

Summary/final report for FY 06-06 TEACH grant

Title: Developing Departmental Student Learning Outcomes and a Shared Vision of Student Learning

From: Biomedical Sciences Department, College of Veterinary Medicine

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Summary: The Biomedical Sciences Department (BMS) teaches the foundational courses of anatomy and physiology for the veterinary professional program (Doctor of Veterinary Medicine, DVM). The department is also responsible for the pharmacology courses in the DVM program. Normal structure (anatomy and histology) and function (physiology) are the foundation upon which the veterinary medical education is built. Students must master these concepts, terminology and principles to understand disease processes and how best to treat sick animals.

The departmental faculty members believe the most effective way to “better coordinate and integrate departmental teaching offerings in the professional curriculum” would be to jointly discuss and develop a set of student learning outcomes for the department. The process of developing departmental student learning outcomes will provide a clear shared understanding of our purpose and instructional goals. This effort not only will improve intradepartmental understanding but will also assist the department on its journey to an iterative outcomes assessment system that fulfills accreditation requirements of the Higher Learning Commission and the American Veterinary Medical Association, Council on Education. Both bodies expect academic programs to use an outcomes assessment process to collect and use data on student learning for improvement purposes.

Initiative and outcomes.

First retreat was organized at the end of Fall 05 semester: BMS faculty collected existing syllabi with their embedded learning objectives. Compile existing learning objectives and classify in meaningful categories (by body system and species). This information was shared with all faculty in the department. At the meeting, BMS identified learning objectives for all courses and agree that in a spring retreat measures for outcomes assessment will be developed.

Second retreat was organized at the end of the spring semester of 2006. This was a facilitated workshops in order to provide time for faculty to present the learning outcomes for their specific courses as well as discuss and develop departmental wide outcomes. Outcomes were developed in the three areas of anatomy, physiology, and pharmacology. The goal of the workshops was for all faculty to have an understanding of what students are learning in other departmental courses.

The success of the retreats was unquestionable and the best indicator is the fact that faculty agreed that teaching retreats will be organized at the end of every semester. In addition to assessments embedded in the courses, assessments external to the courses will also be explored. With the help from the College, faculty will also be encouraged to use existing assessment data (graduating senior surveys, alumni survey, clinical year evaluations, etc.) in their outcomes assessment cycle.

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