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# INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

## Assessment News

September 12, 2012

Volume 12, Issue 1

### Are St. Norbert College Faculty Different Today? (And Are SNC Faculty Any Different Than Faculty Elsewhere?)

When St. Norbert College faculty first participated in the *HERI National Survey of College and University Faculty*, the Dow Jones Industrial Average was 2753, gasoline cost \$.97 a gallon, and an average house sold for \$71,000 (mortgaged at an interest rate higher than 10.5%). The Soviet Union was ending its involvement in Afghanistan, apartheid and the Berlin wall were being dismantled, and Tiananmen Square was filled with students demanding democracy. While sample variation may explain some of the differences in the data over time, comparing faculty responses across SNC's six participations (1989-90, 1992-93, 1998-99, 2004-05, 2007-08, 2010-11) raises interesting questions about whether faculty, their workload and working conditions, sources of satisfaction and stress, and perceptions of college climate have been changing over the last two decades.

Over 50% of current SNC faculty respondents say they have received an award for teaching. This pattern has been relatively stable over the last four administrations but stands in marked contrast to responses in 1989 and 1992. Are present faculty better teachers as a whole? Perhaps more awards are being given or more recently hired faculty are receiving teaching awards as graduate assistants. In comparison, only 40% of private college faculty reported receiving an award for outstanding teaching.

More than 80% of SNC faculty report spending 1-8 hours per week on scholarly writing. (Continued on Page 2)

### The Entering Class of 2012: Highlights from This Year's National *Freshman Survey*

by Catherine March, OIE Student  
Research Assistant

Again this summer, first year students entering SNC completed *The Freshman Survey (TFS)* from the Higher Education Research Institute. Since the 1970s, first year students coming to SNC have completed versions of the *Survey*. Administered during Summer Orientation, virtually the entire domestic portion of the entering class of 2012 completed this year's edition.

The survey contains 46 major questions with numerous sub-items. Content ranges from demographic information to self-rated abilities and life goals. Questions about past activities in high school and plans for future activities in college are also included, as are general reasons for continuing one's education, including reasons for choosing SNC.

The OIE tracks a selection of *Survey* items each year, presenting the "Ten Year Trends" charts which are updated annually for items covering:

Demographics (*Diversity* and self-identification of church membership as *Catholic*)

Reasons for Choosing SNC (*Academic Reputation*, *Post-college employment*, *Size of the college*, *Religious Identification of the College*)

Political Affiliation (*Liberal*, *Middle of the Road*, *Conservative*)

Self-Evaluation (*Academic Ability*, *Drive to Achieve*, *Leadership Ability*, *Writing Ability*, *Spirituality*)

Life Objectives (*Raise a family*, *Be Very Well –Off Financially*, *Help Others in Difficulty*, *Become an Authority in my field*) (Continued on Page 5)

#### Inside this Issue:

Are St. Norbert College Faculty Different Today? (And Are SNC Faculty Any Different Than Faculty Elsewhere?)	1-4
Don't Wait for Program Review	2
The Entering Class of 2012: Highlights from This Year's National <i>Freshman Survey</i>	1, 5-6
Why Assessment?	5

#### Conference Opportunities

Emory University Student Affairs Assessment Conference, The Emory Conference Center Hotel, Atlanta, GA, October 15-16, 2012.

The 2012 Assessment Institute, Marriot Hotel, Indianapolis, IN, October 28-Oct 30, 2012.

The 13th Annual Texas A&M Assessment Conference, It's Time to Show Your Stuff, College Station, TX, February 17-19, 2013.

North Central Association Higher Learning Commission's 2013 Annual Conference, April 5-April 9, 2013.



Assessment Resources

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## **Are St. Norbert College Faculty Different Today? (And Are SNC Faculty Any Different Than Faculty Elsewhere?)**

(Continued from Page 1)

Percentages around 80% have been reported for each of the last four national faculty surveys which differs substantially from the approximately two-thirds of faculty who reported spending 1-8 hours per week on scholarly writing in 1989 and 1992. This percent also differs substantially from the 64% of private college faculty who report spending this amount of time on scholarly writing.

Three-quarters of SNC faculty (77% nationally) express high overall job satisfaction, but this percent is neither as high as it was in 1989 and 1992, or as low as it was in 2004 or 2007. An increasing percent of SNC faculty cite personal finances as a source of stress, which is also true nationally. This may reflect the current economic situation and also explain why 48% of faculty respondents (53% nationally) identified “increasing earning power” as the chief benefit of going to college in 2010, eclipsing a percentage that had never reached higher than 14% of SNC faculty in the past. Committee work, publishing demands, institutional red tape, and working with under-prepared students appear to be sources of stress for an increasing percent of SNC faculty. All SNC percentages on these items are higher than for faculty nationally.

In spite of the College’s efforts to promote student/faculty collaborative research, a lower percent of faculty respondents said they are “conducting research with undergraduates” on the 2007 and 2010 surveys than in 1998 and 2004, but the most recent percentage (64%) is the same as that reported by faculty nationally. A smaller percent of current SNC faculty also reported teaching in general education, but a considerably higher percent of SNC faculty teach in general education than faculty nationally (32%). The percent of SNC faculty who said they have considered leaving academe has been higher in the last three surveys compared to the first three, although a smaller percent report considering early retirement. In the last three surveys the percent of SNC faculty considering leaving academe has been higher than nationally.

Compared to the first several administrations of the national survey, a smaller percent of SNC faculty are satisfied with professional and social relationships with other faculty, and the competence of their colleagues. On all three items, national faculty report greater satisfaction than SNC faculty. Finally, only about a third of current faculty (compared to 54% nationally) agree that “faculty respect for each other is descriptive of this institution”

compared to about two-thirds in 1989 and 1992. About two-thirds of current SNC respondents (55% nationally) cite faculty meetings as a source of stress, a percent that has been typical of the last four surveys, but differs from faculty responses in 1989 and 1992. A greater percent (69%) than ever before regard the promotion/review process as a source of stress.

The data would seem to describe a competent and hard-working faculty under stress. Although three-quarters of SNC faculty report high overall job satisfaction, stressors such as personal finances, committee work, publishing demands, institutional red tape, working with under-prepared students, and the promotion/review process are mentioned by an increasing number of SNC faculty. Perhaps of greatest concern, however, are the smaller percent of SNC faculty (compared to our counterparts nationally) who are satisfied with their professional and social relationships with other faculty, respect for each other, or the competence of their colleagues--underscoring why this year’s focus on civility should be taken seriously.

All of the HERI *National Survey of College and University Faculty* data, including national comparisons, can be found on the OIE web site ([www.snc.edu/oie](http://www.snc.edu/oie)). A summary is included in the insert.

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### **Don’t Wait for Program Review**

Data for all academic programs are updated annually and can be found on the OIE web site ([www.snc.edu/oie](http://www.snc.edu/oie)). Under Quick Links, simply click on Program Review Data. Here you will find peer and aspirant comparisons, numbers of majors and minors, course offerings and enrollments since 1991, grade distributions, profiles of graduating seniors, advisee load, and examples of majors’ post-graduate employment. In addition, you will find aggregated SOOT data and indirect evidence of program performance in the form of SNC Current Student Survey and HERI Senior Survey data. The data also afford opportunities for comparison between your program and division, or to the College overall. For program review purposes, these data should be supplemented by your own student learning outcomes assessment data.

To help you navigate the data, OIE has prepared a *Program Review Data Guide* and a set of *Discussion Questions for Program Review Data*. Both can be found on the OIE web site. Both are intended to help readers better understand how the data can inform important program issues.

Under the revised Program Review Guidelines, analysis of data (including your own student learning outcomes assessment data) constitutes an important first step in the program review process. OIE personnel are available to assist programs as they begin to analyze and interpret their data. Just ask.

A Comparison of Six Administrations of the HERI National Survey of College and University Faculty for St. Norbert College												
Survey Year	1989-90		1992-93		1998-99		2004-05		2007-2008		2010-2011	
	SNC	All Private	SNC	All Private	SNC	All Private	SNC	All Private	SNC	All Private	SNC	All Private
Sample Size	n=73		n=106		n=58		n=52		n=75		n=54	
Survey Item												
awarded for outstanding teaching	38	30	41	34	53	37	53	40	62	39	54	40
conducted research with undergraduates	50	61	51	64	68	68	76	64	55	58	64	63
interests lie primarily in research	1	1	0	1	0	1	4	1	*	*	*	*
teach more than 12 hours/week	33	33	22	32	30	29	31	24	29	27	30	21
spend 17-20 hours preparing to teach	16	16	14	17	23	17	28	16	27	16	15	15
spend 21-45 hours preparing to teach	31	18	18	16	18	16	10	15	10	16	13	14
Spend 5-12 hours in committee meetings	45	23	32	25	46	24	48	21	49	30	37	30
spend 1-4 hours/week on other administration	35	37	37	39	56	41	53	42	46	42	54	42
spend 1-8 hours/week on scholarly writing	68	57	63	59	80	59	79	60	71	62	82	64
taught in general education	70	55	56	56	55	58	72	57	62	53	48	34
considered leaving academe	27	38	27	35	32	35	45	32	41	33	39	32
considered leaving SNC for another college	*	*	*	*	*	*	60	40	54	44	50	44
experience joy in their work	*	*	*	*	*	*	55	70	*	*	*	*
feel good about the direction of their life	*	*	*	*	*	*	47	65	*	*	*	*
achieved a healthy balance of personal & professional	*	*	*	*	*	*	28	38	23	32	24	32
considered early retirement	28	24	35	26	40	27	34	19	18	18	28	18
women believe must work harder for acceptance	*	*	*	*	*	*	47	25	32	29	43	29
women who have been sexually harassed	*	*	10	13	11	8	29	7	24	5	29	7
women sufficiently involved in decision-making	*	*	*	*	*	*	29	59	60	60	76	63
women agree tenure & promotion criteria are clear	*	*	*	*	*	*	41	67	56	72	33	71
women believe gender equity an institutional priority	*	*	*	*	*	*	12	40	32	44	24	40
sources of satisfaction												
office space	*	*	*	*	*	*	65	69	67	70	76	71
autonomy/independence	94	84	95	85	88	89	85	87	83	86	87	86
professional relationships w/faculty	87	80	79	75	79	78	81	81	72	83	74	81
social relationships w/faculty	*	*	70	62	58	67	75	69	66	73	63	72
competency of colleagues	85	74	82	72	77	79	85	82	78	82	76	81
overall job satisfaction	82	71	86	72	75	78	64	80	69	77	74	77
opportunity to develop new ideas	*	*	*	*	*	*	63	77	*	*	*	*
availability of child care	*	*	*	*	*	*	64	23	56	23	37	23

Continued on next Page 4

[illegible]

## Why Assessment?

by Bob Rutter, AVP for Institutional Effectiveness

I was recently reminded of an elective course I took as a graduate student in school law. The instructor, a very capable third year law student, was a last minute substitute for a tenured faculty member who had become seriously ill. I learned a lot about school law that semester, but received my lowest grade ever—and so did all of my colleagues—most of whom had completed or nearly completed their dissertations and would receive their Ph.D. that May.

The grades we received in that class couldn't be explained by rigor or lack of motivation. Rather our instructor had neglected to teach the one thing upon which our final grade most depended. You see, our final paper (assigned in the 10<sup>th</sup> week) was a legal brief. We were to choose a topic, research cases, and prepare a legal brief—just like any first year law student. Simple, except we weren't first year law students. None of us had ever taken a law course, read a legal decision, researched cases, or written a legal brief—in fact, none of us had ever visited a law library (you know, where all the books look the same).

But surely, a group of near-PhDs could complete this oh-so-common assignment without assistance. And that was our instructors' attitude, responding to our requests for help with increasing anger and cynicism. So we six found the law library, leaned on the staff for uncharacteristic assistance, and taught ourselves to write a legal brief—or so we thought. We all got Ds.

So what does this story have to do with assessment? I don't know whether this instructor ever taught the course again or whether she modified her final assignment or her syllabus, but I hope she did. She did a lot of things right and I learned a lot about school law, but she also made one colossal mistake. I hope she took some time to assess. One of her intended outcomes (Graduate students in Curriculum and Instruction will be able to write a legal brief on an important issue in school law.) was not accomplished—in this case, because it was never taught. While it's unlikely that any SNC faculty member would make a mistake this big, assessment data can help foster a conversation about student learning and/or program improvement. Students don't always underperform because they lack ability, are unmotivated, or don't care. More students might meet our expectations if program emphases were adjusted to better reflect our expectations, or if more attention were given in class to areas of perceived deficiency.

I hope our poor performance suggested something more than a bunch of near Ph.Ds. in their final semester not taking an assignment seriously. In reality, we probably worked harder on that assignment than many others. I hope she thought about (assessed) the reasons for our poor performance and either decided to modify the as-

signment or include in her syllabus sessions on how to research a case and write a legal brief. It would have made a huge difference, and I might even be able to say that I once successfully wrote a legal brief—something I can't say today.

Assessment can help us be better teachers and offer more successful programs—things we all want for our students. Now that the accreditation visit is behind us, OIE will re-focus this year on program-level assessment of student learning. Expect a conversation soon.

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## The Entering Class of 2012: Highlights from This Year's National Freshman Survey

(Continued from Page 1)

The remainder of this article discusses *Survey* highlights from the entering class of 2012.

This year's findings followed the "Ten Year Trend" trajectory for many items. For example, the percentage of entering students who chose SNC based on its religious affiliation ("*Very Important*," "*Essential*") was 25% for women and 12% for men. In prior years, these percentages have hovered between 22-26% for women and 10-14% for men. However, for only the second time (first was 2009) in ten years, the percentage of both sexes reporting their religious affiliation as "Catholic" dropped below 60%.

Entering students from 2012 do not always closely follow trend, however. For example, both men and women showed a large increase in "*Graduates get good jobs*," as a reason for choosing SNC. The percentage was 80% for both sexes, above the previous ranges of 60-70% for women and 35-45% for men. The increase for entering first year men is particularly "off-trend," with a jump of thirty-five percentage points from last year's entering class.

Another shift occurred for men who chose SNC based on the "*Size of the college*." Men normally range between 60-70% citing the *size of SNC* as a reason they selected the College. This year the percentage declined to 45%. Percentages for women have been in the 70-78% range, with no obvious shift this year.

Politically, the majority of 2012 entering women (about 60%) continue to select "middle-of-the-road" as their political orientation. Less than 50% of men do so, with a large minority (about 38%) who describe themselves as "conservative."

With regard to life objectives after college, the importance of *raising a family* fluctuates somewhat from year to year. For women, this percentage typically ranges from 75%-85%. This year, the percent rose to 88%, compared to last year's 78%. In contrast, the percentage of 2012 men who report this life goal as "essential" or "very important" was 77%—making this the largest 'gender gap' in the ten year trend. (Continued on Page 6)



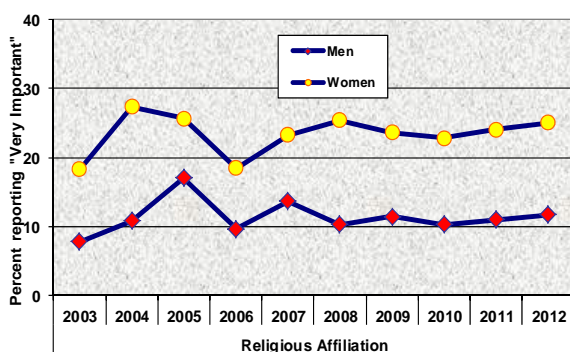
## The Entering Class of 2012: Highlights from This Year's National Freshman Survey

(Continued from Page 3)

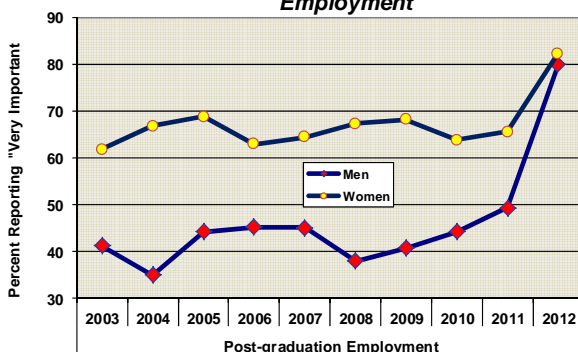
The percentage of students who rate the life goal, "*Being Very Well-Off Financially*," as "Very Important" or "Essential" has increased over the last ten years, particularly for women. In 2003, for example, the percentage of women was 62%; for 2012, it is 81%. The percentage of men has fluctuated between 70%-83% for this same item; it also was at its highest this year.

Perhaps the most interesting differences shown by the entering class of 2012 when compared to the nine previous ones are those related to economics. The large increase in men who report their choice of SNC was influenced by the perception that the College's graduates can get good jobs, and the increase in both men and women with the life goal of "*Being Very Well-off Financially*," suggest significant interest in post-college financial well-being and stability. This interest, in turn, may be a reflection of the current "Great Recession" and its impact on families.

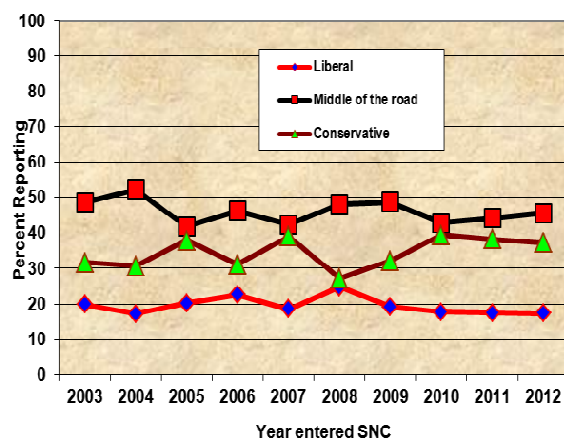
Reason Freshmen Chose SNC: *Religious Affiliation*



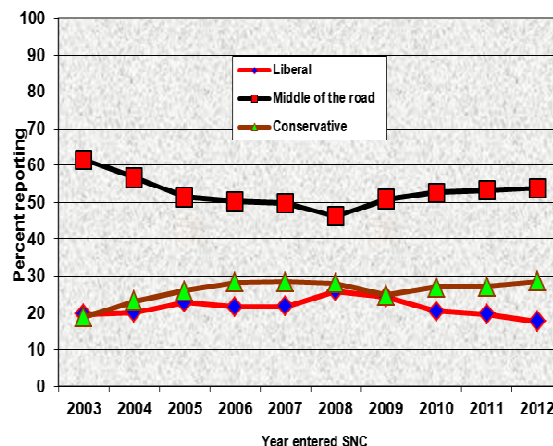
Reason Freshmen Chose SNC: *Post-graduation Employment*



Political Self-Description: *Freshman Men*



Political Self-Description: *Freshman Women*



Freshman Life Goal: *Be Very Well-Off Financially*

