

St. Norbert College
Digital Commons @ St. Norbert College

Assessment News

Office of Institutional Effectiveness

12-1-2003

Volume 3, Issue 3

St. Norbert College

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.snc.edu/assessmentnews>

Recommended Citation

St. Norbert College, "Volume 3, Issue 3" (2003). *Assessment News*. Paper 41.
<http://digitalcommons.snc.edu/assessmentnews/41>

This Newsletter is brought to you for free and open access by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness at Digital Commons @ St. Norbert College. It has been accepted for inclusion in Assessment News by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ St. Norbert College. For more information, please contact sarah.titus@snc.edu.



INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Volume 3, Issue 3

December 1, 2003

ASSESSMENT NEWS

How Well Do You Know Our Seniors?

By

Kyle Thompson (SNC/OIE Research Assistant)

Do you think you know the seniors at St. Norbert College? If so, I want you to try a little exercise. You can grade yourself on the number you ranked correctly with the scale I provided at the bottom of the article. Try to rank the following 10 goals in order of greatest importance to least importance to our seniors:

- Have administrative responsibility
- Help others in difficulty
- Become successful in own business
- Become a community leader
- Raise a family
- Be very well off financially
- Influence the political structure
- Develop a meaningful philosophy of life
- Become involved in environmental programs
- Influence social values

That wasn't too tough, was it? It should be fairly obvious. After all, people should all want the same thing, right? Fortune and fame could possibly be the best things in life. You might think we no longer have any morals or ethics. The ideal life would be to get rich quick, retire early, and spend the rest of our lives vacationing and having fun. After all, money, power, and prestige seem like pretty popular things these days. They seemingly rule the business world, and I guess politics *might* also be influenced by them in some way.

Well, if you agree with the above point of view, you might be a little surprised at how the seniors at St. Norbert College actually rate their goals.

(Continued on Page 2)

Assessment Can be Found in the Most Unlikely Places

By Barbara Bloomer with Maria Jaberg

"Does what I do really make a difference; a difference for whom or for what? If I changed just one aspect of a process, would the same outcome be attained? How do the outcomes I expect compare to the outcomes of others in a comparable position? What are outcomes, anyway?" This maze of questions becomes so convoluted and seemingly unmanageable that doing nothing seems to be the path of least resistance and most of us take it! However, as I became increasingly inquisitive about what I had been doing for the past 20 years, I decided to pursue the possibility of conducting the National College Health Assessment (NCHA) Survey. This survey was developed by the American College Health Association (ACHA) and has been administered to nearly 100,000 students in public, private, large, and small institutions nation wide. It seemed to be the best place to start defining the questions in search of answers.

Anyone who has done research knows that it does not occur without a price tag. Since my budget would not accommodate the expenses associated with this project, I submitted an application for funding to The Office of Institutional Effectiveness. To my amazement and delight I received a grant to conduct the NCHA survey in the spring of 2003.

Here is our story.

The purpose of the NCHA survey is to analyze a wide range of college student health issues, and identify how they relate to the development and (Continued on Page 3)

Inside this issue:

How Well Do You Know Our Seniors?	2
Assessment Can be Found in the Most Unlikely Places	3
Need Funds?	3
How Motivated are Students when Completing Assessment Activities	4

Assessment Conference Possibilities

90th Annual Meeting of the Association of American Colleges & Universities, "Practicing Liberal Education", January 21-24, 2004, Washington, D.C.

AAHE Focus on Learning Workshop: Building Learner—Centered Institutions: Developing Institutional Strategies for Assessing and Improving Student Learning, January 23-25, 2004, San Ramon Valley Conference Center, San Ramon, California

Institute on College Student Values February 5-7, 2004, Turnbull Conference Center, Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida.

Association of American Colleges and Universities, General Education and Assessment, March 4-6, 2004, Long Beach, California.

How Well Do You Know Our Seniors?

(Continued from Page 1)

The goal more 2000-2003 seniors across the board rated as most important to them was *to raise a family*. Over 80% of 2000-2003 seniors felt that it was “very important” or “essential.” Is that what you thought? If you did guess it, then maybe you do know how our seniors think. After all, it was the most important by 10%!

Money has to be next, right? I like money. I’m pretty sure lots of other people are fairly fond of it too. For the most part, we go to college to increase our earnings potential. Just because it doesn’t buy happiness doesn’t mean that we’d be happy without any. So I’m not afraid to admit that I was more than a little surprised to find out that *helping others in difficulty* swept the board as the second most important goal, with an average of 73% of 2000-2003 seniors deeming it to be “very important” or “essential.”

All right, so now money definitely has to come into play. So if you ranked money third, you were right. Of the items listed, *be very well off financially* comes in 3rd, with an average of 60% of seniors from 2000-2003 rating it as being “very important” or “essential.”

Developing a meaningful philosophy of life comes in 4th, and *influence social values* rounds out the top five. They are then followed by *have administrative responsibility*, *become a community leader*, *become successful in own business*, and *to become involved in environmental programs*. Finally, rounding out the top ten is *influencing the political structure*, with an average of only 19% of seniors rating it as “very important” or “essential.” You can see how the seniors rated all of the goals in the table below.

Now, being a senior, you’d think I might actually be able to have a somewhat educated guess as to what goals the senior class as a whole would deem as most important. I’m not going to tell you what my answers were, but if you ranked the above goals similar to how I did, you’d realize that you might not actually understand the senior class as well as you’d thought.

Correct

- **8 to 10:** You are either currently a college senior or were one in the recent past. If none of those apply, then I am at a loss for words because you know way too much about college seniors to have just made some really good guesses.
- **5 to 7:** Not too shabby. You may have once been a college senior, or were close to someone who was. You are definitely still on top of your game as to how the typical St. Norbert senior feels about some goals but it is sure something you can brag about to your friends.

- **2 to 4:** A little less than stellar. Not much to say. Think of it this way. If this were a Calc test, and you brought it home to your parents...well, let’s just say it would be a bad idea to show your parents.
- **< than 2:** Wow. You are close to a lost cause. My only advice would be to immediately go see *Scary Movie 3*, *American Wedding*, or at the very least read some Chicken Soup for the College Soul in an emergency attempt to help you find your lost college side.

Senior Survey (SNC Classes of 2000-2003) Percent seniors who feel goals are "essential" or "very important"						
	2000	2001	2002	2003	Ave.	Rank
Influence the Political Structure	20	21	18	19	19	10
Influence Social Values	52	51	49	47	50	5
Raise a Family	84	83	81	85	83	1
Have Administrative Responsibility	43	49	40	42	44	6
Be Very Well off Financially	64	61	58	58	60	3
Help Others in Difficulty	76	74	72	72	73	2
Become Successful in Own Business	35	33	27	33	32	8
Become Involved in Environ Programs	33	30	21	25	27	9
Develop a Meaningful Philosophy of Life	56	53	49	48	52	4
Become a Community Leader	39	40	39	34	38	7
Based on N: 2000=314, 2001=289, 2002=317, 2003=321						

Apply Now for Assessment Mini-Grants

Mini-grants of approximately \$3,000 are available. Funds may support any of the following assessment activities:

- Carrying out one or more elements of an academic discipline or student life program assessment plan
- Data analysis or report writing
- Elaborating, revising, or developing a discipline or program assessment plan
- Acquiring, administering, or scoring assessment instruments
- Enhancing expertise regarding student outcomes assessment

A copy of the “Request for Funds to Support Assessment Activities” is available on the OIE website: www.snc.edu/oie or by contacting Pat Wery (x3855) in the Office of Institutional Effectiveness.

Assessment Can be Found in the Most Unlikely Places

(Continued from Page 1)

success of college students. In the spring of 2003, the SNC Health Services Director, Barbara Bloomer, conducted the National College Health Assessment survey at St. Norbert College. This survey consists of fifty-eight items addressing health issues facing college students across the country. These questions range from smoking, drinking, and drugs to sexual activity, exercise, and nutrition. The projected goal was to have 700 surveys completed with a general cross section of the student population, realizing that a true random study would not be possible.

A variety of methods were used to distribute the surveys. Seventeen interested faculty allowed Bloomer to administer the survey in their classes; several large student events presented another opportunity for distribution; and, finally, organizations, clubs, athletic teams, and individuals were asked to complete the survey. In the end, 687 surveys were completed, with class and gender demographics representing nearly perfectly the overall SNC student population.

A total of five hundred and thirty viable surveys were used in the compilation of the data file. To assist with the analysis of this data, the Office of Admissions granted a research fellow to the Health Center, and a very talented freshman, Maria Jaberg, has been exploring the data with variable identification, correlation, and graph development.

The task in front of us now is to identify the limitless possibilities we have to correlate data and compare SNC students to each other and to students across the country. Jaberg writes, "The prospects of this survey are extremely exciting, as the data will be analyzed and compared to other institutions and national averages to determine where St. Norbert College students fare on health issues."

The results of these comparisons will be used to define health education programs provided to SNC college students with the intentions of increasing awareness and creating a healthier environment for students at St. Norbert College. In the infancy of this data analysis, some exciting findings are already apparent. When the SNC Women's Center asked the Health Center to assist in the development of a stress and disrupted sleep program on campus, we were eager to do so and found several variables from the survey that correlated stress, sleep (or lack of it) and academic performance. Students were quite interested to find that what they were experiencing was also found in the survey. Women are more stressed than men and women get fewer hours of sleep/day and per week than men. Another interesting tidbit from the survey: Women rated their general health to be "less than excellent" more often than men. This finding in itself has been intriguing and will fuel deeper analysis.

Already, several new ideas have sprouted from the preliminary data. Some programs will need to be re-evaluated and perhaps replaced with those more directly related to correlates in the survey. However, many programs will receive justification and will

continue as necessary health education (such as those related to alcohol and drug use). It is truly exciting to have all this information at one's fingertips; however, the question is, "how will we do all there is to do?" And the mantra will be: one step at a time, one step at a time!

It is our hope that some of the more interesting findings will be placed on the SNC Health Center web page (restricted to SNC logins), and that other offices and student groups would be able to use the information to assist in the development, revision, or maintenance of many programs. When this is feasible, we will notify the College community about this resource. Additionally, those faculty who had allowed the survey to be distributed in their classrooms will be offered the opportunity of a class presentation by Bloomer and Jaberg with data manipulation related to variables of their choice. As time permits, additional requests will be honored for presentations. Our ultimate goal is to present our findings at the regional North Central College Health Association (NCCHA) or National (ACHA) College Health Conference.

Questions about the survey or interest in defining variables for analysis should be directed to Barbara Bloomer, Director of Health Services, Main Hall.

**ASSESSMENT RESOURCES****Dr. Robert A. Rutter**

Director of Institutional Effectiveness

Main Hall, Room 215

Phone: (920) 403-3964 FAX (920) 403-4096

Email: bob.rutter@snc.edu

INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS TEAM

Deborah Anderson (Phone: 403-3199)

Kristee Boehm (Phone: 403-3448)

Jack Williamsen (Phone: 403-3993)

Ray Zurawski (Phone: 403-3202)

OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Patricia Wery, Administrative Assistant

Main Hall, Room 219 Phone: (920) 403-3855

WEB SITE: www.snc.edu/oie

How Motivated are Students when Completing Assessment Activities?

By: Raymond Zurawski

Earlier this month I attended two very interesting sessions at the annual Assessment Institute held on the Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis campus. The topic of both presentations was the assessment of student motivation. Why does the topic matter? Because if students undertake the assessment activities we administer with little interest, enthusiasm, and/or effort, then the results of such activities may not provide an accurate representation of students' knowledge, skills.

Concerns about student motivation in the context of outcomes assessment are long-standing ones. With few exceptions, the types of assessment activities to which students are exposed could be construed as "low-stakes" or "low-cost" to the student. That is, student performance on such assessment instruments rarely is used to determine a grade in an assignment or a course. At most, completion of such assessment activities is required in order to pass a course or to complete a major program, but level of performance is not explicitly tied to the requirements. Under such circumstances, many of us might assume that students are unlikely to be motivated to do their best work when completing assessment activities.

The presentations I attended described use of an instrument to examine student motivation during assessment activities, developed and refined by Wolf and Smith (1995) and revised by Sundre (1997) at the James Madison University doctoral

program in assessment and measurement. Perhaps not surprisingly, the findings suggested that student motivation is a predictor of level of performance on assessment measures. What was surprising was that student motivation was relatively high, even in the context of low-stakes assessment situations.

In the experience of the presenters, the optimal ways to increase student motivation revolve around making clear to students the personal benefits of completing the assessment activities. Among their suggestions:

- communicate the importance and potential uses of the assessment information for individual students,
- illustrate how the data have been and will be used by faculty members,
- administer the activities in a professional manner,
- offer prompt feedback (norm-referenced and, where possible, criterion-referenced).

The presenters also noted that student motivation appears to be considerably lower among students when faculty in their programs either disparage the assessment activities or appear to have little interest or enthusiasm for the assessment efforts. The authors were not particularly encouraging of the use of incentives in an effort to boost student motivation, although they did acknowledge that some incentives (textbook or tuition credits or vouchers) might work better than others.

I believe the instrument described in these presentations could readily be adapted for use here at St. Norbert College, and I would be happy to discuss this issue in more detail with any interested faculty or staff.

