Curriculum Mapping: An example

Curriculum mapping is a tool that programs have found useful when cross-walking NASPAA competency domains and student learning outcomes with exiting courses, regional accreditation expectations, and existing university requirements. By cross-walking courses with competencies, programs can create a visual representation of the opportunities students have to be introduced to, practice, and master competencies. The John Glenn School of Public Affairs at The Ohio State University has shared its process as an example to help peers, below.

Description of Crosswalk and Development Process: John Glenn School of Public Affairs

The impetus for reexamining the structure of our MPA and MA degree programs was the conversion of The Ohio State University. The process for developing the crosswalk was intentionally inclusive for purposes of diversity as well as training for current students. Representatives from the following stakeholder groups were involved on each task force: faculty, staff (advisors and other administrators), alumni (some also employers,) and current first-year and second-year students from each program (MPA and MA), and current dual degree students.

First, groups were divided into 4 task forces that addressed each of the four core areas of concentration in the curriculum, or "streams": Policy, Management, Economics/Finance, and Quantitative Decision-Making. Each group was asked to create a list (past syllabi were used to assist groups) of what someone with the MPA or MA should not leave the program without having learned (know, be able to do, have an informed perspective about). These became "Stream Learning Goals/Objectives." We then presented each group with our seven Program-Level Learning Goals (comprised of the 5 NASPAA Standards plus two additional mission-specific program goals), as vetted by the faculty earlier (see horizontal axis).

Each task force then considered if/how their Stream Learning Goals/Objectives contributed to each of the 7 program goals in broad terms. This information was compiled and shared using google docs. A comprehensive matrix was then compiled indicating by stream (vertical axis) which Stream Learning Goals/Objectives aligned to which Program-Level Goals. The Stream Learning Goals/Objectives were examined by a faculty/staff committee for refinement of any larger goals into more specific, measurable, learning objectives. Stream Learning Objectives were then streamlined, rearranged in some cases, and the language was normalized into assessment terms. The matrix was then examined visually for any gaps or excessive overlap. Learning objectives were combined, eliminated, or added as appropriate until the matrix had balanced coverage of all program goals. This resulted in the relocation of an old course into a different stream where it better fit the objectives of the stream, as well as the elimination of one course from the core curriculum which, while valuable, did not directly address enough of the stream learning objectives to remain in the core (it is now offered as an elective).

Lastly, the 4 core stream learning objective lists were examined by faculty with experience teaching in those areas (a subset of the 4 task forces). Since we planned on offering 2 classes for each stream, faculty divided the learning objectives into two groups which coherently encompassed what two classes could deliver. These learning objectives then became the course learning objectives around which each of the 8 core classes in our curriculum was designed.

As a final step, after all courses were redesigned and approved, we mapped the actual course numbers onto the matrix, creating a crosswalk which represents which learning objectives and program goals can be found in which courses, including the other required elements in the curriculum in addition to the core (Skills classes and Capstone courses).

For questions regarding the crosswalk or the process, please contact Kate Hallihan at hallihan.3@osu.edu or 614-292-8696.