



Assessment in Action

@ Providence College

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National Survey of Student Engagement

Providence College will participate in national study of students' engagement in the learning process during Spring 2005

Over the course of the spring semester, a random sample of first-year and senior students will be invited to participate in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE).

NSSE (*pronounced "nessie"*) has been administered nationally since its pilot in 1999. The number of four-year institutions taking part in the project has increased each year; this year, 533 colleges and universities will administer the survey on their campuses. Indiana University's Center for Postsecondary Research coordinates the project, in cooperation with the Indiana Center for Survey Research and the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems.

According to NSSE, its program "documents dimensions of quality in undergraduate education and provides information and assistance to colleges, universities, and other organizations to improve student learning. Its primary activity is surveying college students annually to assess the extent to which they engage in educational practices associated with high levels of learning and development."

Five benchmarks of effective educational practice provide the foundation for NSSE's assessment of student engagement:

1. *Level of Academic Challenge*
2. *Active and Collaborative Learning*
3. *Student-Faculty Interaction*
4. *Enriching Educational Experiences*
5. *Supportive Campus Environment*

The College chose the Web+ option for survey administration: a random sample of 675 first-year students and 675 seniors will receive an email solicitation, pointing them to the online version of the survey. Students will receive their first three contacts by email. For the fourth contact, a sample of non-respondents will receive a paper version of the survey while the rest of the non-respondents will continue to receive email.

Please join the College in encouraging students to participate! The College's Assessment Program will be sending reminder messages to first-year students and seniors via email, ANGEL, and through select faculty (e.g., DWC teams).

"NSSE was launched with ambitious aims—among them to be widely used by institutions to improve undergraduate education and to help reshape public perceptions of collegiate quality. In five short years, NSSE has done all this and more. No other measure has become so authoritative and so informative so quickly."

Peter T. Ewell, Vice President, National Center for Higher Education Management Systems

Student Engagement Quiz

From NSSE's 2004 Annual Report "Student Engagement: Pathways to Collegiate Success"

True or False?

1. First-year students at master's colleges and universities [such as PC] and research universities spend more time in extracurricular activities than students at liberal arts colleges [bachelor's]?
2. Fewer students (by percentage) attending institutions with "most competitive" admissions criteria report gaining a substantial amount in terms of their understanding of people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds compared with

those at the "least competitive" institutions.

3. Students at liberal arts colleges are more likely to study a foreign language and study abroad compared with students at master's colleges and universities.
4. More seniors at liberal arts colleges work on research projects with a faculty member than their counterparts at research universities.

Please see page 2 for answers.

"To Do" List

ASSESSMENT COORDINATORS

- *Continue data collection and prepare for submission of your 2004-2005 report by June 30, 2005.*
- *Begin to assess academic minors if you have not already done so (academic departments and programs).*
- *Review your department's assessment outcomes. Consider the following question: how do you expect constituents (students, faculty, staff, parents, others) to be different as a result of participating in your program, service, or activity?*
- *Consider new measures for each of your intended outcomes.*
- *Submit any assessment survey plans to the Committee on Assessment Issues & Resources prior to designing and administering your survey.*

Answers to NSSE Student Engagement Quiz (p. 1)

1. FALSE. Students at liberal arts colleges spend an average of 6.8 hours per week on extracurricular activities versus 4.4 hours at master's colleges and universities and 5 hours at research universities.
2. TRUE. 44% of students at the "most competitive" institutions report gaining a substantial amount in terms of their understanding of people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds versus 52% at the "least competitive" institutions.
3. TRUE. 55% of students at liberal arts colleges study a foreign language and 20% study abroad versus 29% and 7%, respectively, at master's colleges and universities.
4. TRUE. 33% of seniors at liberal arts colleges work on research projects with a faculty member compared with 19% at research universities.

PC's results are expected to be available in late 2005.

Update—Campus-Wide Assessments

In addition to all of the assessment work being done in the departments, programs, and offices of the College, the Committee on Assessment Issues & Resources (CAIR) coordinates the administration of several campus-wide assessment initiatives, including the following...

Admitted Student Questionnaire (ASQ): The ASQ details admitted students' perceptions and evaluations of Providence College, prior to matriculation. Currently, it is administered annually. The 2004 analysis is being completed by the Office of Admission.

Cooperative Institutional Research Project (CIRP): The Annual Freshmen Survey, which serves as the foundation for CIRP, describes the characteristics, values, and behaviors of incoming Providence College students; it is administered during New Stu-

"If the results of assessment are not used to inform planning and decisions, colleges and universities often find themselves in positions of being data rich and information poor."

Ronald L. Baker in
Outcomes Assessment in Higher Education
2004, p. 12

dent Orientation each summer. CIRP results for the Class of 2008 have just arrived and will be compiled by Academic Administration.

PC Alumni Survey—One-Year Out: PC's self-developed alumni survey is administered each summer to alums one-year removed from their graduation. The survey provides student satisfaction and outcomes data based on students' evaluation of their Providence College experience. Class of 2003 results are being compiled by the Office of Institutional Research.

Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI): The SSI provides student satisfaction data related to all aspects of campus life. PC administers the survey every three years, to first-year students and seniors, during the Spring semester. The next administration is scheduled for Spring 2006.

Resident Study (ACUHO-I/EBI): The EBI Resident Study provides student satisfaction and outcomes data related specifically to residence living. PC administered the survey for the first time in Spring 2004 and plans to follow an every-three-years schedule, similar to that employed for the SSI.

Feel free to contact Brian Bartolini, in Academic Administration, if you would like further information on PC's campus-wide assessment initiatives.

Survey Guidelines-Assessment

The following guidelines have been established for the administration of assessment surveys at Providence College:

1. *The Committee on Assessment Issues & Resources (CAIR) is the designated clearinghouse for all College assessment surveys (Note: CAIR is not the clearinghouse for faculty research surveys).*
2. *All surveys should be sent to the Committee on Assessment Issues & Resources for review before they are administered. The committee will provide feedback about any potential problems or conflicts about which the department or program may be unaware.*

Assessment surveys should be sent to CAIR for review before they are administered.

3. *The proposed date of administration should be clearly indicated in order that the committee can determine if it will conflict with any other proposed survey(s).*
4. *After the survey is administered, generally, its results should be shared with the Committee on Assessment Issues & Resources.*

The rationale for these guidelines relates to the need for (a) administering surveys in a coordinated fashion, (b) encouraging collaboration among departments and programs when appropriate, and (c) preventing excessive demands being placed on students, faculty, or staff.

appropriate, and (c) preventing excessive demands being placed on students, faculty, or staff.

In Depth: Do Grades Constitute Assessment Data?

Question: Do grades—course grades or specific assignment grades—constitute valid assessment data?

Answer: Yes...when the grade is based on a *scoring rubric* designed to evaluate intended learning outcomes.

A **rubric** is an instructor-generated scoring or grading tool used to describe student achievement. It provides a means to assess the multiple dimensions of student learning represented in their projects, work products, and performances. Rubrics provide evidence of learning patterns and demonstrate areas of strength and weakness.

When developing a rubric, instructors must clearly develop the outcomes, or criteria, on which they will evaluate students' work and the quality measures, or scores, that may be assigned to the completion (or not) of those criteria. In essence, criteria define quality (e.g., "identifies research question clearly and properly," representing one criterion in the "problem-solving skills" area of Dr. Bosack's sample



Grades are valid assessment data when guided by rubrics. Rubrics are designed to evaluate intended learning outcomes

below). Scores articulate gradations of quality (e.g., "exemplary" to "not met," as shown in Dr. Bosack's sample).

Rubrics should be concise and precise. Criteria should address *measurable* outcomes. Finally, rubrics should be flexible; instructors should evaluate their rubrics on a regular basis to determine if they are capturing accurately desired outcomes of student work.

Rubric Resources—Electronic

- Heidi Goodrich Andrade: <http://learnweb.harvard.edu/alps/thinking/docs/rubricar.htm>
- Chicago Public Schools: http://intranet.cps.k12.il.us/Assessments/Ideas_and_Rubrics/ideas_and_rubrics.html
- California State University System: <http://www.calstate.edu/acadaff/sloa/links/rubrics.shtml>
- Discovery School.com - Kathy Schrock's Guide for Educators: <http://www.school.discovery.com/schrockguide/assess.html>
- University of Wisconsin-Stout: <http://www.uwstout.edu/soe/profdev/rubrics.shtml>

Rubric Resources—Print

- Maki, P. (2004). *Assessing for Learning: Building a sustainable commitment across the institution*. Sterling, VA: Stylus and the American Association for Higher Education.
- Walvoord, B.E., & Anderson, V.J. (1998). *Effective Grading: A tool for learning and assessment*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Example: Oral Report Rubric (Dr. Ted Bosack)

In this assignment, students are expected to read and present an oral report on a scholarly research article in the psychology literature that is germane to the class reading assignment for the week. *The scoring criteria are available in the syllabus.*

Name _____ Score _____

Criteria for Scoring Oral Reports of Research Articles

Collaboration Skills: Project Completion Skills

- ___ Submitted or obtained an appropriate article two weeks prior to oral due date
- ___ Scheduled and kept an appointment to discuss article
- ___ Is in class and ready to present on the assigned day
- ___ Appears to be a serious attempt to develop a high quality presentation

Communication Skills: Conventional Expression

- ___ Is properly paced
- ___ Articulates clearly
- ___ Speaks with adequate volume
- ___ Makes eye contact with the student audience
- ___ Explains article clearly for the student audience
- ___ Presents relevant information but does not over-explain technical matters
- ___ States correctly and clearly the conclusions and "take home" message of the research
- ___ Is sufficiently formal for the context
- ___ Is about 10 minutes in length

Problem Solving Skills: Methods Skills

- ___ Identifies research question clearly and properly
- ___ Explains research question clearly and properly
- ___ Identifies independent and dependent variables where appropriate

- ___ Identifies and explains research design and strategy properly
- ___ Provides operational definitions or relevant variables
- ___ Explains the findings of the research and their meaning clearly
- ___ Relates the article to the text and explains clearly its context
- ___ Suggests further research
- ___ Handles questions effectively

Scientific Attitudes and Values: Enthusiasm

- ___ Explains the rationale and importance of the research

Scale

- 3 = Exemplary meeting of the criterion
- 2 = Adequate completion of the criterion
- 1 = Minimal completion of the criterion
- 0 = Criterion not met or addressed

Although the criteria presented here represent student evaluation, the developmental rubric may be used in program evaluation and teaching effectiveness. In the former case, the rubric may be applied to appropriate assignments at various points in a major to see if departmental expectations for scientific inquiry skills are being met by students in the program. In the latter case, instructors may use the scoring criteria to identify areas of consistently poor performance that may require reteaching or a change in the method or approach.

Source: Halonen, J.S., Bosack, T., Clay, S., & McCarthy, M. (2003). A rubric for learning, teaching, and assessing scientific inquiry in psychology. *Teaching of Psychology, 30*, 196-208.

Many thanks to Dr. Ted Bosack, Professor of Psychology, for contributing this article.

ASSESSMENT IN ACTION

FROM DATA TO DECISIONS AT PROVIDENCE COLLEGE

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REMINDER !!!

Please encourage first-year and senior students to respond to their invitation to participate in NSSE

REMINDER !!!



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Assessment Program History—Providence College

The formal, college-wide assessment process began in 1999, with the appointment of a special assistant to the VPAA for assessment, the establishment of the Committee on Assessment Issues & Resources, and Jim & Karen Nichols' assessment consulting visit. Since 1999, the College has staged the introduction of assessment along the following timeline:

- 1998/99, 1999/00 ...: Academic Majors
- 2000/01 ...: Administrative/Educational Support Units
- 2002/03 ...: Academic Minors
- 2003/04 ...: Core Curriculum

Reasons to Assess—Connecting Purpose and Performance

While there are many important reasons to engage in assessment, the following are the most fundamental from the Providence College perspective:

1. **Identifying Purpose**—answers to why things are done and how actions help to fulfill mission
2. **Building Evidence**—evidence-based answers to questions such as: are we doing what we say we do; are we doing well what we say we do?
3. **Formal Linking of Mission, Goals, and Outcomes**—connecting purpose and performance
4. **Regional Accreditation/Governmental Mandates**—NEASC identified assessment as an area for improvement during the College's 1997 accreditation
5. **Competition**—constituents are demanding evidence of success and positive outcomes

Research Highlight—Assessment Methods to Explore Student Learning (Dr. Peggy Maki)

Dr. Peggy Maki, former director of assessment for both NEASC and AAHE and current higher education consultant, is considered one of the country's leading assessment experts. The following is quoted directly from an article she published in NASPA's electronic magazine, *NetResults*.

Some methods that provide direct evidence of student learning and development include the following:

- portfolios that collect student work over time and demonstrate students' abilities to monitor and reflect on their work, providing longitudinal evidence of student learning and development
- course-embedded assignments, providing evidence of how well students transfer learning into a new context
- capstone projects, providing evidence of how well students integrate and apply principles, concepts, and abilities into a culminating project
- observations of student behavior, providing evidence of how well students practice or apply an ability, such as how they participate in collaborative problem solving

- internally or externally juried reviews of student projects or performances, providing evidence of students' problem-solving abilities
- externally reviewed internships, providing evidence of students' problem-solving abilities in a work environment
- performance on a case study, along with students' analysis of how they solved the case study, providing evidence of students' abilities to apply, synthesize and

Maki, P. (2002, January 15). Using multiple assessment methods to explore student learning and development inside and outside of the classroom. NASPA NetResults (<http://www.naspa.org/membership/mem/nr/article.cfm?id=558>)

- solve problems—case studies may be used over time to track the development of students' knowledge or abilities
- essays blindly scored across units, providing evidence of students' abilities to represent ideas, solve problems, and synthesize
- locally designed tests, providing evidence of how well students' achievement matches institutional expectations
- standardized or national licensure tests, providing evidence of student achievement based on norms established outside of an institution.