

UW Madison Information School  
Annual Assessment Report Academic Year  
2019-2020

Date: July 28, 2020

## INTRODUCTION

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This report is a record of the School's experience with this assessment process over the past academic year. The University of Wisconsin—Madison Information School (iSchool) employs a process for continual program assessment and improvement centered on iSchool's performance in terms of achieving program level student learning outcomes. These learning outcomes are revisited annually by the faculty and were assessed in the 2019- 2020 year.

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, this academic year proved to be particularly challenging. Results from the graduate student survey, practicum site supervisor survey and the performance level of the students as assessed via the portfolio are, we believe, illustrative of the exceptional toll on our students. Almost all of our ratings and scores this year are lower than those from last year. Due to the uniformity of the low scores and considering that little changed in terms of curriculum, we feel safe in attributing the changes in scores to the impact of the pandemic.

Assessment activities are primarily run through the iSchool Assessment Committee which includes faculty, staff and student members. The chair of the Assessment Committee ensures that assessment data collection activities take place throughout the year and organizes the data from various sources. The Assessment Committee discusses interim results of data analysis during the spring and summer. The full faculty discuss the draft annual report at the annual August retreat. The Assessment Committee and faculty then propose changes to the program, and changes to assessment methodologies based on discussions of the data.

Assessment tools used during the 2019-2020 academic year included:

- Direct assessment of graduating students' portfolios,
- Direct assessment of students' exhibition of desired outcomes in practicum experiences by their supervisors
- Indirect assessment through an online survey of upcoming graduates,
- Indirect assessment based on 16 exit interviews with upcoming graduates conducted by staff and an additional "self-serve" exit interview done through an online form for students who preferred to not meet with a staff member.

Bootcamp: Assessment of the 2019 online program bootcamp was done via a web student survey and informal feedback. It included questions about the perceived usefulness of activities, how students found out about the online program (used for marketing decisions), and satisfaction with content from the bootcamp meetings. Based on this data, the iSchool made the following changes for the 2020 year:

- Make sure not to overload students.
- Provide more information on practicum.
- Offer more opportunities for community building.

Assessment Committee Special Projects:

In the 2019-2020 year, the Assessment Committee undertook updating employers' survey and revising pre-graduate survey to field in spring 2020.

Student Org Leaders Lunches:

The Director, Student Services Coordinator, and Public Services Librarian met with student organization leaders in January of 2020. In the meeting, students provided input the iSchool's Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives.

## Town Hall Meeting:

The Director held a Town Hall meeting with students in April of 2020. She provided updates and answered questions regarding the iSchool's new faculty hires and changes made in response to COVID-19 (e.g., new grading options, virtual graduation, virtual gathering for students, resources for health and financial supports).

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## STUDENT PORTFOLIOS – DIRECT MEASURE

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The iSchool assessed graduating student portfolios representing August 2019, December 2019 and May 2020 graduates in two phases:

1. Objective evaluation occurred *prior to graduation* in order to ensure that all students meet the portfolio requirement for graduation. This evaluation focuses on ensuring students meet graduation requirements and quantitative analysis of references to program level learning outcomes.
2. Subjective evaluation occurred *after graduation* but *before the end of the academic contract year*. This analysis focuses on qualitative direct measures of the degree to which portfolios show evidence of having met program level learning outcomes

### Step 1: Objective Evaluation

This evaluation, completed by the portfolio manager and the Associate Director, ensures students meet the portfolio graduation requirement. Students missing portfolio elements were given warning and support in order to quickly finish and meet minimum portfolio criteria.

### Step 2: Subjective evaluation

Portfolio review committee met and scored 78 portfolios with new PLOs. There were six portfolios with old PLOs, but their review results are not included here because there are too few to report any reliable information and also because the PLO's have been retired and therefore no longer impact our curriculum planning and assessment.

The 2020 portfolio review committee consisted of the following members:

- Faculty/staff: Megan Adams, Alison Caffrey, Kristin Eschenfelder, Sunny Kim, Meredith Lowe, Anna Palmer, Alan Rubel, Deb Shapiro, Cat Smith, Nicole Wiessinger, Rebekah Willett, Allison Kaplan (lead).
- PhD students (future faculty): Bryan Knowles.

Process: Review committee members reviewed the degree to which each portfolio demonstrated each of the program level learning outcomes. Reviewers gave either a pass or fail grade on each PLO.

Review members then met in teams to resolve difficult cases. After a period of discussion, the committee met as a whole to identify learning outcomes that seemed especially problematic for the student body as a whole and to make suggestions for changes to the process.

Scoring: Scorers were instructed to look at each artifact and the justification statement associated with each artifact. Both had to provide evidence of having achieved one or more learning outcomes. Scorers were instructed to use a scoring sheet (see appendix) assigning the artifact slightly more weight than the justification statement in assigning a final score. Each learning outcome could be given one of four scores: satisfactory, leaning satisfactory, leaning unsatisfactory, unsatisfactory.

Results: The iSchool had set an ideal goal that 85% of portfolios would provide satisfactory evidence of each learning outcome, showing excellent achievement. Unexpectedly, this graduating cohort met only two of the outcomes (#1 and #7) above that 85% level. One explanation for this surprising result may be related to the amount of monitoring on the part of the online TA. Up until this year, the online TA was responsible not only for checking for completeness of the portfolio (all artifacts, descriptions, and justifications were present), but also

took it upon themselves to provide feedback to the prospective graduate regarding improvements on the content of the portfolio. This level of review of the portfolios was never an intended part of the process and so, for 2019-2020, the online TA was instructed to not make any comments regarding content to the students; to simply check for completeness.

The more likely explanation is that most of the graduating students completed work on their portfolios after the pandemic hit, and were under stress hence not able to pay a proper level of attention to completing the portfolio. Given that all outcomes were met with at least 81% satisfactory evidence, however, it is unlikely that these low satisfactory scores are a signal of problems with the curriculum or student quality.

Table 1 summarizes the data for the new learning outcomes for the 2019-2020 graduating cohort.

New Program Learning Outcome	Combined satisfactory and very satisfactory	
	# 2020 (n=74)	% 2020
1. Students demonstrate understanding of societal, legal, policy or ethical information issues.	65	87
2. Students apply principles of information organization.	60	81
3. Students apply appropriate research methodologies for inquiry or decision-making.	61	82
4. Students demonstrate understanding of professional competencies important for management of information organizations.	61	82
5. Students demonstrate competency with information technologies important to the information professions.	60	81
6. Students apply theory to professional practice.	60	81
7. Students demonstrate understanding of issues surrounding marginalized communities and information.	66	89

Table 2 compares the scores from 2018-2019 cohort with the scores from this year's cohort.

New Program Learning Outcome	Combined satisfactory and very satisfactory		Combined satisfactory and very satisfactory	
	# 2020 (N=74)	% 2020	# 2019 (N=48)	% 2019
1. Students demonstrate understanding of societal, legal, policy or ethical information issues.	65	87	43	90
2. Students apply principles of information organization.	60	81	43	90
3. Students apply appropriate research methodologies for inquiry or decision-making.	61	82	46	96
4. Students demonstrate understanding of professional competencies important for management of information organizations.	61	82	45	94
5. Students demonstrate competency with information technologies important to the information professions.	60	81	42	88
6. Students apply theory to professional practice.	60	81	40	83

7. Students demonstrate understanding of issues surrounding marginalized communities and information.	66	89	41	85
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### **Portfolio Assessment Committee Comments**

A couple of conclusions came from this year’s portfolio evaluation:

First is that, given reports from May graduates about the stress of finishing work during the pandemic, it is the pandemic that likely attributed to the lower than normal passing rates for the portfolio.

Second, this was the first year in which the online TA, as instructed, only looked for completeness of the portfolio rather than giving students comments about how to improve their work before “passing” the portfolio. This change might have influenced that fewer number of the outcomes met our goal of 85% satisfaction, compared to last year.

Finally, during the review process, the portfolio review committee expressed concern over the clarity of the stated outcomes suggesting that inconsistencies between faculty/instructor understanding of the outcomes and student understanding of the outcomes may have resulted in poor demonstration via the portfolio on the part of the students.

To address these issues, a team consisting of the e-portfolio course instructors, online TA, portfolio manager, and Assistant director will work closely together to provide clear guidelines to faculty/instructors and to offer additional help to students.

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## **GRADUATES SURVEY – INDIRECT MEASURE**

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Results from the survey look a little surprising when viewed on their own. Most scores are lower this year than in previous years. However, results must be reviewed within the context of the pandemic. The survey was administered in April just a few weeks after everyone was ordered home or otherwise isolated. Stress levels were high with the May and December graduates as they had to navigate such disruptions to their education including immediate changes to delivery of instruction, format changes for completing practicum hours, and the sudden crash of job availability all compounded with social isolation. Taking all of that into consideration, it is understandable that scores are lower this year than previous years.

In recognition of the unusual circumstances, the chair of the Assessment Committee fielded a modified Graduates Survey during April of 2020. The Assessment Committee revised survey questions to include questions related to any challenges students encountered during the COVID-19 pandemic. To keep the length of survey manageable, the number of questions related to the learning outcomes was adjusted, specifically around career and advising support and portfolio.

The survey was sent to 88 students who qualified as December 2019, May 2020 and August 2020 graduates. A total of 65 students completed the survey (74% response rate): 42 on-campus and 19 online. Four students did not indicate whether they were in on-campus or online program. Not all respondents answered all questions.

## 2020 Graduates Cohort Survey Responses

In order to get an understanding of the career aspirations of the respondents, the survey asked respondents to choose the specialization with which they most identified.

With which of the following concentrations do you most identify? (choose only one)	On-Campus student	Online/Distance student	Total
Academic libraries	11	5	16 (24.6%)
Archives	14	1	15 (23.1%)
Public libraries	6	6	12 (18.5%)
School libraries	5	2	7 (10.8%)
Children/youth	4	3	7 (10.8%)
Info tech/UX	3	1	4 (6.2%)
DIA: data/information analytics & management	1	1	2 (3.1%)
Organization of information	0	1	1 (1.5%)
Other	1	0	1 (1.5%)
	45	20	65 (100%)

“Other” answers included art librarianship.

## RESULTS BY LEARNING OUTCOME

This section continues by describing the 2019-2020 data from skill and competency measures associated with each program level learning outcome. The goal is to have 85% or more of all students describing themselves as moderately or very well prepared.

The questions presented below are designed to relate to the seven iSchool PLOs (see Appendix 1). The goal is to have the students rate themselves as “prepared” or “very prepared” at the 85% or higher level. All things considered, the ratings were very good even for the questions that had slightly lower ratings from previous years. The three questions where the students rated themselves below “very prepared” or “prepared” at the 85% target level are:

- PLO #6 APPLY THEORY TO PRACTICE: I understand how the structure and controlled vocabularies of subscription databases or online catalogs influence how one searches for information (80.3% overall; 76.2% campus; 89.5% distance students). Although the distance students rated themselves well over the 85% target level, the overall rating of 80.3% is below last year’s rating of 89%.
- PLO #3 APPLY APPROPRIATE RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES: I can design a plan to collect data for assessment for evaluation purposes (83.6% overall; 78.6% campus, 94.7 distance students). The below target response for this measure was unexpected as the results typically fall above 85%. This might not be a concern as this question was greatly altered from the question that was asked last year which was “I can assess the effectiveness of a program or service in y organization” and had a much higher overall score for 94%. This

question is targeted for revision for next year.

- PLO #5 COMPETENCY WITH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES: I could refer to appropriate resources in order to create a hyperlink in HTML code (77% overall; 71.4% campus, 89.5% distance). This question continues to score below the 85% level in the survey. However, the “all students” and “campus students” scores are both up over 10 percentage points and the “distance students” scores are up by 7 percentage points from last year’s scores indicating progress being made across the curriculum

**OUTCOME 1 STUDENTS DEMONSTRATE UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIETAL, LEGAL, POLICY OR ETHICAL INFORMATION ISSUES**

Measure: I can apply professional ethics to my work.

Student population	Percent of responding students describing themselves as moderately or very well prepared
All students	98.4
Campus students	97.6
Distance students	100

Measure: I can address concerns of a patron who is offended by the content in a collection.

Student population	Percent of responding students describing themselves as moderately or very well prepared
All students	96.7
Campus students	95.2
Distance students	100

**OUTCOME 2 STUDENTS APPLY PRINCIPLES OF INFORMATION ORGANIZATION.**

Measure: I can describe some basic approaches for organizing information.

Student population	Percent of responding students describing themselves as moderately or very well prepared
All students	98.4
Campus students	97.6
Distance students	100

**OUTCOME 3. STUDENTS APPLY APPROPRIATE RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES FOR INQUIRY OR DECISION-MAKING.**

Measure: I can design a plan to collect data for assessment for evaluation purposes.

Student population	Percent of responding students describing themselves as moderately or very well prepared
All students	<b>83.6</b>
Campus students	<b>78.6</b>
Distance students	94.7

**OUTCOME 4. STUDENTS DEMONSTRATE UNDERSTANDING OF PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES IMPORTANT FOR MANAGEMENT OF INFORMATION ORGANIZATIONS.**

Measure: I can select appropriate materials to best meet the information needs of a user.

Student population	Percent of responding students describing themselves as moderately or very well prepared
All students	96.7
Campus students	95.2
Distance students	100

Measure: I can write a persuasive email in order to influence a decision.

Student population	Percent of responding students describing themselves as moderately or very well prepared
All students	86.9
Campus students	81
Distance students	100

Measure: I can successfully elicit information needs from users via face to face or online interactions.

Student population	Percent of responding students describing themselves as moderately or very well prepared
All students	93.4
Campus students	90.5
Distance students	100

Measure: I am prepared to be an advocate for the values of the profession.

Student population	Percent of responding students describing themselves as moderately or very well prepared
All students	95.1
Campus students	92.9
Distance students	100

Measure: I can lead a team or a working group.

Student population	Percent of responding students describing themselves as moderately or very well prepared
All students	93.4
Campus students	90.5
Distance students	100

**OUTCOME 5. STUDENTS DEMONSTRATE COMPETENCY WITH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES IMPORTANT TO THE INFORMATION PROFESSIONS.**

Measure: I can teach myself yourself new technologies and software relevant for your job, using widely available resources.

Student population	Percent of responding students describing themselves as moderately or very well prepared
All students	96.7
Campus students	95.2
Distance students	100

Measure: I can refer to appropriate resources in order to create a hyperlink in HTML code.

Student population	Percent of responding students describing themselves as moderately or very well prepared
All students	<b>77</b>
Campus students	<b>71.4</b>
Distance students	89.5

**OUTCOME 6: STUDENTS APPLY THEORY TO PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE**

Measure: I could design programs and services to meet the information needs of a given user group.

Student population	Percent of responding students describing themselves as moderately or very well prepared
All students	91.8
Campus students	92.9
Distance students	89.5

Measure: I understand how the structure and controlled vocabularies of subscription databases or online catalogs influence how one searches for information.

Student population	Percent of responding students describing themselves as moderately or very well prepared
All students	<b>80.3</b>
Campus students	<b>76.2</b>
Distance students	89.5

**OUTCOME 7. STUDENTS DEMONSTRATE UNDERSTANDING OF ISSUES SURROUNDING MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES AND INFORMATION**

Measure: I can build connections with diverse social, economic and cultural community members.

Student population	Percent of responding students describing themselves as moderately or very well prepared
All students	90.2
Campus students	85.7
Distance students	100

Measure: I can understand and respond to the information needs of diverse social, economic and cultural communities.

Student population	Percent of responding students describing themselves as moderately or very well prepared
All students	95.1
Campus students	95.2
Distance students	94.7

**Other Questions: Professional Involvement**

Over 97% of students responded that they were made aware of the need for continuous professional development and lifelong learning in the information professions while in the program. The number of students attended conferences seem to have been affected by COVID-19 as students who planned to attend national and local conferences in spring had to cancel their trips.

Measure: I attended one or more professional conferences while a student at the iSchool (local, regional, national or international)

Student population	Percent of students answering yes
All students	60.7
Campus students	66.7
Distance students	47.4

Measure: I presented at one or more workshops or conferences while a student at the iSchool

Student population	Percent of students answering yes
All students	24.6
Campus students	26.2
Distance students	21.1

Measure: While a student at the iSchool, I participated in (select all that apply)

	Campus: Percent of students answering yes	Distance: Percent of students answering yes
Student club or organization	69.4	23.5
Professional organization (local, regional, national)	61	47
Volunteer/Service Activity	44.4	35.3
Recreational group	5	6
Community Organization	25	29.4
Others	25	17.6

Others included full/part time jobs, internships, and labor union.

## SUPPORT DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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In the process of modifying the survey, the decision was made to remove the questions about mentorship and advising, career services, and portfolio preparation in favor of gleaning a sense of how the students were able to cope and their perceptions of iSchool support with the onset of the pandemic in which students were told to not return to campus after spring break, March 2020.

Additional questions related to students' experience during the COVID-19 pandemic were included in both the Graduates Survey and the exit interviews. Questions were asked to help identify the issues/areas that iSchool should address and improve should other calamitous events occur.

Question: How much do you agree/disagree with the statements based on your experience in Spring 2020?

	% of all students agreeing	% of campus students agreeing	% of online students agreeing
I felt supported by the instructors	81.3	75.7	94.5
I had stable internet connectivity	86.5	85.4	88.9
I was able to finish my work in a timely manner	78	73.2	88.9
I was provided with information for my mental or physical health	81.3	83	77.8
I had adequate access to devices for completing course work	95	92.7	100
I created coping mechanisms on my own to be successful	83	80.5	88.8
iSchool faculty/staff reached out to me	57.7	53.6	66.7
I was provided with information about financial resources	62.8	63.4	61.1

The survey revealed that most students had stable internet connectivity and adequate access to devices for completing course work in spring 2020 when all courses were delivered online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It also underscored areas for improvement. In case such special conditions continue, the following improvements may need to be considered:

- Instructors work more closely with students to support their needs (e.g., more frequent communication, meetings with individual students, flexible deadlines for students dealing with unexpected challenges)
- More information/help needs to be provided (e.g., information/resources on health, financial support).

These issues will certainly be considered should we find ourselves in another emergency situation. However, there is also the fact that information was sent out to students on an almost daily basis particularly at the onset of the emergency. It may in fact be the case that students were overwhelmed with information and may have stopped looking at email communications from the iSchool. It may be that instead of more close contact and more information being sent out en masse, the iSchool consider ways to personally reach out to students at both the administrative and instructional levels.

## PRACTICUM SUPERVISOR QUESTIONNAIRE – DIRECT MEASURE

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The iSchool asks each practicum supervisor to fill out a survey about their students' work performance at the end of the 120-hour practicum experience. This evaluation is a direct measure of student performance at professional activities during the practicum.

This data is based on supervisor responses submitted via an online questionnaire for the 2019-2020 academic year, including the summer of 2019, representing the field experiences of 84 students.

The survey did not “force answers” to questions meaning that supervisors could skip questions and still submit the survey. Not all supervisors answered all questions.

Additionally, because the spring semester ended with immediate changes needing to be made due to the pandemic, some site supervisors were reluctant to rate students on some questions. One site supervisor confided to the Assessment committee chair that they marked “not applicable” or “no basis for judgment” rather than give a student a lower evaluation due to the disruption in the work schedules. Assuming this site supervisor was not alone in that practice, it is safe to say that this attitude might account for the lower than normal marks particularly in the areas of professionalism and recommendation to hire.

### Practicum Supervisor questions relating to overall satisfaction of students

Measure: *How well did the student meet your expectations?*

Supervisors' rating	% of responses
Exceeds expectations	68
Meets expectations	30
Short of expectations	1
Not applicable	1
<b>Total satisfactory or above</b>	<b>98</b>

Measure: *Please rate the quality of the student's work in terms of daily tasks (work requiring regularized tasks)*

Supervisors' rating	% of responses
Exceeds expectations	72
Satisfactory	27
Unsatisfactory	1
Not applicable	0
<b>Total satisfactory or above</b>	<b>99</b>

Measure: *Please rate the quality of the student's work in terms of specific projects (work not requiring regularized tasks).*

Supervisors' rating	% of responses
Exceeds expectations	79
Satisfactory	19
Unsatisfactory	2
Not applicable	0
<b>Total satisfactory or above</b>	<b>98</b>

Measure: *If I were an administrator and there was an appropriate level job in my organization, I would recommend this student.*

Supervisors' rating	% of responses
Strongly Agree	72
Agree	21
Disagree	5
No basis for judgement	2
<b>Total agree</b>	<b>93</b>

**Practicum supervisor questions relating to overall professional behavior of student related to PLO 4 “Students demonstrate understanding of professional competencies important for management of information organizations” and to PLO 6 “Students apply theory to professional practice”**

Measures: *The student worked effectively as a team member during the course of this placement.*

<b>Supervisors’ rating</b>	<b>% of responses</b>
Strongly Agree	<b>77</b>
Agree	<b>14</b>
Disagree	2
No basis for judgment	7
<b>Total agree</b>	<b>91</b>

Measure: *The student worked independently to accomplish goals during the course of this placement.*

<b>Supervisors’ rating</b>	<b>% of responses</b>
Strongly Agree	<b>82</b>
Agree	<b>12</b>
Disagree	3
No basis for judgement	3
<b>Total agree</b>	<b>94</b>

Measure: *The student demonstrated innovation and skills necessary for leadership during the course of this placement.*

<b>Supervisors’ rating</b>	<b>% of responses</b>
Strongly Agree	<b>54</b>
Agree	<b>33</b>
Disagree	5
No basis for judgement	9
<b>Total agree</b>	<b>87</b>

Measure: *The student displayed a professional attitude and demeanor during the course of this placement.*

<b>Supervisors’ rating</b>	<b>% of responses</b>
Strongly Agree	<b>73</b>
Agree	<b>22</b>
Disagree	2
No basis for judgement	2
<b>Total agree</b>	<b>95</b>

Measure: *The student displayed the communications skills needed to be an effective professional during the course of this placement.*

<b>Supervisors’ rating</b>	<b>% of responses</b>
Strongly Agree	<b>69</b>
Agree	<b>27</b>
Disagree	4
No basis for judgement	0
<b>Total satisfactory or above</b>	<b>96</b>

Measure: *In which of the following areas did your student exhibit unsatisfactory communications skills?*  
(mark ALL that apply)

Only 5 supervisors chose to answer this question.

Area of unsatisfactory communications	# of responses
Public speaking	0
Coordinating with peers and supervisors	4
Contributing in meetings or teams	1
Shyness with coworkers or public	3
Written work for public	2
Written work for internal use	2

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## OTHER ASSESSMENT TOPICS:

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### **One-credit classes:**

Feedback from exit interviews suggests more ideas for 1 credit courses: coding/programming, data governance, tribal libraries/archives/museums, sustainability/disaster planning for libraries, STEM librarianship, and design thinking in libraries.

The comments for additional courses are encouraging as last year, remarks were more about these courses being overly burdensome; and more work than a one-credit course should be. This suggests that the instructors are improving course design for the one-credit courses.

### **Online courses for campus students:**

The exit interview asked campus program students whether they knew they would likely take some online courses as part of their campus-based program. Most reported that they knew they would likely take online classes, but that they took more online classes than they expected. Many did not see this as problematic as it provided flexibility in balancing school with working. What we did to incorporate suggestions from last year's exit interviews seems to have worked well.

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## APPENDIX – ISCHOOL PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

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1. Students demonstrate understanding of societal, legal, policy or ethical information issues.
2. Students apply principles of information organization.
3. Students apply appropriate research methodologies for inquiry or decision-making.
4. Students demonstrate understanding of professional competencies important for management of information organizations.
5. Students demonstrate competency with information technologies important to the information professions.
6. Students apply theory to professional practice.
7. Students demonstrate understanding of issues surrounding marginalized communities and information.