

**Department of Human Development and Family Studies  
Strategic Plan, 2014-2019**

**I. Introduction**

The overall theme for the HDFS strategic plan is *reducing risk and promoting resilience in vulnerable individuals, families and populations* to improve health and quality of life.

**II. Strategic Initiatives**

1. **Embed a “lifespan neuroscience” perspective into behavioral and social approaches to the study of human development.**
2. **Develop family and intergenerational research and programs to optimize early development, promote healthy aging, reduce risk factors, and increase resilience in vulnerable populations**
3. **Integrate the Daily Experiences Paradigm in research to elucidate dynamics that occur between individuals, families, and their proximal physical and psychosocial environments to promote health and well-being across the life course.**
4. **Develop, apply, and disseminate computational systems approaches for analyzing high-dimensional and/or time-intensive longitudinal data of behavior and health**
5. **Build capacity for translating research into sustainable practice**

**Strategic Initiative 1: Embed “lifespan neuroscience” into behavioral and social approaches to the study of human development**

**Rationale.** Lifespan neuroscience incorporates neuroscience perspectives and methods into the study of behavioral, cognitive, social and other developmental processes from birth to old age. We see neurosciences as both a tool for understanding important brain processes and a theoretical perspective that adds an important level of analysis to the study of development and to the evaluation of prevention and treatment programs. According to recent epidemiological data (2008-2009), the top 5 disabilities affecting children in the US are mental health problems, displacing asthma and respiratory issues for the first time (JAMA, 2012). Early onset of mental health disorders is associated with worse prognosis on all outcome domains including health, interpersonal success, academic achievement, and economic achievement. Mental health problems play a similar role in adulthood, contributing to health and economic problems, as well as decreased performance in critical roles (work, parenting). In addition to the individual costs, the societal costs are innumerable. Decades of funded research have provided characterization of major mental health disorders, but have been far less successful at identifying etiological mechanisms or developing consistently effective approaches to treatment. The increasing development of neuroscience and other biological approaches for use in human populations has led to dramatic changes in behavioral research, including significant reorganization of funding priorities at the National Institutes of Health. Neuroscience research provides an opportunity to examine individual differences from a deeper level of analysis. Although this work is grounded in basic science, the implications are enormous for improving the identification of and intervention with developmental trajectories of risk including (a) the ability to identify heterogeneity within common behavioral profiles (e.g. depression or addiction) that can inform individualized approaches to treatment, (b) the ability to study the mechanisms of behavioral change in response to treatment, (c) the ability to understand the mechanisms by which stress and vulnerability are transmitted across generations, (d) the ability to study proximal outcomes of prevention programs that aim to reduce more distal adverse outcomes. Evaluation of neuroscience data depends on advanced multi-level time series analyses, which is a particular strength in the department. Thus, this initiative has strong synergies with other initiatives emphasizing optimizing development (Initiative 2), the role of everyday experiences in shaping development (Initiative 3), dynamical systems approaches to multiple levels of analysis (Initiative 4) and in the study of prevention program outcomes (Initiative 5).

**Goal 1. Strengthen current research and training programs in Lifespan Neuroscience and increase the interdisciplinary integration of this perspective within the existing areas of strength in HDFS.**

Neuroscience represents a unique theoretical perspective with relevant applications to each of the areas of study identified within HDFS: Individual Development across the Lifespan, Prevention Science, Family Studies, and Methodology. The infusion of lifespan neuroscience represents an additional level of analysis from which our faculty and research scientists can approach significant problems. In our previous strategic plan we proposed to hire new faculty in neuroscience in order to begin to build capacity for this objective within the department. We have been considerably successful in this goal, with the hire of two new faculty members resulting in new grants funded, new collaborations within the department, across the university, and internationally, as well as new graduate level coursework and training opportunities.

**Strategic Initiative 2: Develop family and intergenerational (I-G) research and programs to optimize early development, promote healthy aging and reduce risk factors and increase resilience in vulnerable individuals, families, and communities**

**Rationale.** We have had a strong program of family-based interventions that address youth outcomes for behavior problems, substance use, and other factors. We see an opportunity to build on this strength in innovative ways by identifying and testing ways of mobilizing resources across generations within families and communities. The rapid aging of the population implies that our society is becoming not only older but also more age diverse. People of different generations will be living, learning and working together in more age diverse settings than ever before. Although many view this astonishing and irreversible demographic trend as a looming catastrophe for society (“The Silver Tsunami”), we view the growth of the older population as presenting exciting opportunities to advance knowledge as well as to improve the health and well-being of individuals, families and communities.

**Goal 1: Utilize an intergenerational perspective to better understand the mutual influence between parent health and development and child development.** We will leverage existing strengths within the department and across campus to form new collaborations among researchers focused on early life adversity, parenting practices, midlife, and adult aging to build and test more powerful models of lifespan development and intergenerational relationships. In particular, we will work together to extend ongoing longitudinal studies that could provide valuable information on “aging up” within families, and how earlier family processes are predictive of later individual and family outcomes.

**Goal 2: Develop and implement interventions in intergenerational settings to promote health and well-being in both children and adults.**

(1) We will build on our expertise in prevention science, which currently focuses primarily on youth outcomes, and in aging research to develop novel preventive and intervention strategies that address both youth and older adults.

(2) We will find novel ways to engage seniors in generative activities also provides benefits to the seniors themselves—ample evidence now exists that older adults who volunteer enjoy reduced risk for chronic health problems, enhanced well-being, and a stronger sense of social connectedness.

(3) We will facilitate new research collaborations that emphasize reversibility of risk. One example is midlife reversibility or the notion that midlife is an often-overlooked period of particular malleability given that the origins of many health problems in later life can be traced to experiences and behaviors of individuals during midlife. Intergenerational reversibility is another example whereby intervention points can be identified that will interrupt the cycle of disparities across generations.

**Goal 3. Education.** As educators we must prepare our students to work in and contribute to a society that is not only older, but also more age diverse. We will leverage and develop undergraduate minors (gerontology, child maltreatment studies), work with the Center for Healthy Aging to promote awareness of

career opportunities in aging, support graduate students in preparation of applications for nationally funded fellowships (e.g., NRSA applications from NIH) to study I-G processes.

**Strategic Initiative 3: Integration of the daily experiences paradigm to elucidate dynamics that occur between individuals, families, and their proximal physical and psychosocial environments to promote on health and well-being across the life course.**

**Rationale.** The *Daily Experiences Paradigm* offers a flexible and powerful approach to capture the naturally occurring interplay between individuals and their physical and social environments. This paradigm has been applied most commonly to changes occurring on a day-to-day basis, but it can be applied to other time scales (hours, weeks, months, years) and can clarify connections between changes occurring across different time scales (e.g., how day-to-day experiences relate to year-to-year changes). This paradigm pairs cutting-edge data collection techniques such as GPS, biological sampling, field based cognitive testing and smart phone and computer tablet assessments with state of the art statistical approaches that together improve measurement validity, and analytical precision of the nature, direction, and fluctuation of indicators of individual and family well-being. We view “daily experiences” as a broader framework for applying intensive longitudinal methods across varying time scales that will foster interdisciplinary collaboration and drive innovation in the understanding of how individuals, families, and their proximal environments influence each other and in turn help explain important health and well-being outcomes. This would push innovation in the measurement of environments (e.g., education systems, workplaces, neighborhoods) to explore the dynamic nature of environmental influences, which are undergoing rapid change in response to political and economic forces and the pervasive reach of technology into daily life.

**Goal 1. Expand and Improve Measurement in Family and Environmental Influences on health and well-being.** We will pursue opportunities to integrate coordinated real-time assessments of daily experiences across different levels: a) by examining links between daily experiences of individuals and among different members of the same family (e.g., partner dyads, parents and children), b) to develop assessments of daily contextual factors in an effort to more accurately characterize the impact these factors have on individual and family life, and c) to better assess outcomes, such as health behaviors, chronic conditions, and quality of life in multiple family members.

**Goal 2. Promote collaborations for innovative family methodology designs.** New statistical techniques are available that could be applied for the study of family process and interactions. We propose to take advantage of these opportunities by encouraging partnerships between our methodologists and family researchers, both in the Department, the PRC, the Methodology Center and other locations on campus.

We propose to develop an infrastructure that can facilitate on-going communication among family researchers and methodologists, such as reading groups, colloquia, or one-credit seminars that bring graduate students and faculty together, and ultimately to facilitate the development of joint pilot proposals to SSRI and other support for research development that can lead to innovative, ground-breaking extramural research proposals and advance family science.

**Goal 3. Promote research on childhood adversity and neglect that elucidates the environmental factors which underlie both its immediate impact on children and its enduring effects into the adult years.** We will form a partnership with faculty in the Center for Healthy Aging and the Network on Child Protection to expand understanding of ongoing cognitive and behavioral risks in adults who were maltreated as children. This expansion would include an explicit focus on the assessment of the daily experiences (i.e., mood, health behaviors, physical symptoms, stressors, positive events) of maltreated individuals. Other opportunities will be developed through collaboration with the Network on Child Protection, such as identifying risk and protective factors in vulnerable populations.

**Goal 4. Apply the Daily Experience Paradigm to expand expertise in behavior change methods in interventions.** Many interventions emphasize cognitive and psychological components without considering how best to facilitate behavioral, affective and cognitive change. A Daily Experiences Approach would

foster behavior change interventions by evaluating change processes that occur as the intervention is taking place as well as promoting the development of technology assisted interventions.

(1) We will develop graduate courses or modules in courses in HDFS and in collaboration with other units in the College such as BBH, CHA, PRC and the Methodology Center that include the topic of change models, specific to targeted mechanisms (e.g. individual, dyadic, community, etc.).

(2) We will develop a working group of faculty who examine changes processes, who can provide consultation on development of new projects and grant applications.

**Goal 5. Strengthen collaboration with faculty in the Population Research Institute (PRI).** We have a long-standing collaboration with the PRI that has included research and participation in a dual-title degree program, but changes in faculty require that we take this collaboration in new directions.

(1) We will explore collaborations with PRI affiliated faculty that examine risk and protective factors in individuals and families from demographic daily experiences perspectives.

(2) We will explore with colleagues in the PRI how to better utilize demographic information in forming and guiding research on issues such as intergenerational influences within families, on understanding social problems such as child abuse, and on the effects these factors have on health and well-being.

#### **Strategic Initiative 4. Develop, apply, and disseminate computational systems approaches for analyzing high-dimensional and/or time-intensive longitudinal data**

**Rationale.** As the study of health and human development moves toward more intensive types of data collection, we need to expand methods capability for examination of longitudinal trends of multiple systems and the pathways by which these systems influence one another. Through the use of both state-of-the-art data analytic as well as simulation methods, systems methodologies are now on the verge of revolutionizing our conceptions of how health and well-being can be promoted and optimized in real-time, particularly in vulnerable populations. These methodologies are designed to hasten our understanding of how subcomponents of a system may interact with one another, possibly in a nonlinear fashion and in multiple feedback loops, to impact the system's structure and behavior over time. These methodologies offer a timely solution for analyzing "big data," namely, complex, high-dimensional, and/or time-intensive longitudinal data such as those collected in experience sampling, physiological, and brain imaging studies, multi-time scale longitudinal data from burst designs, as well as real-time ambulatory measures collected using mobile devices and wearable sensors. Systems-based simulation models (e.g., control theory and agent-based models) also allow researchers to evaluate the possible pathways, side effects and consequences of novel prevention and treatment options prior to their actual implementation, thereby reducing unnecessary costs and unanticipated risks over the course of the interventions. Many systems-based models of population dynamics also serve as a natural tool for representing lifespan development and family processes. Despite the prevalence of systems approaches and related thinking in the physical sciences and engineering, systems methodologies are largely untapped territories in social and behavioral science. Our department possesses methodological strengths and unique data that can help showcase the ways in which systems-based approaches can have direct implications on our everyday lives. Therefore, HDFS is well positioned to become an international leader and one of the central "hubs" for disseminating new developments in systems methodologies to social and behavioral scientists.

**Goal 1: Increasing the number of collaborative research networks – within the department, within the College, within the University, nationally, and internationally – that foster the exchange of theoretical, methodological, and data analytic systems perspectives.** We intend to seek internal (e.g., SSRI) and external funding to support new collaborative projects that utilize systems methodologies from multiple disciplines to study health, developmental and family processes. Through the organization of

interdisciplinary working groups and proposal meetings, we shall (a) foster the “pairing” of substantive and methodological researchers, (b) promote exchanges among methodologists across different departments and colleges and (c) use these “pairings” to generate, develop, and conduct novel empirical as well as methodological research. Where applicable, graduate students will be encouraged to capitalize on resources provided by the Department, centers and training grant opportunities to develop the expertise needed to engage in interdisciplinary collaborative projects.

***Goal 2. Promote and strengthen the identity of HDFS as a central “clearing house” for the latest innovations in computational systems to social and behavioral scientists outside of Penn State.***

We shall seek funding and resources to (1) host national and international conferences on systems methodologies, and (2) develop contents and subsequently offer workshops on interdisciplinary systems approaches for analyzing longitudinal data. We will capitalize on the rich, high-dimensional longitudinal data available within the Department and from our research affiliates to develop illustrative examples that can also facilitate the accomplishment of other initiatives identified in this strategic report.

***Goal 3. Provide a comprehensive curriculum and training program wherein pre- and post-doctoral students and visiting scientists are exposed to the latest innovations in developmental methodology.***

(1) In conjunction with substantive areas (e.g., prevention, aging, family, etc.), we shall (following the highly successful Prevention and Methodology Training Model) develop in-depth training programs wherein pre- and post-doctoral students work with the faculty on combined substantive/methods problems – innovating new designs and analytic techniques that push the field forward. These will include (a) identifying training grant and external funding opportunities to support methodological training; (b) developing a course sequence on topics relevant to this area, with new courses such as Methods for Studying Dyadic/Family Processes, Categorical Data Analysis, Research Design, Computational Systems Methods, Monte Carlo Computational Techniques, and Statistical Consulting/Practice for Graduate Students; (c) offering a regular 3-credit course on experimental design and intervention; (d) exploring alternative ways of supplementing traditional 3-credit course offerings with 1-credit courses and co-taught courses (e) providing avenues for undergraduate HDFS students to strengthen their methodological training (e.g., through honors-level methodology courses and introductory graduate courses in methodology); and (f) seeking funding and resources for developing online courses/workshops on systems methodologies open to HDFS students and external participants.

(2) Partnering with the Methodology Center and other units on campus for teaching of design and/or higher-level computational courses.

**Strategic Initiative 5: Build capacity for translating research into sustainable practice.**

**Rationale:** One of the hallmarks of research in HDFS has been to conduct longitudinal, developmental research on risk and protective factors and their relation to well-being and maladaptation. This etiological work, combined with sophisticated research designs and statistical methods, has led to a number of clinical prevention trials of innovative models to promote competence and prevent maladaptive outcomes for children and families, including child maltreatment. We recognize that evidence-based programs can only impact population-level public health if they are effectively taken to scale, implemented with high quality, and sustained over time. We propose to build capacity for sustainable practice of health promotion by building on growing knowledge in dissemination science here in the PRC and other places and capitalizing on our expertise in building community partnerships. These efforts also must build on the diversity of communities, and how factors such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, community resources and economic opportunities, rural/urban setting and current or past military service affect implementation. We will also develop increased opportunities for our undergraduate and graduate students to engage in high-quality, community-based efforts to translate research results into sustainable prevention programs.

This initiative has strong synergies with other initiatives, specifically: building intergenerational and family programs to promote development (Initiative 2); utilizing everyday experiences as a tool for guiding and evaluating interventions; and utilizing dynamical systems approaches for new ways of evaluating outcomes (Initiative 4).

**Goal 1 *Build research that emphasizes sustainable translation of evidence-based practice in community settings.*** Extensive empirical evidence supports prevention and intervention programs for reduction of risk and promotion of resilience for many different types of social problems and in diverse populations, communities and age groups. Yet research-based programs often remain “on the shelf” after the initial controlled trials. New models of “sustainable practice” have been developed, which address these translational efforts. The PRC has been a leader in developing these models, with a focus on school and family-based programs. We propose to build partnerships with research scientists in the PRC to expand the scope of these translational efforts both in terms of increasing the number and diversity of the targets of the intervention and by expanding to include programs designed to benefit adults and older adults. We will also explore new models to build sustainability, such as utilization of older adults in the programs, as described in Initiative 2.

**Goal 2. *Expanding undergraduate and graduate training in engaged scholarship sustainable practice***

HDFS has a long history of engaged scholarship, which has encouraged students to gain experience in community programs and to apply research findings in community settings. We will enhance these efforts through course offerings in sustainable practice at the undergraduate and graduate level, and by development of new models of engaged scholarship that provide more integrated experiences in community settings that tie in with undergraduates’ career development and graduate students’ study of translational and sustainable research.

### III. Strategic Issues in Educational Programs

**A. Instructional Issues:** In this section, we describe how we will implement the strategic themes into our undergraduate and graduate residential instruction programs, as well as other strategic goals for those programs.

**A. *Strategic Initiatives for the HDFS Undergraduate Program: Building on Our Core of Engaged Scholarship.*** HDFS has always encouraged engaged scholarship in our undergraduate program, and we welcome the University’s new emphasis in that area. We believe it is timely to find new ways of bridging courses and experiential learning. These initiatives will enhance the depth of students’ learning and help them develop skills that will assist in their transition to the workplace.

**Goal 1: *Promote the HDFS major as a place for prospective students whose career goals involve addressing the needs and promoting the well-being of individuals, families, and communities.*** To achieve this goal, we will:

(1) use four Gen ed courses (HDFS 129, 229, 239, 249) to promote our vision in HDFS of equipping students with science-based knowledge/skills needed for practice and program implementation;

(2) continue to highlight to prospective students and others, through such venues as Spend-A-Summer Day (SASD) and New Student Orientation (NSO), the opportunities we offer for students to couple what they learn in the classroom with “hands on” experiences;

(3) advertise our success in job placement through a variety of new venues such as our recently developed career link website, revised brochures that highlight former students and their job/career paths, and the new HDFS career development course.

**Goal 2: Equip our students through our curriculum to become effective professionals working in the changing landscape of service provision and with an increasingly population.** We hope to achieve goal 2 by:

- (1) Enhancing the links in our 400 courses (411, 414, 428, 429 and 445) among theory, evidence-based interventions, and professional practices, including issues of socio-cultural competence and adaptation of programs and practices for diverse populations.
- (2) Significantly increasing the coverage of diverse populations—including those defined by social class, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, culture, or special needs-- within all HDFS courses.
- (3) Developing a course that highlights interventions in different cultural and social contexts.
- (4) Implementing information about intergenerational relationships and programs (e.g., mentoring) into existing courses.
- (5) Teaching HDFS 415 on a regular basis, with a focus on how to implement evidence-based programs in community settings.
- (6) Increasing opportunities for students to work with individuals and families, both locally and globally, facing such challenges as poverty, disabilities, illness, maltreatment, immigration, and military life.

**Goal 3. Continue to promote opportunities for student participation in research.**

We propose the following Action Items to achieve Goal 3:

- (1) Identify ways to make our most accomplished students aware of the value of involvement in research and the chances for hands on research experiences with HDFS faculty members;
- (2) Identify ways to recognize and reward faculty for involving students in their research
- (3) Create incentives for motivated students to participate in extended or intensive research projects such as semester or summer-long research apprenticeships;
- (4) Expand current mechanisms (e.g., Meet the Faculty night) for faculty to meet undergraduates to discuss their ongoing research, show them their labs, and recruit students to be involved.

**Goal 4. Enhance existing mechanisms that prepare students not only for a successful transition into their first jobs, but for a career.** To achieve goal 4, we will:

- (1) Work closely with students to graduate in as few semesters as possible;
- (2) Help students develop realistic and fulfilling career plans that match opportunities; (3) Foster student involvement in a variety of leadership roles;
- (4) Increase connections to alumni (e.g., guest lectures, and mentoring);
- (5) Enhance the interconnections among theory, research and ethical practices across the curriculum;
- (6) Provide sessions in 400 level classes on professional behavior;
- (7) Develop new methods to gather ongoing information from graduates of our program, and use this information to continually enhance our curriculum and other features of the program;
- (8) Work with HHD Development to obtain resources to enhance information about career trajectories with an HDFS undergraduate degree and to career preparation in the undergraduate curriculum.

## **B. Development of Child Maltreatment Undergraduate and Graduate Minors**

One of the central goals of the University's Network on Child Protection and Well-being is to build into the curriculum opportunities for students to learn about child maltreatment and about career opportunities that address this problem. HDFS has been involved in discussions of an undergraduate minor. HDFS 452, Child Maltreatment Prevention, Intervention and Legal Issues, is the one current course that focuses on child maltreatment. We will be offering a graduate seminar on child maltreatment in the near future, and then consider making it a permanent course.

Preliminary discussions with the Child Protection Network indicate that HDFS 452 will be a core part of the planned undergraduate minor. We hope to take a leading role in the minor and in the subsequent development of a comparable graduate minor.

### C. Diversity in Learning

**Goal: Continue to emphasize diversity in development and family life.** Our exit survey shows that we do well in preparing undergraduate students to understand and work with diverse populations. We want to continue to build these efforts through supporting faculty who enhance course content with material on diverse populations. This could include summer salary for developing curriculum, travel funds for meeting with experts in an area pertaining to their teaching, or funds for building service learning components into courses that emphasize learning about diverse populations.

### B. Graduate Program

**Goal 1: Conduct annual outreach to improve recruitment to the doctoral program in key targeted areas.** HDFS has traditionally drawn applications from top students in psychology, with interests in individual development and prevention/intervention research. We have had great success recruiting these students and placing them into top jobs as faculty, researchers, and program/policy makers. However, we wish to increase numbers of applications and numbers of graduate students in key areas related to our strategic initiatives. In addition, we would like to increase the diversity of the applicant pool. Specifically, we would like to increase applications in neuroscience, family, and methodology, by:

- (1) Conducting targeted outreach for areas that are emerging as strengths in the department (e.g., neurosciences, child maltreatment) or which are under enrolled (e.g., family, methodology);
- (2) Updating our data base of undergraduate instructors who have recommended students to us who were accepted, and send an email each fall with an update on our graduate program, and encouraging them to continue to refer students to us;
- (3) Using relationships with faculty at other institutions as well as College and University initiatives to strengthen our recruitment of qualified minority students.

**Goal 2: Improve graduate training, with an increased focus on professional development and preparation for careers within and outside of academia that emphasize neuroscience, intergenerational ties, diverse contexts, use of system science methodologies, and application and sustainability of interventions.** To achieve goal 2, we plan to:

- (1) Review the required course load and content of these courses. Determine best ways to integrate neuroscience, intergenerational ties, diverse contexts, system science methods, and sustainability of interventions, without increasing the burden on student time in the classroom;
- (2) Increase speakers on professional development (e.g., informational sessions on applying for grants, information about non-academic careers, and video record these sessions to develop a library of professional development talks);
- (3) Develop an electronic library of materials to serve as models for student training and professional development (e.g., students' successful fellowship and grant applications; job application materials jobs);
- (4) Improve access to minors in areas of need in the workforce. Specifically, in addition to developing a graduate minor in child maltreatment, update and revise the graduate Gerontology minor;
- (5) Review the annual feedback to graduate students, and include tentative guidelines in these reviews;
- (6) Gather annual information from graduate students on papers presented at scientific meetings or published, and compile annual statistics on publications.

### E. World Campus

**Goal 1: Complete putting the bachelor's degree on-line, refine courses and outreach. The initial enrollment has exceeded expectations, but we need to continue to explore our niche in the market and make the program attractive to prospective students.**

**Goal 2: Explore the development of an on-line Master's degree in Human Services Development, Administration and Evaluation, including identifying the resources needed to develop and implement this program and the market for the degree.**

The target for this program would be people currently running or working in human services programs who want to develop skills in directing programs, implementation science, the interface of community programs and public policy, and preparing and evaluating grants. Many people in human services are looking to improve their skills and positions by obtaining a Master's degree. An on-line program would serve this population well. We would expect that at least some of the students are former majors in our undergraduate program. The creation of this program would also provide a clearer career direction for our undergraduate majors, who would see a pathway beyond entry-level service positions. This program would build on our strengths around human services delivery through non-profit agencies, and partner with colleagues in the PRC and Center for Health Aging with expertise in community settings and in the dissemination and implementation of empirically-validated programs. The degree would be coordinated with the HPA on-line masters, utilizing some of the courses developed for that program.

**Goal 3: Conduct evaluation of World Campus majors and their career trajectories.**

## **B. Integrity and Ethics**

**Goal:** *Continue to refine ethics training at the undergraduate and graduate level.* In our undergraduate exit surveys, the ethics training provided in our undergraduate program through HDFS 301: Values and Ethics in Health and Human Development Professions, is rated very highly. We will continue to monitor this course, and identify other courses where ethics discussions can be incorporated.

## **C. Assessment of Learning Outcomes**

### **Overview:**

The HDFS undergraduate program has two bachelor's degree options: Lifespan human services (which serves the majority of our majors) and Lifespan developmental science (which serves the majority of honors students as well as a few research-oriented non-honors students).

### **Lifespan human services (LSHS):**

The HDFS department has identified five major learning objectives for students to master course content and succeed in HDFS-relevant careers. In the next five years, we will assess the achievement of the core competencies in each objective by triangulating data from (1) specific courses, (2) internship supervisors, and (3) senior exit surveys, as follows.

1. **Demonstrate professional, ethical, and culturally sensitive standards of conduct.** In order to demonstrate students' mastery of professional and ethical issues, we will collect exam and assignment data from our required course in values and ethics, collect data on professional, ethical, and culturally sensitive behavior from internship supervisors, and collect students' perceptions of material covered on values and ethics during their HDFS courses.
2. **Demonstrate knowledge and competence in helping, leadership, and administrative skills for human services.** To assess students' performance in human service professions, we will collect data from internship supervisor evaluations assessing students' professional standards, leadership capability, and administrative skills. We also will ask students in the senior exit survey to

evaluate how their course work prepared them to work with clients, serve in leadership roles, and perform administrative responsibilities.

3. **Analyze processes, policies, and contextual factors that affect the delivery of human services to individuals and families.** To demonstrate students' ability to understand the factors that influence human service delivery, we will collect data on performance in three HDFS classes. The first course, taken in sophomore year is a course on broad intervention services. The junior year course addresses skills needed for one-on-one service delivery. The senior year course addresses development and administration of human service programs. Data collected across these courses will include specific exam items and in class and out of class assignments. We will also collect internship supervisor evaluation data on delivery of human services and understanding of organizational policies and procedures. Finally, we collect senior exit survey data to assess students' perceptions of their preparation to work in human service fields. We will expand that effort by development strategies for obtaining ongoing feedback from former undergraduate students, as well as using innovative technologies (e.g., mining of linkedin) for information about what skills students might need for various career paths.
4. **Demonstrate an understanding of the complexity of individual and family development across the life span in diverse contexts and changing environments.** To assess students' understanding of the core components of individual and family development, we will centrally collect data from 3 individual and 1 family course at the 400-level. We will make these assessments in the courses taken by the majority of majors, and collect data based on a subset of pre-specified exam items and particular assignments, which we will standardize across instructors in these courses, to assess understanding of key and central concepts in this area. In addition, we will have internship supervisors complete final evaluations on students, including questions about their understanding about individual development, family development, and diverse contexts. Finally, we will ask students in their senior exit survey about the extent to which their course work provided information about individual development, family development, and diverse contexts.
5. **Demonstrate an ability to evaluate and apply research and theory to practice and policy.** Students take a required course in research methods, generally in their sophomore year. We will collect exam and assignment data from this course to assess students' understanding of research, and their ability to apply research to practice and policy. We also will have internship supervisors answer questions about students' ability to apply research in real world settings, and ask students in their senior exit survey about their preparation through course work to do so post-graduation.

**Lifespan developmental science (LSDS).** This degree option serves fewer majors than the LSHS option, but is equally important. Although some of the learning objectives from the LSHS option apply to the LSDS option, they do not all apply. Thus, part of our plan is to develop distinct learning objectives for the LSDS option, that address the unique research skills required to complete this degree option (e.g., writing a literature review, performing statistical analyses). We will also consider substituting HDFS 310M for HDFS 312 for these students to provide stronger training in research methodology. Once we have developed these learning objectives, we will create a specific assessment plan for these new objectives.

**Additional program assessment.** Beyond assessment of specific learning objectives, our goal over the next 5 years is to improve training in professional and career development. We plan to make a permanent course in professional and career development and offer it annually. To truly understand students' ability to succeed in the workforce, we need to continue assessments beyond graduation. Therefore, we propose to create a database of recent graduates, updated every semester, and stay in contact with our graduates to track their progress post-graduation. We will develop a post-graduation survey that will we send out to graduates every 3 years post-graduation to assess their employment status, job duties, and career advancement.