



Holy Family UNIVERSITY

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Issue 7

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Assessment Now

2013 HEP Project Director's Meeting

By Chad May, Director

The US Department of Education recently sponsored its Higher Education Programs (HEP) grant programs project directors meeting held in Washington, D.C. during the last week of March. Each grantee is invited to bring two representatives attend, one on the program management side and one on the financial management side, Chad May and Judy Klein, assistant vice president for finance, represented Holy Family. The sessions provided information on the grant implementation process and shared successes of how various grants within Institutional Services (IS), Fund for the Improvement of Post Secondary Education (FISPE), and Student Services (SS), help to transform the institutions that receive federal money. These programs fund much needed projects to assist in solving a major problem designated by the institution, engage in innovative solutions to various educational problems, and/or assist in supporting the social and academic development of students through grant monies for academic support and other student services like advising and counseling.

This meeting is typically held annually but due to the decreases in the US DOE budget they have begun doing these bi-annually. We learned how we can better use our Title III grant to make improvements at the University as well as comply with the regulations and requirements that govern the use of federal funds. One major piece of information was on how we have to track and how we can invest the federal portion and institutional match portion of the monies dedicated to endowment.

University Outcomes Assessment & Improvement Committee (UOAIIC)

The UOAIIC met Tuesday, April 2.

A major role of the UOAIIC is to review the completed program assessment plans that reside in the Blackboard Outcomes Assessment System. In advance of the April meeting, all the completed plans will be available to the committee. Members will be looking holistically at the overall quality of the assessment plans, the components of the plans, and any collaborative information that can be shared across programs from plan-to-plan.

Discussion at the April 2 meeting will include identifying three to five questions that will help the committee characterize a good rubric for future quality plans, and identifying information within each that may be pertinent to other areas of Holy Family. Projects undertaken in one academic division or administrative support unit that could affect another area. The advantages of the UOAIIC review is two-fold: 1) To make people aware of strategic activities occurring across the university and 2) To help increase general communications and knowledge sharing as well as encourage better use of internal resources across the university.

The UOAIIC will also give feedback directly to the programs on their assessment plans. One of the comments previously noted by faculty was the lack of feedback from administration about the work done to complete the program assessment process. The Deans, the VPAA, and the Provost, will now be part of a systematic and timely review of the ongoing work of the faculty to assess the effectiveness of their programs.

Designing and Teaching a High-Impact Capstone Course – Webinar Now Available

The OIRA recently purchased a Magna webinar on creating and teaching capstone courses. The webinar was initially viewed on February 28th and attendees found it to be a good starting point for the development of capstone courses and/or projects. The webinar, presented by Barbara Jacoby, PH.D., discusses some of the models for capstone courses and gives examples of how they have and can be implemented. This includes various examples of how the course can be structured as well as effective grading practices.

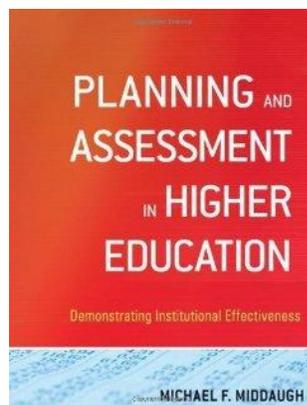
The webinar is available on demand until the end of March at the following link: <http://www.magnapubs.com/handouts/?cid=885>. This page includes supplemental handouts as well as the webinar recording (just click on “View Seminar” to watch the recording). The webinar audio and all associated files are available and may be borrowed from the OIRA.

OIRA Lunch & Learn Spring 2013 Sessions Conclude in April

The OIRA Lunch & Learn sessions will conclude in April. The project has been very successful and will probably continue in the fall 2013. Please let us know if you have suggestions of topics related to the effective use of Blackboard for assessment. All sessions meet in Holy Family Hall Room 411. Lunch has been provided by the OIRA Title III grant.

| No. | Date | Topic |
|-----|---------|------------------------------|
| 8 | 4/11/13 | Reporting on Course Outcomes |

Book Review:



Planning and Assessment in Higher Education: Demonstrating Institutional Effectiveness

By: Michael F. Middaugh
Review by Erin Bailey, Research Analyst, OIRA

This book offers a broad view of planning and assessment in higher education and is perfect for individuals just beginning in the realm of institutional effectiveness or anyone in need of a refresher or some ideas on getting an assessment project off the ground. The author begins with a little history lesson that brings the reader up to speed on the transformations that higher education has undergone in regards to the rise of public scrutiny throughout the 1980’s and the continuous calls for transparency and assessment by accreditation bodies that began shortly after.

Middaugh enjoyed a decorated career as an Institutional Researcher at the University of Delaware (among other institutions) and he walks the reader through a number of real examples of how planning and assessment can be coordinated, conducted, transformed into meaningful information, shared with the appropriate parties, and used to make real changes in different aspects of higher education.

Each chapter focuses on a different issue or need in higher education, such as the importance of using the institution’s mission statement to drive planning and assessment, the assessment of issues important to different student types (i.e., prospective, enrolled, and alumni), identifying meaningful and credible ways to measure student learning, etc. Middaugh states: “the primary intent in writing this book is to deliver a tool box to provosts, deans, department chairs, and administrative directors that will help them more effectively and efficiently manage their institutions” (p.20).

The book is an easy read that is full of additional resources for further readings, practical examples, and visual effects (tables and figures) that tie all of the content together. There are two underlying themes that Middaugh makes clear: 1) “Assessment activity is meaningless unless the results of those assessments are used for planning and resource allocation decisions” (p.46) and 2) “Data are not, in and of themselves, equivalent to information” (p. 173). These themes represent another important message: Just as there is a need for assessment and data in order to create change and move forward, there is a need to be calculated and fully aware in our assessment activities. In other words, before acting we need to know our assessment needs, how to get the desired data, how to turn that data into valuable information and who to take that information to.

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

Association of American Colleges and Universities

General Education Conference February 28 – March 2, 2013 Boston, MA

Drs. Shelley Robbins, Michael Markowitz and Gina MacKenzie attended the AAC&U General Education Conference held in Boston from 2/28 through 3/2. The conference focused on General Education design, revision and assessment. Dr. Bobby Fong of Ursinus College delivered the opening keynote address. He stressed the importance moving General Education away from a laundry list of courses for broad based knowledge towards a comprehensive curriculum designed to instill knowledge, skills, and independence that today's employers expect. This will necessitate a curriculum that focuses on developing critical thinking and analysis, decision making and accountability rather than a coverage of topics.

Peggy Maki spoke about the culture of assessment in General Education. She postulated that effective teachers are experts in misunderstanding. That is, a truly good teacher anticipates how a student will misinterpret information and corrects that misinformation from the start. Good assessment strategies can help to identify common student misconceptions and allow faculty to meet student at their starting points. She asked the following questions of faculty: "At the end of the semester, are you happy with student performance? If not, how can we do things differently next time? What are those things?" Armed with these questions, faculty can assess their teaching strategies and make adjustments to improve student learning.

Shelley Robbins attended a session about approaching the assessment process as a means of improvement rather than accountability. Many universities assess their programs because an accrediting body has told them they must do so. These programs rarely benefit from the results of their assessment processes. Valuable assessment begins with a focused question about student performance and evaluates results as one would evaluate any piece of research. It is important to ask what trends are revealed by the data and to have a discussion about the implications of the findings. That process leads faculty to develop a plan of action that can be used to improve pedagogical practices.

Gina MacKenzie attended a workshop about writing programs at the high school, community college, and college levels. Workshop presenters described a project that streamlined writing assessment the three levels of educational experience to assure that students are being held to the same standards as they transition into higher education.

Finally, psychologist Robert Sternberg spoke about the pitfalls of relying on standardized tests to assess General Education outcomes. Many of the standardized tests being employed for the assessment of critical thinking, for example, correlate highly with SAT scores. This suggests that the tests are measuring the same construct rather than any value added component of a college education. Furthermore, he posited that standardized tests rarely capture real world skills colleges hope to instill in their graduates.

The Holy Family team left the conference with new perspectives on the delivery and assessment of General Education. The General Education curriculum is under program review and revision this year. Many ideas from this conference are being considered by our General Education Committee to create a comprehensive, unified approach blending institutional objectives with existing course structures.

CHERC – Catholic Higher Education Research Cooperative

On March 24 – 25, 2013, Dr. Adam Christensen represented Holy Family at the Nineteenth Annual Catholic College and University Forum for Institutional Research (CHERC) held at Villanova University. The featured panelist will be Linda Suskie, Assessment and Accreditation Consultant, who will join a panel of mission officers to discuss the challenges of assessing mission at Catholic institutions.

Suskie, who has worked with Holy Family recently in the development and delivery of a certificate program, will be returning to Holy Family in April to give us an independent evaluation of our institutional assessment process.

Holy Family is a member of the CHERC organization¹ which grew out of more than a decade of gatherings of institutional researchers and other professionals from Catholic higher education institutions at national and regional conferences, and at an annual Forum every spring. Now formally organized, CHERC continues to be firmly committed to a strong focus on *research* in Catholic higher education institutions. CHERC has regular contact and shares research interests with the leadership of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU) in Washington, D.C. CHERC is also an affiliated member of the Association for Institutional Research (AIR).

¹<http://www3.villanova.edu/cherc/invitation.htm> from the CHERC website.

Presentations and Proposals



Drs. Leanne Owen and Adam Christensen’s proposal “Easing Faculty Apprehension and Improving Student Learning Through Quality Assessment”, has been accepted at

The Association for The Assessment of Learning In Higher Education First Annual Conference, “The Practice of Assessment”, June 5-7, 2013, Lexington, Kentucky.



Dr. Leanne Owen has also submitted a proposal to the Assessment Institute at IUUIU. Notifications will be made June 1. Conference dates are October 27-29, 2013.



Drs. Diane Menago and Rochelle Robbins have submitted a proposal to the Blackboard World Annual Conference on e-portfolios. Notifications will be made March 27, 2013. If accepted, this will be the third consecutive year that Holy Family has had a session or a poster presentation at BbWorld. Conference dates are July 9-11, 2013.

Data Corner

by Erin Bailey, Research Analyst

Since the New Year, the traditional graduate programs as well as programs offered through the Division of Extended Learning’s (UG & GR) were reviewed in two projects that took a closer look at retention and graduation rates of each of the programs. Eight cohorts were included in these reviews, from 2005 through 2012, and each cohort is represented by two tables: one

for retention rates (semester by semester) and one for graduation rates (yearly - cumulative totals). In addition, all of the cohorts were combined into one table to show a compressed view of Graduation rates (2, 4, and 6-year) and Retention rates (1, 2, and 3-year). These projects were completed because we have not paid as much attention to our graduate and DEL programs as we have to our traditional undergraduate programs (i.e., through the Fact Book, School Facts & Figures, External

Surveys, etc.) and we wanted to know what these two important indicators showed us about the programs. For more information on the Graduate Program Review or DEL Programs Review projects, please feel free to contact the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (x3614).

| GRADUATE COHORTS (ALL PROGRAMS): 2005 THROUGH 2012 | | | | | | | |
|--|----------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| TABLE XVII: 2, 4, & 6-YEAR GRADUATION RATES AND 1, 2, & 3-YEAR RETENTION RATES | | | | | | | |
| Entering Cohort (Fall) | Entering Cohort (Students) | 2-Year Graduation Rate | 4-Year Graduation Rate | 6-Year Graduation Rate | 1-Year Retention Rate | 2-Year Retention Rate | 3-Year Retention Rate |
| 2005 | 279 | 33.3% | 48.7% | 52.3% | 59.4% | 39.5% | 16.5% |
| 2006 | 224 | 33.5% | 46.0% | 49.1% | 60.7% | 35.7% | 13.8% |
| 2007 | 197 | 46.2% | 62.9% | | 74.6% | 43.1% | 20.3% |
| 2008 | 155 | 40.0% | 58.1% | | 71.6% | 47.1% | 23.2% |
| 2009 | 187 | 52.4% | | | 77.0% | 54.5% | 18.7% |
| 2010 | 184 | 26.6% | | | 67.4% | 46.7% | |
| 2011 | 173 | | | | 65.3% | | |
| 2012 | 128 | | | | | | |