

At NMHU, co-curricular activities are defined as out-of-class experiences that complement and extend the formal learning experience of a course or academic program. Co-curricular activities develop a student's social, intellectual, cultural, democratic, civic, and aesthetic domains. They are supervised and/or financed by the institution and facilitate the attainment of NMHU's four essential traits (or student learning outcomes). These experiences are voluntary, ungraded, and non-credited, although they may be compensated through student employment.

Four identified traits/student learning outcomes that the NMHU community of faculty, students and staff identified that our graduates are expected to display:

- Mastery of content knowledge and skills
- Effective communication skills
- Critical and reflective thinking skills
- Effective use of technology

Program Name: Student Professional Development

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Program Mission:

To support the University mission: *New Mexico Highlands University is a public comprehensive university serving our local and global communities. Our mission is to provide opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students to attain an exceptional education by fostering creativity, critical thinking and research in the liberal arts, sciences, and professions within a diverse community.*

Highlands offers a variety of opportunities for students to attend professional development opportunities through professional associations, campus club affiliations, and academic department initiatives. Participation in these opportunities are voluntary, yet they do support our Four University traits. Examples of student professional development include presenting research at a conference or attending a conference for professional development purposes. This co-curricular assessment will be of the student's individual participation in professional development, and will gather some individual data on the impact on student learning outcomes.

Intended Audience:

This report will be shared with faculty advisors of these students, but the main audience for the report will be the Dean of Students and other administrators who oversee students attending professional development opportunities.

Summary of Student Utilization of your Program:

There was a total of 82 students who attended student professional development opportunities in the 2016-2017 academic year. These students all utilized University funds to participate in student professional development. This is the criteria that was used to determine students who would be surveyed.

Summary of Student Satisfaction Results:

We used the SkyFactor Student Activities Assessment to measure student satisfaction with the Student Professional Development Co-Curricular program. The survey was distributed to all 82 students in May 2017 via e-mail, with multiple reminders to complete the assessment forwarded by SkyFactor. The Student Activities Assessment included 104 questions about demographic information, satisfaction about the activities, and information about the impact of those activities on student learning outcomes.

23 students completed the survey. While that participation rate is disappointing, we attribute that to one primary factor: the survey was done in May, as the semester is ending, and when many other surveys/polls were going out to students. For next year, we suggest that the survey be completed in February 2018, which will thus survey students at a time when they are not being over-surveyed. If we communicate with the students as they are requesting funds, they will know that they are expected to complete the survey.

The survey still revealed a wealth of interesting information. 41% of respondents were Hispanic, and 59% indicated Not Hispanic or Latino on question 5. This closely matches our overall demographic. 47.8% of the respondents were 25 or younger, and 52.2% were over 25, indicating that many of those most invested in our academic clubs are our older and non-traditional students. Many of these students are working a substantial amount outside of school: 72.7% worked at least 11 hours a week. Given their studying load, it is impressive these students found the time to participate in professional development opportunities.

SkyFactor collects sensitive demographic information from students, including ethnicity, age, income, and, as such, it anonymizes that information, preventing us from collecting student-level data. This is appropriate for this kind of assessment because we want honest feedback at the University, not one that can be traced back to students and potential impact them. Skyfactor does break down the information quite closely, including by range (1-2, 3-5, and 6-7), so a wide variety of information can be gleaned from the data.

Question 42 is: “To what degree are there student activities and/or student organizations at this college/university that interest you?” The average score was 4.82 out of 7, indicating that we are doing well but not great. 52.9% of respondents answered in the 3, 4, or 5 range. Highlands needs to increase the visibility of its clubs and other student activities. 89.5% attended at least one activity during the year, so there is participation.

41.2% of our students were involved in one club, and 47.1% were involved in 2 clubs.

Student Learning Outcome:	University Trait(s) linked to which it is linked Learning Outcomes	Assessment Measurement Results	Outcome Achieved? (0 = No, 1 = Yes)	Plan for Improvement
<p>1. Presenting at professional development opportunities will help students improve their communication skills.</p>	<p>Trait: Effective communication skills.</p>	<p>Skyfactor Survey Question: "Ability to make presentations"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Response was a mean of 5.2 on a scale of 1 to 7 	<p>1 = Yes</p>	<p>Students did feel that student professional development improved their ability to make presentations, with 60% answering that the professional development helped them at 6 or 7 (extremely). This is a positive result and is likely the result because many students attend professional development opportunities to present research they have conducted and therefore make presentations as a result of this experience.</p> <p>Plan for improvement: Students who attend professional development in which they do not present research will be asked to conduct a presentation to the campus community or a club. This request will be made by the Dean of Students and will be shared with students requesting funds and their Faculty advisors.</p>
<p>3. Involvement in student professional development will help students appreciate new and different ideas.</p>	<p>Trait: Critical and reflective thinking skills.</p>	<p>Skyfactor Survey Question: "Ability to think critically"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Response was a mean of 4.95 on a scale of 1 to 7 	<p>1 = Yes</p>	<p>Over 76% of students feel they were able to think critically, however it is not specific to student professional development. The same suggestion for improvement stands: Dean of Students will add a specialized question into the Skyfactor assessment next year and will notify all students requesting University funds about the importance of this survey.</p>

Summary of the Outcomes Assessment Data. [Did students achieve the outcomes? Which outcomes can be achieved? Briefly analyze the results].

Overall participation in the survey yielded poor participation rates, with only 23 responses and approximately a 10% response rate. Since this is the first time we have explicitly gathered data on student professional development, the results were very revealing. While students expressed satisfaction with the clubs, and met the learning outcomes of effective communication skills through the ability to make presentations, and critical and reflective thinking skills through the ability to think critically, students were not seeing a connection between student professional development and impact on GPA. We need to more explicitly make “mastery of content knowledge and skills” part of our student professional development.

How are you going to improve the program for next year? Which outcomes will you target, and what specific steps will you take for improvement?

We suggest that the Dean of Students advise the Student Senate of the expectation for students using University funds for student professional development to complete the survey. The Dean of Students can advise students of this requirement at the monthly club and organization meetings and also advise Faculty advisors. No such meetings have taken place in recent years; by helping students and Faculty advisors to understand how student professional development opportunities might positively impact student learning outcomes, we can do a better job of aligning this professional experience with the academic curriculum. Additionally, there will be a specialized question on the Skyfactor Assessment added that specifically focuses on student professional development as opposed to the broad category of student activities.

What were the results of the discussion with peer reviewers and the joint meeting between the Co-Curricular and Assessment Committees?

Discussion during the peer review suggested that clarifying language about what professional development clearly is needed to be included in the plan. We also had discussion on what the impact of student professional development should be on students' learning, and what the role of academic clubs plays with student professional development. Additionally, we decided that student professional development likely does not have an impact on GPA and therefore we should not have this as a measure.

Do any improvements need to be made to your plan? How will those be implemented?

The plan is sound, but response rate from students need to improve by changing the time of year the survey is given. By moving the survey to February, and better communicating with students and faculty advisors about the purposes of the survey, we can dramatically improve response rates.