



Holy Family
UNIVERSITY

June 2014

OIRA Staff:

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www.holyfamily.edu/oir/

**OIRA Lunch & Learn
Brown Bags**

Will continue in 2014-15

See page 3 for proposed

Fall topics

12:50 – 2:00

Third Wednesday each month
September – April

September 17, 2014

October 15, 2014

November 19, 2014

December 17, 2014

January 21, 2015

February 18, 2015

March 18, 2015

April 15, 2015

Assessment Now

Performance Assessment for Higher Education

By Elizabeth Mignacca,
Assistant Director, OIRA

In April, I had the opportunity to join the Harvard Graduate School of Education, *Performance Assessment for Higher Education* Institute. The Institute is a four-day, workshop-style meeting designed to bring together experienced practitioners to work on responding to the current economic, political, and technological challenges facing the assessment of student learning outcomes. Using case studies, question-and-answer sessions and small group idea sharing, our group analyzed emerging assessment frameworks and models. Other sessions during the meetings were guided by faculty experts and provided insight into developing areas, such as the strengths and weaknesses of competency-based education, online learning, and the proposed national college-rating system:

Competency-Based Education: The U.S. Department of Education has endorsed competency-based education, which features degree program models that do not rely on the credit hour to measure student learning. Cathrael Kazin, the Chief Academic Officer for *College for America*, the competency-based division of Southern New Hampshire University shared insights and led our work on how institutions could incorporate competency based models on traditional campuses. Her presentation prompted a lively discussion on who benefits the most from competency based models and the ability of educators to foster connections between college and the workplace.

Online Learning and MOOCs: HarvardX is a Program described as “an experimental catalyst” for the integration of digital tools for online learning. Justin Reich is the Richard L.

Menschel Research Fellow at HarvardX and a leading expert on Massive Open Online Courses--or MOOCs. Using the HarvardX course, *The Ancient Greek Hero* launched in March 2013, Menschel shared preliminary findings from the study of participant behavior in the course. Although thousands of people have successfully completed the course since its launch, their participation raises new questions, concerns and challenges about the optimal assessment of non-residential forms of teaching and learning.

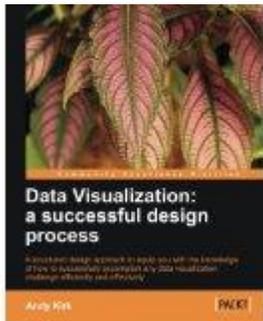
Federal College Ratings System: The Obama administration sparked controversy when it announced plans to develop a federal college ratings system. Emphasizing access, affordability, and outcomes, colleges and universities must prepare to respond to a future which includes government sponsored national ratings. Bridget Terry Long, Academic Dean and Xander Professor of Education and Economics at Harvard and Chair of the National Board of Education Sciences at the U.S. Department of Education, met with us and led discussions on the current status of this initiative, and its implications for individual institutions and their performance assessment programs.

The Harvard Institute was an invaluable experience for me, both as an opportunity to think together with accomplished practitioners and policy leaders, and in acquiring tools to analyze new types of programs and requirements that will impact the field of assessment in the future.

***The Institute’s reading package, which contains over ten cutting edge articles and reports, is available through the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment.

Book Review:

By Chad L. May, Director, OIRA



Data Visualization: a successful design process, Andy Kirk, 2012

Over the past several years there has been an explosion of discussion within many sectors of industry of Big Data. The general concept is that as the internet, mobile devices, broadband Wi-Fi, social media, and other advances technologically has led to a world in which many human's live day-to-day "connected" to the web of digital information that some industry experts argue grows exponentially every day. This growth has impacted society, businesses, health care, service industries, and even educational institutions. With the panacea of data, one has to ask two fundamental questions; first- what do we do with all of this new and changing data (mostly unstructured), and secondly- how do we make sense out of it to drive performance improvement within our industry/sector? This book was primarily written to help answer the second question, how do we make sense out of this data explosion? Data visualization is not a new concept, however, it has gone into more of the mainstream with easy to use software applications (e.g. MS Excel) that have built in processes to create data visualizations; charts, tables, graphics, maps, etc. What was once done mostly by specialists with some artistic background is now done by a variety of individuals who may or may not have specific training in data visualization/analysis. The author wrote

the book for a broad audience so that anyone interested in the topic could follow the steps and techniques outlined. In addition much of the discussion and framework he argues is the best way to solve data visualization challenges can be used by novices and experts.

The book is structured into Six Chapters that takes the reader from the context of their data visualization project to setting the purpose and identifying key factors, to learning about your data, conceiving and reasoning visualization design options, providing a taxonomy of data visualization methods, and finally to constructing a process and evaluating your design solution. One of the first thing the author notes is that data visualization is not an "exact science" that like many modern tasks it takes a combination of skills, attributes, creativity, a learning instinct, however there is a heuristic method to determine the most satisfactory visualization of particular data to help tell the story the analyst is telling with the data. Different approaches could lead to slightly different visual representations as well as different stories, which is where creativity drives much of the work. However, there are certain data properties and visualization techniques that do not mesh well together and there are some rules and techniques for helping folks choose color palettes, size, and markers within the graphic, etc. that makes up the "science" part of data visualization. One such example is use of color, many people like to use red, yellow, green (stop light indicators) to indicate when things are down, similar, and up. In some situations these color's and scheme are ok, but in other situations they do not display very well and may not "tell" the story in a compelling way, thus using one color hue at different intensities (light blue to dark blue) might show a pattern that three different colors might be harder to recognize or see visually. The book is filled with these types of suggestions and advice to help guide the reader through framing their data visualization project and helping them solve problems and issues to ensure their final solution is the best one that conveys the

information or tells the story the analyst wants displayed to their audience.

In Chapter 5 the author lays out a technique for choosing a data visualization method by discussing five methods of classification: comparing categories, assessing hierarchies and part-to-whole relationships, showing changes over time, plotting connections and relationships, and mapping geo-spatial data. With the information covered in Chapters 4 and 5 one can find the most suitable choice of a visual representation by answering three simple questions: does it accommodate the physical properties of your data?, does it facilitate the desired degree of accuracy, is it potentially capable of conveying a certain metaphorical and design consistency with your subject matter? The author gives a wide-ranging number of chart types from the familiar bar chart, line chart, histogram, to the less familiar dot chart, pixelated bar chart, radial chart, glyph chart, and my personal favorite the Sankey diagram. He even throws in more qualitative charts like the word cloud, tree map, and bubble hierarchy, as well as a number of geo-spatial maps like the dot plot map, is-arithmetic map, or bubble plot map.

In the final Chapter 6, the author details and moves away from the planning and selection of a design concept (visualization method and strategy) and moves towards the final two phases: constructing the visualization and evaluating the success of your project once completed and launched. The author keeps technology and technical expertise to a minimum as no matter the software or technical skill of the analyst, the process of planning and designing a solution is pretty much the same. However, at this stage, implementation/construction, technology becomes incredibly important as technical literacy is a must in most visual design situations. The author does not detail all of the software applications or technical tools available as they are ever-growing, however he does provide a web address which houses an up-to-date list of the many technology options in the field:

<http://www.visualisingdata.com/index.php/resources/>. He does provide a summary of the most prevalent and popular tools, browser based ones like google fusion tables, and spends some time on programming environments. Once your design project is complete, you can use the following criteria to help evaluate its effectiveness, data and statistical accuracy, visualization accuracy, functional accuracy, visual inference, formatting accuracy, and annotation accuracy.

Overall, this book provides good advice for those novices to data visualization or experts. I would recommend this book to anyone who has an interest in this emerging and growing field of data science and data visualization.

FALL 2014 OIRA Lunch & Learn Sessions

“Evaluating Studio Art Work” with Pamela Flynn September 17, 2014

Assessing upper level studio art work is a balancing act as elements of design are coupled with creative development, which should be personal and exploratory. Pamela Flynn, Professor and Coordinator of Fine Arts will discuss her initiative to spark an exchange about the nature of assessment among the art faculty of SEPCHE institutions. Her work has catalyzed discussion, debate and the promotion of shared critiquing methods, rubric instruments, and general assessment practices among faculty of art programs.

“Challenges of Implementing Program Level Assessment for Teacher Certification Programs” with Roseanna Wright October 15, 2014

The Pennsylvania Department of Education outlines teacher readiness criteria through the PDE 430 instrument. Roseanna Wright, Associate Professor and Faculty Assessment Coordinator for the School of Education (SOE) will discuss the

rationale for employing the PDE 430 in program level assessment. Among the issues to be addressed are the challenges of data collection among fieldwork supervisors and integrating the use of PDE 430 with Blackboard Outcomes. The discussion will include the SOE’s preliminary results and whether or not they met the program’s expectations for assessment.

“Continuous Improvement for Programs Serving Vulnerable Populations” with Tara Gutgesell November 19, 2014

Finding common frameworks for assessment work among Student Life Divisions can be a challenge. In this presentation, Tara C. Gutgesell, Director of the Counseling Center and Disability Services will discuss goals setting and continuous improvement in programs that provide direct services to students. The discussion will feature the changing dynamics of assessment among programs that work with vulnerable populations on college campuses.

“Organization and Impact: Assuring Quality Measures in Career Development Services” with Don Brom December 17, 2014

Whether dealing with current students or HFU alums, the Career Services Center is ready to help cultivate skills, explore interests, and discover passions that impact the different phases of the career development process. Don Brom, the Director of the Career Services Center will discuss the role of quality improvement in career development services. Among the issues this presentation addresses are accessing employer feedback for program assessment and coordinating improvement projects among the wide array of resources available to students to kick-start their careers.

Mini-Grant Update: “Evaluating Studio Art Work”

In March, the School of Arts and Sciences held the first ever, SEPCHE Studio Art Faculty Workshop: *Evaluating Studio Art Work: Marrying of Qualitative Assessment and Quantitative Assessment* at Holy Family University. This event, organized by Professor Pamela Flynn, Coordinator of Fine Arts at HFU, brought together faculty members art programs from six SEPCHE institutions: Immaculata, Neumann, Cabrini, Arcadia, Chestnut Hill and Rosemont. During the workshop participants exchanged critique practices, rubrics, and general assessing practices for upper level students. The group discussed how assessing upper level studio work is a balancing act as elements of design are coupled with creative development which should be personal and explorative. There was a consensus among the participants that assessing upper level student’s art work is multi-layered and involves pieces that are difficult to assign quantitative values to. It was noted that the institutions that had art degree programs, as opposed to art minor programs, all had a similar final student work assessment portfolio review process. The rubrics for this final review were discussed as well as process details.

The participants of the workshop agreed that the opportunity to join together and discuss common issues was productive and appreciated.



Professor Pamela Flynn,
Coordinator of Fine Arts at HFU

Call for Proposals 2014-2015 Mini-Grant Program

The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment awards mini-grants to encourage faculty and staff to pursue and share assessment skills, tools, and best practices. Our 2014-2015 Call for new proposals is open and we encourage projects aimed at catalyzing and innovating new assessment at HFU. Funding for mini-grants is made possible by the U.S. Department of Education Title III, Part A: Strengthening Institutions Program (SIP) Award.

CONFERENCE REPORT

ASSOCIATION FOR INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH (AIR) FORUM by Erin Bailey

I attended my very first Association for Institutional Research (AIR) Forum and gave my very first professional presentation during the last week of May in beautiful Orlando, FL. According to AIR representatives and staff, 2,000 people had registered to attend the forum making this year's the largest forum to date. There was no shortage of sessions to choose from with each time slot consisting of at least 20 concurrent sessions! I will admit it was a little overwhelming trying to decide what session to attend considering I had identified several of interest for most of the time slots each day! This year AIR created an app that is accessible on-line and mobile devices that allowed attendees to create a schedule, download session materials, take notes, and complete evaluations. This was a huge help in staying organized and prepared during the forum and I am looking forward to going back and downloading all of the materials for the sessions I did not get to attend.

On Wednesday afternoon, I gave my presentation: Streamlining External Reporting: Comparing College and Third-party Approaches. It was a panel presentation discussing the independent efforts of three institution's attempts to streamline external survey requests using an excel document that essentially maps where each data point requested falls across the external surveys. After the institutions outlined their efforts, a third-party vendor, The Noodle Companies, LLC provided their approach to streamlining external surveys for institutions via the use of a Common Data Library. Overall, this was an amazing experience and I am so grateful to have been given the opportunity to share my work and to learn from so many others in the field.

CONFERENCE REPORT

MIDDLE STATES COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION: STARTING A COMPLIANCE PROGRAM by Erin Bailey

Simply defined, compliance is "the process of meeting the expectations of others" (www.corporatecompliance.org) and this workshop helped to shape what that means for institutions of higher education by covering many important topics relevant to campus compliance programs including the eight best practices to follow. There are two driving forces that must be examined and evaluated when developing and implementing a campus compliance program: External Issues (i.e., laws and regulations) and Internal Expectations (i.e., institutional policies, procedures, climate, etc.). Given these driving forces, there is a fine line that compliance programs must follow in order to meet external requirements while staying true to internal standards. Also covered in this workshop was MSCHE's verification of compliance with accreditation, which was essentially a step-by-step guide covering federal regulations related to the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) and the information

institutions are required to make publicly available.

Summer and Fall Assessment Conferences

There are several conferences coming up with a focus on institutional research and assessment. The OIRA will be sending faculty and staff members to attend, as appropriate. Please let us know if you are interested.



MYTHS & MOVEMENTS: REIMAGINING HIGHER EDUCATION ASSESSMENT

September 10-12, 2014
Regional Conference on Assessment
Philadelphia, PA 19104
<http://drexel.edu/aconf/>

Drexel University, one of the 15 largest private, major research universities in the United States and a global leader in experiential education, is hosting its first annual regional conference on assessment. We hope to engage attendees in rich conversation through interactive presentations, snapshot sessions, and plenary addresses. It is anticipated that this first conference will attract 300 to 400 attendees from across the middle states region to Drexel's Philadelphia campus and from many more institutions across the United States in the years to come.

Audience: Discipline Based,
Multidisciplinary, Student Services,
Institutional Research, Assessment
Officers, Administrative Officers



**2014 ASSESSMENT INSTITUTE
October 19-21, 2014**

Marriott Indianapolis Downtown
350 West Maryland Street
Indianapolis, IN 46225
Hosted by Indiana University–Purdue
University Indianapolis
www.assessmentinstitute.iupui.edu

The Assessment Institute in Indianapolis is the nation's oldest and largest event focused exclusively on Outcomes Assessment in Higher Education and is designed to provide opportunities for: individuals and campus teams new to outcomes assessment to acquire foundation knowledge about the field; individuals who have worked as leaders in outcomes assessment to extend their knowledge and skills; those interested in outcomes assessment at any level to establish networks that serve as sources of support and expertise beyond the dates of the Institute.

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**41st NEAIR ANNUAL
CONFERENCE
November 8 – 11, 2014**

Hyatt Regency at Penn's Landing
201 South Columbus Blvd.
Philadelphia, PA 19106
<http://www.neair.org/>

As an individual membership driven association, our mission is to promote institutional effectiveness in postsecondary education through excellence in the field of institutional research. As such, NEAIR focuses on facilitating the professional development of its members while promoting best practice and ensuring integrity in institutional research.

Our regional affiliation extends from Maine to Maryland and as far west at Ohio; however, membership is not restricted by state. All are welcome!



**BECOMING AN ASSESSMENT
FACILITATOR
September 19, 2014**

Doubletree by Hilton
237 South Broad Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107

**The 2014 ANNUAL CONFERENCE
December 3-5, 2014**

Washington Marriott Marquis Hotel
901 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20001
www.msche.org

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education aspires to be the preeminent resource for institutions of higher education striving to achieve excellence in fulfilling their missions. It also intends, through voluntary assessment and adherence to high standards for student learning outcomes and operational behavior, to assure higher education's publics that its accredited institutions are fulfilling their stated purposes and addressing the publics' expectations.

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