Challenges and Opportunities to Graduate Program Assessment

Agricultural Economics, (Vicky Salin, Shelly Peacock) Entomology, (Pete Teel, Rebecca Hapes) Ecosystem Science and Management (Mort Kothmann), Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences (Fran Gelwick), College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Texas A&M University, College Station TX
Degrees in our Departments

- Thesis Masters of Science (MS)
  - Agricultural Economics (AGEC)
  - Entomology (ENTO)
  - Ecosystems Science and Management/Forestry/Rangeland (ESSM, FRSC, RLEM)
  - Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences (WFSC)

- Non-thesis Masters
  - AGEC, and Intercollegiate degree with Mays School of Business
  - ENTO
  - ESSM, FRSC, RLEM
  - WFSC

- PhD
  - AGEC, and Intercollegiate degree with Mays School of Business
  - ENTO
  - ESSM, FRSC, RLEM
  - WFSC
Components in common among our Graduate Program Assessments

- Begin with the end in mind (cf. Stephen Covey, 7-habits)
- Begin with the outcomes that faculty value in their graduate students
  - *We must involve faculty in the difficult work of developing methods of assessment that demonstrate institutional accountability. And when we seek their counsel, we learn that they prefer authentic measures.* . . . *National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment occasional papers 2009*
Components in common among our Graduate Program Assessments

- Authentic measures of what graduate students will know and be able to do upon graduation
  - Components within course context; embedded in assignments, count toward grades, thus encourage students to conscientiously, take responsibility for doing their best and to demonstrate more of what they know and can do.

- Use components of existing degree plans
- Develop annual reports from graduate students, similar to those required of faculty
Components in common among our Graduate Program Assessments

• Encourage use of Rubrics to score graduate student work
  – As communication from faculty to students to
    • improve performance and help graduate students develop insight into their own strengths and weaknesses,
    • help in organizing and collecting data to assess degree programs
  – For communicating among faculty their individual learning outcomes for students, and discovering those they shared
Who? in our Departments

• Faculty: own the program; define data for reporting and assessment
• Administration and Staff: department head and professional graduate advisors; support faculty efforts
  – AGEC: faculty/administration Director-liaison and undergraduate program coordinator for data organization and entry
  – ENTO: faculty/administration Assessment Liaison and faculty Education Committee collect data, graduate advisor enters data
  – ESSM: faculty Assessment Liaison and other faculty members—one for each degree program; faculty collect and enter data
  – WFSC: faculty Assessment Liaison works with faculty and graduate advisors to collect data, administrative secretary to collate data; Assessment Liaison enters data into online forms for reporting and analysis
WHO?

Challenges

• Faculty: as a whole to take ownership of the program
• Staff: realistic expectations given job description and training for assessment
• Program outcomes: like course outcomes, seen as individualistic, sacrosanct and owned by the particular faculty member, graduate committee, and graduate student

Opportunities

• Tailor, streamline, process for each degree (PhD, MS, Non-thesis MS, Distance Ed?)
• Develop shared vision and program ownership
• Faculty Meetings and Retreats with purpose, defined agenda and expected products
• Big Picture; strategic stakeholder involvement
Who? In YOUR Departments?

Challenges?  Opportunities?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcomes - Measures</th>
<th>PhD</th>
<th>MS-Thesis</th>
<th>MS-Non-Thesis</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Communication -</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Written, Oral Competency, Exams, Seminar</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>Proficient, Peer, Public, Internship</td>
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<td>Effective in Discipline, Professional Mtg.</td>
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<td>Quality Work Products, Course Assignments</td>
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<td>Research Publications</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Disciplinary Knowledge, Skills</strong></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advanced, Course Assignments, E-folios</td>
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<td><strong>Reasoning -</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Apply Economics, Course Assignments</td>
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<td>AGEC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Critical -</td>
<td>ENTO, WFSC</td>
<td>ENTO, WFSC</td>
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<td>Thinking Strategies</td>
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<td>Analysts of Disciplinary Knowledge</td>
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<td>Proposal</td>
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<td><strong>Research -</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Competence Conducting Scientific</td>
<td>AGBS, AGEC</td>
<td>FRSC, REM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Applied, Qualifier Exam, Course</td>
<td>AGBS, AGEC</td>
<td>AGEC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independent, Design, Innovative, Funded</td>
<td>FRSC, REM</td>
<td>FRSC, REM</td>
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<td><strong>Learners -</strong></td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>Self-directed, Prelims, Time to Degree, Ann Rpt</td>
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<td><strong>Diversity, Global Society -</strong></td>
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<td>Recognize, Respect Differences</td>
<td>WFSC</td>
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<td>Ethical Awareness, Exit Survey</td>
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<td>AGEC</td>
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<td>Collaborative Contributors</td>
<td>WFSC, AGEC</td>
<td>WFSC, AGEC</td>
<td>WFSC, AGEC</td>
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<td><strong>Professional -</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Competence, Networking, Service, E-folios</td>
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<td><strong>Teaching -</strong></td>
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<td>Explain, Competence, Survey, Evaluations</td>
<td>WFSC, FRSC, RLEM</td>
<td>WFSC, FRSC, RLEM</td>
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WHAT?

Challenges

• Faculty unsure:
  – “What’s a curriculum?”
  – “How do (why must) my courses and research program fit into degree outcomes?”

• DH and Deans:
  – “How does this fit into College and Department strategic plans?”

• Defining measures and gathering meaningful data

• re-evaluated the identity of the department as viewed through their graduate students

Opportunities

• Review current TAMU degree learning outcomes, syllabi, mindfully refine and tailor for degrees and department

• ‘Core Courses’ in a graduate program?

• Coordinated strategic plan (funding, seminars, student handbooks, enhancement programs, E-folios )

• Discover gaps in knowledge; student annual reports
What? In YOUR Departments?

Challenges? Opportunities?
## WHERE and WHEN?

### Challenges

- You've got to be very careful if you don't know where you're going, because you might not get there. “Yogi Berra
- We’re ‘not there yet’
- Some measures are place holders to be evaluated, revised or replaced with ones more useful.
- Now approaching action plans for evaluation and response to findings based on initial data.
- Develop culture of assessment, ongoing track career milestones, and achievements

### Opportunities

- Self-knowledge, focus on supporting evidence of progress toward excellence and status among peers, e-folios
- Regularly (≠ annually) involve all stakeholders (students, alumni, employers)
- Discover gaps in knowledge; graduate students, also produce annual reports
- Just-in-time intervention for adjustment (proposal seminar), rather than end of degree
Where? When? In YOUR Departments?

Challenges? Opportunities?
Example Process

Entomology

• result of a program review
• response to longer-than-desired time to graduate degree completion
• joint decision by faculty, led by Department Head
Academic Advising Team

Appointment hours: 9:00 am – 11:30 am and 1:30 pm to 4:00 pm

Prospective students/Change of Curriculum: Appointment only
Current students: please contact your advisor for availability
* Walk-ins based on advisor availability

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- Academic Advisor I
- Advises Undergraduate students
- Coordinates Outreach Activities for the Department
Education Committee

Role and Function

The Education Committee works with the Department Head, faculty, and students to review academic matters and make appropriate recommendations on subjects including:

- New courses and substantive changes to existing courses
- Curriculum reviews and curriculum changes
- Requests for special, adjunct and full member appointments to graduate committees and graduate faculty
- Academic reviews
- Special Assignments

This Committee is appointed by the Department Head. Service on this Committee can require a significant commitment of time by faculty, and hence reassignments to the committee are made on a rotating annual basis. Committee membership and expected year of rotation now includes:

Members

- Jeff Tomberlin (Chair) (12)
- Kyan Zhu-Salzman (12)
- Raul Medina (13)
- Gregory Sword (13)
- Darrell Bay
- Pete Teel
- John Louis Bolch
- Rebecca Hapes
- Apurba Barman**
- Paul Lenhart*
Program Level Assessment
Graduate Programs (MS, PhD)
Department of Entomology

Orientation for Incoming Students

- Set Academic and Professional Expectations
- Program instructions and expected outcomes
- Identify resources and opportunities
- Panel discussion w/graduate faculty – Expectations for students
- Panel discussion w/current students – Strategies for success
Program Level Assessment
Graduate Programs (MS, PhD)
Department of Entomology

• Time Lines
  – Degree plans
    • Advisory Comm. submits
    • Dept. Education Comm. recommends
    • Department Head final approval
  – Thesis Proposal Filed (MS)
  – Dissertation Proposal Seminar *(dept requirement)*
  – Dissertation Proposal Filed
  – Preliminary Examination
  – Final Examinations

• Assessment
  – Advisory Committee assessment products
    • Annual Report
    • Proposal approval
    • Findings of Preliminary Exam
    • Findings of Final Examinations
  – Student Academic achievement
Program Level Assessment
Graduate Programs (MS, PhD)
Department of Entomology

Annual Advisory Committee Assessment (*Annual Report*)

Written summaries of

1. academic progress
2. research progress
   a. proposal development
   b. preliminary data collection
   c. analysis and writing
3. plans for coming year
4. resume documentation of professional activities, recognition, and development
SAMPLE MEMORANDUM FOR SUBMITTING DEGREE PLAN TO EDUCATION COMMITTEE FOR REVIEW

DATE
MEMORANDUM
TO: Dr. Craig Coates, Education Committee Chair
THROUGH: Dr. (Major Advisor)
FROM: Student Name
SUBJECT: Approval of Degree Plan

I respectfully submit the enclosed degree plan for Education Committee review and approval. To supplement this document, I am also enclosing my transcripts.

My career plans include....... To achieve those goals, I have chosen course work in areas such as....that help me to gain a broader understanding of the..... My committee members were chosen because.....

I feel that this selection of courses and committee members will enable me to obtain a well-rounded educational experience and will increase my opportunities after the completion of my degree.

Please let me know if the Education Committee sees any problems with the degree plan as submitted.
Thank you.
Attachments
Program Level Assessment
Graduate Programs (MS, PhD)
Department of Entomology

• **Student in Good Standing**
  – Minimum GPA 3.0
  – Adhering to timelines/departmental deadlines
  – Advisory Committee – Annual Assessment of adequate progress.

• **Consequences**
  – Registration holds
  – Memo to student file
  – Access to departmental financial support
  – Dismissal
Please evaluate this session!

1. Use iPhone/iPad, Android or Blackberry to scan this QR code, also found on the resource table:

Or:

2. Scan the QR code located at the IOTA Solutions Booth (Booth #2).

Or:

3. Visit [www.tamuevaluation.com](http://www.tamuevaluation.com) and select the title of this session. Thank you!