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ASSESSMENT NEWS

Men and Women Differ on Mission-related Values at Matriculation

Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) data for St. Norbert College show gender differences among entering students for many mission-related variables. Many of these differences are long-standing. In this issue, four of our colleagues comment on these differences. What, if anything do these differences mean? What implications, if any, do these data have for St. Norbert College? Are these findings cause for concern? Beyond these general questions, colleagues were asked to review the various graphs and to comment on any or all of them. The graphs reviewed by all of the authors are interspersed throughout the issue.

The OIE would welcome additional thoughts or perspectives on this topic and would publish your reflections in a future newsletter.

Called by Name

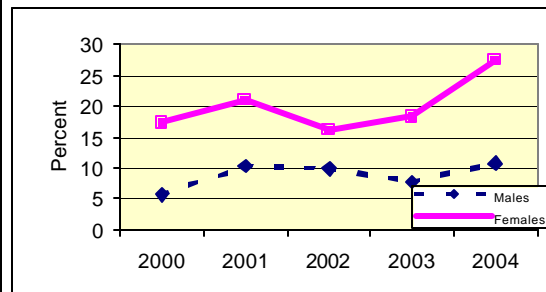
by Father James Baraniak, O. Praem.,
Pastor of the College

On Friday, 28 January 2005, several members of the Saint Norbert College community including students, faculty, staff and Norbertines ventured to Door County to take part in a retreat sponsored by the NCAA. Our task was to spend some significant time considering the 'at-risk population' on most college campuses these days: *men!* With the expertise of Gar E. Kallom, the Dean of Student Life at Saint John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota, we were exposed to national trends associated with men's enrollment in college communities and the activities in which they are engaged during their four-year college experience. Sadly, we learned that the majority of men not only begin their college experience with fewer goals and expectations for their four year experience, but their participation in many of the opportunities offered for personal growth pales in comparison with women's involvement as their college experience unfolds.

Naturally, our purpose for meeting was not simply to learn about national trends in male involvement on (continued on Page 2)

I was attracted by the religious affiliation/orientation of the college

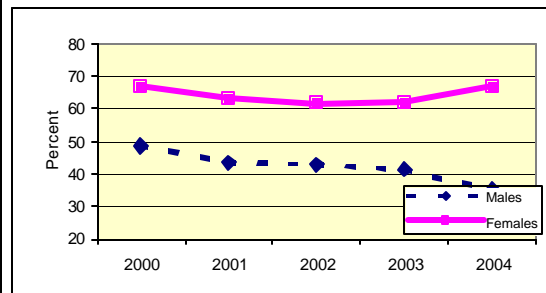
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Males	5.7	10.3	9.9	7.8	10.8
Females	17.3	21	16.2	18.3	27.4



% of students responding "very important".

I wanted to go to a school about this size

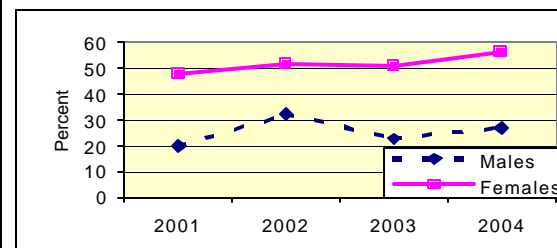
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Males	48.5	43.5	42.9	41.3	35
Females	66.6	63.1	61.4	61.8	66.8



% of students responding "very important".

I think chances are "very good" that I will participate in volunteer or community service work

	2001	2002	2003	2004
Males	19.8	32.4	22.8	27.2
Females	47.8	51.9	50.9	56.5



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Assessment Conference Possibilities

Catholic College & University Forum for Institutional Research, April 3-4, 2005, Villanova University, Philadelphia, PA

The Higher Learning Commission, Becoming a Learning-Focused Organization: Conversations and Commitments, April 8-12, 2005, Hyatt Regency Chicago, Chicago, IL.

North Carolina State University's 3rd Annual Undergraduate Assessment Symposium, April 14-16, 2005, Embassy Suites, Cary, North Carolina.

Association for Institutional Research, 2005 Forum, Mission: Improve Higher Education, May 29-June 1, 2005, San Diego, CA.

The First International Conference on Enhancing Teaching and Learning through Assessment, June 13-15, 2005, Hong Kong.

Association of American Colleges & Universities 5th Annual Greater Expectations Institute, Campus Leadership for Student Engagement, Inclusion, and Achievement, June 22-26, 2005, Burlington, Vermont.

Called by Name (Continued from Page 1)

college campuses; we wanted to discover whether or not these trends were taking part on the Saint Norbert College campus today. Assessment data shared with us in January reported that female participation in extracurricular activities far exceeds male participation in all opportunities at our college except men's involvement as student representatives on the Board of Trustees.

One should not be surprised, then, to learn that our incoming freshmen identified a healthy interest in political influence. Nevertheless, this is the only 'mission-related' area wherein males identified a stronger interest than their female counterparts. Is there some means by which we can tap into this energy to stimulate male involvement in political forums? Further, are there opportunities to engage men in other areas beyond the political arena?

If the January Retreat participants identified any proactive means to address the male at-risk population on college campuses – and at St. Norbert specifically – it is the power of invitation; or to employ the charism of our Norbertine heritage: hospitality. In an atmosphere of overflowing bulletin board notices and general invitations, we were exposed to the power of "calling one by name" to increase participation in activities of interest. Identifying and affirming one's personal gifts and qualities and then inviting one to use these gifts for the common good is an effective, pastoral process worthy of our consideration.

Towards that end, with the assistance of two students on campus, names of twenty students who seem to embody a 'mission-related' attitude of goodness and commitment to common ideals were identified recently. A letter was written to these twenty men to inquire whether or not they would be interested in meeting with other men to explore issues of male spirituality in an attempt to be of fraternal support to one another. Of the twenty contacted, nineteen responded to the invitation expressing their strong interest in such an endeavor. And of the nineteen, only two were unable to attend the forum due to previously scheduled examinations. Where the process goes from here is uncertain. Nevertheless, a process of identification, invitation and response has already begun, with positive results thus far! No doubt, the names of more individuals – both male and female – can be identified, more personal invitations can be extended, and perhaps more positive results can be obtained. "Calling by Name" a process that is ever ancient yet ever new, can be for the Saint Norbert College community – especially our men – a process wherein the lost are found and the idle become engaged.

Apply Now for Assessment Mini-Grants

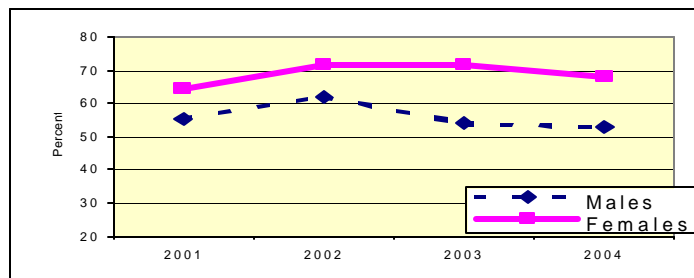
Mini-grants of approximately \$3,000 are available. Funds may support any of the following assessment activities:

- Carrying out one or more elements of an academic discipline or student life program assessment
- 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.

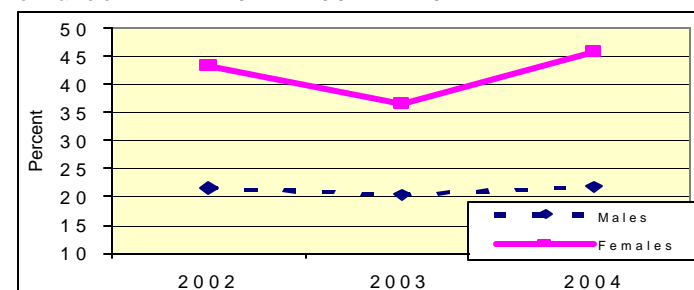
I think chances are "very good" that I will socialize with someone of another racial/ethnic group

	2001	2002	2003	2004
Males	55.4	62.3	53.9	53
Females	64.5	71.8	71.4	67.8



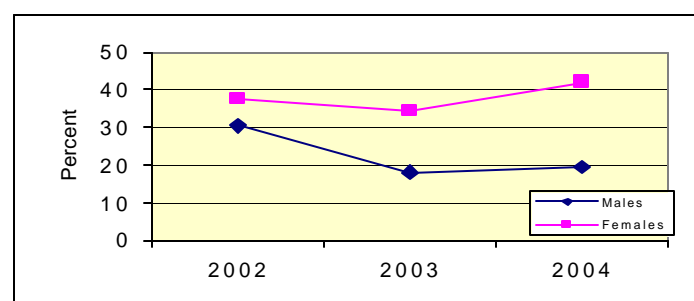
I think chances are "very good" that I will participate in a study abroad program

	2002	2003	2004
Males	21.6	20.4	21.8
Females	43.2	36.4	45.7



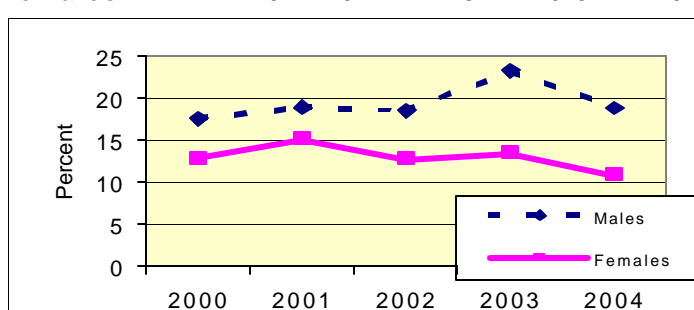
I think chances are "very good" that I will strengthen my religious beliefs/convictions

	2002	2003	2004
Males	30.4	18	19.3
Females	37.6	34.3	42



Influencing the political structure is "essential" or "very important"

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Males	17.6	19	18.6	23.3	18.9
Females	12.9	15.1	12.8	13.5	10.9



Are We Doing Enough?

by Dr. Susan Landt,
Assistant Professor of Education

What can we learn from the data regarding students' attitudes toward selected mission related variables? There are three things that stand out: opinions expressed by males and females consistently differ across all included categories; females respond in the affirmative at a higher rate than males for all but the two political categories and an interesting blip for one category in 2002; females responded affirmatively twice as often as males for key statements regarding religious and community enrichment.

What does this tell us and, more importantly, what, if anything, should we be doing? This information is but a baseline. It reveals student thinking at the commencement of their studies at SNC. The data we need now is where students place themselves at the conclusion of their time with us. However, there are important revelations within even this initial data.

We can see that only a minority of students – 10.8% for males and 27.4% for females – responded in the affirmative to the statement “I was attracted by the religious affiliation/orientation of the college”. Does this indicate a lack of interest by students in religious aspects of campus life, or does it tell us that we should be doing more to enhance this feature of our campus to prospective students? Does this particular piece of data suggest that we are not doing enough to target the population of students who might be attracted to our campus because of the religious aspects?

The above questions are but speculations regarding the data. However, as we strive to increase interest in SNC, this data might help us to identify the kind of students who would come to campus because of the specific features we have to offer, including community spirit and religious orientation.

A Serious Disconnect

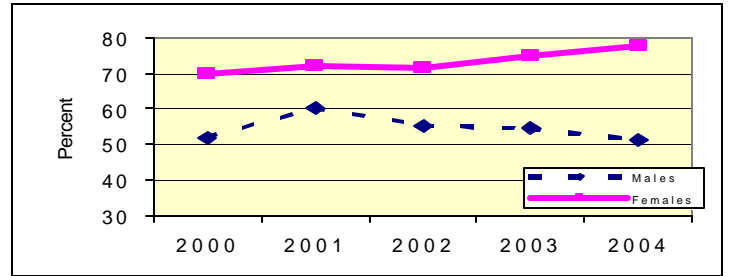
by Dr. Bridget Burke Ravizza,
Assistant Professor of Religious Studies

As a professor of Religious Studies, the data from several tables struck me as significant. First of all, I think it is cause for concern that so few incoming students are attracted by the religious affiliation/orientation of St. Norbert College. We claim our Catholic and Norbertine heritage to be a key aspect of our identity, along with the liberal arts nature of the college. Yet, in the last five years, no higher than 10.8 percent of male students were “attracted by the religious affiliation/orientation of the college,” and that percentage was as low as 5.7 in 2000. The numbers are slightly higher for female students, whose lowest percentage in response to the religious affiliation question was 16.2 in 2002, and the highest 27.4 in 2004. Still, these numbers seem low and we ought to think about why—when the Catholic and Norbertine heritage is considered the core of our identity and one of our greatest assets—it means little to so many students who decide to attend SNC. Perhaps this has implications for how we market that heritage.

More encouraging (but still, in my mind, of some concern) are responses regarding the importance of developing a meaningful philosophy of life and integrating spirituality in life, respectively. (Continued on Page 4)

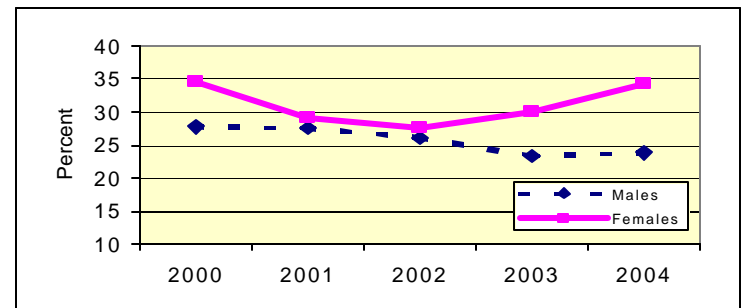
Helping others who are in difficulty is “essential” or “very important”

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Males	51.8	60.4	55.4	54.4	51.2
Females	69.6	72.3	71.5	75	77.5



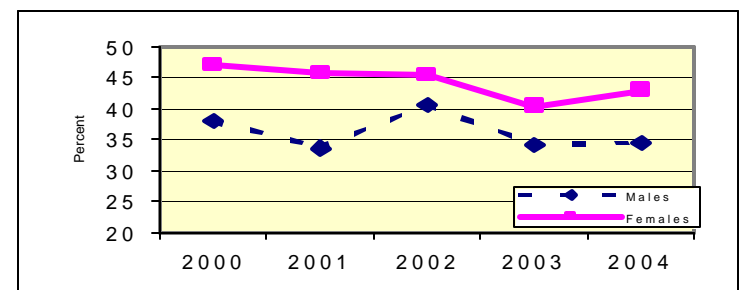
Helping to promote racial understanding is “essential” or “very important”

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Males	27.8	27.5	26.1	23.3	23.8
Females	34.5	29.1	27.5	30	34.2



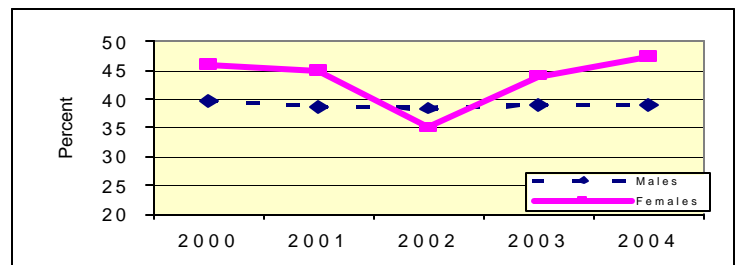
Influencing social values is “essential” or “very important”

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Males	38.1	33.6	40.7	34.1	34.5
Females	47.2	45.8	45.5	40.4	43



Developing a meaningful philosophy of life is “essential” or “very important”

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Males	39.7	38.7	38.4	39	39.1
Females	45.8	44.8	35	44	47.4



A Serious Disconnect (Continued from Page 3)

The percentage of males who believe that “developing a meaningful philosophy of life is ‘essential’ or ‘very important’ has hovered around 39 percent for the last five years. In general, the numbers of females who think this is “essential” or “very important” are slightly higher, and linger in the mid- to high- forties range. Comparatively, these percentages show that our incoming students are not much different (i.e., within a few percentage points) than the national average regarding the importance of developing a philosophy of life.

In the last five years of data, incoming male students who think that integrating spirituality into their lives is “essential” or “very important” have ranged from 32.7 to 41.4 percent, with the lowest numbers in 2004. Women, again, have consistently higher percentages, ranging from 44 percent to 52.9 percent. Interestingly, the highest percentage occurred in 2004.

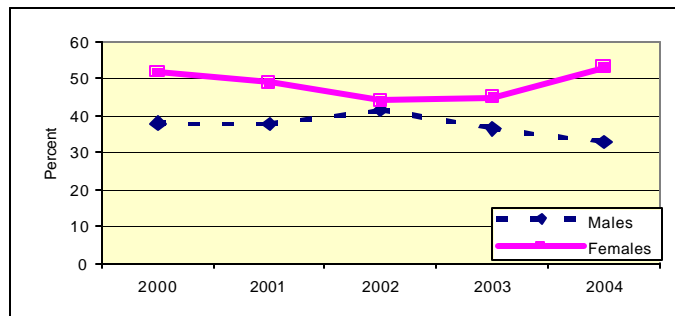
A couple of comments on this data. First, the overall numbers in these two questions seem low. Don’t we expect that more than 47% of our students (which is the highest recorded number in the last five years) would consider developing a meaningful philosophy of life to be of great value? Ideally, as a liberal arts college, shouldn’t we be attracting a higher percentage of students who think such development is essential? In any case, we should have these numbers in mind when meeting our first year students in the classroom and be creative in reaching out to them in order to help them see the importance of such development. I certainly hope that by graduation they understand the value of developing of a meaningful philosophy of life, or, in my mind, we have failed them. Second, if these questions of building a meaningful life philosophy and integrating spirituality are in a particular way valued at a religious affiliated school, why is it that students do not find the religious affiliation of SNC more attractive? It is curious that interest in pursuing philosophical and spiritual questions do not result in a higher appreciation of the religious orientation of the college.

Relatedly, we have interesting data from the past three years on whether students think the “chances are ‘very good’ that [they] will strengthen [their] religious beliefs/convictions.” The numbers here seem surprisingly low, particularly for male students. In 2004, only 19.3 of male students thought the chances are very good that their religious convictions would be strengthened at SNC, compared to 42 percent of female students. At a Catholic and Norbertine college, these numbers ought to give us pause. Why are students entering the college without expectations that their religious beliefs will be strengthened? This is a topic worth discussing.

Looking at this data together, I have two thoughts. First, I sense a disconnect between the pursuit of a meaningful philosophy of life and healthy spirituality and the study of theology and/or religion. This is of concern, and we ought to discuss and address this disconnect in our Religious Studies courses. Second, I think we ought to note the sometimes glaring differences in responses among our male and female students. The consistently higher percentages from females prompt the question: why are females more concerned with tasks such as developing a meaningful philosophy of life and integrating spirituality than males? Why are females more attracted to the religious orientation of the college and why do they more readily expect that their religious convictions will be strengthened as a result of their time here? The discrepancies might be an interesting conversation topic for our community and, in particular, for those of us in Religious Studies.

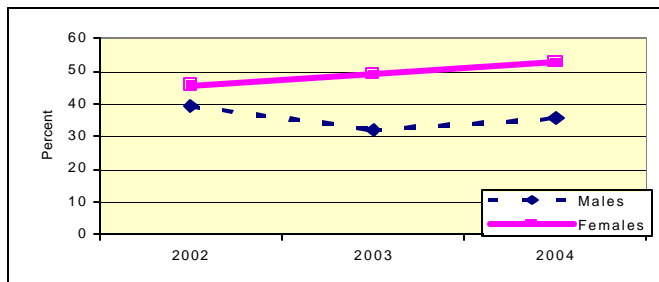
Integrating spirituality into my life is “essential” or “very important”

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Males	37.8	37.6	41.4	36.4	32.7
Females	51.7	48.8	44	44.8	52.9



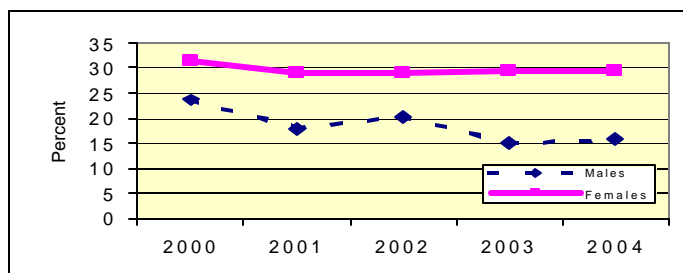
Improving my understanding of other countries and cultures is “essential” or “very important”

	2002	2003	2004
Males	39.4	32	35.6
Females	45.7	48.9	52.6



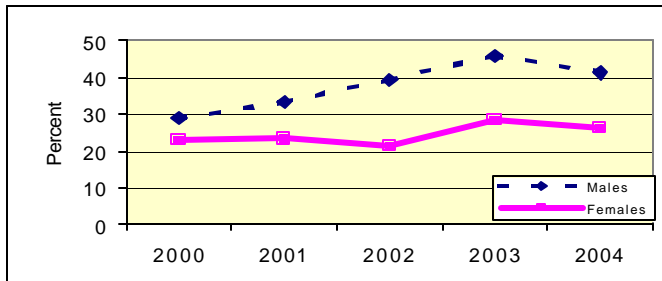
Participating in a community action program is “essential” or “very important”

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Males	23.7	18	20.4	15	15.8
Females	31.4	29.1	29.1	29.5	29.5



Keeping up to date with political affairs is “essential” or “very important”

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Males	28.9	33.5	39.4	46.1	41.3
Females	23.3	23.4	21.4	28.4	26.3



Exploring New Programming for SNC Men

by Nancy Mathias, Associate Director of Leadership, Service & Learning and Bill Mathias, Counselor, Counseling Center

The CIRP data regarding several St. Norbert College mission-related variables comparing men and women provides interesting information about our incoming students. In general, women’s responses were more “positive” or “scored higher” relative to what might be seen as the “preferred response” on most of these variables. We think this may have several implications, especially in regard to men’s programming.

Data for 2004 for four of the variables related to aspects of religion or spirituality are summarized below.

Men	Women	Variable	3-5 year trend
10.8	27.4	Attracted by the religious affiliation/orientation of SNC	Men consistently low – Women increasing since 2002
19.3	42	Chances are “very good” that I will strengthen my religious beliefs/convictions	Gap between men and women increasing since 2002
32.7	52.9	Integrating spirituality into my life is essential or very important	Men/Women very similar in 2002 –gap widest in 2004
39.1	47.4	Developing a meaningful philosophy of life is essential or very important	Scores fairly consistent over 5 yrs

The data may imply:

- While most new students, especially men, do not seem drawn to “religion” as stated in the first two variables, yet
- Many new students are drawn to the idea of integrating spirituality into their life and/or developing a meaningful philosophy of life; this may indicate a special interest in classes or programs that address such.

Men	Women	Variable	3-5 year trend
27.2	56.5	Chances are “very good” that I will participate in volunteer or community service work.	Men’s scores peaked at 32.4 in 2002; women’s scores consistently higher than men’s, peaking in 2004
51.2	77.5	Helping others who are in difficulty is “essential” or “very important”	Men peaked at 60.4 in 2001, declining since; women increasing each year

This may imply some things and raise some questions:

- Many new students think they will volunteer at SNC; perhaps because they formed these habits as high school students.
- Fewer men think they will volunteer—is this because “community service” may be seen as punitive? Or is this because more men than women plan to be involved in athletics and don’t think they will have time to volunteer?

As of fall 2004, athletes are required to do community service; it will be interesting to see if either the men’s or women’s scores begin to increase because of this.

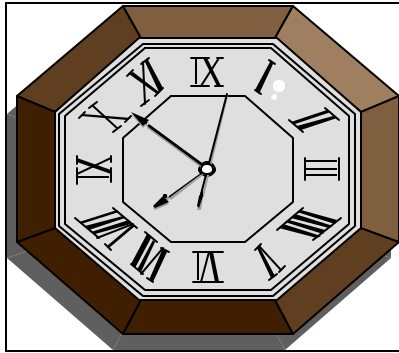
- “Helping others who are in difficulty” is important to most new students. Is there a correlation between men’s declining scores and women’s increasing scores? Perhaps, there is a sense that the women are doing the helping, so there is no need for the men to help? Or perhaps that “helping others” is language more appealing to women than men? It also seems that this response is lower than we would like it to be for both men and women.

With men’s responses consistently less positive than women’s on these variables, this may indicate a gap that an SNC education should address. Some questions for additional research might be:

- what changes in these mission related variables occur in students before they graduate?
- what classes or programs most influence changes in these variables?
- if these are also national trends, in what ways are these concerns being addressed effectively at other institutions?

Currently there are several things happening that may begin to address concerns regarding some of our male students. Several staff, faculty and students met in January to identify shared concerns regarding positive male involvement on campus. Dr. Gar Kellom, from St. John’s University, shared both national trends on college men as well as effective college programming for men. As a result, several interesting men’s programs are being explored in the areas of spirituality, retreats, prayer groups, service trips, and others. We will continue to monitor this data for indications of incoming student needs as well as effective programs that will help us better educate and develop the future graduates of SNC.





Higher Learning Commission Focussed Visit March 6-7, 2006

What can we do to increase the likelihood of a successful focussed visit?

- Finish what's been started. My continuing interactions with all of you indicate that there is a huge amount of work in progress. If the drafts I've seen and promises received were turned into final reports, we would have almost 40% more to show for our efforts.
- Check the OIE web site. Are you satisfied that the assessment work you've done is adequately documented for your program? If not, call me and suggest how we might better represent what you've accomplished.
- Update your plan (if necessary). Some of the plans that appear on the OIE web site no longer reflect current program assessment efforts. In addition, some still reflect our earliest efforts and do not include intended student learning outcomes or sources of evidence and means of assessment? Plans don't have to be long, but these elements should be there. HLC will be looking for them.
- File a report (especially if your last report was 2002 or earlier). Assessment reports don't have to be long. Simply summarize your interpretation of what the data tell you about what your students are or are not learning in your program. Identify action steps resulting from the data. Adjustments in course content or emphasis are legitimate action steps. Finally, while there is no expectation of a yearly report, we will need to make the case that each program has established an assessment cycle that makes sense for the questions the program is trying to answer and the methodology employed.
- Give OIE permission to post your program review and CEPC's response on the assessment web site.
- Make learning outcomes assessment a higher priority in this final year before the focussed visit.

OIE Updates

- Notification of funding for the fifth and final year of the Title III Strengthening Institutions Grant was recently received by the College.
- Dr. Jack Williamsen will attend the Catholic Higher Education Research Cooperative's (CHERC) Annual Conference in Philadelphia, April 2-5, 2005.
- CHERC will recognize SNC as an undergraduate college making substantial progress in meeting accreditation requirements in assessment.
- The OIE will participate in A Day of Celebration of Student and Faculty/Staff Collaborations on April 8, 2005. The presentation will feature collaborative research involving three SNC students; Kaylyn Pankratz (a senior in Communications), Nick Gilson (a junior in Political Science), and Colleen Riordan (our freshmen Research Fellow).
- Drs. Eliot Elfner and Robert Rutter will represent SNC at the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association's annual conference, *Becoming a Learning Focused Organization: Conversations and Commitments*, April 8-12, 2005.
- Drs. Jack Williamsen and Robert Rutter will present "Assessing Broad Affective Student Outcomes: Using Surveys and Focus Groups to Define and Understand the Ineffable" at the Association for Institutional Research (AIR) annual conference in San Diego, May 29-June 1, 2005.

On-Campus Assessment Workshop Opportunity

St. Norbert College will host the 4th Annual Workshop on *Assessment of General Education and Outcomes in Higher Education* on April 14-15, 2005 at the Bemis Conference Center.

Through an active learning experience, participants will be able to address and facilitate the assessment of student learning outcomes in general education programs. Specific objectives include 1) learn the mission-oriented context in which general education programs reside, and the need for assessing the learning outcomes resulting from student experiences. 2) Understand the types of learning outcomes that are commonly associated with general education programs and ways in which your institution can assess the level of success you have had in achieving these learning outcomes. 3) Examine processes that help to see how the results of assessment efforts are used to revise and improve general education programs.

The workshop will be facilitated by Dr. James Nichols, author of four widely used books on high education assessment, and Dr. Eliot Elfner, Professor of Business Administration at St. Norbert College. The OIE will pay the registration fee for any SNC faculty or staff who wishes to attend this conference. Online registration and additional information is available at: www.snc.edu/pce/assessment.html.