██████████████, Cert. (GR)

Distance Education Program Effectiveness

1. **DATA SOURCES: During AY20-21, what data were used to explicitly examine the effectiveness of the distance education program given its unique mode of delivery.**

Student Learning Outcomes Comparison Online versus On-Campus

Our main source of data is the student learning outcomes review conducted each year. In the Graduate Certificate in ██████████████████ program, we compare the learning outcomes of the online and the residential on-campus program to ensure we have the same learning outcomes and demonstrated student learning success for each course. Therefore, when we look for evidence of learning via student papers and a rubric, we do that for both the online and on campus version of the course.

The on-campus student population is typically much smaller than the online student learning outcome data due to the fact that the majority of ██████ students are Online Students.

Analysis of Online Student Writing Samples Via a Rubric

As a five course graduate certificate program, program faculty assess learning outcomes by reviewing and analyzing the final paper in the required courses of ██████████████████ ██████████████.

A faculty instructor uses a rubric to assess that the students' work demonstrates the successful achievement of learning outcomes via the rubric. The learning outcomes include: 1) Content – ██████████████████████████████; 2) Content – ██████████████████████████ ██████████████; 3) Critical Thinking in ██████████████; and 4) Research Competence in ██████████████. Rubric data is compiled and analyzed. The certificate director and faculty then make a plan of improvement in order to improve student learning outcomes based on the data.

OTHER DATA SOURCES BUILT INTO PROCESSES:

Faculty Committee Syllabi Review for Verification of Credit Hours, Contact hours, and Equivalent Learning Outcomes.

The evidence that the program has to support the comparability of the distance education program with similar campus-based program(s) includes the detailed syllabi on archive that demonstrate the credit hours in terms of faculty-led contact hours in excess of 45 credit hours, as well as the minimum 90 credit hours of out-of-classroom work for a three credit hour course. In addition, the student learning outcomes are identical to residential courses in all courses that have faculty approved essential elements (all major core and track courses). Finally, the listing of student services mirrors the support of on campus services in areas of technical support, writing center support, advising support, and career center support. Faculty have ensured that all online courses are equivalent to residential courses in the learning outcomes through a rigorous course review process.

The faculty committee also verifies that each three credit hour distance education, non-traditional course delivered a minimum of the required 45-48 contact hours of formalized instruction and a minimum 90 hours of out-of-classroom student work via syllabi review. The curriculum committee determined faculty contact hours by the number of faculty-led threaded discussion questions in online courses. In online courses, each faculty member spends two hours engaged in online discussion for each threaded discussion question. Out-of-classroom student work hours were determined by the estimate of out-of-class activities, readings, lectures, and assignments that equaled at least 90 hours of out-of-class work for the student during the semester.

2. **FINDINGS: What are the specific findings (quantitative or qualitative) derived from the data sources described above?**

During the 2020 -2021 AY, we only had one residential ███████████████████████████ ███████ student and approximately 20 online ████████████████ graduate certificate students. We still compared the compiled score of the online students with the one residential student. The residential student met all student learning outcomes at the highest level. Also, the online ████████ ███████ graduate certificate students met all the student learning outcome targets with the exception of the communication competence student learning objective, and that objective was only missed by 8%.

Due to only one residential student, there is not a strong comparison between online and on campus formats. However, the data suggests that both types of students are meeting the student learning outcome.

See attached for the detailed ██████ *findings comparison of online versus residential*.

3. **IMPLICATIONS: Do the findings demonstrate the overall effectiveness of the program given its unique mode of delivery? If not, what actions are being taken to improve the overall effectiveness of the program?**

Overall, the findings demonstrate the overall effectiveness of the program in both the residential and the online formats. The only area of slight weakness is in the Communication Competence area, however, the number of students meeting this student learning outcome has increased from 19-20 to 20-21.

Additionally, a new action plan is being implemented to improve this student learning outcome by the end of May 2022. We will hold a special meeting (online or in email) of the Certificate in which ███████████████ faculty will discuss strategies to improve writing in the areas of thesis development, support and APSA citations. From those strategies, we will select and implement the improvements. We think consulting with our faculty experts key in identifying how to strengthen our students' writing skills. Additionally, we will find some support handouts from the Texas A&M Writing Center to share with the students at the beginning of ████████████████████████████ ███████ course about thesis development and support to assist in the writing process. We already include APSA citation handouts in our courses.