

Progressive Measures

Mission Statement

“University Assessment Services is responsible for conducting a variety of assessment activities related to student learning outcomes using qualitative and quantitative research techniques, providing support services to other units engaged in such assessment, and sharing best practices for and results of assessment activities.”

From the Director

Inside this issue:

Assessing General Education at ISU	2
First-year Student Engagement at ISU	6
Measuring Academic, Social, and Developmental Outcomes in TLLCs	9
Summary of Fuller, Wilson, & Tobin (2010)	11
UAS Small Grant Winners	12

During the cold, snowy days of January, University Assessment Services moved to its new home in Uptown Crossing. Stop by for a tour of our new digs!

As we welcome spring, we have been engaged in a full slate of activities and events. We have continued our involvement in the General Education Institutional Artifact Portfolio (IAP) process this year, collecting student work for the Critical Inquiry & Problem Solving Shared Learning Outcome in the Fall 2010 semester and the Public Opportunity Shared Learning Outcome in Spring. These artifacts will be reviewed in May.

To read some of the exciting results of this process, turn to Page 2 to read Dr. Alycia Hund’s article presenting the preliminary results for the Diverse & Global Perspectives and Life-Long Learning Shared Learning Outcomes. (For a similar summary of results for the Critical Inquiry & Problem Solving and Public Opportunity Shared Learning Outcomes, check out last Spring’s issue and expect another one next Spring.)

Another stimulating article in this issue presents longitudinal data regarding student engagement at Illinois State based on responses to the Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement completed by incoming students and their corresponding responses on the National Survey of Student

Engagement during their first year at Illinois State.

Check out the engaging article examining the relative benefits of living in a Themed Living Learning Community by Bridget Reeland and Dave Jaeger. Using Astin’s (1993) Input-Environment-Outcome model, they provide a contextualized assessment of the role of housing in student outcomes. Also in this issue is a succinct summary of a recent article published by former UAS leaders and a listing of our small grant recipients.

As always, University Assessment Services is available to help with program-level assessment efforts, including survey design and administration, data analysis, assessment plan development, and consultation.

Please do not hesitate to contact us at (309) 438-2135 or at assessment@ilstu.edu with your questions and assessment requests. Remember -- UAS is here to serve! We look forward to working with you.

Happy spring!



Renée M. Tobin, Ph.D.

*Acting Director, University Assessment Services
& Associate Professor, Department of Psychology*



**UNIVERSITY
ASSESSMENT SERVICES**
Illinois State University



Assessing General Education at ISU: Life-Long Learning and Diverse and Global Perspectives

Alycia M. Hund, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Psychology

On behalf of the Council for General Education and in collaboration with UAS Staff

Overview

The Council for General Education was charged with using results from the Institutional Artifact Portfolio (IAP) review to determine areas of strength and identify potential areas for improvement within the General Education Program at ISU, reporting our findings in the Spring 2011 edition of *Progressive Measures*. This report provides our summary and interpretation of this second wave of reviews for the **Life-Long Learning** and **Diverse and Global Perspectives** Shared Learning Outcomes. Analysis of **Diverse and Global Perspectives** revealed strong evidence of student learning related to cross-cultural issues (e.g., human nature, human rights, gender, race, religion). Thus, it appears that our General Education program provides students with learning experiences that highlight these issues. Furthermore, analysis of **Life-Long Learning** revealed strong but mixed evidence of student learning, with the strongest evidence in the inner and outer cores. Given that the IAP review focuses on the General Education program as a whole and does not link specific assessments of learning outcomes to sets of courses, we are unable to determine the locus of these results. We note that analysis of all four Shared Learning Outcomes now provides a baseline for future identification of temporal trends. Additional complementary assessment of outcomes in particular course categories within each core would provide helpful details regarding possible strengths and limitations of General Education, as would careful attention to curricular mapping of courses with respect to program goals and learning outcomes with respect to sequencing of courses in each core.

Background

General Education at ISU provides students with a broad, common foundation of study upon which to build an undergraduate education. ISU students complete 14 courses (42 credits) as part of this program, including courses in the inner, middle, and outer cores. The inner core focuses on foundational skills and includes 5 courses: Composition as Critical Inquiry, Communication as Critical Inquiry, 1 mathematics course, and 2 natural science courses. The middle core focuses on interdisciplinary perspectives and includes 5 courses, 1 from each category: Quantitative Reasoning, Language in the Humanities, United States Traditions, Individuals and Civic Life, and Individuals and Society. The outer core focuses on varieties of disciplinary knowledge and includes 4 courses, 1 from each discipline group: Science, Mathematics, and Technology; Social Sciences; Fine Arts; and Humanities. In total,

the General Education Program develops students' capacity (1) to think critically and solve problems, (2) to comprehend and contribute to diverse and global perspectives, (3) to be stewards of life-long learning, and (4) to advance public opportunity. These represent the **four Shared Learning Outcomes** of General Education.

The **Institutional Artifact Portfolio (IAP)** process provides a comprehensive method to evaluate our progress in accomplishing the four Shared Learning Outcomes of General Education. General Education assessment also supports teaching and learning in the disciplines by providing an accurate representation of student abilities. Lastly, General Education assessment realizes many of the requirements of systematic review of educational outcomes required by external constituencies such as state government and accrediting agencies. Each Shared Learning Outcome is assessed one semester every two years as part of this ongoing assessment process.

Method and Procedure

As part of the second wave of IAP reviews, University Assessment Services invited instructors of General Education courses related to **Diverse and Global Perspectives** (Fall 2009) and **Life-long Learning** (Spring 2010) Shared Learning Outcomes to participate in the review. In Fall 2009, 122 instructors were invited to submit artifacts from 161 classes offering 13,122 seats in courses within 15 departments/schools. Twenty-three instructors submitted over 2,600 artifacts from 20 courses (9 middle core, 11 outer core; 3 in the College of Applied Science and Technology, 14 in the College of Arts and Sciences, 3 in the College of Fine Arts) related to Diverse and Global Per-



Continued on page 3...

Assessing General Education at ISU (cont'd)

spectives, yielding a 19% instructor response rate and representing 21% of total enrollments in **Diverse and Global Perspectives** courses. Among participating instructors, 8.7% were Administrative Professional Staff with teaching responsibilities, 26.1% were Lecturers/Instructional Assistant Professors, 30.4% were Assistant Professors, 17.4% were Associate Professors, and 17.4% were Professors. In Spring 2010, 212 instructors were invited to submit artifacts from 306 classes offering 21,880 seats in courses in 21 departments/schools. Thirty-seven instructors submitted over 2,000 artifacts from 23 courses (3 inner core, 16 middle core, 4 outer core; 6 in the College of Applied Science and Technology, 15 in the College of Arts and Sciences, 1 in the College of Business, 1 in Interdisciplinary Studies) related to Life-Long Learning, yielding a 17% instructor response rate and representing 15% of total enrollments in **Life-Long Learning** courses. Among participating instructors, 18.9% were graduate students, 35.1% were Lecturers/Instructional Assistant Professors, 10.8% were Assistant Professors, 8.1% were Associate Professors, 21.6% were Professors, and 5.4% were Distinguished Professors/Emeritus Faculty. An artifact is any form of tangible student work. It is a product of the students' learning experience that relates to at least one of the identified primary traits for a Shared Learning Outcome. Possible examples of artifacts include essays/papers, written assignments, exams, speeches, presentations, posters, artwork, performances, or music recitals. Instructors who agreed to participate in the review selected an artifact (or small set of artifacts) from their courses that relates to the primary traits/Shared Learning Outcomes, and UAS staff collected all student examples of that artifact for later scoring. It is important to note that instructor assignment parameters and grading comments were not included with the student artifacts. Moreover, all identifying information (including student, course, and instructor details) was removed prior to scoring.

Table 1

Artifact rating distribution for Diverse and Global Perspectives

Primary Trait	Not Present		Developing		Established		Advanced	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Originators of human creativity	105	52.5	32	16.0	39	19.5	24	12.0
Form of creative expression	87	43.5	25	12.5	39	19.5	49	24.5
Cross cultural issues	17	8.6	66	33.3	93	47.0	22	11.1
Major events and/or ideas composite	88	44.0	25	12.5	79	39.5	8	4.0
Major events and/or ideas (world cultures)	151	75.5	15	7.5	31	15.5	3	1.5
Major events and/or ideas (Western cultures)	184	92.0	9	4.5	7	3.5	0	0.0
Major events and/or ideas (U.S. cultures)	128	64.0	14	7.0	53	26.5	5	2.5
Self-reflection	115	57.5	44	22.0	36	18.0	5	2.5
Discipline knowledge	19	9.5	64	32.0	96	48.0	21	10.5

For each Shared Learning Outcome, 100 artifacts selected randomly (and proportionally based on enrollment) from submitted artifacts for courses in each core were assessed using rubrics developed by the General Education Assessment Task Force, yielding 200 artifacts for Diverse and Global Perspectives (no inner core courses were mapped to this Shared Learning Outcome) and 300 artifacts for Life-Long Learning. Interdisciplinary review teams (each consisting of two faculty members) carried out blind reviews in which members were asked to come to consensus regarding the extent to which each primary trait (and self-reflection and discipline knowledge) was developing, established, or advanced using the established rubrics. Reviewers also had the option to note that primary traits were not present in a given artifact. Not present ratings should be interpreted broadly because it is possible that the assignment for which the artifact was created did not incorporate particular aspects included in the rubric. It is also possible that students did not show evidence of an aspect when requested by the assignment. Inter-rater reliability was within the "acceptable" to "very good" range for the Diverse and Global Perspectives review teams. Inter-rater reliability was somewhat lower for Life-Long Learning review teams, indicating that resulting data should be interpreted with caution.

Results and Discussion

Diverse and Global Perspectives

In the IAP process, **Diverse and Global Perspectives** is described with the following statement, "Students will be exposed to diverse and global perspectives by developing and communicating an appreciation for the impact made in personal and professional lives." It includes six primary traits: (1) role of individuals as originators of human creativity; (2) interpretation of a form of creative expression; (3) inclusion of cross cultural issues (e.g., human nature, human rights, gender, race, and religion); (4) major events and/or ideas which characterize the past, present, and/or future of world cultures; (5) major events and/or ideas which characterize the past, present, and/or future of Western cultures; and (6) major events and/

Continued on page 4...

Assessing General Education at ISU (cont'd)

Table 2

Artifact rating distribution for Life-Long Learning

Primary Trait	Not Present		Developing		Established		Advanced	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Position	70	23.3	85	28.3	46	15.3	99	33.0
Influence of context	89	29.7	78	26.0	76	25.3	57	19.0
Other viewpoints	154	51.3	48	16.0	56	18.7	42	14.0
Inter-disciplinary approach	235	78.3	22	7.3	11	3.7	32	10.7
Information from outside resources	103	34.3	85	28.3	46	15.3	66	22.0
Influential learning composite	46	15.3	65	21.7	77	25.7	112	37.3
Value of literacy and art	273	91.0	8	2.7	12	4.0	7	2.3
Individuals or events	222	74.0	24	8.0	33	11.0	21	7.0
Scientific and/or mathematical principles	137	45.7	53	17.7	37	12.3	73	24.3
Relevance of science and/or technology	136	45.3	60	20.0	59	19.7	45	15.0
Life-Long Learning Factor	77	25.7	94	31.3	71	23.7	58	19.3
Self-reflection	169	56.3	42	14.0	72	24.0	17	5.7
Discipline knowledge	61	20.3	101	33.7	99	33.0	39	13.0

or ideas which characterize the past, present, and/or future of U.S. cultures. Based on the structure of the rubric, primary traits 4, 5, and 6 were combined into one major events and/or ideas composite by using the maximum review value given across the three items. Exploratory factor analysis was used to determine whether the primary traits could be reduced to a single interpretable factor. Results did not yield a reliable factor structure, so the primary traits were interpreted individually. The assessment of all artifacts includes details about self-reflection and discipline knowledge.

General trends for each **Diverse and Global Perspective** primary trait, the composite major events measure, self-reflection, and discipline knowledge can be found in Table 1. Initial examination of overall patterns for native and transfer students revealed broad similarities across student samples, so this factor is not considered in the sections that follow. Moreover, examination of patterns based on student designation (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior) and core (middle, outer) were similar to the overall trends described below, so these factors are not considered further. In general, ratings of inclusion of cross cultural issues and discipline knowledge were **very positive**; role of individuals as originators of human creativity, interpretation of a form of creative expression, and the major events or ideas composite were **somewhat less positive**; and self-reflection was **neutral**. It is important to note that ratings for U.S. cultures were higher than for world and Western cultures, so the composite findings should be interpreted with caution. **This overall pattern evinces very strong student learning outcomes related to cross-cultural issues and discipline knowledge. Thus, we identify these aspects of Diverse and Global Perspectives as an area of strength in our General Education program.**

Although the program-level focus of the IAP does not provide details about the relation between particular sets of courses and learning outcomes, we speculate that the strong outcomes for **Diverse and Global Perspectives** relate, in part, to the inclusion of global studies courses in our General Education program, highlighting our commitment to educating students as global citizens.

Life-Long Learning

In the IAP process, **Life-Long Learning** is described with the following statement, "Students will utilize the skills indicative of an effective life-long learner actively pursuing knowledge and applying new information and skills in interdisciplinary approaches." It includes nine primary traits: (1) a position on a variety of issues, (2) influence of context on knowledge and learning, (3) the context of other viewpoints in developing arguments, (4) one's own inter-disciplinary approach to learning, (5) use of information from outside resources responsibly, (6) the value of literacy and art as it affects individuals or society, (7) individuals or events that have shaped the world, (8) scientific and/or mathematical principles or concepts that influence the natural world, and (9) relevance of science and/or technology to society and/or individuals. Based on the structure of the rubric, primary traits 6, 7, 8, and 9 were combined into one influential learning composite by using the maximum review value given across the four items. Exploratory factor analysis was used to determine whether the traits could be reduced to a single interpretable factor. The six traits loaded onto one factor, a life-long learning factor that evinced adequate internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .85).

Assessing General Education at ISU (cont'd)

Finally, the assessment of all artifacts includes details about self-reflection and discipline knowledge.

General trends for each **Life-Long Learning** primary trait, the composite measure, self-reflection, and discipline knowledge can be found in Table 2. In general, ratings of position on a variety of issues, influence of context on knowledge and learning, uses information from outside resources responsibly, and scientific and/or mathematical principles or concepts that influence the natural world were **very positive**, with the influential learning composite, discipline knowledge, and the life-long learning factor also yielding **positive ratings**. Relevance of science and/or technology to society and/or individuals and self-reflection received **neutral ratings**, and context of other viewpoints in developing arguments, one's own inter-disciplinary approach to learning, value of literacy and art as it affects individuals or society, and individuals or events that have shaped the world received **somewhat low ratings**. Overall, examination of the life-long learning factor revealed that, for inner core courses, 36% of artifacts were rated as developing, 20% as established, 24% as advanced, and 20% as not present. For middle core courses, 29% of artifacts were identified as developing, 17% as established, 14% as advanced, and 40% as not present. For outer core courses, 29% of artifacts were identified as developing, 34% as established, 20% as advanced, and 17% as not present. **This overall pattern evinces strong but mixed evidence of student learning outcomes related to Life-Long Learning, with strongest evidence in the inner and outer cores.**

It is possible that this mixed evidence is, in part, a result of the divergent courses that address **Life-Long Learning** from unique perspectives across cores (similar to Critical Inquiry and Problem Solving assessments last year). That is, only a subset of courses focuses primarily on scientific principles, another subset on technology, another subset on literacy and art, and so on.

Supplementary Analyses

Thus far, analyses have focused on ratings of all primary traits for the artifacts. Supplementary analyses focused on the extent to which artifacts addressed at least one primary trait. When instructors were recruited to participate in the assessment process, they were invited to identify one assignment (or a collection of two or three assignments) that addressed any number of the primary traits. To examine how well the artifacts addressed at least one of the primary traits, a *maximum review value* was calculated for each artifact. That is, the "best" score across the rubric for each artifact was included in the analysis, allowing for a clearer picture of how well the artifacts addressed at least one of the pri-

mary traits.

Overall, analysis of Diverse and Global Perspectives maximum values revealed that, for middle core courses, 8% of artifacts were identified as developing, 44% as established, 48% as advanced, and 0% as not present. For outer core courses, 23% of artifacts were identified as developing, 36% as established, 40% as advanced, and 1% as not present.

Analysis of Life-Long Learning maximum values revealed that, for inner core courses, 11% of artifacts were rated as developing, 17% as established, 71% as advanced, and 1% as not present. For middle core courses, 36% of artifacts were identified as developing, 23% as established, 38% as advanced, and 3% as not present. For outer core courses, 15% of artifacts were identified as developing, 35% as established, 49% as advanced, and 1% as not present. These findings are consistent with the patterns of strength and limitation evident in the main analyses reported above.



Concluding Remarks

Given that the IAP review focuses on the General Education program as a whole and does not link specific assessments of learning outcomes to sets of courses, we are unable to determine the locus of these results. **Additional complementary assessment** of student and instructor responses linked to the 12 General Education goals for particular course categories within each core would provide helpful details regarding possible strengths and limitations of General Education. **Curricular mapping** also would be helpful. Overall, the IAP review suggests some interesting trends that merit further study in a more focused manner. The current assessment design did not permit the CGE to make more than general observations of possible patterns.

For additional information and resources related to General Education, please visit <http://gened.illinoisstate.edu/>. To learn more about the General Education assessment process, please visit <http://assessment.illinoisstate.edu/generaleducation/>.

Student Engagement at ISU: Longitudinal Analyses of 2009-2010 First-Year Students' Data

University Assessment Services Staff

Over the last several years, Illinois State University has been committed to examining student engagement systematically over time. To this end, surveys of student engagement have been administered to incoming students, current students, and faculty members. Every year, the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research (IUCPR) administers several national-level student engagement surveys to colleges and universities, including the Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE), the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), and the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE). Within a three-year cycle, Illinois State participates in each of the three surveys once to maximize the benefits of participation. The BCSSE is administered to incoming students during ISU Preview, a summer orientation program. The NSSE then is administered during the following spring semester to all first-year students and senior students. A year later, the FSSE is administered to all full-time faculty members. This cycle is then repeated, allowing for the students who completed the BCSSE as incoming students and the NSSE as first-year students to complete the NSSE again as senior students [as well as adding a new cohort of first-year students]. These students' data can be matched across these three times to provide longitudinal evidence of changes and stability in the levels of student engagement at Illinois State. This report focuses on results from surveys administered to incoming students during the summer of 2009 (BCSSE) and first-year students during the spring of 2010 (NSSE).

The BCSSE obtains information regarding incoming students' previous engagement levels during high school, as well as their expected engagement levels during their first year at Illinois State. Several of the items on the BCSSE are combined to form the "BCSSE Scales," and they are:

- High School Academic Engagement,
- Expected Academic Engagement,
- Expected Academic Perseverance,
- Expected Academic Difficulty,
- Perceived Academic Preparation, and
- Importance of Campus Environment.

The NSSE obtains information regarding current students' levels of engagement in the classroom, on their campus, and in their community. As with the BCSSE, several of the items on the NSSE are combined to form the five "NSSE Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice." They are:

- Level of Academic Challenge,

- Active and Collaborative Learning,
- Student-Faculty Interaction,
- Enriching Educational Experiences, and
- Supportive Campus Environment

At Illinois State, the 2009 BCSSE was completed by 1,589 incoming students, and the 2010 NSSE was completed by 869 first-year students. In addition, data from 325 students who completed both the BCSSE and the NSSE were matched, providing a longitudinal examination of student engagement before and during their first-year at Illinois

Table 1

Frequencies and percentages for demographic information from the surveys of student engagement

	BCSSE 2009		NSSE 2010 [first-year students]		BCSSE 2009 & NSSE 2010	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Sex						
Male	657	41.8	237	30.9	98	30.2
Female	916	58.2	530	69.1	226	69.8
Race/ethnicity						
American Indian or other Native American	5	0.3	2	0.3	2	0.6
Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander	34	2.2	13	1.7	2	0.6
Black or African American	70	4.5	30	3.9	7	2.2
White (non-Hispanic)	1,313	83.5	627	81.7	281	87.0
Mexican or Mexican American	59	3.8	29	3.8	12	3.7
Puerto Rican	5	0.3	4	0.5	2	0.6
Other Hispanic or Latino	23	1.5	10	1.3	6	1.9
Multiracial	36	2.3	19	2.5	4	1.2
Other	4	0.3	5	0.7	1	0.3
I prefer not to respond	24	1.5	28	3.7	6	1.9
International student or foreign national						
No	1,555	98.9	760	99.1	319	98.8
Yes	17	1.1	7	0.9	4	1.2
First-generation student						
No	976	67.6	629	82.2	207	69.7
Yes	468	32.4	136	17.8	90	30.3
Enrollment status						
Part-time	5	0.3	3	0.3	1	0.3
Full-time	1,562	99.7	866	99.7	324	99.7

Note. Frequencies for each demographic variable may not sum to these totals because some students did not answer every question.

Continued on page 7...

First-Year Student Engagement at ISU (cont'd)

State. Table 1 provides the demographic information for these three samples.

Longitudinal Results

The longitudinal data allow for a more refined analysis of expectations and experiences of student engagement over time. These data were examined at the scale/benchmark level and at the item level. This information is valuable because it provides faculty and staff the opportunity to examine specific areas of student engagement during both their last year of high school and their first year at Illinois State, as well as the correspondence between their expectations for engagement and their actual activities at Illinois State.

BCSSE Scales as Predictors of the NSSE Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice

As mentioned previously, items on the BCSSE were formed into the six BCSSE Scales, and items on the NSSE were formed into the five NSSE Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice. Of the six BCSSE scales, *High School Academic Engagement* and *Expected Academic Engagement* were the strongest predictors of the NSSE Benchmarks of Effec-

tive Educational Practice except *Supportive Campus Environment*. Not surprisingly, the BCSSE scale *Importance of Campus Environment* was the strongest predictor of this benchmark. These results indicate that the best predictors of student engagement during the first year at Illinois State are students' previous reports of engagement and how engaged they expected to be during their first year.

Overall Analyses: Academic and Co-curricular Engagement

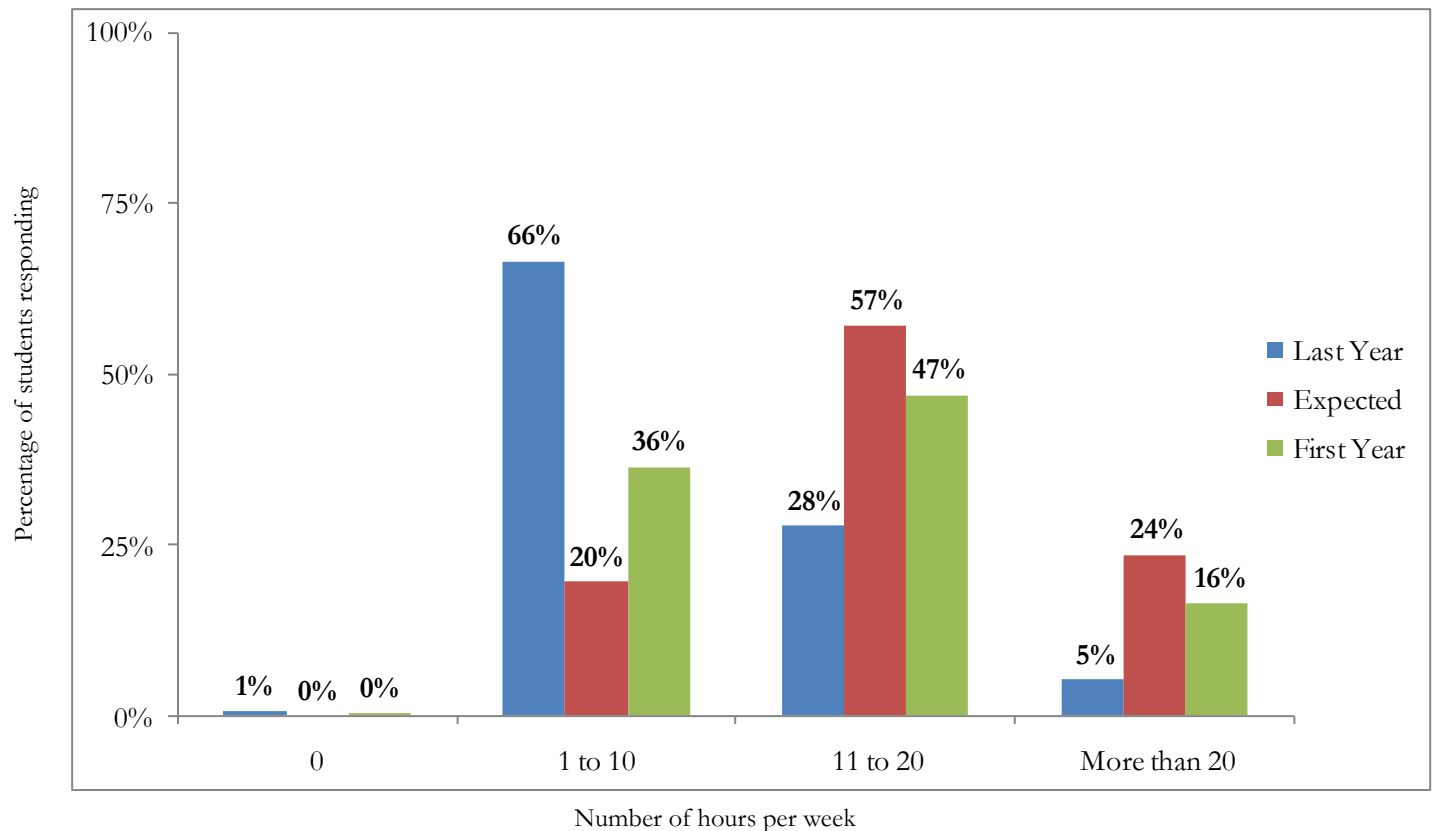
Examining similar items on the BCSSE and the NSSE that were completed by the same person at two points in time allowed for a clearer picture of how students' previous experiences and expectations corresponded with their actual experiences as first-year students at Illinois State. That is, some items on both the BCSSE and the NSSE concern the number of hours in a typical week that students were, and expected to be, engaged. How many hours students spent/expected to spend preparing for class can be used to summarize academic engagement, and how many hours students spent/expected to spend participating in co-curricular activities can be used to summarize nonacademic engagement (see Figures 1 and 2).

Item-Level Analyses: Previous, Expected, and Current Engagement

A mismatch between students' previous experiences or expectations and their current experiences occurred for two items:

Figure 1

How often students spent/expected to spend preparing for class



First-Year Student Engagement at ISU (cont'd)

- 78% of students ‘often’ asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions during their last year, 67% expected to during their first year, but only 48% actually did.
 - 39% of students ‘often’ discussed grades or assignments with a teacher or instructor during their last year, 63% expected to during their first year, but 44% actually did.
 - 47% of students ‘often’ made a class presentation during their last year, 55% expected to during their first year, but 39% actually did.
 - 67% of students ‘often’ worked with other students on projects in class during their last year, 50% expected to during their first year, and 42% actually did.
- And perhaps one of the most interesting findings:
- 75% of students worked for pay during their last year of high school and 82% expected to work during their first year at Illinois State, but only 22% actually worked during their first year.

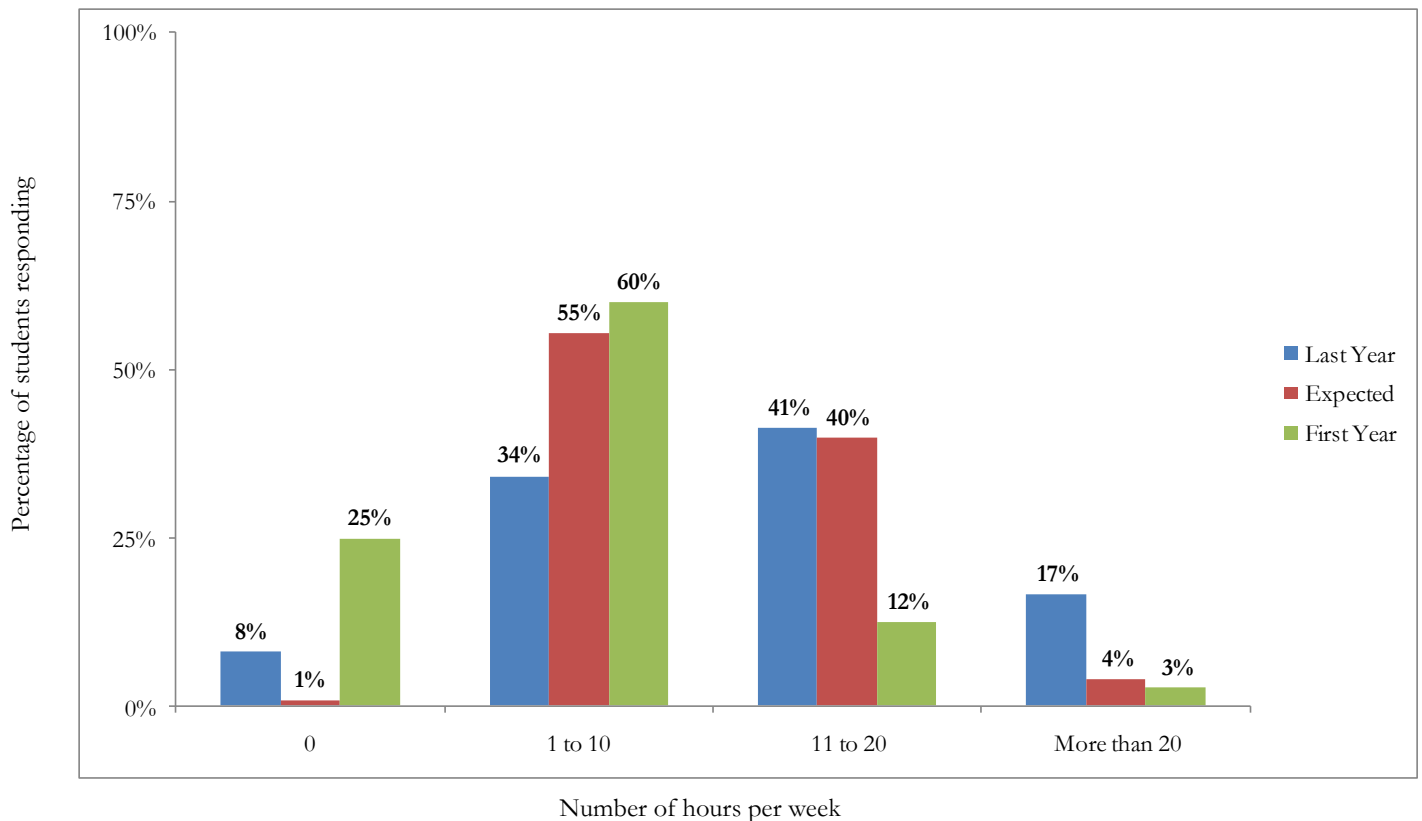
For several items, previous experiences were a better gauge of first-year students’ experiences than were their expectations. For example, about half of incoming students reported ‘often’ having a serious conversation with students who were very different from them in terms of religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values during their last year. Consistent with previous experience, 50% reported engaging in this behavior as first-year students, although 64% expected to during their first year. Similar mismatches between students’ previous experiences or expectations and their current experiences occurred for three other items:

Summary and Conclusions

These longitudinal results indicate that first-year academic engagement is consistent with students’ last year of high school and somewhat consistent with their expectations. Although students’ nonacademic engagement during their first year is lower than during their last year of high school and their expectations, the majority of first-year students are involved in co-curricular activities. These results suggest that first-year students are prioritizing academic engagement over nonacademic engagement, but the majority of first-year students are involved in at least one co-curricular activity.

Figure 2

How often students spent/expected to spend in co-curricular activities



Measuring Academic, Social, and Developmental Outcomes: ISU Housing Services Themed Living Learning Communities (TLLCs)

Bridget Reeland, Associate Director, Residential Life

Dave Jaeger, Graduate Assistant, Themed Learning Communities, Residential Life

During the spring semester of 2010, University Housing Services participated in the “National Study of Living Learning Programs” (NSLLP) to measure the success of the Themed Living Learning Communities (TLLCs), which provide a unique atmosphere for residents who share common majors or interests. These communities cultivate an environment that supports personal growth through academic and social programming. The NSLLP is the only national, multi-year survey that assesses how participation in Living Learning Programs (LLPs) influences academic, social, and developmental outcomes for students.

The assessment compared students living on Themed Living Learning Communities to those students living in non-themed residence hall communities here at Illinois State University. The outcomes provide insight into the perceptions our students have regarding the impact of these communities.

The research conducted by the NSLLP examined how the college environment influences student change or development. Results were accumulated from twenty eight universities, including Illinois State University, thereby comparing 374 Living Learning Communities. The foundations of the study are based upon Astin’s (1993) college impact model, “Input-Environment-Outcome” (Table 1) as cited in National Study of Living Learning Programs (2010). In this conceptual framework, inputs and environments are believed to impact student outcomes, such as perceptions of self-confidence or the social transition to college.

The distribution and data collection methods used for the assessment captured the inputs, environments, and outcomes of residents. The process took place through a web-based survey that was available to residents over a five-week span. For the TLLC sample, 929 residents were invited, resulting in a 17.98% response from 167 residents. To create a comparison, 904 residents from non-TLLC communities were invited to participate in the survey. From this pool, 95 residents participated producing a 10.51% response rate.

The survey was comprised of two sections. The first section was the baseline questionnaire developed by the NSLLP, constructed to measure the concepts mentioned in Table 1. Following the baseline questionnaire, custom questions were generated through University Housing Services staff input, which allowed for additional qualitative feedback of residents’ experiences specific to ISU residence halls. This segment allowed for the collection of narrative comments to compli-

Table 1

Input-Environment-Outcome model (Astin, 1993)

Inputs	Environments	Outcomes
* Demographics	* Academic major	* Perceptions of self-confidence
* High school achievement	* Peer interactions	* Appreciation of diversity
* Pre-college assessment of college involvement and perceptions of self-confidence	* Significant mentors, profession development, academy expectations, and confidence in STEM activities	* Perceptions of intellectual abilities and growth
	* Co-curricular involvement	* Drop-out risk
	Study group interactions	* Sense of civic engagement
	* Alcohol-related experiences	* Alcohol use and behaviors
	* Use of residence hall resources	* Plans to return to institution
	* Academic and social influences on LLP participation	* Self-reports of cumulative college grade-point average
	* Diverse interactions	* Overall satisfaction and sense of belonging
	* Perceptions of campus racial climate	* Estimations of academic and social transition to college
	* Time spent on leisure activities	
	* Faculty interactions	
	* Mentoring experience	
	* Perceptions of residence hall	

ment the wealth of quantitative data collected in the baseline questionnaire. Ultimately, the results from the survey are used to measure various student perspectives.

Measuring Academic, Social, and Developmental Outcomes

(cont'd)

Table 2

Data provided in the National Study of Living Learning Programs (NSLLP) ISU institutional report

- * Student utilization of residence-hall resources
- * Students' perceptions of their residential environments and the extent in which they nurture academic and social growth
- * A wide range of student outcomes, including intellectual growth, self-confidence, diversity, civic engagement, and alcohol use
- * A customized report summarizing Illinois State University's results to the national sample of participating institutions of higher education
- * Responses to customized questions in order to address areas of institutional uniqueness

The results from the NSLLP provide quantitative analysis of University Housing Services' long standing belief that there are distinct benefits of students' participation in a Themed Living Learning Community at Illinois State University. Incoming students, as well as returning, have been encouraged to live on TLLCs to become engaged in a unique experience that will help facilitate their overall development. The NSLLP 2010 institutional report supplied University Housing Services with data measuring students' self-reported perspectives (Table 2). The findings from the study are overwhelmingly positive.

The results provided in Table 3 are in comparison to the control group of Non-Themed Living Learning Community counterparts, are self-reported statistics, and were all found to be statistically significant by the "Center for Student Studies." These findings demonstrate that residents living in TLLCs report significant advantages to living in these environments relative to those who live in non-TLLC environments. Higher reported rates by residents for "faculty mentorship", "attendance at seminars", and "ease with social transitions to college" are merely a few of the benefits that residents may receive living on a Themed Living Learning Community.

University Housing Services implements a number of successful programs and initiatives each year that contributes to the experience created within these Themed Living Learning Communities. Each semester, residents are provided opportunities to attend monthly social and developmental floor programming, which allows them to interact with their peers, staff, and faculty members. Past programs and activities on Themed Living-Learning Communities have included field related community service projects, off-campus trips, book clubs, social events, and alumni speakers. These experiences may help to illuminate further possibilities for students' aca-

Table 3

Statistically significant differences between students who did live in TLLCs and students who did not

- * Higher course-related faculty interaction
- * Higher rates of faculty mentorship
- * Higher use of co-curricular residence hall resources
- * Higher interactions with professors
- * Higher attendance at seminars and lectures
- * Higher agreement that the residence hall is academically and socially supportive
- * Higher positive peer diversity interactions
- * Higher intended participation in internship experiences
- * Higher ease with the social transition to college
- * Higher rates of overall sense of belonging

demical careers or personal interests, as well as their professional growth while at Illinois State University.

A vital component of the TLLCs is the partnership of these communities with their faculty mentors. Our Residence Hall Staff and Illinois State Faculty Members have been partnering to serve our residence hall communities at ISU since 1992. Specific Faculty Members from sponsoring departments are identified who then partner with the communities to provide advising, leadership, mentorship, referrals, and friendship. The dedication of these faculty members provides residents with both formal and informal interactions with faculty members outside of the classroom during the academic year.

Given the benefits Illinois State students have accrued between their transition to college and overall sense of belonging here at ISU, as compared to their non-TLLC counterparts, it is clear that the TLLC program is beneficial to students. Evaluation of current programming and its influence is always needed. As we continue to evaluate the factors contributing to this success, we will strive to provide further social and developmental opportunities within these communities, as well as strengthen our partnerships with faculty and staff mentors.

References

- Astin, A. W. (1993) *What matters in college? Four critical years revisited*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- The Center for Student Studies. (2010). *The national study of living learning programs: Prepared for Illinois State University*. Ann Arbor, MI.

Summary: Fuller, Wilson, and Tobin (2010). The national survey of student engagement as a predictor of undergraduate GPA: A cross-sectional and longitudinal examination.

Kelly Whalen, Graduate Assistant, University Assessment Services

Former UAS leaders recently published an article examining student engagement as a predictor of final cumulative GPA. In their article, “The National Survey of Student Engagement as a Predictor of Undergraduate GPA: A Cross-Sectional and Longitudinal Examination,” Fuller, Wilson, and Tobin (2010) challenge the applications of cross-sectional designs for predicting undergraduate GPA. The authors analyzed National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) data collected at Illinois State over the course of 7 years. Cross-sectional and longitudinal analyses were conducted to determine whether students’ scores on four sub-categories of NSSE items (referred to as NSSE Benchmarks) accounted for a significant amount of the variance in students’ final cumulative GPA.

The purpose of this study was twofold: To examine the usefulness and validity of cross-sectional models in predicting student outcomes, and to explore NSSE benchmark scores as predictors of student outcomes using a longitudinal approach. The authors focused on whether NSSE Benchmark scores were internally consistent in both cross-sectional and longitudinal data models, as well as the extent to which the cross-sectional and longitudinal models of NSSE Benchmark scores predicted final undergraduate GPA.

The cross-sectional model accounted for 22.6% of variance in student final college GPA, and was broken down as follows: 18.2% of the variance was explained by high school GPA and ACT, and 3.5% of variance was accounted for by class rank. In addition, 0.8% of the variance was accounted for by the *Level of Academic Challenge* Benchmark, but only for first-year students, and 0.1% of the variance was accounted for by the *Active and Collaborative Learning* Benchmark, but only for seniors.

Although there was no evidence that the model including the control variables of first-year Benchmark scores and the change in benchmark scores was significant, Fuller et al. (2010) remained optimistic about the utility of longitudinal data in predicting student outcomes, such as final cumulative GPA with larger samples. This optimism is based on their longitudinal findings with 127 participants that explained a total of 31.3% of the variance in final GPA (as compared to 22.6% from the cross-sectional data). When examined longitudinally, NSSE Benchmark scores accounted for an additional 1.4% of the variance in final GPA.

Fuller et al. (2010) discussed the importance of both cross-sectional and longitudinal methods in examining student engagement. Many institutions rely simply on cross-sectional data to demonstrate the value of collegiate experiences; however, Fuller et al. advised caution about this use of NSSE Benchmarks. Fuller et al. stated that use of cross-sectional data should be limited to year-by-year comparisons, or as a snapshot of the collegiate experience for students at that moment in time. Budget and time constraints may hamper the ability to track and organize longitudinal data in some institutions. If this is the case, Fuller et al. (2010) caution that cross-sectional data must be interpreted carefully, or erroneous conclusions may be drawn.

The authors concluded that their findings may support institutions seeking to meet value-added assessment pressures. They noted that all variables assessing change from first-year to senior year revealed positive growth, although these findings were too modest for statistical significance. They also expressed a need for additional research to examine why NSSE did not serve as a stronger predictor of student success, as measured by GPA.

**For information about how University Assessment Services
can assist **YOU** with your program-level assessment,
check out our website!**

<http://assessment.illinoisstate.edu/>

Program Assessment: Small Grants for Academic Units

Kelly Whalen, Graduate Assistant, University Assessment Services

Assessing the effectiveness of Illinois State's degree programs is an essential step towards fulfilling the University's mission. University Assessment Services strives to facilitate the completion of assessment-related activities by providing a variety of assessment services, free of charge, to units across campus. To further advocate the use of effective assessment procedures, UAS rejuvenated the Small Grants program this year.

Reinstituted in 2010, the Small Grants program was designed to provide financial support for units conducting program-level assessment. This Small Grants program was designed to provide two \$2,500 grants to qualifying individuals or teams proposing projects assessing outcomes at the program or department/school level. Due to a high number of exceptional applications, three grants (one full and two partial) were approved for the 2010-2011 school year. The following recipients were provided with funding through this program:

Dr. Rita Bailey, Ms. Julie Burns, Ms. Terri Tyra, and Dr. Megan Kuhn – Communication Sciences and Disorders
Full funding was awarded for the development of a program-level assessment prospectus for the CSD graduate program, which will specify the components of the assessment process for the department's Assessment Committee. In accordance

with the guidelines for reaccreditation specified by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (to which the CSD department will be re-applying in 2012), focus groups and survey data will be collected to create these evaluation components.

Dr. Debbie Shelden – Special Education Master's Degree Program

Partial funding was awarded for the completion of a comprehensive evaluation of the Department of Special Education Master's Degree program. This evaluation will be used to assist the department in identifying priorities for course and sequence revisions, as well as to establish a program evaluation system that can be maintained over time. This evaluation process will be created from survey and focus group data.

Dr. Susan Kossman – Mennonite College of Nursing

Partial funding was awarded for the development of a comprehensive assessment plan for the new Clinical Simulation Lab. The use of high-fidelity simulations for clinical learning is still new, and evaluation procedures are still being tested. As such, the development of a formative and summative assessment plan will require a careful analysis of existing tools and techniques for assessment, as well as the development of new evaluation strategies tailored to MCN.

University Assessment Services has moved to UPTOWN CROSSING!



Our new location is
Uptown Crossing Suite A/Room 212

Campus Box 2500
Normal, IL 61790-2500
Phone: (309) 438-2135

Fax: (309) 438-1120
Email: assessment@ilstu.edu