

# Outcomes Assessment

## Recreation Program

Department of Physical Education, Health and Recreation

Outcomes assessment, that is, demonstrating that the Recreation Program is making a difference in students' lives, is a complex process. And as Thor Hansen has pointed out, it is part of a larger "institutional process" involving four interrelated and evolving steps:

1. Developing a vision, mission and educational objectives for a course, department, and university,
2. Creating a course or program specifically designed to meet these objectives,
3. Developing an assessment strategy to measure how well the objectives are met,
4. If the objectives are not being met or if the objectives are not furthering the mission, reassessing the program (i.e., go back to number 1).

Unfortunately (or perhaps fortunately in the context of our own learning and progress as teachers) outcomes assessment is not easy to do well. The Recreation Program has had an Outcomes Assessment Plan for years and the faculty have consistently collected data (Phase IV exit questionnaires, alumni surveys, course grades, grades on key program assignments, graduates' performance on national certification exams, etc.) as snapshots to determine if we are meeting our objectives. The current outcomes assessment effort caused us to look at the bigger picture of our plan and told us that we can be proud of many aspects of our program, that students and alums are very pleased with their educational experience, and that to do a better job we must refine our thinking and practice regarding the four steps above.

The first part of this report is a summary of the quantitative and qualitative data collected for our eight goals. The bulk of the data is displayed in the Outcomes Assessment Plan form, the second (attached) part of the report.

The Plan displays our goals, learning process, learning outcomes, and assessment. (See the attached form.) The learning outcomes are measured by:

- Evaluation of tests, projects, papers, and presentations
- Course grades
- Internship evaluations
- Professional certifications
  - Certified Leisure Professional (CLP)
  - Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist (CTRS)
- Phase IV Survey
- Alumni Survey
- Employer Survey

Data is presented for each of these with two exceptions: 1) we have no data for our students' performance on the national certification (Certified Leisure Professional) exam because the national organizations does not provide it (and it applies to only a small subset of our graduates), 2) we have not yet instituted an employer survey but plan to as a follow-up to our next alumni survey.

**Goal #1** Students shall possess the knowledge and skills required of entry-level professionals, including the areas of planning, management, assessment, leadership, evaluation, and budget and finance.

#### Evaluation of tests, projects, papers, and presentations

We have selected two assignments at this point to assess student learning related to goal 1: a specific recreation program assignment that requires students to design a detailed recreation program; and a research paper in the senior capstone class that requires students to thoroughly research a current professional issue and to write a clear and succinct research paper.

Specific Program Assignment Eighty four percent of our students exceeded our expectations (received a grade of A or B) on this assignment over the past four years (approximately 225 students). Twelve percent met expectations by receiving a C grade and 4% did not meet our expectations by receiving a D or an F for this assignment. Because the assignment is our best indicator, prior to internships, of how well students grasp the complex problem of designing a recreation experience for a specific population of participants (mission and goals, assessment, marketing and promotion, registration, risk management, budget, etc.), the data indicate that students typically exceed our expectations. Students recognize the importance of this assignment and put time and effort into doing good work.

Research Paper Seventy four percent of students exceeded faculty expectations and 26% met expectations for this assignment. Students are challenged to do this assignment well because faculty expect clear evidence of critical thought and effective writing and because we find that students typically have not had much experience (especially transfer students) with writing research papers. The faculty also works hard to help students write more effectively and to master the basics of researching a topic related to their professional development.

#### Professional Certifications – NCTRC

Students studying therapeutic recreation at Western must satisfy national curriculum guidelines and pass a national certification exam (among other criteria). The fact that our Program graduates consistently perform at a higher level on the exam than their regional and national peers is a solid indicator that our students are well prepared to perform as professionals. These results are statistically significant according to the certifying organization.

74.3 WWU mean exam score

70.4 Regional mean exam score

67.3 National mean exam score

#### Course Grades

The Plan form indicates grades over the previous four years for courses related to the learning outcomes for Goal #1 – skills required of entry-level professionals. For each course the percentages of students who exceeded expectations (received an A or B in the course), met expectations (received a C in the course) or did not meet expectations (received a D or an F in the course) are given. The percentages do not total 100% in some cases due to students withdrawing from the course, students receiving K grades (incompletes), etc. The course grade data suggest that students are achieving learning outcomes at a high rate of success.

### Internship Evaluations – Therapeutic Recreation

Internships for all students occur in Phase III of our four phase curriculum. A final internship evaluation form is completed by the intern agency supervisor for each therapeutic recreation major. The form is aligned with national certification performance criteria and includes 16 questionnaire items and space for written comments. (See the Plan form for quantitative data related to goal #1.) The entry level skills related to goal #1 are rated on a five point scale under the category of Therapeutic Recreation Process and include the following skills and abilities (mean ratings for students are given):

Assessment	4.4
Planning	4.0
Interventions	4.2
Documentation	4.0
Discharge Planning	3.9
Evaluation	4.0

### Internship Evaluations – all other students

Students are rated by their agency internship supervisor using a 12 item rating form. Three of 12 internship evaluation items relate to goal #1:

Internship Knowledge	4.3
Ability to Learn	4.7
Initiative	4.5

A mean rating of 4.3 on a five point scale for Internship Knowledge indicates our students are bringing useful skills from their education to their internships. A mean of 4.7 on a five point scale for Ability to Learn indicates that interns are “exceptionally fast to learn and adjust to changing conditions” as observed by their agency supervisors. This speaks well of their classroom preparation. A mean of 4.5 for Initiative indicates that our students are seen as “definitely motivated; see what’s required and step in; seek responsibility; routinely make suggestions and contribute ideas.”

Internship agency supervisors offered the following qualitative assessments of student abilities related to goal #1 on final internship evaluation forms.

*“ \_\_\_ identified, planned and lead activities as well as coordinated all the details of putting on an event for 50+people. \_\_\_ is detail oriented and is still able to see the big picture.”*

*“ \_\_\_ program knowledge of the climbing wall was exceptional. This has been the first time in five years that I have felt the ability to pass total responsibility of the wall to another person.”*

*“ \_\_\_ strengths are getting along with everyone, communicating effectively, and being a conscientious worker and catching on quickly.”*

*“ \_\_\_ education has been a strong point throughout. Very insightful and knowledgeable, particularly in regards to programs.”*

### Phase IV Survey

This survey is administered to all students at the end of the last “phase” of our curriculum. Refer to the attached Phase IV Outcomes Survey 2001, 2002 and 2003. What follows are selected aspects from that data related to goal #1 (See the attached summary survey data.)

The following items from the survey questionnaire are of particular relevance for goal #1. The mean scores are based on a four point satisfaction scale: 1 = very satisfied, 2 = mostly satisfied, 3 = somewhat satisfied, 4 = not at all satisfied.

	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>
How well were you challenged to do your best?	1.42	2.00	1.56
Completing challenging individual projects	1.41	1.67	1.69
The quality of instruction	1.36	1.90	1.31
Completing challenging group projects	1.36	1.73	1.67
Developing skills in working in small groups	1.25	1.43	1.41
Being ready for a career	1.61	2.21	1.88
Using management/leadership capabilities	1.39	1.90	1.75

### Alumni Survey

Graduates of the Recreation Program between 1995 and 1999 were surveyed in 2000. The department uses a five year cycle for completing alumni surveys. New data will be available during the 2005-2006 academic year. Alumni expressed satisfaction as follows regarding a similar set of questions asked of Phase IV students above.

How well were you challenged to do your best?	1.7
Completing challenging individual projects	1.5
The quality of instruction	1.4
Completing challenging group projects	1.8
Developing skills in working in small groups	1.5
Being ready for a career	1.9
Using management/leadership capabilities	1.6

**Goal #2** Students shall be able to use diverse ways of understanding.

### Evaluation of tests, projects, papers, and presentations

Recreation majors move through the curriculum in cohort groups taking 15-16 credits of classes during phases I, II, and IV (phase III is the internship). This necessitates that the students not only respond and adjust to four different faculty members that they see every day, but that they come to an expanded awareness and understanding of their cohort members and their differing backgrounds, approaches to learning, and ways of experiencing and processing their learning. The curriculum emphasizes small group discussion and project work wherein students must learn to respond effectively to others who see the world differently. The aspect of the curriculum is difficult to quantify. See the Phase IV and Alumni Survey section below.

### Phase IV Survey

The following questionnaire items address aspects of students' satisfaction with aspects of the curriculum related to goal #2. 1 = very satisfied, 2 = mostly satisfied, 3 = somewhat satisfied, 4 = not at all satisfied.

	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>
Defining and solving problems	1.57	1.82	1.74
Using a broad range of knowledge, ideas and perspectives	1.41	1.84	1.46
Being able to respond to moral dilemmas	1.36	1.65	1.46
Being able to respond to social issues	1.34	1.84	1.49
Understanding and appreciating differing philosophies/cultures	1.32	1.75	1.62
Understanding the interaction of society and the environment	1.30	2.00	1.49
Understanding organizations and how people behave in them	1.59	2.00	2.08

### Alumni Survey

Alumni who graduated between 1995 and 1999 responded to the same set of questionnaire item as the Phase IV survey above, based on the same scale. The data suggest that graduates are quite satisfied with their recreation education at Western.

	<u>Mean</u>
Defining and solving problems	1.6
Using a broad range of knowledge, ideas and perspectives	1.5
Being able to respond to moral dilemmas	1.6
Being able to respond to social issues	1.6
Understanding and appreciating differing philosophies/cultures	1.5
Understanding the interaction of society and the environment	1.6
Understanding organizations and how people behave in them	1.7

**Goal #3** Students shall be able to think critically and to express themselves proficiently in oral and written communication.

### Evaluation of tests, projects, papers, and presentations

Research Paper Rec. 480, senior capstone course. Seventy four percent of students exceeded faculty expectations and 26% met expectations for this assignment. Students are challenged to do this assignment well because faculty expect clear evidence of critical thought and effective writing and because we find that students typically have not had much experience at Western with writing research papers. The faculty also works hard to help students write more effectively and to master the basics of researching a topic related to their professional development.

### Course grades

Expectations	<u>Exceeded</u>	<u>Met</u>	<u>Did not meet</u>
Rec 480	88%	9%	0%

### Internship evaluations – therapeutic recreation

Two items on the final intern evaluation form completed by agency supervisors address goal #3.

Intellectual ability:

Think critically

Problem-solve effectively

Make sound judgments

4.3 on 5 point scale

Communication:

Write clearly and correctly

Speak effectively

4.3 on 5 point scale

Internship evaluations – all other majors

Two items on the evaluation form address goal #3.

Judgment:

- Shows common sense
- Thinks in making decisions and acting
- Considers implications and consequences
- 4.2 on 5 point scale

Communications:

- Effectively expresses self orally and in writing
- 4.3 on 5 point scale

Phase IV survey

The following items from the survey questionnaire are of particular relevance for goal #3.

The mean scores are based on a four point satisfaction scale: 1 = very satisfied, 2 = mostly satisfied, 3 = somewhat satisfied, 4 = not at all satisfied.

How satisfied are you with the Recreation Program's contribution to your learning in the following areas?

	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	
Speaking effectively	1.74	2.18	2.24	
Writing effectively	2.19	2.39	2.15	(2 = mostly satisfied)

Alumni survey

Alumni (1995-1999) expressed satisfaction as follows regarding a similar set of questions asked of Phase IV students above.

Speaking effectively	2.0	(2 = mostly satisfied)
Writing effectively	2.2	

**Goal #4** Students shall be able to apply moral decision-making and make reasoned judgments.

Evaluation of tests, projects, papers, and presentations

Moral reasoning, Rec 480, 1999-2003, capstone course

This senior capstone class presents a model for moral reasoning with 8-10 hours of class time devoted to lecture, discussion, debate, and application of the model. See course grades for Rec 480.

Course grades

Expectations

	<u>Exceeded</u>	<u>Met</u>	<u>Did not meet</u>
Rec 480	88%	9%	0%

Internship evaluations – therapeutic recreation

Ethics:

- Intern understands ethical principles
- Intern applies principles to practice
- Intern logically resolves moral dilemmas
- 4.4 on 5 point scale

Internship evaluations – all other majors

Professional Ethics:

- Awareness of ethics
- Ability to recognize moral dilemmas
- Applies rational decision making
- 4.7 on 5 point scale

Internship agency supervisors offered the following qualitative assessments of student abilities related to goal #4 on final internship evaluation forms.

*“College education is obvious here. Insightful and caring. Desire to follow through with youth and sensitive situations. Handles ethical concerns (with staff and youth) very professionally with reason and logic.”*

*“Great ethics and understanding of ethical issues as they relate to TR. Clients trust \_\_\_\_\_ and feel comfortable speaking with her.”*

*“\_\_\_\_\_ is very professional and always applies rational decision making.”*

*“Our group recognized \_\_\_\_\_ as the “Goldenruler”. He carries himself extremely well: professional, collected, and mature.”*

*“\_\_\_\_\_ has come across many struggles with cottage staff throughout her placement. She has handled all these issues professionally, using supervisors for support when needed. \_\_\_\_\_, in regards to clients, always uses good judgment and sound ethical procedures.”*

<u>Phase IV survey</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>
Being able to respond to moral dilemmas	1.36	1.65	1.46 (1=very satisfied)

Alumni survey

Being able to respond to moral dilemmas	1.6	(1=very satisfied)
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**Goal #5** Students shall be capable of socially responsible leadership and shall be advocates for the right of all persons to quality leisure services.

Internship evaluations – therapeutic recreation

Community integration/recreation inclusion:

- Knowledge of community recreation resources
- Knowledge to barriers to recreation and leisure
- Connects clients to programs that reflect their needs
- Identifies supports needed for inclusion
- 4.5 on a 5 point scale

Internship agency supervisors offered the following qualitative assessments of student abilities related to goal #5 on final internship evaluation forms.

*“\_\_\_\_\_ respected clients and treated them with dignity as individuals. She made a conscious effort to empower them to be independent by being patient so they could complete tasks independently.”*

*“\_\_\_\_\_ has done an excellent job of researching and learning about the needs of people with disabilities that she has worked with over the summer. \_\_\_\_\_’s confidence with the participants and their different ability levels has increased over the summer.”*

*“\_\_\_\_\_ has begun a program called “Out and About” which incorporates leisure education with community integration. She has had patience with the clients and has come up with creative ideas to help them to learn.”*

<u>Phase IV survey</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>
Providing socially responsible leadership	1.27	1.49	1.32
Advocating for the rights of all persons to services	1.25	1.57	1.36
Understanding the personal/social benefits of leisure	1.14	1.29	1.22 (1=very satisfied)

Alumni survey

Providing socially responsible leadership	1.4	(1=very satisfied)
Advocating for the rights of all persons to services	1.3	
Understanding the personal/social benefits of leisure	1.3	

**Goal #6** Students shall understand the contributions of leisure and recreation to individual well-being and to community welfare. In particular, they shall understand the benefits of individual leisure expression, shared leisure experiences, and their relationship in the context of community life.

Evaluation of tests, projects, papers, and presentations

Time diary assignment, Rec 201. Students complete a detailed analysis of their personal use of time over a period of seven days emphasizing, among other issues, their professed values and beliefs, their actual behavior, and the role of leisure in the quality of their lives. Grades for this assignment, winter 2004, were as follows:

- 35% exceeded expectations
- 47% met expectations
- 18% did not meet expectations

Neighborhood recreation analysis, Rec 271. Students complete a quarter-long study of the demographics, social issues, role and function of recreation, the importance of parks and recreation facilities, informal recreation, etc. in Bellingham neighborhoods. Grades for this assignment, winter 2004, were as follows:

- 98% exceeded expectations
- 2% met expectations
- 0% did not meet expectations

Comprehensive recreation program planning, Rec 373. In small groups students design a comprehensive summer recreation program for the City of Ferndale. Students complete a detailed assessment of the community, write a mission statement and goals and objectives tailored to the interests and needs of the community, select and schedule recreation experiences to meet the needs and interests, design a promotion plan to reach all segments of the community, etc. Students present their comprehensive plans to an panel of Ferndale residents, emphasizing their understanding of Ferndale as a community and how the proposed recreation program will increase the well-being and community welfare. Grades for this assignment, winter 2004, were as follows:

- 100% exceeded expectations
- 0% met expectations
- 0% did not meet expectations

Makah Reservation Ecotourism Fieldtrip, Neah Bay, Rec 479, Ecotourism

Student fieldtrip to the Makah Reservation to learn about tribal issues, current tourism projects, and opportunities for economic development through eco-tourism projects.

Internship evaluations – therapeutic recreation

Therapeutic recreation foundations. The intern demonstrates understanding of:

- The meaning of and conceptual relationships among recreation, leisure, health, therapeutic recreation, quality of life, etc.
- The relationship among treatment, leisure education, and recreation participation
- The application of therapeutic recreation principles to practice

4.5 on 5 point scale

Community integration/recreation inclusion. The intern demonstrates:

- Knowledge of community leisure resources
- Knowledge of barriers to recreation and leisure
- Recommends and connects clients to leisure programs and services
- Identifies supports needed for recreation inclusion

4.4 on 5 point scale

Phase IV survey

The following items from the survey questionnaire are of particular relevance for goal #6. Students were very to mostly satisfied with each aspect of their recreation education related to this goal.

	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>
Understanding the personal and social benefits of leisure	1.14	1.29	1.22
Understanding and appreciating differing philosophies/cultures	1.32	1.75	1.62
Understanding the interaction of society and the environment	1.30	2.00	1.49
Using a broad range of knowledge, ideas, and perspectives	1.41	1.84	1.46
Being able to develop a satisfying meaning of life	1.23	1.76	1.49

(1=very satisfied)

Alumni survey

Similarly, graduates of the Program were very to mostly satisfied with the same aspects of their education several years after graduating. Same four point scale.

Understanding the personal and social benefits of leisure	1.3	(1=very satisfied)
Understanding and appreciating differing philosophies/cultures	1.5	
Understanding the interaction of society and the environment	1.6	
Using a broad range of knowledge, ideas, and perspectives	1.5	
Understanding the interaction of society and the environment	1.6	
Being able to develop a satisfying meaning of life	1.6	

**Goal #7** Students shall be able to function in a pluralistic democracy. They shall understand how leisure can strengthen both the diverse threads and the whole fabric of a multicultural democracy.

Course Grades

The goal of Rec. 480, Leisure and Society, is to “synthesize diverse strands of theory and practice into an integrated understanding of recreation and leisure in modern society, with implications for professional service.” Current trends and issues are addressed in lecture, small group discussions, position papers, research papers, reflection papers, guest presentations, and large group discussion and debate.

Expectations

	<u>Exceeded</u>	<u>Met</u>	<u>Did not meet</u>
Rec 480	88%	9%	0%

Phase IV survey

The following items from the survey questionnaire are of particular relevance for goal #6. Students were very to mostly satisfied with each aspect of their recreation education related to this goal.

	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>
Understanding the personal and social benefits of leisure	1.14	1.29	1.22
Understanding and appreciating differing philosophies/cultures	1.32	1.75	1.62
Understanding the interaction of society and the environment	1.30	2.00	1.49
Using a broad range of knowledge, ideas, and perspectives	1.41	1.84	1.46
Being able to develop a satisfying meaning of life	1.23	1.76	1.49

(1=very satisfied)

Alumni survey

Similarly, graduates of the Program were very to mostly satisfied with the same aspects of their education several years after graduating. Same four point scale.

Understanding the personal and social benefits of leisure	1.3	(1=very satisfied)
Understanding and appreciating differing philosophies/cultures	1.5	
Understanding the interaction of society and the environment	1.6	
Using a broad range of knowledge, ideas, and perspectives	1.5	
Understanding the interaction of society and the environment	1.6	
Being able to develop a satisfying meaning of life	1.6	

**Goal #8** Students shall understand the interrelationship among leisure behavior, society, and nature.

Course grades Fall 1999 – Spring 2004

Several courses address goal #8 in a variety of ways.

Expectations

	<u>Exceeded</u>	<u>Met</u>	<u>Did not meet</u>
Rec 201 Foundations of Rec/Leisure	75%	20%	5%
Rec 272 Dynamics of Outdoor Rec	85%	14%	0%
Rec 370 Outdoor Program Develop.	90%	4%	0%
Rec 372 Management of Rec Services	75%	19%	4%
Rec 379 Tourism Planning & Development	84%	10%	0%
Rec 470 Adventure Programming	91%	7%	0%
Rec 476 Ecotourism: Principles/Practices	100%	0%	0%
Rec 480 Leisure and Society	88%	9%	0%

Phase IV survey

	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>
Understanding the interaction of society and the environment	1.30	2.00	1.31

Alumni survey

Understanding the interaction of society and the environment	1.6
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