



Holy Family UNIVERSITY

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Assessment Now

Reflections from OIRA

By Chad May, Director

As we come to an end of another successful academic semester and hopefully, have many positive student outcomes and achievements to report, I wanted to take this opportunity to remind the University community that the OIRA is here to support and work alongside every person and office at the University to ensure continuous improvement and success. Outcomes assessment and institutional assessment have a unique and viable place at the decision-making table to help integrate and evaluate cross-functional processes that run the University. Additionally, it provides a perfect place for both of the two predominant cultures of the University to come together and integrate ideas, priorities, initiatives, and provides a place to document and show all of the good work that we do for our students and each other.

Reflecting on the past few months and the many challenges that currently face the University community and how those challenges will continue to impact us, I am reminded of a quote by Robert Newton¹ in which he describes the two often conflicting cultural communities within higher educational institutions: the corporate and the scholarly.

The corporate community views the institution as a business organization because of its capital assets, operating budgets, and differentiated workforce. Typically, personnel with this cultural view are engaged in everything but the usual triad of faculty work; teaching and learning, research, and service to academic shared governance. The

scholarly community, however, views students not as customers but as “neophyte members of a select intellectual community devoted to exploring the perennial questions of humankind and the best new ideas and methods of inquiry of the scholarly disciplines” (p. 10).

These conflicting cultural communities complicate strategic planning and assessment. Change is generally reactive, department-based, and viewed as useful so long as it furthers the discovery and dissemination of knowledge. However, the most successful higher education institutions unite and celebrate these two indispensable organizational cultures and overcome the conflicting cultures through leadership that creates a shared set of guiding principles that form the most desirable organizational culture and produce the highest level of quality of work-life for members of both cultural communities. The challenge for institutional assessment is to measure the quality of the guiding principles, the degree to which the community as a whole understands, embraces, and demonstrates those guiding principles, and the effectiveness of those guiding principles in serving their purpose. The main way these guiding principles are expressed is through Strategic Goals, in which, at the institutional level help leaders integrate operational plans at the functional level.

Let’s take the following weeks to evaluate both what our strategic aspirations might be but also focus on what our goals/objectives/outcomes of our work are today and should be tomorrow and how we can enhance our measurement of both their summative achievement but more importantly how we can measure them formatively to show us when and where adjustment is needed through smart and appropriate use of data to inform decisions.

¹ Newton, R., “The Two Cultures of Academe: An Overlooked Planning Hurdle.” *Planning for Higher Education*, 1992, 21 (1), 8-14.

University Outcomes Assessment & Improvement Committee (UOaic)

The agenda for the December 4, 2012 meeting was primarily the review of the draft timelines for the implementation of the assessment of both the academic and administrative support units. The timeline consists of a three-year cycle for every program/unit at Holy Family, although this could vary if a four or five-year cycle is more appropriate. The timelines also indicate where each program/unit is in the process of the cycle. Members of the UOaic can view the draft timelines on Blackboard and consider if these timelines are in compliance with other departmental priorities and obligations. Adjustments may be necessary.

Academic Programs- Progress and timeline over the next three years

The timeline for the academic programs has been developed by Adam Christiansen, OIRA assistant director, Rochelle Robbins, Title III grant activities director, and the faculty assessment coordinators representative of faculty from each of the departments. The collection and reporting on Assessment data have been centralized in Blackboard Outcomes which makes this information more transparent and accessible by all stakeholders. Many programs had assessment plans in place; other programs are just beginning to develop theirs. This timeline shows the status of all programs as of the meeting date and will be continuously updated reflecting progress.

Administrative and Educational Support Units Draft Timeline

The OIRA has also prepared an implementation timeline for the 34 administrative and educational support units to move their

assessment of their area into the Blackboard Outcomes System. The administrative units plans will look different from the academic programs as they will use strategic goals/objectives and not necessarily student learning objectives. In addition, AES units might identify departmental performance indicators (DPIs) which may or may not be mapped to the University's key performance indicators (KPIs). The OIRA will support this transition and has already successfully worked with several AES units in assisting them to transition and use the Blackboard Outcomes System.

Seven units are beginning the cycle this year, 15 next year, and the remaining the following year. By the close of the Title III grant in 3 years all the AES units will have active and annual assessment programs/processes in place.

OIRA Lunch & Learn Sessions Continue in 2013

The OIRA Lunch & Learn sessions will continue monthly in January 2013 on the effective use of Blackboard. Here are the remaining topics and dates. All sessions will meet in Holy Family Hall Room 411. Lunch will be provided.

No.	Date	Topic
5	1/10/13	Grading with Rubrics
6	2/14/13	e-Portfolios in Blackboard
7	3/14/13	Aligning Student Work to Outcomes
8	4/11/13	Reporting on Course Outcomes

Mini-Grant Update

by Adam Christensen

Last year the OIRA funded a series of mini-grants aimed at faculty and staff development in assessment. While there were a few unforeseen obstacles for two of the projects that prevented the completion of the proposed activities, most of the awarded projects are now completed. The following is a brief summary of the projects that were completed:

- A group of nine faculty members from Arts and Sciences participated in *Analysis of Classroom Assessment Techniques: A hands-on approach to learn how our students learn*, created by members of the faculty. Resources used in the workshop are available in the OIRA library. For more information, contact Dr. Daniel Bassi.

- Mini-grant funds were used to support a workshop series in the School of Education to develop common assessments for their masters level programs and establish an agreed upon framework for assessing those programs. Materials used in these workshops are available in the OIRA library. For more information, contact Dr. Lynn Orlando.

- A colloquium on *Capstone Experiences in Math and Science* was organized by members of the Holy Family faculty and held on the Northeast campus earlier this year. Presenters from five Philadelphia area colleges and universities participated in sessions that were open to the general public. For more information, please contact Sister M. Marcella Louise Wallowicz.

- The foreign language faculty purchased a series of webinars, *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century*, which have been viewed by the current full-time faculty and are available for part-time and future faculty. For more information about the webinars

and the companion book, please contact Sister Angela Cresswell.

- A human resources exam was piloted. Unforeseen obstacles resulted in difficulty getting students to participate. However, the value of the exam is evident from the work that was able to be done on the project. This exam will likely be used more extensively in the future as a result. For more information on this project contact Dr. J. Barry Dickinson.

- The final project to be implemented will occur in Spring 2013 in which more detailed score reports for the ETS Major Field Tests (MFT) will be purchased for a number of programs to provide more meaningful data in program assessment. For more information on this project, contact Dr. Jenai Grigg.

Look for further updates in the next *Assessment Now* newsletter for more specifics on the new round of mini-grant awards. Also, think of projects that you may want to apply for in the coming year as we plan to make a third call for proposals in the spring.

Book Review: [Developing Outcomes-based Assessment for Learner-centered Education: A Faculty Introduction](#)
by Amy Driscoll and Swarup Wood
Review by Adam Christensen

Amy Driscoll and Swarup Wood provide a readable overview of what it means to become an institution focused on the learner through an evidence-based outcome model. This text is a great read for anyone that wants an accessible, relatively jargon-free look at the kind of model we are aiming for at Holy Family. In the authors' words, they present, "an educational model in which curriculum and pedagogy and assessment are all focused on student learning outcomes. It's an educational

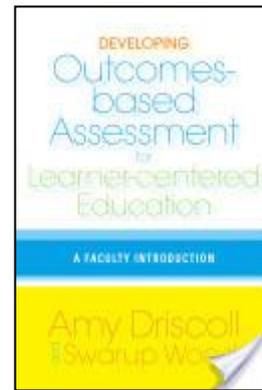
process that fosters continuous attention to student learning and promotes institutional accountability based on student learning" (p. 4).

One author is an assessment administrator and the other a faculty member. Their different perspectives give a complete and rounded view of what it was like for their institution to become one that values evidence of student learning and uses that evidence to improve the student experience. In sharing the process, the authors support anecdotes and vignettes with mounting evidence that the assessment methods they endorse do lead to better student learning. The authors reference various learning theories to frame their arguments adding empirical substance to the personalized tone of the text.

Throughout the text, Driscoll and Wood emphasize the need for the assessment process to be owned and driven by faculty in a collaborative process. Discussions among faculty need to occur at every stage from determining what learning objectives are important, to planning, and ultimately evaluating and interpreting assessment results.

Driscoll and Wood also discuss the need for assessment to be transparent to and involve the students. The authors offer techniques for transparency with examples from their own experiences. These are practical methods that can be implemented by any instructor.

The text closes with a discussion of how the scholarship of teaching and learning can be a gateway to outcomes-based assessment and learner-centered education. This book is an excellent read for anyone interested in the goals of the assessment process at Holy Family and anyone that is interested in improving their own teaching practice.



This book is available in the OIRA Library of resource materials and can be borrowed by calling Cheryl Glover in the OIRA office at 267-341-3614.

Conference Report

In the era of webinars, and other modes of electronic communications, one could argue that attending conferences is expensive and time consuming. However, conferences remain the best way to connect with colleagues, engage in meaningful conversations, and learn from them techniques that are proven and practical and, most importantly, applicable to our situation here at Holy Family. Through the judicious administration of the Title III grant funds the OIRA has been able to sponsor several faculty to conferences such as The Assessment Institute at IUPUI in Indianapolis, and the ACTFL Annual Convention & World Languages Expo in Philadelphia.

This year, Holy Family submitted a proposal for a presentation, *Establishing an Assessment Culture: A Case Study*, which was accepted. The presentation by Dr. Rochelle Robbins and Dr. Adam Christensen was well attended and followed by an extended Q&A period. They plan to return next year with a proposal chronicling the implementation. Presentations at national conferences also attract attention to the work Holy Family is doing in the field of institutional assessment.



Newcomers Events

by Erin Bailey, Research Analyst

Recently, I attended my first North East Association for Institutional Research (NEAIR) Conference in Bethesda, MD. It was four days filled with meeting new people, sharing experiences, and learning some tricks to the IR trade. The scheduling of this conference was ideal as, at the time, I had only been in the Research Analyst position for a little over three months. Since I was new to the organization and this position, I participated in all of the events specifically designed for newcomers to the IR field: a two-day workshop, a dinner group, and their mentor program.

The workshop was led by two seasoned professionals who were not only very knowledgeable about the trials and tribulations of IR but were truly excited to share their experiences with us “newbies”. The best part of this workshop was that all attendees received a USB drive full of useful resources for working in IR, including a copy of the presentation.

The dinner group was more or less an extension of the Newcomers workshop and it was a great opportunity to get to know my fellow newcomers a little better as we discussed our experiences in a more relaxed environment.

The mentor program took the Newcomers events to the next level. This program works because people who have been in IR for a period of time volunteer to a mentor a newcomer. The organizers of this program worked very hard to match volunteers with newcomers appropriately, as my mentor is the director of an IR office at an

institution very similar to Holy Family. NEAIR has a knack for making newcomers feel welcome and at home in the IR universe.

Attending this conference and meeting so many colleagues in the IR field has reminded me that we are all in this together and that I have many wonderful professionals in the NEIR organization that would be ready, willing, and able to assist in any way.

Research Brief Summary

by Erin Bailey, Research Analyst

Last month, the OIRA published its first Research Brief as part of our plan to publish one per quarter. Volume I, Issue I: An Analysis of Retention & First Generation

This was an exploratory project in that there were no concrete expectations of what the data would reveal about these student populations. The goal was to see if any identifiable trends appeared in both student types. For example: do they both report difficulty transitioning from High School, more negative feelings (sad, lonely), etc. One specific goal of this research brief was to determine if First Generation Students are more likely to become Non-Retained students and the answer is no. There was not a significant difference, or relationship, between being a First Generation student and becoming a Non-Retained Student (see Table 1. below). From the analyses conducted, several conclusions and

Table 1. First Generation by Retention

Are you the first in your family to attend college?	Non-Retained	Retained	Total
Non-First Generation	19.1% (n = 13)	80.9% (n = 55)	100% (n = 68)
First Generation	21.1% (n = 8)	78.9% (n = 30)	100% (n = 38)
Total	19.8% (n = 21)	80.2% (n = 85)	100% (n = 106)

$p \geq .05$

Students is available on our website, under the Research Briefs menu line: http://www.holyfamily.edu/oir/brief_s.shtml. This research brief was inspired by the results received from the Spring 2011 administration of the Association for Independent Colleges and Universities of Pennsylvania (AICUP) First Year Student Survey (FYSS) and focuses on two student populations: Non-Retained Students and First Generation Students.

recommendations were made regarding our Non-Retained Student population.

For the full report, please visit our website! If you'd like to discuss this report in more detail, please feel free to contact me at x3622.