



DATE: September 21, 2005

TO: College Deans
Department Chairs and Directors
Dean of Undergraduate Studies

FROM: Kathleen M. Moore
Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs
and Educational Outreach

SUBJECT: Academic Learning Compacts

As you know, the Board of Governors now requires that the universities publish an Academic Learning Compact for each baccalaureate degree program listed on the SUS Academic Degree Programs Inventory. Departments are free to develop separate ALCs for tracks, concentrations, or specializations within their programs. At a minimum, however, we must publish an ALC for each baccalaureate program on the Inventory. A list of baccalaureate programs by college is attached.

ALCs must be developed and made available to students by the end of Fall semester 2005. They must be posted to the program/department web site no later than December 1, 2005 and will be included in the 2006/7 Undergraduate Catalog.

ALCs must be developed at the department level and approved by the appropriate faculty committees within the department and college, and by the college dean. As part of the initial implementation of ALCs, each college dean will submit the ALCs from each of the programs in that college to the Undergraduate Council for review and information.

The timeline for the initial implementation of ALCs is as follows:

- Late summer/early Fall 2005 - Departments/programs develop Academic Learning Compacts for each of their baccalaureate degree programs or tracks/concentrations/specializations.

- October 15, 2005 – College deans forward ALCs for all baccalaureate degree programs or tracks/concentrations/specializations in that college to Undergraduate Council for review and information.
- December 1, 2005 – departments post ALCs for their baccalaureate degree programs or tracks/concentrations/specializations to their respective web sites.
- Spring 2006 – Departments review and update student learning outcomes assessment plans to reflect the outcome and assessment statements in the ALCs.

The Office of Decision Support and the Center for 21st Century Teaching Excellence will provide assistance to faculty and departments with respect to the development and revision of student learning outcomes assessment plans. The plans developed to support the ALCs will fulfill the SACS requirements regarding assessment of student learning outcomes. Programs with professional accreditation should develop assessment plans that are consistent with the requirements of their respective accrediting agencies. No department or program should have in place more than one process for the identification and assessment of student learning outcomes.

The student learning outcomes identified in the ALC must address three areas:

- Content/discipline knowledge and skills;
- Communication skills; and
- Critical thinking skills.

Department/program faculty may elect to include in the ALC the communication and critical thinking outcomes identified in the new General Education program:

- Written communication: Students will demonstrate well-organized, well-developed papers that reflect appropriate use of language. They will demonstrate specific knowledge, critical and analytical abilities, and appropriate use of technology consistent with assignment objectives.
- Oral communication: Students will demonstrate well-organized, well-developed oral presentations that reflect appropriate use of language and technology consistent with assignment objectives.
- Students will demonstrate critical thinking and analytical abilities, including the capacities to engage in inductive and deductive thinking and quantitative reasoning, and to construct sound arguments.

These will be assessed centrally as part of the General Education assessment process conducted by the Office of Decision Support.

Others may prefer to identify program-specific outcomes in communication and critical thinking that will be assessed as part of the program-based assessment plan.

Departments/programs should review their ALCs annually, and revisions should be made as part of the annual catalog review and promulgation process.

The Provost has approved a template for USF baccalaureate degree program ALCs that is based on one developed at the University of West Florida. The USF template is provided below. Sample content was extracted from the assessment plan of the Department of Criminology with permission from Vice Provost Dwayne Smith. Please note that the Communication and Critical Thinking categories have institutional (General Education-based) outcomes rather than program-specific ones.

I plan to visit colleges and campuses in the next few weeks to discuss ALC implementation. My assistant, Carol Clark, will be contacting your office to arrange a suitable date and time. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me when you have questions.

Attachment

ACADEMIC LEARNING COMPACT TEMPLATE

[Sample content added with apologies to Department of Criminology]

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA SYSTEM

ACADEMIC LEARNING COMPACT

Department/Program: Criminology

Degree designation: Bachelor of Arts

Department/College Mission Statement:

(Add statement here)

Track/Concentration/Specialization (if applicable): None

Identification of Core Student Learning Outcomes:

Graduates of this program should be able to do the following:

Content/discipline skills:

- Understand the structure of the US system of criminal justice.
- Be familiar with the theoretical explanations of crime and delinquency.
- Demonstrate knowledge of research methods used in the fields of criminology and criminal justice

Critical Thinking Skills

- Demonstrate critical thinking and analytical abilities, including the capacities to engage in inductive and deductive thinking and quantitative reasoning, and to construct sound arguments.

Communication Skills

- Create and deliver effective oral presentations
- Develop effective written presentations
- Contribute effectively to group discussions

Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes:

Through a variety of mechanisms, including examinations, capstone experiences and assignments, internships, and portfolio evaluations, the faculty of the Department of Criminology will measure students' achievement of the identified core learning outcomes. The results of the assessments will be used to improve student achievement and program effectiveness.