**SOC 111 HELPER THEORY SPRING 2011 SLOAT REPORT**

*submitted by: Professor Arzelia Dixon Said*

INTRODUCTION

The Social Science Division administered an assessment instrument for students in two sections of Helper Theory (SOC 111) for the Spring 2011 semester. The two class sections were taught by a full-time professor and an adjunct faculty member. Helper Theory is a requirement for all ECC Human and Social Services (HSS) majors. The HSS program allows students to select from the following three options: addictions, mental health, or social work.

SOC 111 Course Description: This course examines ways in which the helping professions intervene in individual, group, community, and societal processes with the goal of improving social functioning.

METHODOLOGY

Fifty-six students made up the sample group used in the assessment of SOC 111. The sample consisted of all students from two of the three sections of SOC 111 offered during the Spring 2011 semester. The assessment tool used in this SLOAT study was a multiple-choice examination. Both professors administered to their classes different exams, which included ten identical questions for comparable assessment. These questions were designed to assess the level of student achievement of some of the Measurable Course Performance Objectives (MPOs) listed on the SOC 111 course outline.

The assessment questions were specifically designed to assess students’ understanding of the theoretical concepts of the helping process which are utilized by social service and mental health professionals while counseling clients. Furthermore, these questions solicited the students’ understanding of the basic foundations of the theoretical framework. Another question was designed and included on the exam to assess the students’ knowledge of and familiarity with the diverse helping professionals in the human service profession.

Measurable Course Performance Objectives (MPOs) 1.1 and 1.3 are both associated with the first course goal on the SOC 111 course outline, which states “Demonstrate knowledge of a problem-management-and-opportunity-development framework of the helping process.” MPO 1.1 requires one to “identify problem-solving theories in the helping process” and MPO 1.3 requires that one “compare the various skilled professionals and paraprofessionals in the helping profession.” Data was collected on two of the ten identical questions, which were blueprinted to MPO 1.1 and MPO 1.3, and the results were tallied by faculty members. Details of this data collection/results are given in the following paragraphs.

MPO 1.1 was assessed on Examination One to determine the students’ knowledge of the problem-solving model. The first multiple-choice question required students to select the “goals of the helping relationship.” For the entire SLOAT SOC 111 study cohort, twenty-eight (28) students answered the question correctly and twenty-four (24) students answered incorrectly. (If the class section results are separated, it is noteworthy that 64% of the students answered correctly in one section and 50% answered correctly in the other section. The students who answered incorrectly comprised 36% of one section and 50% of the other section.)

MPO 1.3 was also assessed on Examination One to determine the students’ knowledge of various skilled professionals in the human service profession. The second multiple-choice question required students to select various types of human service professionals in the helping profession. Thirty-four (34) students answered the question correctly and twenty-two (22) students answered incorrectly in the combined sections of SOC 111. (If the class section results are separated, it is noteworthy that 50% of the students answered correctly in one section and 75% answered correctly in the other section. The students who answered incorrectly comprised 14% of one section and 28% of the other section.)

STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS

A short survey was also administered to the students in both sections of SOC 111. The students took the examination first and, when they turned it in to their professor, they were given an “Outcome Assessment Survey” form to complete. The purpose of this survey was to determine information on the following: how students prepare for exams, knowledge of material, frequency of reading the textbook, note taking habits, and students’ perception of the exam. In addition, survey questions concerning personal factors were included such as a question that inquired about students’ employment status (i.e., full-time, part-time, or not working).

Analysis of completed student surveys revealed four areas that appeared to be significant factors influencing student outcomes on the examination. This information is useful for planning reading assignments and reports for future semesters of SOC 111. The results given below are reported for the entire cohort (combined responses of student in the two sections of SOC 111). (Note: One survey was not filled in and two or more students did not answer all of the questions on the form.)

In response to survey Question One “How prepared were you for this exam?”, thirty-seven (37) students selected the second choice which indicated that they were “somewhat prepared” for the exam. Only nine (9) students indicated that they were “fully prepared,” and just three (3) students indicated that they were “not all prepared.”

Survey Question Three asked “How much time have you spent reading the textbook so far this semester?” The responses were as follows: twenty-three (23) students indicated they read the text “once a week;” twenty-five (25) students indicated they read the text “twice a week;” and only six (6) students indicated they read the text “three or more times a week.”

For survey Question Five “How did you find the level of the exam?”, the responses indicated that forty-two (42) students found the exam “reasonable” and five (5) students found the exam “too hard.”

Survey Question Six asked the students “If you think you did not do too well on the exam, what would be the reason?” Twenty (20) students indicated “test anxiety;” ten (10) students indicated they “missed too many classes;” and fourteen (14) students indicated that they “did not study enough – overcommitted schedule.”

Another survey section allowed students to write helpful comments. Some comments given included the following: “Son was distracting me while studying.” “Studied too much.” and “I think I did well.”

The results of survey Questions Nine and Ten were combined. Specifically, Question Nine asked the student “Are you employed?” and Question Ten asked the student if they work “Full-time or Part-time?” Thirty-three (33) students indicated that they were “Employed.” Of the thirty-three employed students, eighteen (18) indicated that they work “Full-time” and fifteen (15) indicated that they work “Part-time.”

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There appears to be a relationship between student outcomes and their preparation for the examination including the amount of time they spend reading the textbook. In addition, only four (4) students reported “studying with a fellow classmate” for the examination as was indicated on the student survey. Students are encouraged to study with their fellow classmates in order to reinforce what has been taught in the classroom and to discuss their understanding of the textbook with other students. Students have commented that they don’t have sufficient time to study with others due to personal commitments.

Several suggestions can be made to hopefully improve student learning in this course. The students can be given more weekly oral presentations and writing assignments, which reflect and/or report on assigned textbook readings. It appears that the number of times the students read their textbooks correlated to the number of times they met for class during the week. The data shows that evening students (16), who generally meet once a week, reported reading the text once a week. Similarly, daytime students (19), who generally meet twice a week, reported overall that they read the text twice a week. Significant efforts must be made to encourage students to read more often.

Future assessments might study the effect of employment and family issues on students’ academic performance. Based on the limited student survey administered during this SLOAT study, this report cannot definitively determine how other social factors affect students’ academic performance.