following reason: This program is set up in away that allows the maximum amount of sharing across different institutions and the minimal amount of faculty and staff on the campus. Because of this, the college, and by extension the university, gets high impact per dollar, compared to other programs that require long-term, large-scale faculty be placed in service of those programs. This, however, is a reason to make sure that the program is well-supported so that it can remain strong over the long term and continue to benchmark this future-forward style of collaborative degree programs for the university. Ensuring that this program remains successful will also ensure that Tennessee Tech can continue to lead the way in these sorts of programs within the state of Tennessee and across the country.

<u>General Recommendations (Online Programs)</u>

- Since I have a great deal of experience with online programs, and Tennessee Tech University on the whole is still at the beginning of its online learning space use, I would recommend that steps be taking to build on the strengths of online learning while

mitigating some of the routine pitfalls that tend to structurally form over time when building online academic programs. It is very important that I state clearly here that I am referring to the naturally occuring hazards of online learning structures in general. These are not at all concerns I found with the faculty, staff, or administration in this program. Since this program is fully and only online, however, the following recommendations are worth providing. There are three interrelated recommendations:

1. Those teaching online courses should be referred to as professors or faculty, rather than instructors. The words we use have an effect in that that they not only label, but they also create certain perceived realities over time. There are many distinctions provided in the literature between training and education, and the word 'instructor' is a key word for those who teach in workplace training contexts. Institutions of higher learning, have almost exclusively referred to their teachers as faculty and/or the professorate, but as programs have gone online over the past decades, and outside technological talent has been recruited to assist in infrastructure, training terminology has crept in. Those in the IT field, specifically those who deal with learning platforms, etc., use the word instructor, and institutions have followed suit. The BSPS is no exception. The word instructor is found often in the program materials. This may seem subtle, and indeed it is, but it has a long-term effect. It can be indicative of a manner of instruction that can also naturally creep into online learning (see next point).

2. It is easier to train someone online to do something, than it is to broadly educate someone online to *be* something. Because of this, online learning platforms have a tendency to tilt the type of learning that students get toward the training end of the spectrum, where knowledge is shared, but hearts aren't reached. To educate someone is to expand them and to prompt them to ask questions, not to narrow their focus and give them only answers along with the resulting complacency that comes with it. This positive sort of facilitative education can be seen in the words of the program mission and also of the university's mission to provide "enduring education." Not only is there a tendency to refer to faculty who teach online as instructors, there is a tendency for faculty who are teaching online, to begin to simply instruct their students, rather than to educate them. My suggestion is that you work very hard to be purposeful and allow the mission of your program to drive the online program, rather than the online nature of the program and the related "online learning culture" to drive the mission. Do what you have always done, but do it online. That may, of course, mean that you will do it in a very different way, but the thing that you are trying to do has not changed, in essence, simply because the learning space has.

3. The over standardization of curriculum, lesson plans, and syllabi almost always takes place once academic programs are put online. This does not seem to have occurred in the BSPS program at this time, but the tendency is inherent in the structure of online programs and so it is with caution that one should proceed in these areas. Faculty would never be told how to arrange their physical classrooms, tweak their powerpoints, or, for that matter, which learning activities to utilize. Online learning programs, however, very often provide space to engage in this sort of micromanagement simply because of the technological nature of the learning space. It is a very natural step for an institution to start wanting all of their online courses to

look the same, to have all content in the same online areas, and to have the same master syllabi, etc. While there may need to be some level of standardization in certain limited domains, I recommend that this trend be identified and resisted.

The BSPS program is a very strong program. It utilizes a collaborative cross-institutional network that shares educational resources and extends the reach of all of the universities involved. Everything I was able to read and all of the discussions I was able to have indicated that the leadership, faculty, and staff are dedicated to a high-quality program and are willing to make the continued, prolonged efforts that lead to sustainability.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with further questions.

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