



Holy Family
UNIVERSITY

March 2014

OIRA Staff:

Chad May, Director
Elizabeth Mignacca, Asst. Director
Erin Bailey, Research Analyst
Cheryl Glover, Research Assistant

www.holyfamily.edu/oir/

OIRA Lunch & Learn

12:50 – 2:00

Locations to be announced

Second Thursday each month
February - May

April 10

May 8

Faculty Assessment
Coordinators
2013 - 2014

Patricia Dunn,
School of Nursing
Dian He
Gina MacKenzie,
School of Arts & Sciences
Joanne Ma,
School of Business
Roseanna Wright,
School of Education

Assessment Now

Working Towards Continuous Improvement

By Elizabeth Mignacca,
Assistant Director, OIRA

The majority of higher education institutions in the US engage in assessing student learning outcomes, yet there remains a great disparity in the number of institutions that actually use their assessment findings in decision-making. I recently participated in a workshop hosted by the Middle States Commission, focused on leading institutions in using assessment results. As academic programs at HFU move from constructing assessment plans to measuring and interpreting assessment results, the workshop proved helpful in delivered tools and concepts for making use of outcomes in decision-making. In the brief overview that follows, I share highlights from the workshop organized around three themes: *communicating your findings*, *choosing benchmarks*, and *engaging in strategic conversations about higher education*. Together, these topics touch upon the dynamic purpose of using assessment results in decision-making: *working towards continuous improvement*.

Communicating Your Findings.

Assessment findings are the building blocks of evaluation. Evidence about learning outcomes can be used to support claims or arguments about programmatic strengths and weaknesses, and they provide a rationale for improvement and accountability strategies. Incorporating assessment findings into institutional communication provides an opportunity to critically engage multiple audiences. When leaders discuss assessment initiatives with prospective students, their parents and employers, they communicate the institution's commitment to adding value to the student experience. When reporting evaluative analyses, leaders demonstrate a campus community's efforts toward building an enduring institution, one

that has the capacity to respond to change. This message is important to maintaining a vibrant network of supporters, alumni, donors and policymakers. And finally, when leaders consider findings of systematic assessment in their decision-making, they demonstrate that the institutions they lead are adapting to consider the needs of new groups of students, ensuring that concerns for social justice are met.

Benchmarks: Choosing and using Standards. Benchmarking is an evaluative practice that allows institutions to assess their strategic position through a comparative analysis. Looking to best practices in the field, leaders incorporate standards, adopt criteria and study exemplars. In its more active form, benchmarking includes modeling processes and studying underlining philosophies that foment and guide organizational change--all with the intention of achieving greater results. In decision-making, benchmarks can create multiple perspectives on an outcome, helping to provide a context for findings. How do program outcome measures compare to overall institutional benchmarks? To peer programs, or peer institutions? What is a program's past performance in particular areas and how has it changed over time? As leaders answer these questions, they come to contextualize assessment findings and identify those programs, curriculums, and co-curricular units who stand out as "process leaders" within their field.

Engaging in Strategic Conversations about Higher Education.

Communicating findings and choosing benchmarks are antecedents for the use of assessment results to engage in strategic conversations about higher education. This step in evaluative practice allows leaders to address contemporary trends and anticipate social and intellectual developments impacting higher education. Drawing on advanced analyses, they are better able to answer future oriented questions and

engage in public policy debates. Public conversations about accountability, baccalaureate degree completion, the integration of technology in society as well as the income distribution of the US workforce are all enriched when including case study comparisons of systematic assessment.

Blackboard Outcomes Assessment Upgrade

By Chad May, Director, OIRA

As many on campus have already witnessed, Blackboard has been upgraded to the most recent release, including some important building block updates to the Outcomes Assessment module. Here is brief snapshot of what has changed within the Outcomes module (tab).

The first and most significant change was the move of the unit hierarchy, which included programs from Outcomes, to the base Learn module. What this means is that all modules within Blackboard Learn will have some growing connection and capability to leverage the Institutional Hierarchy. OIRA and our Blackboard support team in Information Technology are working on building out that piece of the system and this should be completed in the next month.

Blackboard has streamlined its offerings within the Outcomes module and thus Improvement Initiatives, Improvement Projects, Curriculum Maps, Outcomes Portfolio Templates (which we were not using), and artifact collection templates have been discontinued with the newest release and building block upgrade. Blackboard decided to streamline the Outcomes module to make it more user-friendly; and to limit the scope to make system maintenance, enhancements, and upgrades more systematic and manageable as well as meet institutional client needs. Therefore, much of that functionality is being moved to the community module of Blackboard through the use of Organizations.

OIRA has developed a Program Assessment Organization template in which all documents (curriculum maps, assessment plans, assessment reports, etc.) needed for our annual program/unit assessment planning and reporting process will be housed. Every program/unit has a folder within the organization. We have developed /refined templates in MS Word format to enter assessment plans and annual assessment reports which focus on what data are being collected from students, displaying the results of that data collection, and then having the most space and use to concentrate on developing action plans to use the results to drive performance improvement initiatives. This process is being rolled out simultaneously with the recharged University Outcomes Assessment and Improvement Committee (UOaic) who is reviewing all academic programs assessment plans and reports this Spring and next Fall semester and will review materials for Administrative and Educational Support (AES units include- Student Activities, OIRA, Registrar, Bursar, Admissions, CAE, etc.) units this summer.

The final major change in Outcomes was the move of Goals from the Outcomes module to the base Learn platform as well as the Enterprise Surveys tool which was already available in the Learn module in a previous release.

The system certainly looks different from a user-interface perspective, however, the functionality and all of the data that was in the system is still accessible, albeit perhaps in a slightly different way. The hope is that these changes will result in final analyses that will be much more user-friendly and assist us in improving the assessment process, while informing policy and practices that will improve student learning and the overall student experience at Holy Family University. If you have any questions about the changes to Bb Outcomes Assessment, If you have any questions about the changes to Bb Outcomes Assessment,

please don't hesitate to contact me or Elizabeth Mignacca in the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment.

2014 OIRA Lunch & Learn Sessions

Thursday, April 10, 2014

Thursday, May 8, 2014

Locations to be announced

The OIRA will continue to offer the Lunch & Learn sessions in the spring semester 2014. This is one of the ways to disseminate information and explain the processes used to collect and evaluate institutional data. Please help make these sessions more successful by attending when you can. If you have suggestions for topics please contact the OIRA.



Good Bye Survey Monkey,



Hello Qualtrics

By Erin Bailey

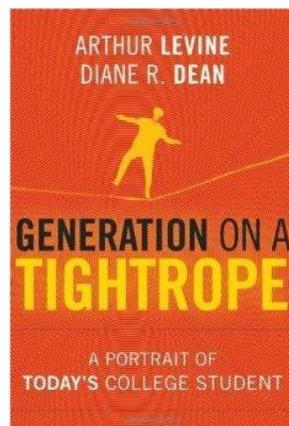
You may have heard by now, but just in case you haven't, the shared university account (skohut) for Survey Monkey has been discontinued as of March 10th. What this means for you if you were an avid Survey Monkey user: you no longer have access to the surveys you had created/stored under that account or the data/reports associated with them. Never fear, if you did not take the time to save what you needed prior to the deactivation, we saved a copy of the surveys and reports under the account. If you need a copy of a survey or report that you had administered via Survey Monkey, let us know and we can get it to you. If you had surveys that you administered on a regular basis out of

Survey Monkey and would like to continue that practice, let us know and we can get you set up on Qualtrics.

Of course we would not take away one survey tool without providing an acceptable alternative for the University community. If you have not heard about Qualtrics yet then you are in for a real treat! This is the new survey tool that we have available to replace Survey Monkey. Qualtrics is a web-based survey software system that allows survey builders to incorporate more sophisticated logic than Survey Monkey offered (e.g., skip logic, display logic, branching, etc.), offers more confidentiality of surveys and results (e.g., users can only see their surveys/responses), and more robust survey distribution and reporting options. If you are in need of getting your Survey Monkey surveys built in and sent out via Qualtrics, contact us and we will be happy to assist. Or if all of this talk about surveys has got you thinking about creating one, let us know and we can help you from survey development, to deployment, to reporting!

Book Review

By Cheryl Glover



Generation on a Tightrope
A Portrait of Today's College Student
By Arthur Levine and Diane R. Dean
Jossey-Bass, 2012

Why read **Generation on a Tightrope**? Because this book gives us a profile of today's college student based on a national survey of over 5,000 students at 270 diverse institutions.

(Unfortunately, Holy Family was not one of the institutions.) Published in 2012, it helps us understand where the students are coming from, and how to meet their needs while providing a quality education. The authors, Dr. Arthur Levine, president of the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, Princeton University, and Dr. Diane R. Dean, associate professor, Illinois State University, make it very clear that the purposes of the university have not changed. They continue to be teaching, research, and service. They argue that what must change is the means by which this generation is educated. The fact is that colleges have changed before. Many colleges saw a significant decrease in enrollment at the turn of the 20th century with the shift from a focus on the classics to a more liberal arts curriculum. Now the shift may not be so much in the curriculum but how it is being delivered.

The tightrope named in the title refers to the situation students find themselves in as they pursue an expensive and time consuming college degree that they know may not yield the high paying career opportunity they were hoping for. They may not be better off financially than their parents. But they believe in the American Dream and, with the willing help of family, believe they will still be able to achieve it.

The authors have attributed much of the change in student's attitudes to the availability of technology and the advance of the digital age. Yet most of higher education continues to operate in an analog age. There is a disconnect between what today's self-absorbed students with their tribe of friends and social networks have become accustomed to, and what higher education offers. Regularly scheduled classes and regularly scheduled office hours do not adequately serve the needs of these students. They think of themselves as consumers and higher

education as a product. They want 24/7 access to faculty and administration through e-mail, text messaging, and social networks. Higher education is a service and they expect certain benefits.

The popularity of cell phones has made it easy for parents and adult children to communicate daily by voice or text. Today's students respect their parents and share with them most aspects of their daily lives. Parents are accustomed to intervening when they perceive their child is being treated unfairly. As a result, parents are contacting college administrators with real or imagined concerns that should be forwarded by the students themselves. Some colleges have created new staff positions to address the increasing number of parent inquiries. Parents want to know what their child is doing and expect the administration to track students and report to parents when questioned.

Generation on a Tightrope covers much more than the topics highlighted here. Ultimately, it is a challenge for traditional institutions of higher education to change and thus they might possibly become obsolete.

2013-2014 UOAIC Meeting Schedule 2:00 - 3:30, ETC 215

January 7	January 21
February 18	March 18
April 22	May 20
June 17	July 22

The University Outcomes Assessment and Improvement Committee is reviewing academic programs and administrative units assessment plans to provide feedback and suggestions for improving programs on-campus. Please speak with your Associate Dean or your supervisor on how you can participate in the development and improvement of your unit or programs assessment plan and activities.

Spring 2014 Conferences

There are several conferences this spring with a focus on institutional research and assessment. The OIRA will be sending faculty and staff members to attend, as appropriate.



Middle States Commission on Higher Education

“Starting a Campus Compliance Program”

May 2, Philadelphia, PA

Attending: Erin Bailey, Research Analyst OIRA



Harvard Graduate School of Education

“Performance Assessment in Higher Education”

April 6-8 Cambridge, MA

Attending: Dr. Elizabeth Mignacca, Assistant Director, OIRA



Association for Institutional Research

Annual Forum

May 27-30, Orlando, FL

Presenting and Attending: Erin Bailey, Research Analyst, OIRA

AIR 2014 Annual Forum

By Erin Bailey

In May, I will be attending my very first AIR (Association for Institutional Research) Forum in Orlando, FL. A tradition for the OIRA has been to attend the regional AIR conference (NEAIR) annually, but this is the first that anyone in our office will be attending the AIR Forum. Another first is that I will be providing a professional presentation. I am a member of a panel and we will be holding a 60-minute session at this Forum. The panel is made up of six members (including a moderator) from four institutions and one non-profit organization, Noodle Education. The panel session is called: Streamlining External Reporting: Comparing College and Third-party Approaches and is all about my favorite pass time as the Research Analyst here in the OIRA: External Surveys (e.g., IPEDS, College Board, U.S. News, etc.).

This panel was born out of the shared goal to establish an effective and efficient way to respond to the abundance of external surveys requesting institutional data that would not only minimize the time and effort required to complete these surveys but to also increase the consistency of responses across them. This is something that each of the panel members has been working on independently, some for longer than others. Once we learned that we were all attempting to do the same thing, we decided to collaborate which resulted in

the opportunity to share our efforts with a much larger audience. To give you some perspective, so far this academic year, the OIRA has submitted to 16 external surveys and there are 9 more that we will submit to by mid-April. A majority of the surveys we submit to have considerable overlap between them.

The concept behind this effort is simple; create one document that links individual survey questions to all of the surveys that we submit to (i.e., an external survey crosswalk). However, the actual creation and execution of this crosswalk has been far from simple! The ideal crosswalk would have all survey items linked to every other survey we participate in which would allow me to fill in the response directly on the crosswalk and know where it will serve as the response for all of the surveys. What I did not account for when I began building my crosswalk was the sheer amount of time it would take to build out such a document and the diligence required to maintain it once survey season began. I began this year’s survey season with only 9 surveys integrated. But this is only the first year that I have put this document into place and as each year goes on; I plan to add more surveys and continue to refine the set up so that it can be as useful as possible to me and those that contribute to the completion of these external surveys across campus.

Below is a snippet of my external surveys crosswalk that demonstrates the essence of the effort.

Data Item	Data Provider	File or Source	Response	Common Data Set	Peterson’s	Barron’s
Total Undergraduates: Full Time: Men	IR	Census_ Enrollment	379	B1.021	EN1.a.017	29.01
Total Undergraduates: Full Time: Women	IR	Census_ Enrollment	1120	B1.022	EN1.a.018	29.02
Total Undergraduates: Part Time: Men	IR	Census_ Enrollment	192	B1.023	EN1.a.019	29.04
Total Undergraduates: Part Time: Women	IR	Census_ Enrollment	491	B1.024	EN1.a.020	29.05