

**Institutional Effectiveness  
2024-2025**

**Program:** Professional Studies BS

**College and Department:** College of Interdisciplinary Studies, Professional Studies Program

**Contact:** Dr. Dennis Tennant

**Mission:**

The Professional Studies Program is committed to serving and providing traditional and non-traditional students with an intellectually engaging and effective undergraduate educational experience utilizing technology through online delivery systems as they enhance their knowledge, analytical abilities, critical thinking, and communication skills for upward mobility in their professional field.

This online undergraduate degree consists of 120 hours of interdisciplinary course work through TTU and TN eCampus and is available in four concentrations:

- Health Administration prepares students interested in entering the health care field in an administrative capacity planning, coordinating, and supervising the processes of medical facilities/offices.
- Information Technology is designed to prepare managers and non-managers to use information for decision-making as well as improve proficiency in software, operating systems, and management of networking systems.
- International Organizational Leadership prepares students to lead in a global economy spanning differing management styles, business practices, and cultural awareness.
- Organizational Leadership develops a student's foundation of leadership skills through a variety of communication outlets, critical thinking and problem-solving situations applicable in real-world businesses and organizations.

**Attach Curriculum Map (Educational Programs Only):**

Attached Files: See Appendix 1

## **SLO1: Critical Thinking Skills**

### **Define Outcome:**

Professional Studies majors will demonstrate critical thinking skills, as measurable through the Senior Exit Exam.

### **Assessment Methods:**

Senior Exit Exam: The Senior Exit Exam is administered to every student who graduates from TTU, with the exception of non-traditional students. This assessment evaluates students in the area of critical thinking. Scores are aggregated by major and reported annually. The California Critical Thinking Test is a well-tested measure of critical thinking and is accepted by the University as a whole. (It must be noted that the exception of Non-traditional student scores is a university policy and not one of the SOPS. The exemption leads to the exclusion of many of our majors from the data. It's our goal to work toward the inclusion of all SOPS students.)

The School of Professional Studies uses the Senior Exit Exam to evaluate majors in Critical Thinking. The goal is to have an increasing score in the Exam annually, and to meet or exceed the university average score.

Results are distributed to the Dean of the College and discussed among faculty and School Directors.

### **Criteria for Success (Thresholds for Assessment Methods):**

Threshold: Equal to the CCTST National Norm

Goal: Equal to the Tennessee Tech University institutional average

### **Link to 'Tech Tomorrow' Strategic Plan:**

### **Results and Analysis:**

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
PRST	73.3	73.1	72.1	75.4	73.5
TNTech	74.5	75.2	74.3	74.4	74.8
National Norm	74.0	73.3	73.3	72.8	72.8
% of National Norm	99%	100%	98%	104%	101%

The PRST program met both the threshold and goal by performing above the TN Tech average and the CCTST national norm.

**Use of Results to Improve Outcomes:**

Moving forward, the School of Professional Studies will launch an internal informational campaign to emphasize the importance of the Senior Exit Exam. While the exam does not affect students' grades, it plays a critical role in shaping and improving future academic programs by providing valuable insight from graduating seniors. Historically, the purpose and significance of this exam have not been clearly communicated, and this campaign aims to bridge that gap by ensuring students understand the 'why' behind their participation.

## SLO2: Synthesis of Knowledge

### Define Outcome:

Students will successfully demonstrate the synthesis of knowledge from their program of study with a focus from their concentration area in a Culminating Project during their senior year.

### Assessment Methods:

BPS Professional Culminating Project: The Senior Culminating Project or Capstone course is required of all Professional Studies majors. Each student must complete either a 6000-word research paper or a real-world project that demonstrates a synthesis of knowledge from their program of study from their concentration area.

Faculty members complete the rubric on each student that completes the course, entering a score based on the rubric. The scores are combined to get an overall score for each semester's cohort of students.

Two areas of the rubric assess this outcome:

1. Information Seeking, Selecting, and Evaluating
2. Synthesis

### Criteria for Success (Thresholds for Assessment Methods):

Data from the rubric is used to assess overall preparedness for the senior project, and student development in research question development, analysis, integration and synthesis of concentration areas, documentation, and critical thinking. Data is also used in program evaluation to assess areas of needed improvement. A score of 2.5 is adequate, 3.0 is considered acceptable, 3.5 advanced, and 4.0 stellar.

### Link to 'Tech Tomorrow' Strategic Plan:

### Results and Analysis:

Area	Fall 2021	Spring 2022	Fall 2022	Spring 2023	Fall 2023	Spring 2024	Fall 2024	Spring 2025
Information Seeking	3.67	3.57	3.26	3.32	3.38	3.40	3.38	**
Synthesis	3.44	3.27	3.16	3.29	--	3.17	3.23	**

\*\*Data not available as of report deadline

This past year, instructors actively reviewed senior project expectations and implemented more structured support to help students strengthen their synthesis skills. Efforts included providing

clearer examples, increased formative feedback, and additional opportunities for students to practice integrating ideas throughout the course. These strategies have proven successful, and we will continue to build on them in the coming year to further enhance student learning and performance.

**Use of Results to Improve Outcomes:**

While synthesis skills improved, a slight decline in information seeking suggests a need for renewed emphasis on research practices. Instructors will look to reinforce information-seeking skills by integrating targeted research activities earlier in the curriculum, and will look to provide more guidance on identifying credible sources and using library databases effectively.

### **SLO3: Problem-Solving and Communication**

#### **Define Outcome:**

Professional Studies majors will demonstrate real-world problem solving and communication by identifying and developing a research project in his/her concentration area.

#### **Assessment Methods:**

BPS Professional Culminating Project: The Senior Culminating Project or Capstone course is required of all Professional Studies majors. Each student must complete either a 6000-word research paper or a real-world project that demonstrates a synthesis of knowledge from their program of study from their concentration area.

Faculty members complete the rubric on each student that completes the course, entering a score based on the rubric. The scores are combined to get an overall score for each semester's cohort of students.

Five areas of the rubric assess this outcome:

1. Thesis/Problem Question
2. Analysis
3. Documentation
4. Product Process
5. Critical Thinking

#### **Criteria for Success (Thresholds for Assessment Methods):**

Data from the rubric is used to assess overall preparedness for the senior project, and student development in research question development, analysis, integration and synthesis of concentration areas, documentation, and critical thinking. Data is also used in program evaluation to assess areas of needed improvement. A score of 2.5 is adequate, 3.0 is considered acceptable, 3.5 advanced, and 4.0 stellar.

#### **Link to 'Tech Tomorrow' Strategic Plan:**

#### **Results and Analysis:**

Area	Fall 2021	Spring 2022	Fall 2022	Spring 2023	Fall 2023	Spring 2024	Fall 2024	Spring 2025
Thesis/Problem Question	3.62	3.58	3.71	3.57	3.25	3.75	3.6	**
Analysis	3.38	3.24	3.23	3.25	3.17	3.20	3.32	**
Documentation	3.29	3.08	3.25	3.12	3.18	3.22	3.26	**

Product Process	3.38	3.31	3.34	3.23	3.14	3.32	3.41	**
Critical Thinking	3.39	3.21	3.25	3.17	3.09	3.36	3.26	**

\*\*Data not available as of report deadline

Student performance continued to show gradual improvement across most areas, with gains most evident in Thesis/Problem Question and Product Process. While Analysis and Documentation scores rose slightly from the previous year, they remain below earlier benchmarks. Critical Thinking, which improved in Spring 2024, saw a slight decline in Fall 2024, suggesting the need for continued attention in this area, as discussed in SLO-1.

#### **Use of Results to Improve Outcomes:**

Instructors will be charged with refining instructional strategies to strengthen student problem solving and communication, with a renewed focus on developing synthesis skills and improving information-seeking behaviors. They will be encouraged to incorporate more structured opportunities for research practice, and to communicate clearer guidance on using credible sources and integrating evidence into their work.

**Summative Evaluation:**

During the 2024–2025 academic year, the Professional Studies program demonstrated continued commitment to assessing and enhancing student learning across all Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs). Performance on the Senior Exit Exam remained strong, with PRST students scoring above both the Tennessee Tech institutional average and the national norm. The internal informational campaign launched this year successfully raised awareness of the exam's value, helping to reinforce its role in program improvement. In the Senior Culminating Project, synthesis scores showed modest gains, indicating that recent instructional changes—such as providing clearer examples and more structured opportunities for idea integration—are having a positive impact. However, a slight decline in information-seeking scores highlighted the need for more intentional instruction around research practices. Problem-solving and communication outcomes saw improvement, particularly in areas like Thesis/Problem Question and Product Process, though Analysis and Critical Thinking remain areas for continued focus. Moving forward, the program will expand efforts to support research skill development, sustain effective synthesis instruction, and continue using data-informed strategies to drive curriculum improvements and enhance student outcomes.

**Assessment Plan Changes:****List of Appendices:**

Appendix 1: Professional Studies BS Curriculum Map



## Appendix 1: Professional Studies BS Curriculum Map

Course Number	Course Title	Student Learning Outcomes		
		SLO1: Critical Thinking	SLO2: Synthesis of Knowledge	SLO3: Problem Solving
Professional Core (choose courses from each area): 21 credit hours				
One Administration and Supervision Course				
LIST 4093	Special Topics and Leadership		X	X
MGMT 3610	Principles of Management		X	X
PADM 3601	Public Administration		X	X
TECH 4381	Principles of Supervision		X	X
One Organizational Systems Course				
PADM 4226	Introduction to Nonprofit Organizations		X	
PM 4120	Organizational Theory & Behavior		X	
Team & Organizational Relations				
COMM 3010	Integrated Corporate Communication		X	
One Statistical Methods Course				
PBRL 4410	Public Relations Research	X	X	X
SOAA 3350	Social Statistics	X	X	X
SOCI 4510	Introduction to Social Research	X	X	X
Two Written Communications Courses				
ENGL 3134	Computers, Writing & Literature		X	X
ENGL 3250	Professional Communication		X	X
PBRL 3421	Public Relations Writing		X	X
One International Context Course				
JOUR 4712	Mass Media & Cultures		X	
POLI 4350	International Law		X	
PS 3510	International Political Economy		X	
SPAN 3550	Latin America: The Countries and the Peoples		X	
Culminating Special Project Course				

UNIV 4995	Culminating Special Project	X	X	X
<b>Information Technology Concentration (choose one course from each area)</b>				
<b>Management Information Systems Overview</b>				
PTMA 3020	Management Information Technology		X	X
MGMT 3220	Management Information Systems		X	X
UNIV 3713	Freedom, Openness and the Internet		X	X
<b>Software</b>				
CSC 3700	Software Analysis & Design	X	X	X
UNIV 4706	Managing Software Development	X	X	X
<b>Files/Operating Systems</b>				
INFS 3700	Introduction to System Analysis and Design		X	X
<b>Database Management</b>				
CSCI 3222	Database Management Systems	X	X	X
UNIV 4708	Introduction to Business Intelligence	X	X	X
<b>Networks</b>				
CSCI 4017/5017	Introduction to Information Assurance		X	X
INFS 4900	Seminar in Data Communications	X	X	X
UNIV 4995	Culminating Special Project	X	X	X
<b>Organizational Leadership Concentration (choose 5 courses)</b>				
BMGT 3600	International Management		X	X
BMGT 3630	Human Resource Management		X	X
COMM 3560	Intercultural Communication		X	X
PBRL 3400	Introduction to Public Relations		X	X
PBRL 3409	Public Relations Case Studies	X	X	X
LDSP 3000	Leadership Development	X	X	X
MGMT 4800	Corporate Etiquette		X	X
PADM 4401	Comparative Public Administration		X	X
PSY 3590	Psychology of Personality		X	X
PSYC 3210	Abnormal Psychology		X	X

SW 3200	Cultural Diversity		X	X
<b>International Organizational Leadership (all courses required)</b>				
BMGT 3600	International Management		X	X
COMM 3560	Intercultural Communication		X	X
POLI 4350	International Law	X	X	X
POLS 4508	Theories and Concepts in International Relations		X	X
PS 3510	International Political Economy	X	X	X
<b>Health Administration Concentration (all courses required)</b>				
HETH 4210	Healthcare Research	X	X	X
HETH 4211	Healthcare Leadership and Management		X	X
HETH 4212	Trends and Issues in Healthcare	X	X	X
HETH 4213	Community Health: Issues & Services	X	X	X
COBH 4707	International Health: Problems and Issues	X	X	X