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INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

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ASSESSMENT NEWS

Freshmen Advisement Pilot Program By: Jeff Ritter

The Academic Advisement Office and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness have partnered together in a pilot project that has as its goal improved freshmen retention. Another goal of the project is to improve the advisement relationship between faculty advisors and their advisees, and to recommit ourselves to the developmental model of academic advisement. Many advisors on campus feel that OARS has made advisement a mechanical exercise focused on selecting courses, and that we have abandoned the developmental model of advising. Developmental academic advising is a systematic process based on a close student-advisor relationship intended to aid students in achieving educational, career, and personal goals through the utilization of the full range of institutional and community resources. It both stimulates and supports students in their quest for an enriched quality of life. Developmental advising relationships focus on identifying and accomplishing life goals, acquiring skills and attitudes that promote intellectual and personal growth, and sharing concerns for each other and for the academic community. Developmental academic advising reflects the College's mission of total student development.

The pilot program started this Fall. Selected advisors from each academic division have "freshman only" advisees. The advisors selected were Tom Bolin, Julianna Claassens, Karlyn Crowley, Darin Davis, Brad Ellis, Pete Lohrey, Jason Pierceson, Paul Schnorr, Matt Stollak, Frank Sylvester, and Bob Rutter. These advisors were trained by Jeff Ritter, Director of Academic Advisement, and Jack Williamsen, Retention Coordinator. In addition to the normal (Continued on Page 3)

Sophomore Research Assistant Analyzes Data on His Class By: Nick Gilson

When I first began working in the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, I was astonished at the sheer amount of data and information that was available for interpretation. With all of the survey and data files, I could run the information and find out almost anything about the SNC student body as a whole. I admit, I enjoyed looking at these statistics. Finding out what percentage of students complete four years at SNC, label themselves as 'conservative' or 'liberal,' or had an ACT score of thirty or above proved to be especially interesting.

After working with all of the data for some time, I discovered that this information is even more powerful than my initial SPSS outputs. With the use of many of the surveys taken by the student body and the exceptional statistical computer programs available, the data reveal a great deal about the students at SNC, particularly my class - the sophomore class.

The UCLA-sponsored *2003 Your First College Year* survey and the *2002 Student Information Form* are two surveys taken by SNC students. As a freshman, my classmates and I took the *2002 Student Information Form (SIF)* at our summer orientation. The *2003 Your First College Year (YFCY)* was taken close to the end of the 2002-2003 school year by a sampling of 110 freshmen, 95 of them with matched *SIF* results.

These two surveys reflect a significant amount of change that takes place during a student's first year of college. *SIF* responses reflect students' preconceived notions about themselves and college, while students taking the *YFCY* have adjusted to college life, their peers, and academics. (Continued on Page 2)

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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.

Sophomore Research Assistant Analyzes Data on His Class

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The most significant change of these two surveys is the decrease in perceived academic ability. On the *SIF*, 67% of the students rated themselves above average or in the top ten percent compared with their peers. On the *YFCY*, 54% of the SNC freshmen rated themselves above average or in the top ten percent. This thirteen-percent drop is quite significant. Students came into college with high ideas about themselves as compared to their high school cohorts, but when compared to their college peers a year later, many ranked themselves differently.

The two most dramatic *increases* were in self-perceived computer skills and writing ability. Each of these areas went up 7%. Perhaps the constant use of a personal computer for essays, homework, and Internet research increased the students' computer skills. The emphasis on writing at St. Norbert College through the General Education Program's use of the writing intensive class is evident in the second number.

Overall, eight ability areas had an increase in ratings of "above average" or "top ten percent," while twelve showed a decrease. This does not automatically carry a negative connotation, but merely suggests that students do reevaluate themselves after one year of college.

Another way of looking at changes during the freshmen year is to see what happens to self-ratings (on the *SIF*) of entering freshmen who see themselves as "average" when compared with their peers. How do they respond to the same ability items on the *YFCY* at the end of the year?

The most significant *decrease* is in perceived Mathematical Ability. While 54% of self-rated average freshman continued to rate themselves as average on the *YFCY*, 24% rated themselves *below average* by the end of the year.

Self-rated math skills aside, looking over all the ability areas on the *SIF*, the number of "average" students who rated themselves above average or higher on the *YFCY* is much greater than the number who said they were below average. This fact should excite the St. Norbert College community. Among the highest increases were: the *ability to cooperate*, with 75% responding "above average;" *understanding of others*, with 58% responding "above average;" and *physical health*, with 47% responding "above average." Increases in ratings of *intellectual self-confidence* and *leadership* were also notable.

The tables below provide statistics for self-reported ability items on both surveys. This information was derived from only one section in the *SIF* and *YFCY*. There is an infinite amount of information that can be calculated from any survey; therefore I'll have my hands more than full for the next few years.

2002 SIF & 2003 YFCY: Changes during Freshmen Year Percent Freshmen Rating Self "Above Average" or "Top Ten Percent"

	SIF	YFCY	Change
Academic Ability	67%	54%	-13%
Artistic Ability	19%	20%	1%
Computer Skills	35%	42%	7%
Cooperativeness	87%	80%	-7%
Creativity	55%	50%	-5%
Drive to Achieve	70%	66%	-4%
Emotional Health	64%	67%	3%
Leadership Ability	69%	69%	0%
Mathematical Ability	41%	35%	-6%
Physical Health	67%	68%	1%
Persistence	65%	59%	-6%
Popularity	45%	50%	5%
Public Speaking Ability	45%	40%	-5%
Religiousness	35%	41%	6%
Risk Taking	49%	49%	0%
Self-Confidence(Intellectual)	62%	61%	-1%
Self-Confidence(Social)	52%	55%	3%
Self-Understanding	53%	50%	-3%
Spirituality	42%	41%	-1%
Understanding of Others	64%	62%	-2%
Writing Ability	49%	56%	7%

2002 YFCY, 2003 SIF; n = 95

SIF 2002 & YFCY 2003 Changes in Self Reported Abilities and Other Personal Characteristics

	< Average	Average*	> Average	SIF Count**
Academic Ability	13%	74%	13%	n=31
Artistic Ability	21%	62%	18%	n=34
Computer Skills	5%	75%	20%	n=55
Cooperativeness	0%	25%	75%	n=12
Creativity	3%	73%	23%	n=30
Drive to Achieve	7%	63%	31%	n=27
Emotional Health	10%	57%	33%	n=30
Leadership Ability	4%	54%	42%	n=24
Mathematical Ability	24%	56%	21%	n=34
Physical Health	0%	54%	47%	n=26
Persistence	9%	58%	33%	n=33
Popularity	5%	58%	37%	n=43
Public Speaking Ability	9%	68%	24%	n=34
Religiousness	16%	58%	26%	n=43
Risk Taking	5%	63%	32%	n=38
Self-Confidence(Intellectual)	13%	44%	44%	n=32
Self-Confidence(Social)	5%	54%	40%	n=37
Self-Understanding	7%	67%	26%	n=42
Spirituality	12%	66%	22%	n=41
Understanding of Others	0%	42%	58%	n=33
Writing Ability	6%	61%	33%	n=36

*Shows % respondents rating self "average" on both SIF and YFCY.
"< Average" shows % rating self "Average" on SIF, but "below average" on YFCY. Opposite for "> Average."

** Shows Number of YFCY Respondents rating self "Average" on SIF (Total N of YFCY Respondents with CIRP = 95)

Freshmen Advisement Pilot Program

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training on OARS, these advisors were trained in using the Noel-Levitz Retention Management System College Student Inventory. The purpose of the inventory is to assist advisors and advisees in academic planning. The inventory assesses advisee self-reported perceptions and motivations related to successful completion of a college program. Advisees receive a detailed four-page report that provides them with a summary of their results compared to other college students and recommendations and suggestions on how to use these results effectively. The advisor receives a one-page summary of the results and meets with advisees individually to discuss the results and suggestions in the student report, and then decide on next steps. The objectives of the student-advisor conference are to provide information on an individualized level, to establish a relationship with students that communicates an interest in them as individuals, to discuss the student's unique pattern of strengths and needs, to link students to the services they need in order to succeed in college, and to facilitate a student's growth and development. Effectively, the Noel-Levitz inventory and retention management system provides a tool for us to use in becoming better advisors.

The Noel-Levitz inventory is used at over 400 other colleges and universities. The results are encouraging, including an 89% increase in student satisfaction with advisement and an increase in retention. We hope that the use of the Noel-Levitz materials will help us to become better advisors and in the process, improve retention. Early comments from the pilot group of advisors have been positive. Feedback on the usefulness of the Noel-Levitz materials could determine whether the College makes this available for all students and advisors.

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2003 Summer Seminar on Assessment in Student Affairs

By Cynthia Barnett

Pennsylvania State University's [Center for the Study of Higher Education](#) (CSHE) co-hosted the Summer Seminar on Assessment in Student Affairs with the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) on the Penn State campus June 25-27, 2003. My attendance at the seminar was funded by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. The seminar was a specialized assessment institute based on research for the National Center for Teaching, Learning and Assessment that had been adapted for student affairs professionals. Attendees came from 17 states and nearly 50 colleges and universities. Student affairs professionals attending the seminar worked in the areas of residence life, career services, multicultural affairs, health and wellness, counseling, financial aid and assessment and retention and were from private and public, liberal arts as well as community colleges. These knowledgeable professionals shared success stories as well as current challenges on their campuses. The seminar format provided opportunities for discussion and sharing of resources in addition to general sessions and concurrent session opportunities.

Presentations were by nationally recognized experts Trudy Banta, Vice Chancellor for Planning and Institutional Improvement at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis and M. Patrick Terenzini, Professor and Senior Scientist, Center for the Student of Higher Education

The seminar included research on topics such as assessing diversity climate, types of measurements, learning outcomes, qualitative and quantitative designs and models, accountability, and student surveys. In line with the CSHE mission, the seminar concluded with sessions focusing on fostering change in policy and practice.

The opening session, "Assessing to Promote Learning" addressed questions such as, What is assessment?, Why assess?, How should we plan for assessment?, What methods are available?, and What characterizes effective assessment? The session provided an appropriate overview for an audience varied in knowledge and application of assessment practices. The review of basics was good for the seasoned professional as well as the professional who has just begun incorporating assessment activities into their work as student affairs practitioners. To know what to do is important, but (Continued on Page 4)



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OIE Report Released: A Data-based Review of General Education

By: Kristee Boehm

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness has recently published "A Data-based Review of the General Education Program," a report which compiles all recent assessment data on the General Education Program at St. Norbert College. The report is intended to serve as a resource for faculty as we prepare for the upcoming comprehensive review of the General Education Program. The report includes four elements: 1) descriptive information about the current general Education Program, 2) learning outcomes assessment data and minutes from follow-up meetings for those general education areas that have completed an initial learning outcomes assessment, 3) data from a faculty survey on the General Education Program at the College administered in the spring of 2003, and 4) student self-report data for each general studies area. These latter data come from several sources including the SNC Current Student Survey, the Higher Education Research Institute UCLA and Senior CIRP, and SNC Alumni Surveys.

The OIE seeks to assist faculty and staff as they develop and implement assessment plans. A central component of this assistance is compiling data generated through these assessment efforts and making them readily available to those persons who make decisions regarding curricular change and improvement. It is therefore the OIE's hope that the report will serve the faculty as we move toward a full review of our General Education Program.

In an effort to pique interest in the upcoming review of our General Education Program, we have included below a few items from the report. Please interpret these data and findings cautiously and judiciously. They should not be accepted as fact or absolute truths; rather they are best regarded as broad indicators of program performance and as stimuli for discussion. We invite you to take a look at the full report (available on the OIE's web site at www.snc.edu/oie) and to share your impressions and questions with one another.

- About 70% of students meet or exceed performance expectations in their Upper Biennium GS 1 courses
- Over 40% of seniors say SNC has increased their knowledge of Catholic traditions "not much" or "not at all."
- Students' self-reported ability to think logically, test assumptions, and solve problems increases each year, through senior year.
- About 60% of SNC seniors scored above the national mean on the CAAP Critical Thinking Test.
- Only 20% of SNC seniors regard influencing the political structure as "very important" or "essential."
- Less than 20% of seniors say their acceptance of different races/cultures is "much stronger" than when they first entered college.
- As a result of their GS 8 course, students on average are able to answer 2 additional indicator questions (of 10) correctly compared to their pre-test.

- About 40% of alumni indicate that SNC has contributed little ("not too much") or ("not at all") to their understanding and appreciation of non-Western traditions.
- About 80% of SNC students report handing in more than 20 pages of formal writing in a semester. Of these 36% report submitting more than 40 pages.
- Faculty believe GS Areas 3, 7, 11 & 12 offer a less coherent set of courses than the other GS areas.
- Fewer faculty regard areas 3, Upper 1 & 10 as "very essential" to a General Education Program than the remaining nine.
- Among suggested program additions, an oral communications component received the strongest support.
- More than 75% of SNC students meet or exceed performance expectations for GS 5 courses.
- The percentage of students who attribute a deeper understanding of diverse heritages and peoples to their SNC education increases each year.
- The percentage of students who report increased understanding and appreciation of Western traditions increases each year, through senior year.

2003 Summer Seminar on Assessment in Student Affairs

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learning how to do it is quite another. Regardless of how much any of us were doing on our campuses, there was not one person in attendance who did not realize that effective assessment is ongoing, not episodic. Institutional assessment is here to stay; we need to embrace it in every aspect of our work. Assessment improves student learning and that is what the colleges experience is all about. Ted Marches, America Association of Higher Education, says it best, "Assessment is a rich conversation about student learning informed by data."

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