

Detailed Assessment Report
2010-2011 Anthropology BA

Mission/Purpose

The undergraduate program in anthropology is committed to furthering the mission of the university, the college, and the department by applying the scientific method to the study of culture from both biological and behavioral perspectives over space and time. Through use of a number of instructional strategies, including coursework, independent research projects, and experiential learning, students will gain a holistic view of the diversity and commonality of human beings and their societies. They will also gain other skills valued by an educated populace, such as effective written and oral expression and critical thinking abilities. These skills and knowledge are essential to both personal and professional success, as students adapt to a rapidly changing global environment.

Student Learning Outcomes, with Any Associations and Related Measures, Achievement Targets, Findings, and Action Plans

O 1: Ability to understand and discuss central anthropological theories/theorists

All undergraduate majors in anthropology are required to take ANT 301: History of Anthropology. In this course, they will read about, discuss, and write about central theories and theorists in the history of the discipline, and they will be required to demonstrate an accurate understanding of such theory.

Related Measures:

M 1: Ability to discuss theory in a research paper

Students in ANT 301: History of Anthropology is required to write a paper in which they discuss central theories or theorists in the discipline of anthropology. This paper is then graded using a standardized, departmentally agree-upon rubric to assess clarity of discussion, accuracy of presentation, organization of argument, and writing style.

Source of Evidence: Written assignment(s), usually scored by a rubric

Achievement Target:

A minimum of 70% of students will earn a grade of 70% or better on the paper assigned in ANT 301: History of Anthropology that requires them to discuss central anthropological theories/theorists. This paper will be graded according to the departmentally agreed-upon rubric.

Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Met

In Fall 2010, 88% (14/16) of students enrolled in ANT 301 earned a grade of 70% or better on the theory paper when it was graded using the standard rubric. This course is offered once per year, in fall semester.

M 2: Exit survey question on understanding of theory

All graduating students must take an exit survey, which includes a question on their ability to explain central theories or theorists in the discipline of anthropology. All students are expected to be able to discuss these theories.

Source of Evidence: Exit interviews with grads/program completers

Document:

- *ANTSOC Exit Survey 2010-2011*

Achievement Target:

At least 70% of graduating students in anthropology will "agree" or "strongly agree" that the program was effective in providing them with a basic understanding of anthropological concepts and theories.

Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Met

100% (6/6) of students graduating in 2010-2011 with an Anthropology BA "agreed" or "strongly agreed" on the exit survey that the program provided them with an understanding of basic anthropological concepts and theories.

O 2: Ability to apply anthropological theories and concepts

All students in the undergraduate program in anthropology will be required to demonstrate the ability to apply the theories and perspective of anthropology to current 'real world' issues.

Related Measures:

M 3: Ability to apply theory in a research paper

Graduating seniors are required to take the Capstone Seminar, in which they write a paper applying anthropological theories to a current issue. Students must pass this assignment and class in order to graduate.

Source of Evidence: Written assignment(s), usually scored by a rubric

Document:

- *ANT Capstone Rubrics 2010-2011*

Achievement Target:

At least 70% of students enrolled in the Capstone Seminar will earn a grade of 70% or better (as evaluated by a departmentally agreed-upon rubric) on the research paper for the class that requires them to apply anthropological theories and concepts.

Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Met

In Spring 2011, 75% (6/8) of students earned 70% or better on the research paper. This class is offered once per year, in spring term.

M 4: Ability to apply anthropological theory to understand human cultures

All graduating students in anthropology complete an exit survey. One of the questions on the survey asks about their ability to apply anthropological theory. All students are expected to gain this skill while in the program.

Source of Evidence: Exit interviews with grads/program completers

Achievement Target:

At least 70% of graduating seniors in anthropology will "agree" or "strongly agree" (based on a five-point scale) that the program was effective in teaching them to apply anthropological theories and concepts to understand human cultures.

Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Met

100% (6/6) of the students graduating in anthropology in 2010-2011 "agree" or "strongly agree" on the exit survey that the program effectively taught them to use anthropological theory to understand human cultures.

O 3: Ability to communicate anthropological concepts and theories orally

All students in the undergraduate program in anthropology are expected to be able to demonstrate an ability to communicate anthropological concepts and perspectives orally.

Related Measures:

M 5: Research presentation in capstone seminar

Students are required to take the Capstone Seminar in their senior year, and part of that seminar is presenting their research paper to the class. All students must pass this assignment and class in order to graduate. The oral presentation is evaluated using an agreed-upon departmental rubric.

Source of Evidence: Presentation, either individual or group

Document:

- *ANT Capstone Rubrics 2010-2011*

Achievement Target:

At least 70% of students in the Capstone Seminar will earn a grade of 70% or better on a ten-minute oral research presentation. This presentation is graded using the departmentally developed oral presentation rubric.

Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Met

In Spring 2011, 6/8 students (75%) earned a grade of 70% or better on the oral presentation assignment when graded by the departmental rubric. This class is offered once per year, in spring semester.

M 6: Oral communication confidence

All graduating students must complete an exit survey, which includes a question that asks about their ability to communicate anthropological ideas orally.

Source of Evidence: Exit interviews with grads/program completers

Achievement Target:

A minimum of 90% of graduating seniors will "agree" or "strongly agree" (using the five-point scale on the exit survey) that the program prepared them to present anthropological concepts and theories well.

Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Met

100% (6/6) of graduating seniors in 2010-2011 "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that they were able to communicate anthropological ideas well orally.

O 4: Ability to carry out a research project in anthropology

All students are expected to learn to design and carry out an independent research project in the field of anthropology.

Related Measures:

M 7: Ability to design and carry out independent research project in anthropology

All students in the Capstone Seminar are required to complete an independent research project and write a research paper on their work. This paper is evaluated using a departmentally agreed-upon rubric.

Source of Evidence: Capstone course assignments measuring mastery

Achievement Target:

At least 70% of students enrolled in the Capstone Seminar will earn a grade of 70% or better on the research paper when graded by a departmentally agreed-upon rubric designed to assess appropriateness of research, clarity of writing, organization, and use of anthropological theory.

Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Met

In Spring 2011, 6/8 (75%) students earned a grade of 70% or better on their research paper in ANT 401 (Capstone).

M 8: Exit survey question on independent research ability

All graduating students must complete an exit survey, which includes a question on their ability to carry out independent research in anthropology.

Source of Evidence: Exit interviews with grads/program completers

Achievement Target:

At least 70% of graduating students will "agree" or "strongly agree" that the program prepared them well with the skills needed to conduct research in anthropology.

Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Met

In 2010-2011, 100% of graduating students (6/6) "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that the program effectively provided them with the skills necessary to conduct research in anthropology.

O 5: Professional preparedness

The program in anthropology seeks to prepare students to succeed after graduation by giving them tools and confidence needed to enter the work force or graduate school.

Related Measures:

M 9: Creation of a clear personal statement

All students in the Capstone Seminar are required to write a "personal statement" that articulates their interest in anthropology and their plans for their career. Rough drafts of these statements are peer-reviewed by other students in the seminar and then revised. By the end of the seminar students will have drafted a personal statement that can be used for job or graduate school applications. These personal statements are graded according to a rubric designed to assess appropriateness of style, clarity, and usefulness.

Source of Evidence: Written assignment(s), usually scored by a rubric

Achievement Target:

At least 80% of students will write a personal statement that earns a grade of 80% or better when graded with a standard rubric.

Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Met

In Spring 2011, 7/8 students (88%) earned a score of 80% or better on their personal statement. This course is offered once each year, in spring.

M 10: Crafting a resume and cover letter for a job

In the Capstone Seminar, all students are required to identify a job advertisement and craft an appropriate resume and cover letter for applying for that position. The resume and cover letter are peer-reviewed and revised, then graded for appropriateness, thoroughness, and clarity according to a rubric.

Source of Evidence: Written assignment(s), usually scored by a rubric

Achievement Target:

At least 80% of students will write a resume and cover letter than earns a grade of 80% or better when graded using a standardized rubric.

Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Met

In Spring 2011, 100% of students (8/8) crafted a resume and cover letter that earned a grade of 80% or better. This class is offered once per year, each spring term.

M 11: Exit survey question on preparedness for work or grad school

All graduating students are required to complete an exit survey, which includes a question regarding how prepared they are for entering the work force or graduate school in anthropology or a related field.

Source of Evidence: Exit interviews with grads/program completers

Achievement Target:

At least 70% of graduating seniors will indicate on the exit survey that they "agree" or "strongly agree" that the program has prepared them well to enter graduate school or obtain employment where they use the skills and knowledge gained in their major.

Findings (2010-2011) - Achievement Target: Met

100% (6/6) of students graduated in 2010-2011 "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that the program prepared them well for graduate school or employment.

Action Plan Details for This Cycle (by Established cycle, then alpha)**Promote the minor actively on campus**

We will add new promotional materials to our website and in print and circulate them on campus, as well as meet with coordinators or relevant majors to let them know of the anthropology minor.

Established in Cycle: 2009-2010

Implementation Status: In-Progress

Priority: Medium

Analysis Answers

What specifically did your assessments show regarding proven strengths or progress you made on outcomes/objectives?

In 2010-2011, the program in anthropology focused on assessing student skills and working to ensure that students are gaining knowledge of theory, can apply the perspective on anthropology to the "real world," are able to conduct a research project and present their findings, and feel prepared for success upon graduation. Our students met all targets set, and findings indicate that students are particularly strong in theoretical understanding and application as well as the ability to craft a resume, cover letter, and personal statement. We will continue to look closely at our outcomes and measures throughout 2011-2012 to ensure that our students are improving and succeeding through our program.

What specifically did your assessments show regarding any outcomes/objectives that will require continued attention?

As previously noted, in 2010-2011, all targets were met in the Anthropology BA program. That said, some aspects of the Capstone Seminar continue to be less than where we want them to be in terms of student performance. Only 75% of students earned a grade of 70% or better on their oral presentation in Capstone, and the same percentage above 70% for the research paper. This course is a difficult one to teach, as offering a single "Capstone" experience is challenging in a four-field discipline. Although all targets were met, in 2011-2012, the faculty in the program in anthropology will discuss student performance in this seminar and consider alternative ways of organizing the seminar to improve the rate of successful research papers and presentations.

Annual Reports

Program Summary

Anthropology has been part of the undergraduate curriculum at Southern Miss since 1955. The program has always been dedicated to engaging students not only with its curriculum but also with active learning outside the classroom. The program is committed to applied and basic research and the involvement of undergraduate students in ongoing research projects. Through summer field school experiences, lab research, and community-based research, students learn first-hand about theory and methods in the discipline of anthropology. The faculty in anthropology excels in research, continually bringing in grant dollars and publishing their scholarly work. In 2010-2011, the faculty in anthropology published three peer-reviewed articles (one co-authored with students) and a peer-reviewed book chapter as well as presented multiple papers at academic conferences. At the same time, faculty were highly involved in a range of service activities, including the College and University Advisory Committees, Grade Review Council, University Assessment Committee, and Graduate Council. The kinds of work that anthropologists do also lends itself well to community involvement, and 2010-2011 was no exception. Dr. Marie Danforth utilized her forensic work to create "CSI: Hattiesburg," a traveling, interactive exhibit designed to teach children about how the tools of physical anthropology can be used to solve crimes. This engaging and fun project was enjoyed by elementary and middle school children in Hattiesburg and on the coast. In addition, Dr. Danforth's research on Greenwood Island unearthed the remains of Mexican-American War soldiers, which led to partnership with the local historical society and an eventual reburial ceremony on Memorial Day. During 2010-2011, Dr. Hayden also continued her involvement with local immigrant communities, chairing the board of a coast-based group, El Pueblo/The Village. The synergy between her own research on migration and place and her service to this board illustrates the engaged, active nature of the anthropology program as a whole. Our students certainly benefit from the highly productive and involved faculty with whom they work. In 2010-2011, the program in anthropology worked with the sociology program to host the second annual "Anthropology/Sociology Research Colloquium," a

lecture series featuring students and faculty of our programs as well as high-profile scholars from other universities. We were pleased during this year to highlight the research of undergraduate students (4) as well as graduate students in Anthropology. In the fall, we hosted Dr. Mark Cohen, a Distinguished Professor of Anthropology from SUNY-Plattsburgh. In spring, we were honored to welcome Dr. Carol Stack, Professor Emeritus at UC-Berkeley. Dr. Stack is a highly acclaimed scholar, and her visit included not only a public lecture but also a writing workshop for faculty from across the university, a seminar with English graduate students, and meetings with undergraduates about their research. We hope to do more research events such as this in the future.

Continuous Improvement Initiatives

The undergraduate program in anthropology is a successful program. We nonetheless continue to identify areas for improvement and will assess efforts in 2011-2012 to ensure that we are increasing our rates of student success, particularly regarding performance in the Capstone Seminar.

Closing the Loop

In reviewing the past three years of action plans for the Anthropology BA program, the Capstone Seminar has been a major focus. In particular, the method and rubric for evaluating oral communication in the Capstone Seminar had to be established and revised over time to create a useful and informative assessment. Based on assessment results, we now have a rubric that works and will continue assessing oral communication with this tool. Assessment also indicates that, although we are meeting our targets for the course, room for improvement exists and we will address that need in the upcoming cycle. In addition to oral communication, we previously used a comprehensive exam as a measure of student learning and did not have good success with this approach. As such, over the past three years we have gathered evidence that the exam was not a good fit for that seminar and, as such, have revised the measure of student learning to focus on the written papers for the course, which provide us with richer data for understanding student learning. The only outstanding action plan in this cycle is the need to promote the minor on campus. We have a relatively small number of minors but believe that the program would be very useful to students in many majors across campus. During this cycle we will work to promote the courses we offer and the option of a minor.