

Assessment in Action

@ Providence College

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HOLD THE DATE: APRIL 21, 2004, 4:30 pm Dinner/Presentation—Spring Assessment Forum

PC Assessment Notes

From Brian Bartolini, Special Assistant to the VPAA for Assessment & Director of Academic Services

Welcome to *Assessment in Action*—the inaugural issue of PC's bi-annual assessment newsletter!

Assessment in Action is designed to:

1. Provide periodic updates on assessment activities, events, and progress;
2. Remind faculty and staff of upcoming assessment tasks and responsibilities;
3. Share interesting data and/or research related to assessment;
4. Explain and outline assessment policies and procedures; and
5. Celebrate PC's many assessment successes!

Inside this issue you will find descriptions of several assessment accomplishments up to this point; summaries of PC's assessment framework, survey guidelines, and reporting format; a description of the College's Committee on Assessment Issues & Resources; a data spotlight on postsecondary completion trends and a research highlight on assessing student learning both inside and outside of the classroom.

For 2003-2004, the Committee on Assessment Issues & Resources (see p. 3) is exploring several new campus-wide assessment initiatives. The committee, for example, is discussing the National Survey of Student Engagement as a means for gathering meaningful data related to students'

engagement in the teaching and learning process. Plans are also underway to administer the EB/Resident Study to first-year students and seniors every three years, tentatively beginning this spring—just before the new suite-styled residence hall goes online. And, also in Spring 2004, the committee will sponsor an assessment forum for the entire campus community.



Assessment coordinators be sure to check the "To Do" list at the bottom right of Page 1 for important reminders!

Finally, please join me in thanking Dr. Raymond Sickinger, former special assistant for assessment and current director of the Feinstein Institute for Public Service and Community Studies. Dr. Sickinger was instrumental in leading the campus assessment effort for the past several years.

Assessment leads to change at PC!

Select examples from academic departments and educational support units throughout the College

Academic departments and educational support units have been hard at work identifying and assessing outcomes since the College began its formal assessment program in 1999.

These efforts are now being rewarded. While space does not permit a comprehensive listing of all that has been accomplished, it is important to note just a few

of the changes taking place across campus as a direct result of assessment efforts.

In fact, Providence College's assessment success will soon be highlighted in a new book by Dr. Peggy Maki (see p. 4) scheduled for publication in April 2004!

Please see page 2 of *Assessment in Action* for brief descriptions of assessment-related changes.

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"To Do" LIST

ASSESSMENT COORDINATORS

- Submit electronically your 2002-2003 assessment report to Brian Bartolini or Cathy Pantano if you have not already done so (see page 3 for format).
- Continue data collection and prepare for submission of your 2003-2004 report by June 30, 2004.
- Begin to assess academic minors if you have not already done so.
- Schedule an organizational meeting with Brian Bartolini to discuss assessment progress.
- Submit any survey plans to the Committee on Assessment Issues & Resources prior to designing and administering your survey (see p. 3)

Assessment leads to change at PC (examples), con't.

- The Department of Accountancy has administered a survey to graduates that indicated 65% were either interested in taking the CPA or were employed by CPA firms. As a result of the survey, the department is reviewing its curriculum to address this finding.
- The Department of Art History has developed its own comprehensive identification examination for seniors, involving the identification of slides from both western and non-western art. It has also developed a preparation pre-test program that enables students to know what will be expected of them when they take this examination.
- The Department of Biology has surveyed seniors who participated in an internship or independent research project. Students were asked about the rigor, quality, and personal experience derived from these programs. Comments on all these aspects were discussed by the department and in some cases have led to adjustments in the experiences to make them more valuable to the students.
- The Department of History has successfully used an annual exit survey of seniors to determine both strengths and any areas of concern. The results of each year's survey are discussed at departmental meetings and appropriate actions are made to address any concerns.
- The Department of Social Work has undertaken a complete review of its curriculum and has followed a program of course-embedded assessment.
- In response to information gathered from the Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI), significant changes were introduced in the area of Student Health services.
- The Office of Academic Service has used assessment results to improve both the quantity and quality of services to students (e.g., enhancing early intervention for at-risk students based on analysis of incoming student credentials).

Congratulations to these and all departments and programs that have used assessment to inform practice!

Data Spotlight—Postsecondary Completion Trends

A valuable resource for the higher education community is Thomas Mortenson's, *Postsecondary Education OPPORTUNITY*. The purpose of this organization's work is to "inform those who formulate, fund, and administer public policy and programs about the condition of and influences that affect postsecondary education opportunity for all Americans."

Postsecondary Education Opportunity publishes a monthly newsletter dedicated to the study of higher educa-

"About half of those who start college complete a bachelor's degree. This is just as true today as it was a half century ago."

(Postsecondary Education Opportunity, November 2003, p. 4)

tion; the following data is excerpted from the November 2003 issue.

Between 1952 and 2002 the U.S. bachelor's degree completion rate increased from 50.2 to 50.6 percent (i.e., those who begin postsecondary education and complete a degree program); at the same time, between 1952 and 2002, the bachelor's degree attainment rate increased from 10.1 to 29.3 percent (i.e., the percentage of the population holding a bachelor's degree). According to Mortensen, "Clearly, the gains in bachelor's degree attainment have occurred prior to college, namely in increased high school graduation rates and/or college continuation rates for high school graduates. The gains in bachelor's degree attainment have not been produced in higher education."

PC's Assessment Framework

Providence College's college-wide assessment program began in earnest with Jim & Karen Nichol's visit in January 1999. In response to their consultation and the relevant assessment literature, the College adopted a systematic framework for conducting a formal assessment program. The key components of that framework include the following:

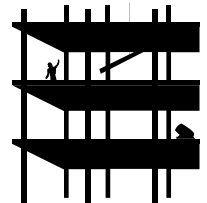
Assessment Process/Framework

1. *Develop/articulate mission*
2. *Develop objectives/goals/outcomes (based on mission)*
3. *Develop measurements (based on objectives/goals/outcomes)*
4. *Conduct measurements*

5. *Evaluate-interpret-report results/Identify necessary improvements*
6. *Execute improvements*

All departments and programs are expected to utilize this framework in order to achieve assessment success. Help is available if you are experiencing any difficulty in formulating or executing this process—please contact Brian Bartolini, special assistant to the VPAA for assessment, for assistance (bbartoli@; x1554).

Thank you for your hard work and your dedication to continuous evaluation and improvement!



Committee on Assessment Issues & Resources (CAIR)

Providence College's *Committee on Assessment Issues & Resources (CAIR)* is charged with the following:

- To advise the special assistant to the vice president on assessment issues and resources,
- To advise College departments and programs, academic and non-academic, on matters related to assessment, and
- To advise academic and non-academic departments and programs on College-administered surveys dealing with student experience at the College, undergraduate and graduate student preparedness for graduate and professional school study and careers, and alumni/ae perceptions of their preparation for lifelong learning.

This task falls to a committee of nine members, spanning various campus departments and divisions and chaired by Thomas Frank, director of institutional research. In addition, to Mr. Frank, CAIR members include:



CAIR meets monthly to coordinate campus assessment activities

- Dr. Brian Bartolini, *special assistant for assessment & director of academic services*
- Dr. Alice Beckwith, *professor of art/art history*
- Dr. John Hogan, *director of personal counseling*
- Dr. Joseph Marina, *dean of continuing education*
- Dr. Marian Mattison, *associate professor of social work*
- Dr. Pamela Sherer, *associate professor of management*
- Dr. Raymond Sickinger, *professor of history and director of the Feinstein Institute*
- Mr. Brian Williams, *associate dean of enrollment management*

Ms. Catherine Pantano provides staff support to the committee on behalf of academic administration.

In addition to preparing for the Spring assessment forum, CAIR is currently reviewing new campus-wide surveys, such as the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), and is researching course evaluation methodologies for potential adaptation.

Survey Guidelines-Assessment

The following guidelines have been established for the administration of 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.
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.

"All assessment surveys should be sent to the Committee on Assessment Issues & Resources for review before they are administered."

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.

Assessment Reporting Format—Reminder

If you are not using TracDat to enter assessment plans, data, and outcomes, please use the structure outlined below in preparing annual assessment reports:

- Department/Program: NAME
- Outcome [one entry for each outcome]: LIST
- Measure for Outcome [one entry for each measurement]: LIST/DESCRIBE
- Means of Assessment and Criteria for Success: LIST/DESCRIBE
- Assessment Results: LIST/DESCRIBE
- Use of Results or Intended Changes Based on Results: LIST/DESCRIBE



If you have any questions regarding PC's assessment reporting format, please contact Brian Bartolini (x1554) or Cathy Pantano (x2356).

ASSESSMENT IN ACTION

FROM DATA TO DECISIONS AT PROVIDENCE COLLEGE

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HOLD THE DATE!!!

APRIL 21, 2004—4:30 pm!

PC Assessment

Spring Forum

*A snapshot of PC assessment
research and activities*

HOLD THE DATE!!!



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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:

1. 1998/99, 1999/00 ...: Academic Majors
2. 2000/01 ...: Administrative/Educational Support Units
3. 2002/03 ...: Academic Minors
4. 2003/04 ...: Core Curriculum

Reasons to Assess

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**
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 senior scholar at AAHE, 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.