ASSESSMENT NEWS

Assessment Spotlight: Career Services "First Year Student" Academic and Career Status Project
By Maureen L. Huffer, Director of Career Services

Since the spring of 2002, the St. Norbert College Career Services Office has participated in a special effort to reach out to first-year students with hopes of making them feel more connected to St. Norbert College and the major selection and career planning processes. As part of the OIE Retention Committee’s efforts to increase retention of students from their first year to their second year, the Career Services Office has placed its focus on students who need assistance in the areas of "choosing a major" and "career path planning". It is believed that students who fail to "connect" in these areas are more likely to leave the institution and, quite possibly, will not complete their pursuit of a college degree. Below is an overview of the project.

I. Step One: Identify potentially "at risk" students who had not selected a major and/or a career path to explore.

During the first advising session of the academic year prior to the start of classes, all first-year students were asked to fill out a one-page survey providing an overview of their major selection and career planning status; they could note where they would like assistance. About one-quarter of entering freshmen indicated that they had not selected a major or a career path to explore. Of these, about half requested assistance and half did not. Areas included:
• deciding on a major. (11%)
• identifying potential career interests. (11%)
• finding an internship to begin exploring potential fields of interest. (55%)
• writing a resume or cover letter. (31%)
• identifying contacts/career mentors. (7%)

(Continued on Column 2)

Task Force on General Education to Attend AAC&U Institute

Support from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness will enable the Task Force on General Education to attend the AAC&U Institute on General Education at Salve Regina University, Newport Rhode Island, May 21-26, 2004. This comprehensive professional development program is the successor to the well-known Asheville Institute. It is designed for Colleges and Universities at any stage of general education reform or review. Teams have the opportunity to meet with experienced consultants, attend numerous targeted sessions and workshops, exchange experiences and insights with other teams, and to plan. The AAC&U has made general education reform a majority priority with its Greater Expectations Initiative. Their National Panel Report entitled Greater Expectations: A New Vision for Learning as a Nation Goes to College can be obtained from the OIE.

(Continued from Column 1)
• researching career fields (learning about different occupations, organizations, industries, etc.). (8%)

Students or advisors returned surveys to Career Services where the information was entered into a database; queries identified students needing assistance.

II. Step Two: Contact first-year students who had not yet selected a major and/or a career path to explore, as well as those who expressed the need for assistance.

Career Services personnel personally invited first-year students to the Fall 2003 "Choosing Your Major" workshop who checked "I have not decided on a major and would like assistance from Career Services in identifying a major". Approximately 50 first-year students received this invitation via e-mail. (Continued on Page 4)

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Assessment Conference Possibilities
Catholic Higher Education Research Cooperative 10th Annual Catholic College and University Research Forum, Villanova University, April 5, 2004 (9:30-3:00 P.M.)
North Carolina State University’s Undergraduate Assessment Symposium, April 16-17, 2004, Embassy Suites Hotel, Cary, NC.
**Assessment Snapshots**

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness has developed a series of “Assessment Snapshots”. Examples appear on pages 2 & 3 of this newsletter. The “Assessment Snapshot” is intended to summarize large amounts of data in a compact, accessible, and visually appealing format. Developed with a number of campus programs/units in mind, it is hoped these snapshots will lead to greater understanding and use of campus data. As one way of informing the SNC Community, this newsletter will publish assessment snapshots periodically. These snapshots provide interesting insights into how our students choose their major, their overall satisfaction with that choice, how our students understand the concept of citizenship, and their overall appraisal of the extent to which SNC has helped them become better citizens. If you have ideas about other snapshots that would be useful to your program, please contact Jack Williamsen or Bob Rutter in the OIE.
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.
“First Year Student” Academic and Career Status Project  (Continued from Page 1)

Career Services personnel personally invited first-year students to take advantage of one-on-one career counseling sessions, workshops, special events and services and career library resources who checked “I have not decided on a career path but would like assistance in (areas previously mentioned in step one)”. Approximately 68 first-year students received this invitation via e-mail.

III. Step Three: Conduct follow-up outreach to second year students who indicated, on last year’s survey, that they had not yet selected a major and/or a career path to explore.

Career Services personnel personally invited sophomore-level students to the Fall 2003 “Choosing Your Major” workshop who last year checked “I have not decided on a major and would like assistance by Career Services in identifying a major”. These students were asked to comment on their current career status regarding major selection. Approximately 38 sophomore-level students received this invitation via e-mail.

Career Services personnel personally invited sophomore-level students to take advantage of one-on-one career counseling sessions, workshops, special events and services, and career library resources who last year checked “I have not decided on a career path but would like assistance in…(areas listed above in step one)”. These students were asked to comment on their current career planning status. Approximately 40 sophomore-level students received this invitation via e-mail.

Career Services personnel conducted a follow-up inquiry with sophomore-level students who last year indicated that they either had not decided on a major or a career path but wanted no assistance at that time. Staff encouraged these students to update us on their status and participate in services that would be most useful to them. Our records showed that 46 students from last year’s entering class said they needed no help in selecting a major and 17 needed no assistance in choosing a career path despite not having firm plans in one or both of those areas.

IV. Step Four: Continue to promote opportunities for students to explore and pursue their major and career interests, including...

For Freshmen Only: Held spring semester; students explore skills, values and interests while setting short-term and longer-term goals in this special workshop series.  
Career Exploration Day Fair: Fifty-four (54) professionals from 45 organizations represented at least 39 fields. Staff members estimated that over 200 students, crossing all class years, attended and interacted with professional representatives.
Career Services Professional Network: Both on-going and web-based; students can contact professionals eager to share their career stories and advice.
On-going career-oriented services: one-on-one career counseling, career development workshop series, comprehensive career library and computer laboratory with access to Career Services’ web site and career assessment programs.
St. Norbert College Full-Time Job and Internship Fair and Work Force Career and Internship Fair: Students have the opportunity to meet with employers from the region (state and Midwest) who want to hire talented and qualified interns and full-time employees.

Professional Internship Experience: A year-round opportunity, students are guided in the development of internship sites, meaningful learning agreements with the internship host, and contact materials including resumes and cover letters. Credit and non-credit experiences can be pursued with the assistance of the Career Services Office.

Don’t Cancel Class”, "What Can I Do with a Major in …?” and "Career TuTOURial": Faculty and staff, as well as student groups, can partner with Career Services in any of the above programs which promote career-oriented education and exposure to career resources.

V. Step Five: Track participation levels of first and second year students. Regularly share these data with OIE Retention Committee and post trends on the OIE web site.

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Use of Educator Increases

According to Jay Cook, Software Support Specialist, 15 SNC faculty regularly use Educator, a course management program purchased in 2003 with Title III funds. Campus uses include online course communication with non-traditional students on a recent K-12 snow day, accessing and maintaining attendance records via a handheld PDA, and recording grades. Educator has also been used to organize and deliver independent study courses, as a central submission point for student assignments, and as a point of exchange for peer reviews.

Anyone teaching a course at St. Norbert College can use Educator. Although Educator delivers course materials via the world wide web, instructors do not need to know how to construct web pages in order to use the system. Computer Services will provide periodic training on how to use the course management capabilities of Educator. For more information, please contact Jay Cook (x3973, jay.cook@snc.edu).

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