

**OFFICE ADMINISTRATION
NASHVILLE STATE TECHNICAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

ACADEMIC AUDIT SELF-STUDY

Prepared for:

Tennessee Board of Regents

Prepared by:

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Nashville State Technical Community College**

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OVERALL PERFORMANCE

The Office Administration Program uses several methods and resources to assess overall performance and program quality. With regard to the program in general, the OAD program enlists:

- the consultation and advice of an advisory committee
- continued professional development of faculty
- varied delivery methods
- accreditation by Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP)
- course evaluations
- self-evaluation of program through SWOT report in February 2003

With regard to students and evaluation of outcomes, the OAD program currently uses the following:

- learning and assessment software simulating Microsoft Office User Specialist (MOS) tests (SAM and SimNet)
- capstone course – Integrated Software Applications with comprehensive exam at the conclusion of course
- Exit Test – given to graduates on all courses in their concentration (also used for Performance Funding and for ACBSP)
- continued demand for students in OAD program and good placement rate
- student and employer satisfaction surveys

The mission of the OAD program is: to better the community by equipping students with the office skills necessary to become productive and responsible leaders in today's workplace. Our mission coincides with and supports the college's mission to: provide comprehensive education programs, progressive partnerships, exemplary services, and responsible leadership to improve the quality of life for the communities it serves. We are equipping our graduates with the skills, both technical and soft skills, needed to succeed and contribute to the workplace and to their community.

Each of these methods and resources, both program related and student related, will be explained in more detail in the Quality Assurance section of this report.

Program Objectives

The objectives of the Office Administration program are to:

- Perform office tasks using the leading office application software for word processing, database, presentations, spreadsheets, desktop publishing, web design, scheduling, and coding.
- Apply time management skills effectively by managing multiple projects and priorities.
- Play a vital role in a successful management team as an administrative assistant.
- Succeed in various positions in today's multi-demanding and rapidly changing medical environment.

Office Administration History and Statistics

Nashville State Technical Institute opened in 1970, and the Secretarial Science Technology program was first offered in the fall of 1975. At that time there were three options; Engineering Secretary, Legal Secretary, and Medical Secretary. In 1977 those options were modified to Legal, Medical, and Professional. The program was renamed to Office Administration in 1988, and the options were again modified to Administrative, Legal, and Medical.

In the fall of 1990 the term "options" was replaced with "concentrations." The Medical concentration was made inactive, and then reactivated in the fall of 1996.

In the fall of 2002 Nashville State Technical Institute became a community college, thereby changing its name to Nashville State Technical Community College. Currently students have the option of pursuing the Associate of Applied Science degree in Office Administration with either the Administrative or Medication concentration (the Legal concentration was made inactive in the fall of 2002). In addition to the degree, there are five Career Advancement Certificates offered in the program. Those certificates are Medical Coding, Medical Receptionist, Medical Transcription, Office Applications, and Electronic Office Technology. These are designed to be completed in one academic year and, if the student meets the degree admission requirements and wishes to pursue a degree, the courses may be applied to the A.A.S.

There are currently four full-time faculty members in the Office Administration program and seven adjunct faculty members. The number of students enrolled with a major of Office Administration was 106 in the fall of 2003 and 107 in the spring of 2004. Annually the number of graduates is approximately 25.

In the spring of 2005 the program is offering 38 classes, 14 of which are Web classes. The average class size is 15, with the capacity of classrooms ranging from 15-20 seats.

Classes currently being developed for the Web are:

OAD 2620	Medical Office Management and Procedures
OAD 2630	ICD-CM Coding
OAD 2630	CPT Coding
OAD 2700	Administrative Transcription
OAD 2820	Desktop Publishing and Web Design

The A.A.S. degree with both the Administrative and Medical concentration is targeted to be completely available online by the summer of 2005. The Career Advancement Certificates are also scheduled to be available completely online.

Summary

Some goals of the OAD program that resulted from the SWOT analysis were:

- To increase enrollment in the Office Administration program through various recruiting strategies.
- In addition to day and evening classes, to expand students' options for flexible scheduling by increasing Web and weekend course offerings.
- Provide training on the latest software and instruction on topics such as ethics and oral and written communication skills necessary to prepare students for success in the workplace.
- Develop systems that create and promote environments for student success. Systems may include assessment, academic placement, intervention, and advising.

Many of the specific steps outlined to meet these goals were met, some were not. Some of these may be revisited and moved into potential initiatives along with new goals that will come from the process of this audit.

Assessment of Educational Quality Process Maturity

Overall Rating of Office Administration Program – Organized Effort (5)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Knowledge, Skills, and Values

Students in the OAD program should learn effective technical skills, communication skills, interpersonal skills, math skills, and critical thinking and problem solving skills. The OAD program uses the advisory committee, student surveys, and employer surveys to solicit input for the program which ultimately impacts the learning objectives. For example, during the spring 2004 advisory committee meeting a panel of former students gathered to discuss the changing role of the administrative professional and provide feedback regarding their experience in the Office Administration program and how it has affected their careers. Valuable information regarding the need for additional spreadsheet skills, accounting skills, presentation skills, and teamwork/interpersonal skills came from that discussion and how they can be incorporated into the program are being considered.

The OAD learning objectives are consistent with the processes that we are using in that, with regard to the skills courses, the objectives relate to specific Microsoft Office software tasks or MOS objectives and our teaching methods include demonstration of those tasks. Assignments, both in-class and homework, include simulation and execution of these tasks as well as application of the theory and use of the principles of the applications.

Objectives in both skills and lecture courses are also matched with the textbooks chosen for each course. Those textbooks are also chosen in keeping with the overall objectives of the program. Each instructor, or instructors, of a particular course collaborate on the selection of texts, but this is not done by the entire faculty in the program. The syllabi used for courses taught by more than one instructor are common in objectives and goals.

The objectives in both the Administrative and Medical concentrations are heavily workplace driven. In the Administrative concentration software changes are continually upgraded to keep up with industry requirements and students are instructed on current office procedures. The objectives in the Medical concentration, on the other hand, are more heavily workplace driven because they use fewer software packages, therefore not requiring MOS objectives. The objectives for these courses are updated by looking directly to the workplace for current information regarding items such as processes and forms.

Pay Off In Employment/Societal Contribution/Quality of Life

This approach in setting objectives in both concentrations is designed to pay off very well in employment, which has been the ultimate goal of the program. With the recent mission change of Nashville State to a community college, and the focus now being placed on making degrees more transferable to four-year institutions, we have a new goal that has not been completely addressed, which is how to make the Office Administration A.A.S. degree more transferable.

Objectives Based on Actual/Potential or Ideal Student

The objectives of the OAD program are, by and large, based on the actual or potential student. These have been set based on feedback from what employers are looking for and need in potential employees, what students indicate they need in the workplace, what the literature shows is needed for the skills being taught, and other indicators like the MOS objectives.

The reality is that there are two types of actual students; those who come and are prepared for college and to begin the program and the actual student who is under-prepared for college level courses. Nashville State is not alone in this problem; the following is a quote from the U.S. Department of Education Web site:

Community colleges are an important bridge to further education and careers for American youth and adults. Serving over 11 million students annually, community colleges offer a wide range of programs and services, from 2-year associate degrees to transfer programs with 4-year institutions to job training and retraining. **Yet, today's community colleges face a number of challenges, including under prepared students**, low rates of program completion and multiple accountability requirements.

Ideas for Improvement

The constant challenge is how to teach to both of these types of students and how to, or at what point to, adjust objectives and methods without losing either. It is clear that, even with the developmental courses required with particular entrance ACT/SAT test scores, some students still require additional instruction in basic reading, writing, and math. These areas are covered in the objectives of the OAD courses and overall program, but the faculty finds it to be a challenge at times to find ways to reinforce those skills while still covering the core objectives of the concentrations. In both concentrations, it is not unusual for material to be re-taught if the instructor feels that the students are not grasping essential theories and concepts, though obviously a certain number of objectives or goals are expected to be reached in those courses as well.

This is an area that is somewhat always in a state of flux. The basic program objectives, whether they pertain to hard/technical skills or soft skills, may remain relatively constant. But, the specific course objectives to meet those larger objectives will change as software upgrades and technology changes and as industry changes and progresses. The OAD program continually tries to adjust and grow with those changes through methods such as the advice of the advisory committee members, feedback from former students, the employer surveys, and exit exam results. More formal processes for implementing the information received from these sources need to be developed.

With the use of the new learning and assessment software, the faculty has the ability to quantify learning outcomes in the skills courses using reports generated by the software.

From these reports students can be directed to repeat lessons and generate custom lessons from practice exams. for areas where they are not learning the material. The students have the ability to do this on their own as they complete the lessons, but the instructor has the ability to, and will need to, watch the progress of the student and prompt them to relearn skills in which they are deficient.

In the Medical concentration a possible weakness may be the lack of objectives pertaining to specific new insurance forms and processes. The question being posed is whether or not to have objectives relating to these added to the coding and/or insurance classes. A survey of adjunct faculty working in industry and the advisory committee is planned to gather information regarding what they feel is important and what some possible objectives might be.

Other basic skills that need to be emphasized program-wide are presentation, spreadsheet, accounting, and general communication skills. These skills are generally weak in students entering the program and are addressed in the objectives, both program and course, but still need to be strengthened.

Summary

Define Quality in Terms of Outcomes – Applied to some degree (4)
 Focus How Things Get Done – Applied to some degree (4)
 Base Decisions on Facts – Applied to some degree (4)
 Strive for Coherence – Applied to some degree (4)
 Learn From Best Practice – Not applied now but would clearly be useful (3)
 Work Collaboratively – Applied to some degree (4)
 Make Continuous Improvement a Priority – Applied to some degree (4)

Assessment of Educational Quality Process Maturity

Overall Rating – Between Informal and Organized Effort (4)

CURRICULUM AND CO-CURRICULUM

Relationship between Curriculum and Learning Objectives

The Office Administration curriculum consists of courses designed, and the order arranged, to meet the program's mission of improving the community by providing students with the office skills to be productive, successful, and responsible leaders in today's workplace. Because of our determination to meet the continually evolving business needs, our curriculum is updated often in order to meet the challenge. A major strength of our program is our business-driven curriculum, with each course offering, as well as course content, planned to achieve the learning objectives.

Processes – How Things Get Done

After determining the courses that compose our curriculum, the next steps are to search for materials and develop teaching and learning assessment methods to achieve the objectives of each course. Teaching methods are developed from the belief that learning is not passive but requires active student participation. Many of the courses are software based, or have a software or skills component included, which require a hands-on approach. Other courses incorporate interactive activities for specific course objectives.

Input from Research, Literature, and Industry

The curriculum begins with certain basic facts, such as general education course requirements that include English, math, social science, and humanities electives. The recent mandatory reduction in total hours required for degrees resulted in a curriculum revision that necessitated either a reduction of credit hours for some courses or elimination of courses. The choices of offerings by OAD are based on workplace needs. These are arrived at by input from various sources, a major source being an active and diverse group of business representatives who serve on our Office Administration Advisory Committee. Other sources include reading related publications and accessing related Web sites, reviewing skills requested in job advertisements in the paper and online postings, and student requests or interests.

Strive For Coherence

The area of coherence is a major focus because the best course selection would be meaningless without a proper "fit." Courses are arranged based on the knowledge that skill development is a building process that requires a strong foundation upon which to add additional skills. Some courses are sequential, having "Beginning" or "Advanced" as part to the course name. While the order of these types of courses is obvious, equal importance is placed on the order of other courses. Faculty advising and course prerequisites ensure that students follow an appropriate sequence.

Professional Development and Research of Similar Programs

With an eye always looking for new innovative ideas to incorporate into the program, attending conferences, workshops, and on-campus in-service offerings provide opportunities to learn from others. An example of a simple yet effective idea learned at the recent conference addressed the problem of online students not reading important documents, such as the syllabus. A presenter shared her technique to resolve this problem by creating a “scavenger hunt” that required students to read various documents in order to answer the required list of questions. The Internet is a quick and easy way to access the curriculum of most all schools in the U.S. Similar programs are of particular interest and are reviewed. Publications and various other Web sites are also sources of information.

Faculty Collaboration

The Office Administration program consists of two areas of concentration with the goal that each curriculum be designed to accomplish our common mission. Both the Administrative and Medical concentrations contain courses to prepare students to enter the workforce. The Administrative concentration prepares students for a more generalized office environment; the Medical concentration, a more specialized medical office environment. The design, revision, or updates of the Administrative curriculum is the result of the collaborative efforts of most of the OAD faculty along with the division dean. The Medical curriculum is guided primarily by a faculty member with a medical background along with the division dean.

Ideas for Improvement

The topic of the curriculum or course content is discussed in almost all OAD meetings. Although it may not be the focus of the meeting, it is so important that it is never off the table. Business needs change and technology brings daily changes that affect business; therefore, our program is often impacted as well.

One item that is lacking in the Medical concentration is a capstone course. Further study needs to be completed as to what a possible capstone course would consist of for this concentration, what skills and objectives would be pulled together to create this course, and what possible medical software could be incorporated into this course. Questions regarding this will also be part of the survey sent to the advisory committee.

The capstone course in the Administrative concentration, Integrated Software Applications, covers the software courses in that concentration, but it does not cover the courses that teach the soft skills. The faculty has had discussions about creating a one-hour lecture course, using the OPAC software, to reinforce and assess communication skills including proofreading, grammar, and punctuation, essentially creating a second capstone course covering those non-software courses.

Creating any new courses in either concentration would also require a realignment of the curriculum by removing a course or reducing hours of current courses. The A.A.S. degree may not exceed 60 hours, and each concentration is at 60 hours at this point.

Recent assignment and test scores show a possible need to move Administrative Transcription closer to Business English and Communication. Students have a retention problem with grammar and punctuation skills taught in Business English and Communication, which are essential in Administrative Transcription. The idea came from requests from current students that the courses be closer together. The grammar and punctuation rules are taught in Business English and Communication and reviewed and reinforced in the transcription course. Retention of this material may be increased if these courses were closer together better reinforcing each other, thereby also better preparing the students. One indicator of whether or not this is succeeding would be the Exit Exam score in the Business English and Communication area if this change is implemented. Scores in this core area over the past two years have been consistently low.

The OAD faculty does not, at this time, have a formal process for reviewing curriculum and learning objectives/outcomes with instructors in the co-curriculum courses.

Summary Assessment for the Seven Quality Principles

Define quality in terms of outcomes – Applied to some degree (4)
 Focus on how things get done – Applied to some degree (4)
 Work collaboratively – Applied to some degree (4)
 Base decision on evidence – Applied extensively (5)
 Strive for coherence – Applied extensively (5)
 Learn from best practices – Applied extensively (5)
 Make continuous improvement a priority – Applied extensively (5)

Assessment of Educational Quality Process Maturity

Overall Rating – Organized Effort (5)

TEACHING AND LEARNING METHODS

Methods Used

Skills Courses. In the skills courses the specific intended outcomes are for the students to be able to execute the software, both in theory and application. They should also be prepared to take the MOS (Microsoft Office Specialist) Test in the particular software courses they have completed.

For the first exposure to new material in the skills courses a combination of methods is used. With the use of the ceiling-mounted projector and the instructor's computer, a combination of demonstration and lecture is used to introduce the students to new skills. The instructor will demonstrate the skill as their computer display is projected onto a large screen in front of the class. At the same time the instructor gives step-by-step instructions regarding how the skill is being executed.

A theory and concepts portion of each of the skills courses is also covered in a lecture method. This portion covers required information including vocabulary, step-by-step processes, methods of use, and formatting instructions.

Questions are fielded throughout the demonstration. The students then begin a hands-on simulation of the skills through chapter exercises. This gives the students an opportunity to simulate these step-by-step processes in the classroom in the presence of the instructor where they are again able to ask questions and receive immediate feedback in preparation for completing their homework assignments.

In the fall of 2004 the Office Administration program began instituting learning and assessment software, SimNet, which will take the step-by-step simulation a step further. It has been successful in other colleges and universities with regard to learning and retention of material, but this is the first semester of use in this program and there is no data to show its impact on the OAD program. It will give the students an opportunity to revisit demonstrations of skills, practice those skills, and even access practice exams outside of the classroom.

Lecture Courses. In lecture courses the common intended outcomes are for the students to be able to communicate effectively, develop teamwork/interpersonal skills, and integrate the individual course outcomes into their anticipated careers.

For the first exposure to new material in the lecture courses, the main teaching method used is the lecture method accompanied by PowerPoint presentations using the instructor's computers and shown using the ceiling-mounted projectors. Classroom discussion, problem solving, and group activities are also used in order to encourage student involvement. This is accomplished through critical thinking exercises, self-tests, WebCT activities, Internet activities, chapter exercises worked as a class or in groups, and cases.

Questions are fielded throughout the lecture. More questions tend to arise during group exercises and problem-solving sessions. With group activities, discussion is encouraged among the students and, depending on the activity, a report from one or more of the group members may be required at the end of the activity.

Is Learning Active

Learning is active in that students are required in the skills courses to replicate tasks that the instructor demonstrates in each lesson; they are completing tutorials in the learning software and applying the theory of the applications in class assignments and projects. In the lecture courses students are required to participate in group projects and discussions.

Is It Collaborative

The OAD faculty meets regularly regarding program, curriculum, and various other issues. Teaching and learning methods are not always part of these meetings in a formal manner, but ideas are discussed, issues of particular problem situations are brought up, and informal brainstorming happens. This is an area that has been identified that could be improved.

Is Technology Being Used, If So Is It Effective

Technology is being used very heavily in the teaching and learning methods in the OAD program. As stated earlier, the use of the projectors, instructor's computers, and PowerPoint presentations are used in both skills and lecture courses for demonstration and lecture. WebCT is used in the classroom for several courses, instructor's Web sites are used, supplemental Web sites are used, and various software programs are used to supplement both skills and lecture courses.

The newest addition of technology is the learning and assessment software, which is expected to make a very positive impact on student learning. As stated before, this gives students access to online tutorials, demonstrations (with audio) when outside of the classroom, and practice exams. It is also in an environment similar to that of the MOS test which further prepares them to take those exams when they have completed the skills courses.

Ideas for Improvement

Some concerns program-wide involve critical thinking skills and communication skills. With regard to teaching and learning methods, the following articles pertain to the OAD course of study.

In 1998 in the DPE (Delta Pi Epsilon) *Instructional Strategies* newsletter a three-part article regarding teaching technology skills was published. This article compared the systematic and minimalist approaches to teaching business and information technology

courses. The crux of the article is that a systematic, step-by-step approach is needed in beginning courses where students do not have experience with a particular piece of software, but that a minimalist approach should be the goal once those skills are covered in order to move the student toward skills that would be more similar to those needed in the workplace. The minimalist approach emphasizes more learning by doing, puts the software in the workplace or social context in which the student will ultimately use it, and requires them to learn from their own errors. The systematic approach would be reinserted at times when needed. Students need to be able to quickly and effectively transfer their skills learned to application in the workplace, so implementation of the minimalist approach is needed to help achieve that goal. The article points out the link between in-school practices and workplace practices in the following:

Such a link makes it possible to talk about truly developing employment-related office technology skills. To reiterate ideas developed earlier, when success in a work setting is the goal, the Discourse of an employment setting should eventually become more dominant than the Discourse of schooling. This means the sooner the context of employment field can become dominant in the learning setting, the better for allowing student participation in the employment Discourse.

Most of the software courses in the OAD program are beginning courses and emphasize a step-by-step approach, but some homework assignments do emphasize critical thinking and more independent application. There are also courses that require semester projects that students complete from scratch and require complete independent application from conception. This is an area that could probably be expanded in either assignments or projects or both.

With regard to communication skills, a recent study published in the DPE Journal compared three different methods of teaching and evaluation of writing skills. This study used a pretest, treatment, and posttest of 148 students given scenarios where they were asked to write either letters or memos in the form of a direct request, goodwill message, negative message, and persuasive message. These were then reviewed, evaluated, and graded by a faculty member, a peer review (which was controlled by a software program that used three steps to make sure that the students evaluated correctly and fairly), and a group review. The evaluations were based on style and format, which covered tone, grammar, sentence structure, punctuation, word usage, spelling, and direct/indirect method; and content, which covered whether the letter contained the correct opening, the correct information in the body, and the correct closing. The results of the study found that the students' writing improved when they worked in groups, but that grades were slightly better under faculty evaluations for all four documents. The study suggests that this may be attributed to the fact that students take their assignments more seriously when they know that a teacher is grading them and spend more time preparing and on the writing process.

In the OAD program all writing assignments are graded by the faculty, but in many courses students are allowed to collaborate on assignments before beginning the writing

process or in the proofreading stage. More student collaboration in class and group assignments should possibly be considered where appropriate to see if it impacts reading, writing, and overall communication skills.

Summary Assessment of Quality Principles

Define Quality in Terms of Outcomes – Applied extensively (5)

Focus How Things Get Done – Not applied now but would clearly be useful (3)

Base Decisions on Facts – Applied to some degree (4)

Strive for Coherence – Applied to some degree (4)

Learn From Best Practice – Applied to some degree (4)

Work Collaboratively – Applied to some degree (4)

Make Continuous Improvement a Priority – Applied to some degree (4)

Assessment of Educational Quality Process Maturity

Overall Rating – Between Informal and Organized Effort (4)

STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT

Assessment of students is used to evaluate whether the Office Administration program is meeting the mission statement of the college and the mission statement of the program, as well as meeting the objectives of each course in the program. The following methods of assessment are used to evaluate the Office Administration program:

- employer survey
- exit exam
- student satisfaction survey

In addition, individual courses in the Office Administration program are evaluated by the following methods of assessment:

- student evaluations
- tests, quizzes, projects, and assignments
- capstone course

The Process

Program Assessment. Results from the employer survey, exit exam, and student satisfaction survey are used to assess the Office Administration program in relation to the mission of the college and the program. The employer survey is completed on a voluntary basis by employers of graduating students. Students also have the option to decline participation. The survey contains questions about soft skills (ethics, communication, problem solving, interpersonal skills, teamwork, and leadership) as well as technical skills.

The exit exam is completed by each graduating student in the program. An exit exam is administered for each concentration in the program (medical and administrative) and contains questions based upon the learning objectives of the courses included on the test. Students take the exam in the testing center on campus, and the test is administered in WebCT, an online course management system.

Graduating students in the program are also asked to complete the student satisfaction survey at the same time that they complete the exit exam. This survey is administered in WebCT at the testing center on campus. Students answer questions on the survey relating to the quality of instruction and advising in the program; therefore, results of the survey are based upon student opinion.

Course Assessment. Results from student evaluations, tests/quizzes/projects/assignments in courses, and the capstone course are used to assess individual courses in the program in relation to the objectives of each course. Student evaluations are administered at the end of each semester and solicit student opinions about the course, instructor, textbooks, and assignments.

Each instructor may also use tests, quizzes, projects, and/or assignments in each course to assess student learning based upon the objectives of the course. Software courses incorporate the use of simulated learning and assessment software (similar to Microsoft Office Specialist testing) to assess student learning of skills in particular software programs. Students in the administrative option of the program complete the capstone course (OAD 2900, Integrated Software Applications), in which they learn to integrate features of Microsoft Office programs learned in previous courses. This provides the instructor with an opportunity to assess their software skills.

Who is Responsible

Program Assessment. The exit exam and student satisfaction survey were created through a collaborative effort of the OAD faculty. Questions from the survey were taken from the Enrolled Student Survey and then questions specific to the program were incorporated. After students complete the exam and survey in the campus testing center, results are retrieved and compiled by an Office Administration faculty member. The employer survey is sent to employers by the NSCC Career Employment Center after student permission is obtained, and the results are compiled and provided to OAD faculty.

Course Assessment. Student evaluations are administered school wide. Results are provided to the deans and are then provided to faculty members for the courses they teach. Instructors are responsible for creating tests, quizzes, projects, and/or assignments in their courses and measuring the results of them. The instructor of the capstone course is responsible for assessing student learning in that course.

Measuring Success

Program Assessment. For the exit exam, the primary criterion for which we aim is for students to score 70 percent or above on the exam. A secondary goal is for students to score at least 70 percent on each component (course/subject area) of the test. Each instructor summarizes and evaluates the results of the questions included on the exit exam from the courses they teach. If the goals are not reached, instructors indicate in their summaries how they plan to adjust teaching methods to better emphasize concepts and skills in areas of weakness in order to improve student learning.

Results from the employer survey provide evidence of employer opinion about technical skills and soft skills of our graduates. The return of employer surveys has been minimal, and no formal process has been implemented to evaluate results. The Career Employment Center is now obtaining student permission for the employer survey when the students submit their intent to graduate forms, in hopes of getting a better return on the surveys. Student satisfaction survey results are provided to faculty, and no formal process has been implemented to evaluate results.

Course Assessment. Results from the end-of-semester student evaluations are provided to instructors of each course. The evaluations are based upon student judgments. Based

upon the results of evaluations, instructors may adjust teaching methods and/or materials to improve student learning.

Tests, quizzes, projects, and/or assignments in each course are based upon the objectives for that course. A variety of measurements and assessment activities are used in order to address various learning styles. If the majority of students are successfully completing the assessment activities, this provides evidence that students are learning. In the capstone course, assessment is measured by the successful completion of integrated software projects, as well as simulated software testing by the students.

Ideas for Improvement

As evidenced by the ongoing evaluations, surveys, and various assessments that are used, the Office Administration program strives for continuous improvement.

It has been noted in several places in the report already that students are lacking in oral and written communication skills. This is supported by the scores on the Exit Exam. The goal is at least 70 percent on each component and the cumulative score for graduating students has consistently been just under 70 percent in the Business English and Communication component for the last few years. This is obviously an area that needs to be addressed. It should also be noted though, the Exit Exam score is not reflected in students' overall GPA nor is it an overall graduation requirement, and therefore, some students do not take it with as much earnestness as it is intended.

We will continue to review course and program assessments to make sure that they align with learning objectives and the mission of the Office Administration program. We are currently in the process of revising the exit exam in order to make more questions common to both the administrative and medical concentration exams. We can also review the questions included on the exit exam on a regular basis to make sure the questions align with course and program objectives. The test could also be reviewed by our advisory committee or other professionals.

Summary Assessment for Seven Quality Principles

- Define quality in terms of outcomes – Applied to some degree (4)
- Focus on how things get done – Applied to some degree (4)
- Base decisions on evidence – Applied to some degree (4)
- Strive for coherence – Applied to some degree (4)
- Learn from best practice – Not applied now but would clearly be useful (3)
- Work collaboratively – Applied to some degree (4)
- Make continuous improvement a priority – Applied to some degree (4)

Assessment of Educational Quality Process Maturity

- Overall Rating – Between Informal and Organized Effort (4)

QUALITY ASSURANCE

Methods

As stated in the Overall Performance section of this report, the OAD program uses the following methods to assure that the designs for curricula, teaching and learning activities, and student assessment are being implemented as intended.

Program related:

- the consultation and advice of an advisory committee
- continued professional development of faculty
- varied delivery methods
- accreditation by Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP)
- course evaluations
- self-evaluation of program through SWOT report in February 2003

Student related:

- learning and assessment software (SAM and SimNet)
- capstone course – Integrated Software Applications with comprehensive exam at the conclusion of course (Administrative concentration only)
- Exit Test – given to graduates on all courses in their concentration (also used for Performance Funding and for ACBSP)
- continued demand for students in OAD program and good placement rate
- student and employer satisfaction surveys

Program Related

Advisory Committee. The advisory committee is made up of program faculty and staff, former graduates of the program, adjunct faculty, industry leaders in education administration, human resources, management, administrative staffing, legal offices, hospital administration, and medical insurance and coding. The committee meets once each semester to consult with faculty and staff on the current program, any changes (additions, modifications, deletions) being considered, and any suggestions they have concerning new technology, methods, or industry trends. Each meeting is chaired by one of the industry committee members, and they are able add to or modify the meeting agenda.

Professional Development. Faculty members attend workshops and seminars throughout the year on various classroom/teaching techniques, new software, and new learning and assessment software. Attendance at events such as the Mid-South Instructional Technology Conference are very beneficial to faculty because they focus directly on

technology that can be used in the classroom, in classroom instruction, and teaching techniques, which relates directly to the majority of the courses in the OAD program. Conferences such as the National Business Education Association and Southern Business Education Association Conferences have also been very beneficial in the past, but due to budget constraints, these have not been available to faculty in recent years. With the addition of the new learning and assessment software, workshops and conferences offered (both on and off campus) by the publishers of SAM, SNAP, and SimNet have been very beneficial to faculty members as well.

Varied Delivery Methods. Multimedia projectors, the new learning and assessment software, critical thinking projects, classroom group projects, and beginning in Fall 2004 WebCT is available to all on-campus courses and is being implemented in many courses in the OAD program. In order to meet varying student schedules, courses are offered during the day, evening, on the Web, and occasionally on the weekend.

ACBSP. The Office Administration Program received ACBSP accreditation in May 2001. Accredited status is granted for a period of ten years, including the 2001/02 academic year and extending through the academic year 2011. Accreditation by the Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs is maintained by submitting a Quality Assurance Report every two years. Our next Quality Assurance Report will be due in 2005. This accreditation examines the program against a set of nationally recognized standards concerning quality and integrity.

Course Evaluations. Each semester students are asked to fill out evaluation forms for every course, including Web and video courses. These evaluations ask questions concerning the quality of the text, assignments, assessments, the instructor, and even the effectiveness of the course in helping the student become a better thinker. This information is used for future evaluations of these materials, for instance when changing textbooks. In addition to the student generated course evaluations, the instructors also conduct comparisons of courses that they run concurrently on campus and on the Web to make sure that they are equivalent.

SWOT Report. In February of 2003 the OAD faculty and staff participated in a self-evaluation of the program through a SWOT analysis. The faculty and staff met with members of the advisory committee and two other members of the Nashville State Community College staff to make up the OAD SWOT committee. This committee met three times in the spring, along with other meetings of the OAD faculty and staff only. Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats were identified and goals were stated to address the weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Data and documentation was also given to back up the strengths listed.

Student Related

Learning and Assessment Software. The continued integration of learning and assessment software into the classes focusing on Microsoft Office software allows the students to become better prepared for the MOS tests by giving them the opportunity to simulate that

testing environment. Through the use of SAM and SimNet, the OAD program is not only able to give the student an opportunity to be better prepared for the MOS tests, but to also get immediate feedback on their lessons and assessments, and still work with an instructor for lectures, step-by-step instruction, and homework projects.

Capstone Course. Integrated Software Applications is a capstone course in which students complete office-related projects that integrate Microsoft Office 2003 skills learned in previous courses. Students gain practical experience by creating various projects that will help to prepare them for the business office environment. Students complete tests using Web-based testing software that measures their proficiency in Microsoft Office 2003 applications (similar to MOS tests). At this time, there is not a capstone course in the Medical concentration. This is a course that is being considered and is addressed elsewhere in this report.

Exit Test. Graduating students review for and complete a comprehensive exam, which covers material from core courses in the Office Administration program. This exam provides an opportunity for a final analysis of skills and knowledge gained by students at completion of the program. The results of the test for the Fall 03/Spring 04 exam are as follows:

OAD 1115 – Business English and Communication	61.8%
OAD 1120 – Keyboarding/Speedbuilding	82.6%
OAD 1220 – Beginning Word	91.0%
OAD 2230 – Advanced Word	75.6%

Demand and Placement Rate. The OAD program continues to have high demand for its students evidenced by the number of employers contacting the Career Employment Center. The program has also demonstrated a good placement rate of students graduating and working in fields relating to their major.

Year	Employment Related to Major
2003	100%
2002	77.4% (10% of graduates this year reported they were not looking for employment)
2001	90.5%
2000	81.8%
1999	94.4%

Student and Employer Satisfaction Surveys. The OAD program began administering a student satisfaction survey in 2003 which asks students to rate their satisfaction with the program, the quality of the instruction in their major, the quality of the courses to prepare them for employment, to rate the clarity of degree requirements, the clarity of objectives, and various other items. With choices of Poor, Fair, Good, and Excellent, the survey for Fall 03/Spring 04 showed a rate of 92.3 percent for full-time faculty and 69.3 percent for adjunct faculty in the Good/Excellent range to the statement: Rate the quality of

instruction in your major. With regard to the statement: Rate the clarity of degree requirements for your major, the rate was 92.4 percent in the Good/Excellent range. For the statement: Rate the clarity of objectives for courses in your major, the rate was 100 percent in the Good/Excellent range.

The employer survey asks employers to evaluate graduates/students based on the following:

- Technical knowledge and skills
- Work ethic
- Verbal communication skills
- Written communication skills
- Problem solving skills
- Interpersonal skills
- Teamwork and leadership skills
- Current performance level
- Was graduate properly trained by NSCC for his/her particular field?
- How would they rate NSCC graduates compared to other graduates with similar training they have hired?

With choices of Not Applicable, Poor, Needs Improvement, Average, Good, and Excellent, all employers who responded in 2003 responded in either the Good or Excellent categories for each of the areas above. Some common skills they cited as critical for employment in their companies were interpersonal skills, problem solving, communication, organization/multitasking, and computer skills.

Ideas for Improvement

The OAD program has several processes for gathering information from the industry professionals through methods such as the advisory committee, from students (current and former), employers, and assessments. The feedback and statistics from these sources are directly used in the development and/or modification of the program and individual courses. The processes for how to effectively use some of this information (i.e. employer survey information) is still in development because it is relatively new or in short supply.

There is a need for more alumni information regarding employment and the level of success that the graduates of the Office Administration program (both concentrations) are finding in the workplace. The current alumni surveys report very general information in overall terms rather than program-by-program. The student satisfaction survey that the OAD program uses currently was spurred by this need for more information.

To reiterate, one item that is lacking in the Medical concentration is a capstone course. Further study needs to be completed as to what a possible capstone course would consist of for this concentration, what skills and objectives would be pulled together to create this course, and what possible medical software could be incorporated into this course. Questions regarding this will also be part of the survey sent to the advisory committee.

Summary Assessment of Quality Principles

Define Quality in Terms of Outcomes – Applied to some degree (4)

Focus How Things Get Done – Applied to some degree (4)

Base Decisions on Facts – Applied to some degree (4)

Strive for Coherence – Applied to some degree (4)

Learn From Best Practice – Not applied now but would clearly be useful (3)

Work Collaboratively – Applied to some degree (4)

Make Continuous Improvement a Priority – Applied to some degree (4)

Assessment of Educational Quality Process Maturity

Overall Rating – Between Informal and Organized Effort (4)

POTENTIAL INITIATIVES

With the support of the chief academic officer and divisional deans, it has been proposed that all of those involved in the academic audit process work together in an ongoing process to develop a true curriculum or learning plan as outlined by Stark and Lattuca (1997) and Diamond (1998). As Massy wrote in his paper addressing the issue of education quality processes:

Quality processes span five interrelated domains of activity. None of the five are optional. Exemplary practice in one domain does not automatically produce good performance elsewhere, although failure in one makes progress harder in the others (p. 2).

While some of the programs included in the academic audit are working to move from an informal to a more formal process in some areas, none believe that they can substantiate an overall quality rating of seven in any area.

Given the interrelatedness of the five focal areas and the necessity for them being tied together in an overall system, it does not make sense to address one area without regard for its impact on the other four. The curriculum design process has been described repeatedly in the literature as an iterative process where changes in one area require rethinking and changes to other areas.

As we moved through the self-study process for the academic audit, it became apparent that everyone brought something to the table for discussion and thought. This being the case, it appears obvious that all interested parties should be a part of this ongoing effort. Based on the literature, we believe this will be the first step in a long-range and ongoing process with a minimum time frame of three years. No one on campus can remember such an effort ever being undertaken. Much of the curriculum design completed up to this point has primarily been undertaken on a course-by-course basis and usually by an individual faculty person working alone. To our knowledge, a formal process involving multiple programs that addresses overall student outcomes has not been done while a great deal of work has been done on individual competencies in the individual programs.

In this project, it is anticipated that each of the focal areas will be addressed with weekly meetings of approximately one hour. Initially, these will be group meetings. As we move through the process, some of the meetings will be on a program basis. It is anticipated that team leaders will take an active part in this process, particularly as the process shifts from group meetings to program level activities. Since this is a new process to us, we are not comfortable with making an estimate of the time needed for each of the five focal areas or for the project in total. It is, however, anticipated that the resulting system will become ongoing as an integrated part of the Nashville State Community College culture; at least in the Business and Applied Arts Division. One of the overriding goals of these initiatives is to move closer to what Tagg (2002) has described as the

Learning Paradigm College and to use what Huba and Freed (2000) describe as learner-centered assessment.

Costs

The major resource required for this initiative is one that is in short supply—faculty time. That is the reason for the three-year time frame. Since many of the programs included in the academic audit are already accredited by the Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP), a great deal of work has already been done. Under better working conditions (more time for faculty involvement), it might have been possible to shorten the time frame—for at least some of the accredited programs.

In addition to faculty time, released time (three credit hours) for one of the team leaders (who also serves as a “super dude”) has been requested and approved for the spring 2005 semester. The only other cost foreseen at this time is for copying and printing, and this should be covered by normal operating budgets.

Initiatives by Individual Programs

In addition to this major initiative, several programs have already begun initiatives on their own such as expanding makeup of advisory committee membership, minor tweaking of the course syllabi, formalizing the process of advisory committee approvals of syllabi, and curriculum changes.

Specific Potential Initiatives Related to Office Administration:

- Add a one-hour lecture course emphasizing the OPAC objectives of grammar, punctuation, editing, and proofreading.
- Move OAD 2700 (Administrative Transcription) closer to OAD 1115 (Business English and Communication) in the curriculum.
- Have both concentrations completely online by 2005 (Keep online courses up-to-date (ongoing initiative)).
- Incorporate professional/student organizations into curriculum to help build interpersonal skills, teambuilding skills, networking, etc. Make reports about meetings part of a course.
- Add capstone course for the Medical concentration.
- Move from analog tapes to digital audio files/electronic delivery for transcription courses.

A brief outline for each of the focal areas follows:

Potential Initiatives – Focal Area: Learning Objectives

The literature is consistent in its findings and recommendations that the outcomes or competencies must be the first step in the process of developing learning or curriculum plans. As we worked through the academic audit process, it became apparent that most of

the programs under review have a good understanding of outcomes for students in courses in the major. What is missing are:

- Statements of core competencies outside the major
- An understanding of how core competencies should be integrated in the courses in the majors themselves
- Statements of competencies that are widely available to all constituencies
- As to program learning objectives, there are no standards for how objectives should be written
- Many of the objectives that exist are not written in performance terms

In order to overcome these and other shortcomings in the area of learning outcomes, the process will begin with an in-depth review of the process of developing learning outcomes. Sessions will cover the field of competencies, outcomes, and objectives; how they differ, how they are the same; how they should be written as well as their significance in the overall learning plan. A number of authors (Diamond, 1998; League for Innovation in the Community College, 2000; Stark, 1997; Steihl and Lewchuk, 2002; Tagg, 2003) have described this process in detail and will be used as resources as we develop our statements of competencies, outcomes, and objectives.

Deliverables

At the completion of this initiative, it is anticipated that the following items will be completed for each program involved:

- Agreed upon core competencies outside the major that are correctly written and also widely published and distributed.
- Revised course syllabi with valid learning objectives including appropriate competencies outside the major courses.
- The creation of a curriculum handbook that details the curriculum design and planning process. This handbook will describe the entire learning planning process that links outcomes, instructional methods, expected out of class assignments, and how outcomes will be assessed. This document will be based on best practices and will use the Curriculum Handbook of San Bernardino Valley College as a starting point. This handbook can be found online at <http://sbvc.sbccd.cc.ca.us/OnlineCurriculum/Files/Handbook/Curriculum%20Handbook%202004.2005.pdf>.
- Web sites for each department that describe the curricula of the individual programs including the competency and outcome statements developed during this process.

It is anticipated that the list of deliverables will expand as we work together on the focal area of learning outcomes.

Potential Initiatives Focal Area: Curriculum and Co-Curriculum

During the audit process, it became apparent that the degree to which the programs strive for coherence varies from program to program. Within the courses in the major there appears to be a significant degree of coherence but, in most cases, it is informal and not documented. The purpose of initiatives in this area is to formalize the curriculum, include learning outcomes outside the majors themselves and provide forms of documentation that will be institutionalized across and within the various majors in order to integrate outcomes from the students' majors with those included in their liberal education.

In the initiatives described under outcomes, the faculty involved will develop outcomes both within the major fields themselves as well as in areas such as critical thinking, ethics, communication skills, and teamwork (to name a few). Once these skill sets have been identified and reduced to writing, they will be integrated into a coherent curriculum.

Maki (2004), provides examples of matrices which have been used successfully by other institutions to document the coherence of curricula. She also introduces the concept of the curriculum map which is used to document the distribution of learning opportunities that contribute to shared expectations of student learning.

Deliverables

The participants in this initiative will work collaboratively to develop curriculum maps for their programs. This is envisioned as an iterative process as are most of the initiatives described in this document. The major outcome of this initiative will be the curriculum map which, in turn, depends on the other initiatives described in this document.

Potential Initiatives Focal Area: Teaching and Learning

One of the discoveries made during the academic audit was the predominance of the lecture as a teaching method. In many of the programs under review, faculty members have made strides in modifying the standard lecture to include other techniques but they are still variations of the traditional lecture.

The purpose of this initiative is to make faculty aware of the shortcomings of the lecture method, particularly where long-term retention and deep learning are concerned, and to help them become aware of the efficacy of other teaching methods. It is also the intent of this initiative to begin the process of expanding the array of techniques actually in use. Topics covered will include but will not be limited to:

- The shortcomings of the lecture method
- Deep vs. shallow learning
- Active learning
- Cooperative learning
- Collaborative learning

- Problem-based learning
- Case-based learning
- Relating outcomes statements to teaching methods
- Mastery learning
- Teaching to multiple learning styles
- The importance of metacognition
- Creating instruction that is both active and interactive
- Learner-centered instruction
- Using the Web to create active instruction
- Using formative assessment as learning tool
- The physical basis for learning

Deliverables

The short-term goal of this initiative is to evaluate each course in the major fields to find significant challenges where students regularly struggle and then to design and test instructional methods to help students master these “problem areas.” Each instructor will identify one particularly troublesome area and will then work together as a group to identify new methods of instruction. The new methods will then be tested in the classroom and reworked as necessary. Faculty will then work over the three-year period to identify additional problem areas for students and develop and test new instructional methods.

Faculty will develop and include formative assessment techniques in their courses. Faculty will learn to develop active learning techniques using Web technology and will include these techniques in their WebCT shells. (All faculty at NSCC have WebCT shells created automatically at the beginning of each term.) Van Weigel (2002) writes about the power of using technology to increase the reach of the instructor.

Potential Initiatives Focal Area: Student Learning Assessment

Once competencies and outcomes are determined, the next step is to develop assessment activities that align with them. There are two levels of outcomes that must be addressed: program outcomes and course outcomes. One of the things learned during the academic audit process was that the number and efficacy of assessment activities varies from program to program. In most programs there are a number of assessment activities, but most of these relate specifically to course content in the major itself. As far as other skills outside of the major courses are concerned, little has been done on a consistent and organized basis except for the C-base test which, unfortunately, is not broken down by major. A number of authors (Maki, 2004; Suskie, 2004; Huba and Freed, 2000; Allen, 2004) make the case for coherent assessment being a part of a truly coherent curriculum. The same authors also maintain that assessment must be aligned with outcomes and should be formative as well as summative. Another important aspect of assessment is that, when done properly, it focuses on teaching and learning as much as it does actual student outcomes. Topics that will be covered in this focal area will include but will not be limited to:

- Formative assessment
- Summative assessment
- The importance of feedback and how to provide effective feedback
- Using the Web as a means of formative and summative assessment
- Authentic assessment
- Alternative assessment
- Embedded assessment
- Genuine assessment
- Learner centered assessment
- Aligning assessment with outcome expectancies and teaching and learning methods
- Creating assessment rubrics
- Principles of good practice in assessment
- Promoting learning with assessment
- Course embedded assessment
- Using assessment data to revise outcomes statements
- Using assessment to improve learning experiences

Deliverables

Once outcomes have been clearly defined, assessment methods have been developed, and teaching methods have been aligned with both, it will be appropriate to create new course syllabi for all courses in the curriculum. It is anticipated that syllabi will undergo several revisions as we move through the process. Some changes that are needed immediately can be made short-term. Grunert (1997) wrote what has become the standard document on writing the course syllabus. Working collaboratively faculty will determine what format our syllabi should follow.

Working collaboratively, faculty will work on courses one-by-one beginning with those that are the most difficult for students to include formative assessment techniques and learning tools that serve the purposes of formative assessment.

Faculty will develop alternative assessments where appropriate.

Faculty will develop Web-based assessments that help students know where they stand prior to tests and exams.

Faculty will develop and document appropriate forms of feedback to help students learn from their mistakes.

Potential Initiatives – Focal Area: Quality Assurance

This major initiative, as well as program initiatives as outlined in the foregoing discussions, is intended to improve student outcomes. The programs that are participating in the academic audit either have in place already or will develop through

the major initiative tracking mechanisms that allow assessment of student outcomes and tracking of program graduates. It is the intent of the initiatives as defined earlier to improve learning outcomes. The progress and efficacy of these initiatives will be judged by improvement in program assessments. Additionally, much of the work as outlined, in addition to improving outcomes, is intended to formalize and document the curriculum design process.

The major premise of this initiative is that faculty working collaboratively when made aware of current literature can document and improve current practices in the overall area of curriculum planning. The plan as outlined is to present all involved faculty with current thinking in the area of best practices and then allow them to work together to determine when and how they should best be applied in their own programs. One of the major thrusts of this program is to improve the use of existing as well as new assessment data to improve teaching and learning and student outcomes. This will allow continuous improvement based upon facts.

Given the level of support provided by the chief academic officer, deans, program coordinators, team leaders, and the facilitator, it appears that circumstances are the best they have ever been at Nashville State Community College for implementing such a program.

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COMMITMENT TO IMPROVEMENT

As Vice President for Academic Affairs, I enthusiastically and fully support the major initiative outlined in this self-study. The proposed project will require three years, and the coordinated effort will serve as motivation to all participating faculty. The collaboration across programs will ensure that the academic audit project has maximum benefit in the improvement of our curriculum. I understand that some financial support will be necessary for this project, including release time for a faculty member to coordinate and monitor this major effort.

Dr. Ellen Weed
Vice President of Academic Affairs

As the division dean for Business and Applied Arts, I fully support the major initiative outlined in the prior section of this self-study. This three-year plan will allow faculty members the opportunity to sustain the effort put forth over the past few months in reviewing and reflecting on their program's education quality processes and to make ongoing quality improvement a major priority. Faculty members from different disciplines will be working together throughout the process which will strengthen collaboration among faculty.

Karen Stevenson
Dean, Business & Applied Arts

The Office Administration faculty is committed to the three year division-wide plan for achieving the overall potential initiatives in the five focal areas, as well as the specific program related initiatives that we have identified through the self-study. There is constant awareness and emphasis on staying up to date with regard to software, technology, and specific course-related items in the OAD program. While we feel that we have a strong program, in the course of a wider evaluation through the self-study it has given us a chance to step back and look at the "big picture."

Working collaboratively is one area that we agreed could be improved in most every area. Working on the self-study collaboratively with other programs on campus and in weekly program meetings the past few months have been very beneficial and we look forward to continuing that effort in the long-term plan presented above.

Andrea Compton, Wanda Grissom, Beverly Lyle, Eli Alvarado
Office Administration Program Faculty
