2013-2014 Assessment Report

College of Architecture, Design & Construction
Real Estate Development, Master's

Expected Outcome 1: Formal/Technical Mastery
MRED students will demonstrate a competence in observation, networking, and communication skills.

Assessment Method 1: Field Studies

Assessment Method Description
Students enrolled in the course RDEV 7126 have six field courses in the curriculum. Four are domestic trips to cities such as Philadelphia, Washington, DC, Boston, Los Angeles, Portland, Seattle and others and one is to attend the Urban Land Institute’s Fall Conference. At that conference, students are asked to network with the 6,000 – 8,000 attendees. To evaluate their participation, we ask them to submit five business cards that they have secured in conversations with other attendee during the conference. They also write a three-page reflection paper on one of the conference’s Concurrent Sessions. The final field study, which combines field study trips 5 & 6 into one trip, travels to an international location such as Buenos Aires, Melbourne, Auckland, London, Paris, Santiago, and Rio de Janeiro and others. During the field studies, students are asked to write a blog post about one of the events on the itinerary. Upon their return, students are asked to write a three-page reflection paper on their experience.

Findings
Students were assessed using the following rubrics:

Attendance and Participation: 75%
1. Were they present for every activity available on the field-study trip 50%
2. Did they actively engage in discussions with professionals 50%

Reflection Paper: 25%
1) Delivery of a central message 40%
2) Ability to tell a compelling and coherent story in an academic format 25%
The following observations were made:
A. Twenty-seven out of twenty-nine students scored a 3.0 or higher. Two out of twenty-nine students were asked to substitute another field study to replace the one in which they could not fully participate. This is on a 4.0 scale, with 4.0 indicating excellence. If a student does not participate fully over the length of the field study, they are asked to withdraw and repeat the course.
B. During the last year, the program has conducted a Strategic Planning process. As a part of our survey of students, one of the questions asked students to rate the importance of their Field Study experience from 1 (outstanding) to 5 (poor). The average for the eighteen students who responded to the survey was 1.35, indicating their experience had been in the excellent range. Several students commented the field trips make the MRED program distinctive among all other programs in the country.
C. While the success of students in this course indicates the importance of these field studies to the hands-on development of knowledge in this discipline, we found the following weakness. Some of our students still are not able to write compelling and coherent papers in an academic format (as noted above).

**How did you use findings for improvement?**
Since our assessment last year, we conducted a short writing workshop delivered during a student’s first executive residency as a part of a Remedial Action Plan. In that workshop, we discussed how to write a short essay focusing on content delivery, research, and format. In the Summer Semester of 2015, we will ask the Campus Writing Center to conduct a two-hour workshop to help us evaluate improvement in the area of writing composition.

**Additional Comments**
We will continue to provide our students with workshops to improving their writing skills through the Remedial Action Plan. This may be a continuing need across the curriculum. And while we already direct students to the Campus Writing Center, if they are continuing to have difficulties, we will increase the number of workshop until the faculty feels that a common base of writing skills has been achieved.

**Assessment Method 2:** Assessment Method Two: Real Property Analysis

**Assessment Method Description**
Students enrolled in RDEV 7146 Real Property Analysis are asked to 1)
discuss the assigned cases during their Executive Residency week, 2) hold on-line discussions, and 3) write a reflection paper of 3-4 pages on each real estate development case studied. Eleven case studies are typically reviewed during the semester, with eight of them occurring in a distance format.

**Findings**

**Course Rubric:**

*Residency Discussions (25%):*
- 1. Participation in the class discussions
- 2. Attendance

*On-Line Case Discussions (35%):*
- 1. Number of comments made over the course of the week
- 2. The amount of time spent each week reading and adding comments
  - The quality of the comments made based on how each comment advanced the discussion

*Reflection Papers (40%):*
- 1) Clear articulation of a position on the case
- 2) Ability to tell a compelling and coherent story in an academic format
- 3) Overall organization of the content and format of the paper
- 4) Concise analysis of the case

Eleven out of fourteen students received a score of 3.0 or higher. None of the students received a grade below a 2.0. This is on a 4.0 scale, with a 4.0 indicating excellence.

The following observations were made about the course:

A. This course, in the past, created some fundamental time issues for many of the executive students. Those time issues contributed to the lack of clear and concise analysis of the case by some students. While they could adequately articulate a position, it often was not backed up by relevant case facts. By reducing the number of cases from twelve to eleven and combining the last case with the final assignment for the other course, Principle of Real Estate Development, we were able to create adequate time for students to fully participate in the on-line discussions and crafting their reflection papers.

B. Some of our students, because they are working professionals in an executive graduate program, have not had to write many papers since graduating from college more than ten years ago on average. They are not able to tell compelling and coherent stories written in an academic format. (see the Remediation Action Plan for writing
How did you use findings for improvement?

A. We will continue to better coordinate the date of assessments among all courses offered during the students’ first semester. In addition, the number of case studies will be cut down to 10 cases next year due to the Field Study Course RDEV 7126 essentially taking up a whole week during the Summer Semester. This is another recalibration of the student workload to a more appropriate level.

B. We will continue to use the last case study as the final assessment for both of the three-hour courses offered in the Summer Semester. As suggested above, we will ask the Campus Writing Center to conduct the workshop or workshops as needed.

C. In addition, this year students were given videos to review regarding financial and investment analysis prior to entering the program. It is believed that having some exposure to the language of real estate development would make their Excel boot camp, given in their first residency week, more productive.

Additional Comments

The program has recognized that programs such as Excel require the general awareness of real estate fundamentals to being able to gain the knowledge needed to master financial analysis during the first semester. We have tied several workshop formats with greater or lesser success. We determined that the barrier to quickly learning Excel for real estate development is, in part, a real estate terminology issue as much as it is a technology issue.

As noted above, an introductory writing workshop was conducted this year. It was a one-hour workshop that was developed and presented by faculty during the students’ first executive residency. The short workshop did improve many of the students’ writing in general, however, there are still some weakness in their abilities to write both professional and academic papers.

It should be noted that the pre-residency preparation, the improvement in the Excel Boot Camp, further coordination of assessments, reduced workloads to a reasonable level, and writing support produced the advancement of the full cohort into the next semester. Usually there has been an attrition rate of one to four students in the first semester of every cohort.
Expected Outcome 2: Professional competency: feasibility study

MRED students will be able to prepare a comprehensive feasibility study for a development project.

Assessment Method 1: Capstone Project

Assessment Method Description

Students are enrolled in RDEV 7636 Capstone in their final semester. The capstone project provides students with a Request for Proposal (RFP) of an actual project under consideration for development at the time and asks them to conduct a comprehensive feasibility analysis and submit a formal response to the RFP. Students are required at the end of the course to make a verbal presentation and submit a written proposal report for review by a national panel of practicing real estate development executives. Students have substantial review periods during their semester residency and during the semester using synchronous and asynchronous technologies.

Findings

Students were evaluated by a professional review panel on the following basis (see addendum):

- Development Approach
- Site Analysis and Selection
- Community Use and Benefits
- Financial Feasibility
- Project Design
- Market Analysis
- Quality of Verbal Presentation and Written Report

There was no percentages given for weighted scoring of each criteria.

All students in the cohort worked in teams of three to four each. Three of the four teams received a score of 3.5 or higher. The group receiving the lowest score gave a 3.0. This is on a 4.0 scale, with a 4.0 indicating excellence.

While all teams performed at a very high level, the review panel felt the glaring weakness in almost every proposal was the quality of their site analysis.

How did you use findings for improvement?

This is a program in its fourth year of operation. This year we provided a rubric for the panel to use in evaluation of each group’s proposal and presentation.
MRED will continue to strengthen its offerings in RDEV 7346 Site Planning and Infrastructure Development to emphasize specific project site analysis more heavily since it continues to be perceived as a weakness. While we had planned to provide students with a detailed rubric that would have articulated specifically the types of site analysis required in the presentation of the project, the site planning rubric became incorporated into and overall rubric (see addendum). Next year we will provide an additional rubric specifically for site planning that is separate from the Review Panels rubric for evaluating the overall project. It is expected that clearer directions and requirements related to this one weakness will improve their overall Capstone projects.

**Additional Comments**

Since we use an industry panel to review the capstone projects, pick a winning team, and provide input for grading the student work, it is often difficult to get executives to fill out a rubric. We provide each member of the review team with written questions that form the evaluation rubric. To get professional practitioners to fill out the questionnaire in a statistically useful manner has been challenging. Another rubric will be developed next year that will be easier for professional panelists to fill out.