Degree/Certificate: Bachelor of Arts
Major/Option: Communication in Public Relations Option
Submitted by:
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Part I – Program SLO Assessment Report for 2014-15

Part I – for the 2014-15 academic year:

1. **Student Learning Outcome**: The student performance or learning objective
   as published either in the catalog or elsewhere in your department literature.

"Students are expected to exhibit the cognitive ability to connect everyday activities
with communication theory and/or concepts" (as proposed to and accepted by
CPAC; Placed into effect Fall of 2014). This SLO is referred to as the STAR
component of the Communication Studies program since all majors must STudy, Act,
and Reflect to successfully exhibit this cognitive ability.

2. **Overall evaluation of progress on outcome:** Indicate whether or not the
   SLO has been met, and if met, to what level.
   ____*SLO is met after changes resulting from ongoing assessments, referencing*
   assessment results from the previous year to highlight revisions;
   ____*SLO is met, but with changes forthcoming;*
   __X__*SLO is met without change required*

3. **Strategies and methods:** Description of assessment method and choices,
   why they were used and how they were implemented.

Description of Assessment Method and How they were Implemented: The following is
the <u>exact paperwork</u> students receive prior to participating in the STAR assessment:

Guidelines for the STAR (Study/Act/Reflect) Exercise

As part of your CMST major, you are required to complete a paper that
reflects on the relationship between the knowledge and skills you acquire
in your major and their applicability to a particular activity. This activity
may include one of the following:
- Internship;
- Employment situation;
- Volunteer activity with a particular community group or organization;
- Community engagement exercise that is part of a class;

- Holding office in an organization.

After completing the paper, you are required to meet with the Coordinator of the STAR program to provide an oral report on your paper. The following steps guide you through completion of both the paper and the oral report.

Step 1

Meet with the STAR Coordinator to discuss the activity you plan to engage in. Currently, Dr. Peter Shields (pshields@ewu.edu) is the Coordinator.

Step 2

Complete the reflection paper. This paper should include the following sections:

Description

Describe the nature of the activity you engaged in. When and for how long did you engage in the activity? What role(s) and task(s) did you perform while engaged in this activity? (200 words)

Relevancy of Communication Concepts and Skills

Discuss your take on the relevancy of the knowledge and skills you have acquired in the major. That is, what communication class(es), concepts and skills did you find relevant when engaging in the activity? In what ways were they relevant? (200 words)

Assessment

Looking back on your activity, what do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of your communication-related knowledge and skills in relation to the role(s) and task(s) you carried out? That is, in what ways were these knowledge and skills helpful during the activity? In what ways do you feel they fell short? Do you think you were well equipped to deal with ethical issues that may have arisen during the duration of your activity? (Ethics has to do with knowing the difference between right and wrong and deciding to do the right thing – it includes upholding qualities of personal integrity such as honesty and fairness). (200 words)

Summary

Summarize what you learned about the organization and yourself during the activity. Include a discussion of your most important learning experiences (300 words)

Guidelines

- The paper should have a separate cover page.
- Avoid using typeface greater than 12-point font.
- The paper should be double-spaced, and pages should be numbered.

- The paper should be organized in sections with the appropriate sub-headings (i.e., Description, Relevancy of Communication Concepts and Skills, and so on).
- Make sure to thoroughly edit the paper for spelling and grammar before submitting.

Submission
On completion of the paper submit an electronic copy to the Coordinator.

Step 3
After reading the paper, the Coordinator will contact you to arrange a time to meet so you can provide a brief oral report. At the meeting you and the Coordinator will also discuss the implications of the paper and oral report for your future course of study.

On the successful completion of the paper and oral report, the Coordinator will ensure your academic transcript and SOAR audit reflects this fact.

Additional points to keep in mind
- A minimum of 10 credits of CMST coursework at EWU must be taken before beginning the STAR activity.
- The STAR paper and oral report needs to be completed during the regular academic year (i.e., during fall, winter, or spring quarters). The Coordinator is not on duty during summer quarter.
- Within the academic year, the latest you can submit your paper is two weeks before the last day of spring classes. This will ensure the Coordinator has adequate time to read the paper and schedule an oral report before end of the academic year.

Why these Assessment Methods were Used: Only students can inform us as to when they are making the cognitive connections between what they are learning in Communication Studies' courses to their everyday lives. Through many meetings of the curriculum committee of the department and the full faculty these directions evolved to guide our students.

4. **Observations gathered from data**: *Include findings and analyses based on the strategies and methods identified in item #3.*

    a. Findings: Thus far, only four students have submitted and had their STAR essays accepted. Each student identified a course or courses and gave examples of what they had learned and how this helped them

better understand phenomenon in their everyday lives, e.g., in their internships, volunteer activities, etc.

b. Analysis of findings: Though there are few essays thus far, the findings clearly illustrate that students are making the cognitive connections between communication theory/concepts and their everyday lives.

5. **What program changes will be made based on the assessment results?**

a) *Describe plans to improve student learning based on assessment findings (e.g., course content, course sequencing, curriculum revision, learning environment or student advising).* Even with only four papers received it would be fair to say that we are beginning to see some valuable critique from students in terms of our curriculum. With many more essays, there may well be a strong empirical basis for making adjustments/refinements to the curriculum. Current results show students are making the cognitive connections but as of yet there are too few STAR essays to extrapolate additional knowledge based on the nuances from the essays. It is expected that the quantity of STAR essays will dramatically increase this year and next as STAR becomes a requirement (for all 200+ majors in Communication Studies) to fulfill prior to graduation.

b) *Provide a broad timeline of how and when identified changes will be addressed in the upcoming year.* Currently, there is no expected timeline but as more essays become available we will consider departmental changes to enhance learning.

6. *Description of revisions to the assessment process the results suggest are needed and an evaluation of the assessment plan/process itself.* Two issues have become apparent. First, the instructions for the essays need to state that students need to specifically label the communication concepts/theories they are connecting to their everyday lives. Second, the requirement for 10 credits (2 classes) of EWU communication classes prior to attempting the STAR essay needs to be adjusted. The first issue is easily addressed with a simple change in the students' instructions for the STAR essay. The second issue needs a bit more discussion as to whether we need to lift the number of credits, specify particular courses that must be taken prior to attempting to write the STAR essay, or another alternative.

==NEW:== PART II – CLOSING THE LOOP

1. **Student Learning Outcome(s)** assessed for 2013-14

The learning outcome assessed in 2013-2014 is the same one reported above (2014-2015) though it has now been more thoroughly developed.

2. **Strategies implemented** during 2014-15 to improve student learning, based on findings of the 2013-14 assessment activities.
   See the above, but for a brief recap: Students now have a required essay (the STAR component degree requirement) in which they exhibit the cognitive ability to connect communication theory/concepts with everyday life activities.

3. **Summary of results** (may include comparative data or narrative; description of changes made to curriculum, pedagogy, mode of delivery, etc.): Describe the effect of the changes towards improving student learning and/or the learning environment. We are pleased to see that most students are capable of cognitively connecting their coursework with everyday activities. This affirms the work that professors have accomplished both in the design and teaching of their courses.

4. What **further changes to curriculum, pedagogy, mode of delivery,** etc. are projected based on closing-the-loop data, findings and analysis? This is only the first year of the required STAR component for students, so the vast majority of students impacted by this requirement have yet to write their essay. It is anticipated that we may see students focus on particular courses and or concepts. This may inform the department of which courses appear to have the most impact on student learning, where students struggle with their learning, etc. But as stated, we have too few essays by which to make an analysis like this as of yet.

Definitions:

1. **Student Learning Outcome:** The student performance or learning objective as published either in the catalog or elsewhere in your department literature.

2. **Overall evaluation of progress on outcome:** This checklist informs the reader whether or not the SLO has been met, and if met, to what level.

3. **Strategies and methods used to gather student performance data,** including assessment instruments used, and a description of how and when the assessments

were conducted. Examples of strategies/methods: embedded test questions in a course or courses, portfolios, in-class activities, standardized test scores, case studies, analysis of written projects, etc. Additional information could describe the use of rubrics, etc. as part of the assessment process.

4. **Observations gathered from data**: This section includes findings and analyses based on the above strategies and methods, and provides data to substantiate the distinction made in #2. For that reason this section has been divided into parts (a) and (b) to provide space for both the findings and the analysis of findings.

5. **Program changes based on the assessment results:** This section is where the program lists plans to improve student learning, based on assessment findings, and provides a broad timeline of how and when identified changes will be addressed in the upcoming year. Programs often find assessment is part of an ongoing process of continual improvement.

6. **Description of revisions to the assessment process the results suggest are needed.** Evaluation of the assessment plan and process itself: what worked in the assessment planning and process, what did not, and why.