

## School of Public and Environmental Affairs (SPEA)

### **2002-2003 PRAC Report on Undergraduate Assessment Activities**

SPEA is a multi-disciplinary program with undergraduate degrees in public affairs, criminal justice, and public health. The public affairs and criminal justice degrees include areas of specialization called concentrations, and the public health degree has traditional majors. In the past, SPEA has been organized into system-wide interdisciplinary faculty groups, rather than campus-specific departments, which have had curricular oversight along with graduate and undergraduate policy committees. More recently, on the IUPUI campus, SPEA has used a curricular committee structure for oversight and decision-making. The past two years, these committees have included a public health committee, criminal justice committee, and public affairs committee. Each committee is headed by a coordinator and faculty join on a voluntary basis. Faculty can belong to more than one committee.

A major accomplishment for SPEA during 2002-2003 is that faculty voted to create an Assessment Committee consisting of the coordinators of the curriculum committees, one of which will serve as the chair of the committee. The IUPUI SPEA Assessment Committee will be responsible for promoting, coordinating, and reporting on assessment activities for the school's programs. This accomplishment is important because it assigns responsibility for assessment with those who are directly responsible for curricular issues, and this change should enhance assessment within the school.

#### **Assessment Methods Used**

Each degree area utilizes capstone courses, which require term papers and other written works and presentations, as the primary assessment tool for the majors. The capstone courses incorporate learning outcomes for the PULs and degree-specific content, and learning outcomes for the major and capstone are communicated to the student via the syllabus and through in-class discussion. Each instructor is responsible for structuring an assessment tool for evaluating his/her learning outcomes and for providing feedback to the appropriate curricular committee and Undergraduate Program Director. Additional methods for program evaluation and student learning include PRAC program review, focus groups, employer and student evaluation of internships, practicum report writing, student and employer surveys, alumni surveys, student job placement, and course evaluations.

'Building and change' characterize the past year's accomplishments. A summary of each curriculum committee's accomplishments follow.

## **Changes Made and Impact of Changes**

### B.S. in Public Affairs (BSPA)

During 2002-2003, a committee comprised of eight faculty and staff worked to revise the BSPA by zero-basing the degree with a solid intellectual foundation—the proposed revisions include concentrations in civic leadership, management, and policy studies. The process undertaken and products produced by the committee are listed below. Degree changes were approved by the SPEA faculty at the end of the academic year.

- defined the intellectual foundation of the BSPA by identifying the purpose of the degree, three majors, and competency areas for each major
- developed a new major—policy studies—and refined the civic leadership major
- mapped competencies across all courses in the curriculum; developed a matrix to show how competency areas are distributed across the curriculum
- identified leadership and ethics competencies as a weak area and developed a new course to fill the gap
- identified performance measurement and program evaluation as a weak area and developed a new course (to replace an existing course) to fill the gap
- develop a matrix to identify courses across the majors
- proposed a course title and description change for the V473 course.

The impact of these curricular changes will not be evident until implementation of the new curriculum, which will begin during the next academic year.

### B.S. in Criminal Justice (BSCJ)

The BSCJ structure includes general education requirements (communications, quantitative methods, social sciences, and humanities and natural sciences), management and policy, and a concentration in criminal justice. Evaluation in the capstone course includes quizzes, exams, and two papers (a formal term paper and a ‘reality’ paper). A grading rubric is used for the capstone and all papers are retained.

The curriculum was revised in August 2001 based on faculty, student, and employer feedback. This feedback identified weaknesses in written communications, foreign language literacy, computing, and the concentration. In response, the curriculum was revised to include only W131 and W231, rather than journalism and business courses. An optional track in general education was included to build foreign language literacy to respond to diversity in our communities. One of the ways a student can demonstrate proficiency is through placement testing. Faculty discussions led to the realization that most criminal justice students have basic computing literacy and need more advanced computing coursework. In response, the curriculum was revised to include more advanced computing classes, including geographic information systems. Two additional

changes to the curriculum were an expanded list of options for the management and policy concentration and a modified criminal justice concentration to reflect interests in the juvenile justice system.

The curricular changes are viewed positively based on anecdotal feedback from faculty, students, and employers. A more in-depth evaluation of the impacts of the 2001 revisions should be available in the coming year.

### B.S. in Public Health (BSPH) and B.S. Health Services Administration (BSHSM)

In August 2002, at the Bradford Woods Retreat, the faculty met to discuss the strengths of the degree programs, identify changes needed to excel, and develop an action agenda. These discussions identified key administrative and curricular changes needed to maintain quality and excel.

The BSPH degree was revised in August 2001 based on enrollment pressures and feedback from employers, students, PRAC program review, and faculty. An important change was to convert the concentrations to majors—Environmental Science and Health and Health Administration. The general education degree requirements for both majors include communications, social science and humanities, science, and quantitative methods.

The Environmental Science and Health major requires specialized coursework in policy and management, foundation methods, applications in environmental science and health, and experience in environmental science and health (practicum and internship). Competencies and learning outcomes were developed for the major when it was revised in 2001. During 2002-2003, the faculty developed a marketing plan in response to lower enrollments. And, in response to concerns that students reported in focus groups, a four-year course rotation was created to ensure that students would have the courses needed to graduate and that courses would meet the SPEA enrollment minimum of 15 students. Faculty also revised course descriptions to ensure that they were easy to understand and reflected the course content. Additional curricular changes in response to student and faculty feedback included revisions to the Area Certificate in Public Health (last revised in February 1986) and the minor in Environmental Science and Health (last revised in August 1996). The faculty also moved forward the BS in Environmental Science and Health, a joint new degree proposal with School of Liberal Arts and Schools of Science.

The Health Administration major requires specialized coursework in health and health care systems, health and public policy, management fundamentals, health services management skills, integration of theory and practice, and experience in health administration (practicum and internship). Faculty revised course descriptions to ensure that they were easy to understand and reflected the course content. Additional curricular changes in response to student and faculty feedback included revisions to the BSHSM (last revised in January 1995) and the Health Systems Administration minor (last revised in August 1996). The faculty also revised the accelerated Master's in Health

Administration (last revised in August 1996), which allows highly motivated BSPH students to enter the master's program before they complete the bachelor's degree.

Ingrid Ritchie, Ph.D.