

## Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Summary

### ***Rural Development, MA*** *College of Rural and Community Development* **AY 2015-16**

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#### **1. Assessment information collected**

- A. Comprehensive Exams: Six students completed their comprehensive exams in 2015/2016.
- B. Master's Projects and Theses: Seven students submitted and defended projects and successfully graduated in AY 2015/2016.
- C. Graduate Survey: Not conducted.

#### **2. Conclusions drawn from the information summarized above**

- A. Comprehensive Exams: Three basic issues have turned up with the comprehensive exams:
  - a. Topic: Our comprehensive exams currently ask that students choose three topic areas that demonstrate a broad knowledge of rural development and Alaska Native issues. However, these topic areas often are loosely related to the student's project or thesis topic and do not support the student in their research or activities.
  - b. Timing: Some students are not completing their comprehensive exams prior to doing significant work on their projects/theses. For one graduate, comprehensive exams were not completed until after her project was substantially completed. This keeps students from utilizing their comprehensive exams to deepen their understanding of their topic and use the exams to inform their projects/thesis.
  - c. Writing: Writing standards are loose and not always adhered to by students and their committees.
- B. Master's Projects and Theses:
  - a. Standards: Expectations for projects are not clearly defined or understood in terms of form, length, and the related methods paper.
  - b. Timing: Students are turning in their projects/thesis too close to deadlines and revisions are not always completed by the students.
  - c. Writing: Writing standards for projects and methods papers are loose and not always adhered to by students and their committees.
- C. Graduate Survey: Not conducted.

Discussion:

#### **3. Curricular changes resulting from conclusions drawn above**

- A. Comprehensive Exams

Program Name, Degree

- a. Topic: To encourage greater ties between comprehensive exams and students' projects and theses the department has restructured the exams so that students will write papers in three areas: an overview of their project/thesis topic and theoretical approach, a literature review, and a methods review.
  - b. Timing: The department is now requiring that comprehensive exams be completed prior to or alongside substantial project work.
  - c. Writing: The department is mandating that all newly admitted students utilize APA for their comprehensive exams. Committees may make an exception for existing students if they want to utilize another style.
  - d. A rubric will be developed for faculty to use to assess RD MA student comprehensive exams to support more consistency in evaluation and to more easily track student learning outcomes.
- B. Master's Projects and Theses: Standards for theses are established by the Graduate school. Most curriculum changes are being made for projects.
- a. Standards: Standards are being developed for projects and their associated methods papers and will be incorporated into the revised RD MA Handbook summer 2016.
  - b. Timing: Deadlines have been established for Department Chairs to receive projects/theses for review and faculty are aware of those deadlines. A document on expectations of committee chairs is being prepared.
  - c. Writing: The department is mandating that all newly admitted students utilize APA for their project methods paper. Projects should also utilize APA if appropriate to the project. Committees may make an exception for existing students if they want to utilize another style.
  - d. RD 650 Community-Based Research Methods has been revised to focus on research skill building and project/thesis planning by requiring students write a prospectus for their proposed project/thesis. Students are asked to take the class in the second semester of their program. RD 698/699 has also incorporated a monthly audio meeting along with a Blackboard site with resources for students who are working on their projects/theses.
  - e. A rubric, similar to that used for the RD BA senior projects, will be developed for the Department Co-Chairs to utilize to assess each project/thesis they review to more easily track student learning outcomes.
- C. Graduate Survey: Not conducted. The Graduate survey will be removed from the SLOA Plan. Instead, DANSRD will conduct alumni surveys every three years. This survey will be utilized for program review to demonstrate how the RD MA graduates are using their degrees, but will not be used to assess student learning outcomes.
- 4. Identify the faculty members involved in reaching the conclusions drawn above and agreeing upon the curricular changes resulting**

Program Name, Degree

Jennifer L.L. Carroll, DANSRD Co-Chair

Catherine Brooks, DANSRD Co-Chair

Jenny Bell Jones, DANSRD Faculty

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