Northern Studies Program MA Outcomes Assessment

Academic Year 2010-2011 and 2011-2012

Northern Studies graduated 5 students with MA's in the 2010-2011 year and 3 during the 2011-2012 year. This outcomes assessment will analyze the data collected from evaluations by faculty and the students themselves.

Our Outcomes Assessment includes 3 phases of evaluation: assessment of the students' abilities exhibited in the introductory seminar to the program, Perspectives on the North, assessment by committee chairs of the students' abilities and growth in the program at the time of graduation, and self-evaluations by the graduates of their skills and growth in the program. The outcomes below are based on the evaluations by faculty of all graduates and the 7 self evaluations that have been returned.

Quality of writing, fluency and mechanics:

Faculty noted that 6 of the students had strong writing skills upon entering the program and that 6 of the students exhibited growth in their writing skills; a foreign born student exhibited growth in her ability to write fluently in English. Faculty noted that 3 students developed a more academic writing style.

The majority of students noted growth in their writing skills; 4 noted specifically developing a more academic writing style; 1 noted remarkable growth in vocabulary; 1 noted appreciating the constructive feedback on writing that he/she received.

Analytical skills, including ability to formulate a problem, evaluate evidence, draw conclusions:

The vast majority of faculty evaluations (7 of 8) indicated perceived growth in analytical skills; in 4 cases students entered with strong analytical skills and they grew through very sophisticated, complex analysis in thesis writing. In two cases faculty observed that students applied cross-disciplinary analysis well. One student did complex (high-tech) map analysis. Another did very strong literary analysis, focusing on irony.

Students reported growth in such areas as quantitative analysis, both quantitative and qualitative analysis, applying theory to practice, interdisciplinary analysis (2). One student noted benefiting from being able to write papers in her various classes that contributed to her eventual thesis; thus she analyzed her topic from various perspectives. Two students said they thought that their analytical skills improved markedly.
Research skills, including use of primary sources, archival materials, interviews, journal articles, other scholarly sources:

Faculty reported that students generally demonstrated ability to interpret and integrate a wide variety of sources. Two students used foreign language documents. Three conducted interviews. Six of the 8 used primary sources or archival materials.

Virtually all of the students perceived growth in their research skills. Two noted that extensive integration of primary sources was very useful. One reported that she developed sensitivity to issues surrounding research among indigenous peoples.

What is the nature of the contribution?

Each of the student’s contributions to the literature was unique. Their topics included: Alaska women’s history, Russian Alaska history and museums studies, an annotated bibliography of Gwich’in sources, wilderness theory and policy, political history of Alaska fish and game management, literary analysis of Letters to Howard (Native Alaska History), Sami art history and the history of the Sami political movement, and Spanish exploration of Alaska in the 18th century. Seven of the 8 topics focused at least partially on Alaska topics.

Assessment of value added from beginning of project / thesis work to completion of project or thesis AND Assessment of value added in Northern Studies MA program from student’s initial research paper in Perspectives on the North through completion of MA project or thesis:

Faculty perceived value added in the contributions of the students to their respective fields of literature, as well as growth in the students themselves, specifically: growth in interviewing skills; sharpened analytical skills (7 of 8); improved writing skills (7 of 8), especially a more scholarly writing style (5); and application of theory to personal experience (2). Faculty observed value added for all the students (8) in their ability to integrate, apply and draw conclusions from a large body of literature.

Students’ comments in these sections tended to be quite personalized. For instance, individuals noted: life enrichment; improved life skills, including prioritizing, self-critique, self-discipline and time-management; enjoyment in being a part of the program – relationships with students and faculty; appreciation of being challenged by faculty to think and analyze. They also reported improved analytical skills, improved research skills, expanded understanding of many northern topics, and improved presentation and formatting skills – written and oral. The students tended not to separate their personal growth from their academic/intellectual growth.
Conclusions and Programmatic Revisions:

Overwhelmingly faculty and students reported growth in skills and subject matter among the students. In only one case was a faculty member disappointed that a very gifted student did not grow to his potential in the program (his personal situation changed during the program, and he seemed to lose his drive; he completed a project, rather than a thesis; we did not receive an evaluation from this student). All students stated that they received value from having earned their MA’s in Northern Studies. Several students remarked favorably on the constructive feedback they received from faculty. One student wrote that she wished she had received more guidance.

We do not envision changes based on these faculty or students evaluations. Based on our previous outcomes assessment we have prioritized supporting students in attending conferences to present their research and to do their field work, for professional development purposes. We have not yet had graduates who have benefited from this shift in priorities. We anticipate that next year we will receive positive feedback on that topic.

Attachments:

- List of NORS graduates 2010-2011 and 2011-2012
- Rubric for faculty evaluations of students’ abilities, progress and contribution
- Rubric for student self-evaluations
Attachment A: NORS MA Graduates 2010-2011 and 2011-2012

2010-2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salena Bias</td>
<td>Database Specialist, CANHR, UAF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lillian Anderson-Misel</td>
<td>Assistant Registrar for Graduation and Curriculum, UAF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curtis Seelen</td>
<td>(Left Alaska, lost touch)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kate Ripley</td>
<td>Director, Public Affairs, UA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenneth Woldstad</td>
<td>Retired</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2011-2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corinna Cook</td>
<td>Fairbanks Literacy Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birte Horn-Hanssen</td>
<td>Currently not working; returning with family to Norway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Letzring</td>
<td>National Park Service – student internship</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Attachment B  Rubric for Faculty Evaluation

Student Name: _____________________________________ Evaluation by: __________________________

Rubric for Northern Studies Thesis / Project Evaluation

Quality of writing, fluency and mechanics

(provide narrative analysis including examples)

Analytical skills, including ability to formulate a problem, evaluate evidence, draw conclusions
(provide examples)

Research skills, including use of primary sources, archival materials, interviews, journal articles, other scholarly sources (provide examples)

What is the nature of the contribution?

Assessment of value added from beginning of project / thesis work to completion of project or thesis
(provide narrative with specific examples)

Assessment of value added in Northern Studies MA program from student’s initial research paper in Perspectives on the North through completion of MA project or thesis (provide narrative with specific examples)
Attachment C: Student Self Evaluation

Student Name __________________________

Rubric for Student Self Evaluation of Value Added in the MA in Northern Studies

You have had the opportunity to review your project/thesis advisor’s assessment of the quality of your work and your progress within the program. Please provide below your own assessment of your work and progress.

Quality of writing, fluency and mechanics
(provide narrative analysis including examples of your proficiency upon entering the program)

Analytical skills, including ability to formulate a problem, evaluate evidence, draw conclusions
(provide examples of your proficiency upon entering program)

Research skills, including use of primary sources, archival materials, interviews, journal articles, other scholarly sources (provide examples of the experience you gained in the program)

What is the nature of the contribution? (That is, what contribution has your thesis or project made to the greater good?)

Assessment of value added in Northern Studies MA program from student’s initial research paper in Perspectives on the North through completion of MA project or thesis (provide narrative with specific examples of your growth and the value you gained during the time that you were in the program)