



College of Business and Information Systems

Institutional Program Review Report to Board of Regents

Health Information Management Programs

Date of Visit: April 26, 2007

**Reviewer: A.H. Lenne Klopfer, MS, RHIA
Chief Information Officer
Computer Information Systems Program Director
Briarwood College
Southington, CT**

Part 1: Strengths and Limitations Identified to the Reviewer

Analysis of Trends in the Discipline

Ms. Klopfer, the reviewer for Health Information Management program review, found the program to be accurate in its representation of the needs and opportunities in the field. She also found it to accurately describe "the growing need for the delivery of distance education." The program was found to address the needs of not only South Dakota residents, but also those outside the state.

Analysis of Academic Programs and Curriculum

The Health Information program includes three curricula that are designed in a progressive format:

- Bachelor of Science in Health Information Administration (HIA),
- Associate of Science in Health Information Technology (HIT), and
- Certificate in Healthcare Coding.

All but one of the certificate's courses can be applied to the associate degree, and all of the courses in the associate degree are required for the baccalaureate degree.

According to the reviewer, the AHIMA domains, sub-domains, and tasks are all addressed and the content in the knowledge cluster is incorporated into the curricula. The cluster content needs to be taught at varying intensities to accommodate for the different competency levels despite the cluster equivalencies with the Registered Health Information Administrators and Technicians.

Ms. Klopfer also commented that it appears that curricula revisions recommended by prior reviewers have been implemented.

The Healthcare Coding Certificate was approved by the American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA) in 2003 and will be up for review in the 2008-2009 school year. The HIA and HIT programs are accredited by the Commission on the Accreditation of Health Informatics and Information Management (CAHIIM) and are satisfactory in its Annual Program Assessment Report (APAR).

The reviewer did note that BIOL323 Human Anatomy and Physiology does not generally have a prerequisite at other colleges and universities as it does here with BIOL151 General Biology. Elsewhere, it is taken as a first semester course.

Analysis of Program Enrollments and Student Placement

Ms. Klopfer found that distance delivery of the curricula has led to a stable increase of students. However, she did comment that the notices about new students' on-campus registration procedures could be confusing to the distance learners.

Analysis of Faculty Credentials

The external reviewer found the faculty to be "well qualified and extremely knowledgeable to teach the subjects assigned." She stated that the program director is professionally active nationally in multiple settings and the other full-time faculty members are active within the state, regionally, and at Assembly on Education (AOE).

Analysis of Academic and Financial Support

The reviewer found that the Dean of the College of Business and Information Systems provides leadership to the HIM faculty. She found financial resources to be appropriate, but stated that the distance curriculum requires more time than on campus teaching, providing burdensome teaching loads and class sizes to the faculty. HIM faculty is reducing teaching time to provide time for orientating students with the technology and Web-CT training that has been inadequate for student needs.

Analysis of Facilities and Equipment

The University's tablet initiative provides excellent technological resources that are "excellent and in harmony with the overall mission," according to Ms. Klopfer. She found that HIM students were pleased with the tablet requirement, yet voiced concern about the related support that is available only Monday through Friday. Assistance for distance learners through E-education Services is also only available on weekdays. The reviewer found the college-wide orientation to Web-CT and other technology to be delivered at lower levels for students entering in the spring and summer courses.

Ms. Klopfer stated that the "acquisition of the health information Virtual Lab would greatly support both distance and on-campus deliveries of HIM content."

Analysis of Major-Field Assessment

Dakota State University has a three-tiered assessment framework that the reviewer deemed very effective. The major field assessment as the third level ensures that pending graduates are proficient in their discipline. The HIT and HIA exams are issued annually, and the exams are graded immediately so the students can receive their results on the same day.

The HIM faculty conducts a workshop during the afternoon of Assessment Day to prepare students for national credentialing exams. The researcher found that although HIM programs' goals relating to the pass rates for the Assessment Day competency exams are being met, recent pass rates on the national credentialing exam have been low.

Analysis of Strategic Planning

Ms. Klopfer found the goals and objectives for the HIM program to be parallel with the mission and goals of the College of Business and Information Systems and the University as a whole.

Overall Evaluation of Strengths and Limitations of the Academic Program

Ms. Klopfer found one of the strengths of the program to be the dedicated faculty, who she found "extremely well-qualified and much respected by the students, fellow faculty, administration, and HIM peer professionals. She also found that the distance delivery addresses the education needs of the large geographic land expanse of South Dakota. It provides educational opportunities to national and international prospective students, enlarging the university's marketplace. The distance delivery has resulted in steady growth of the HIM program. She also found that the physical technology resources support the overall missions of the University and incorporate computer and information technologies throughout all programs of study.

Ms. Klopfer stated that distance delivery limits the variety and content of health information lab activities. She also commented on the limited help desk hours and restricted technology support for technology problems of on-campus and web-based students. The reviewer also reiterated the extra time strains of distance delivery curricula. She said that the current faculty teaching loads and class sizes are burdensome.

Part 2: Reviewer's Recommendations for Change

Of the reviewer's recommendations, she found only two to benefit the HIM programs specifically. The others would affect all programs of study, especially through an increase in distance delivery. The two that she found would benefit the HIM program are:

1. Faculty should continue to evaluate the competency level at which knowledge cluster content is delivered in courses shared by the associate and baccalaureate students.
2. Fund the acquisition of the Virtual Lab.

Her other recommendations were:

1. Make informational or procedural notices "more friendly" to web-based students.
2. Eliminate the biology prerequisite to be consistent with the delivery of A&P at other universities.
3. Increase technology and Web CT training to all students such as during college orientation, so that HIM faculty does not have to allocate teaching time to such issues.
4. Evaluate true class prep and support time associated with distance delivery or reduce class sizes of distance delivered courses.
5. Increase help desk hours to provide technology support during evening and weekend hours.

The only area reviewed that she did not have any recommendations for was advising.

Part 3: Institutional Response

Curriculum: *Eliminate the biology prerequisite to be consistent with the delivery of A&P at other universities.*

BIOL 323 Anatomy and Physiology is the only anatomy course offered by Dakota State University. It is included in the required curriculum for the biology major students (such as Biology for Information Systems) as well as being required for the exercise science, physical education, respiratory care, and health information management students. It is also taken by pre-professional major students, such as those preparing for graduate education in chiropractic medicine, optometry, dentistry, occupational therapy, medicine, physical therapy, or mortuary science. BIOL 323 is a prerequisite for the BIOL 325 Physiology course which is also required for some of these majors. The biology faculty members have indicated that BIOL 151 is a necessary prerequisite for BIOL 323 in order for the course to be taught at a level necessary to meet the needs of the variety of students. Therefore, there are no plans to eliminate this prerequisite at this time. However, the recommendation warrants future consideration.

Curriculum: *The faculty should continue to evaluate the competency level at which knowledge cluster content is delivered in courses shared by the associate and baccalaureate students.*

Each year the content of the HIM courses are evaluated by the faculty to ensure that all required domains and knowledge clusters are included in the curriculum. The syllabus for each HIM course includes documentation of the domains and knowledge clusters addressed within the

course. During the 2007-2008 academic year, the associate and baccalaureate programs will report which courses address each domain and knowledge cluster as a part of the Annual Program Assessment Report for accreditation. Preparation of this documentation requires that the HIM faculty review and discuss the domains and knowledge clusters, and particular attention will be given to competency levels.

Curriculum: *Fund the acquisition of the Virtual Lab.*

As part of the budget and funding for 2007-2008 Dakota State University acquired access for the AHIMA Virtual Lab. The resources available through the Virtual Lab will be incorporated into HIM classes as appropriate.

Program Delivery: *Make informational or procedural notices “more friendly” to web-based students.*

Directors of the Extended Programs Office and the HIM Programs held meetings in the Fall 2007 semester with representatives of the Enrollment Services and Student Services to discuss revisions for admissions, registration, and student service messages to ensure that they also address the needs of distance or web-based students. Content and wording of communications will be revised to be more inclusive and helpful to these students.

Program Delivery: *Increase technology and Web CT training to all students such as during college orientation, so that HIM faculty does not have to allocate teaching time to such issues.*

DSU’s Computing Services department offers a number of online resources at the <http://www.support.dsu.edu/> website. In addition, the Extended Programs Office has tutorials and orientation information available for distance students. The WebCT site has several video demonstrations related to features of WebCT as well as answers to many software questions that students may encounter.

A survey of health information management students in January 2008 showed that 79.49% did not utilize the distance learning orientation modules and 71.79% did not utilize WebCT tutorials.

Faculty will encourage use of these demonstrations and tutorials prior to the beginning of the semester so that students are better prepared. Information will be provided to all HIM students to remind them of the resources available to use outside of class.

Program Delivery: *Evaluate true class prep and support time associated with distance delivery or reduce class sizes of distance delivered courses.*

It has been decided to set the maximum capacity of each distance health information management course to 25 students. Faculty may allow a limited number of additional students in the class or an additional section will be added if needed. This standard is the same or less than all other distance courses on campus. The average enrollment for health information management courses in the 2007-2008 academic year is eleven students.

Faculty have been the recipient of course development grants to pay the faculty for putting in additional time each Summer for preparing courses for distance delivery. Course websites and WebCT content may be created during that time for use during the Fall and Spring semesters. The Extended Programs Office provides student assistance to health information management faculty to assist with general clerical support services, including typing, filing, printing, grading, scanning, etc. There are currently three students assigned to the health information management faculty to provide up to 30 hours of support (10 hours per student) each week throughout the Fall and Spring semesters. In addition, technical support is provided as needed to assist with recording courses for webcasting.

Program Delivery: *Increase help desk hours to provide technology support during evening and weekend hours.*

A survey of health information management students indicates that 50% of students responding have used DSU's support services available on the Internet and 95% of those students were satisfied with the assistance they received. In addition, students indicated that generally they have not attempted to contact the instructor or DSU's support services because of problems with software, with 84.64% reporting that they have not had problems. Responses showed that 89.74% have not contacted the instructor in person and 94.87% have not contacted support services in person; 66.67% have not contacted the instructor via email and 84.62% have not contacted support services via email; and 87.18% have not contacted the instructor by phone and 89.74% have not contacted support services by phone. Students utilizing computers provided by DSU may contact the help desk with any hardware problems, and 58.33% of the students who have DSU computers reported that they had encountered problems. Of those students, 85.71% contacted the help desk for assistance and 83.33% of those were satisfied with the services that they received.

DSU has provided help desk services during evening and weekend hours during the past and students were encouraged to seek help via telephone call or email during those times as well. It was found that there were very limited requests for services or calls for technology support during those times and the service was discontinued.

Although the current help desk hours are scheduled during regular business hours on Monday-Friday, students may send emails or leave phone messages regarding problems at any time and they will receive a response as soon as possible. Although not required, often support staff and instructors are checking their emails and phone messages during evening and weekend hours, and the students may receive an answer to their questions at those times.