Office of Institutional Effectiveness
Strategic Plan Analysis

Vision Statement
The Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) supports academic and student life program assessment activities by providing expertise, data processing and analysis capability, and financial resources. The OIE will ensure that assessment plans adopted by various units are methodologically sound and meet the needs of the institution. The OIE will develop, distribute, and monitor a college-wide assessment calendar which will guide resource allocation. The OIE will coordinate the administration of existing surveys and will make those data (CSS, CIRP, SS) available to campus units. The OIE will collect all assessment results and make recommendations regarding an overall college assessment plan. The OIE will initiate and carry out, when necessary, assessment activities for programs which are inter or intra disciplinary. The OIE will facilitate the integration of assessment data into college planning and budgeting processes.

How does learning outcomes assessment and institutional research enhance the College Mission?

St. Norbert College’s mission is to “provide a superior education that is personally, intellectually, and spiritually challenging.” Development of assessment plans focused on student learning outcomes by all academic and student life programs combined with data collection, analysis, and use of these data to inform program improvement will support the College’s mission.

Environmental Analysis

What has been accomplished?

Year 1 (2001-2002)

Academic quality and institutional management were improved by the establishment of an outcomes assessment infrastructure. In the grant’s first year, St. Norbert College established an Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) and staffed it with key personnel representing all three academic divisions and student life. The OIE consolidated and made accessible all existing campus-generated assessment data, purchased additional print resources for an assessment library, and compiled a resource list. A proposal to establish a college-wide assessment committee was approved by the faculty assembly and AAC. A Learning Outcomes Assessment Progress Report Form was developed to monitor academic and student life program progress toward meeting NCA accreditation expectations regarding assessment. The OIE developed a comprehensive assessment web site and began publishing an informative newsletter (12 issues through 10/03).
In addition, three nationally recognized authorities on student learning outcomes assessment shared their expertise during campus visits and thirty-two faculty and staff attended national or regional assessment conferences. OIE staff met with twenty-three different academic or student life units as well as personnel from 17 different administrative offices. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness hosted four data-based presentations and conducted eleven targeted assessment workshops for faculty and staff in its first year. An electronic portfolio performance assessment system was implemented for students in teacher education. Statements of intended student learning outcomes for General Education Areas 1-12 were developed and endorsed by the faculty and an assessment plan for General Education was adopted and implemented for 2002-2003. Current Student Survey, Alumni Survey, and CIRP data were broken out by major and distributed to all academic units. Two studies of departing students were conducted and used to inform and develop interventions to increase retention. Twenty-five program-level assessment projects were authorized and funded by the OIE.

Year 2 (2002-2003)

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness offered 17 targeted assessment workshops in which 206 faculty and staff participated. The OIE hosted two on-campus presentations by nationally recognized assessment leaders (Drs David Ozar & James Nichols) and consulted extensively with a third (Dr. Kathleen Blake-Yancy) on assessment of student writing. Analysis of CSS data produced a study of correlates of student satisfaction. Focus group data with follow-up additional questions in the 2003 CIRP & SNC Current Student Survey were used to clarify the “personal sphere” emphasis within the SNC Mission Statement. The OIE Director met with academic, Student Life, and Mission & Heritage program faculty and staff 74 times during year 2. The General Education Review Chair facilitated 25 meetings involving 60 faculty participating in learning outcomes assessment of general studies areas 4, 5, 8, Upper 1, and 12. The Retention Coordinator/Data Analyst met with faculty and staff 62 times. Finally, the Academic Programs and Natural Science Assessment Specialists met with faculty 31 times in support of discipline-based assessment activities.

Assessment capacity continued to increase through OIE support of 14 faculty and staff who participated in 8 national assessment conferences. Twenty-nine assessment projects were authorized and funded. The Institutional Effectiveness Team, the Retention Committee, and the College Assessment Committee met regularly during year 2. The College Assessment Committee developed a “Plan for Assessing Student Learning Outcomes at St. Norbert College”. The plan has been reviewed and approved by the Administrative Advisory Committee, Academic Affairs, Student Life, and Mission & Heritage. It is currently under review by the Student Government Association.

Analysis of retention data yielded an article published in the Noel-Levitz On-Line Journal as well as in Assessment News. Retention analyses were expanded to two new at-risk groups (underprepared, underachieving) and the HERI “Your First College Year” and the Noel-Levitz “College Student Inventory” were piloted with sub-samples of freshmen students, including those identified at-risk. Preliminary analyses of these data (in consort
with other available data) lead to formation of a “developmental advisement pilot” which began in August. The freshmen diversity student retention rate increased from a baseline of 67% to 81% in 2003. The freshmen overall retention rate increased by 2% to 85%.

Review of the General Education Program continued in year 2. A General Education Faculty Survey was administered by the OIE. The results were included in a 75 page report consolidating all existing campus data about the performance of the general education program. These data will be used to raise questions as the basis for a comprehensive curricular review beginning next Spring. An assessment plan for the 2003-2004 academic year was adopted by the General Education & Honors Committee.

The electronic portfolio initiative continued in teacher education. Excluding a few ninth semester student teachers, all certification candidates now have an electronic portfolio appropriate for their stage in the program. Twenty-three academic and five Mission & Heritage Programs have developed or modified learning outcomes assessment plans and are collecting data. Student Life programs are collecting assessment data based on an overall Student Life Assessment Plan. Eight academic and three Student Life programs have filed reports with the OIE documenting the use of assessment data for program improvement.

Where are we headed?

In addition to the Higher Learning Commission’s assessment expectations, recent implementation of a comprehensive program review process for 42 academic programs has increased the need for regular dissemination of reliable data to all academic units. At present, data retrieval is often ad hoc or on-demand. Data is housed in numerous administrative offices on campus and, due to the limitations of an antiquated AIMS database, inconsistencies in data are often encountered. The Associate Dean for Instructional Support is a source of data regarding program costs, reallocated time, and faculty and staff transience. IPEDs data are prepared, in part, by the Registrar, and, in part, by Business & Finance, Alumni data reside with the Alumni Office and Institutional Advancement, SOOTs are scanned and reports generated by Computer Services, Admissions data are maintained by the Dean of Admissions, yearly institutional assessments (e.g. HERI Freshmen & Senior CIRP, SNC Current Student Survey, YFCY) are administered by Student Life, the Survey Center, and the OIE respectively.

Funding for an Office of Institutional Effectiveness beyond the expiration of the Title III grant in 2006 is uncertain. Furthermore, the OIE was established to support the College’s flagging assessment effort, but assessment is only one part of the College’s overall data collection and dissemination needs. It is conceivable that every academic, Student Life, and Mission & Heritage unit on campus will have accomplished one complete assessment cycle by the HLC focussed visit in 2005. Even if this is accomplished, support in the form of resources and expertise will still be necessary to sustain the effort through the 2011 site visit and beyond. Support, however, will probably not be needed at the same level. In addition, to successfully accomplishing the focussed visit, the grant’s fifth year may be an ideal time to take the first steps toward incorporation into the OIE of an
Action 1: The College-wide Assessment Committee (or another appropriate group) will develop a mission and organizational structure for a post-grant Office of Institutional Effectiveness.

Action 2: The OIE will begin its transition by adding a qualified Institutional Research Coordinator (ideally with assessment as well as institutional research expertise) to the Institutional Effectiveness Team.

Action 3: The Institutional Research Coordinator will work with various campus offices (e.g. Registrar, Business & Finance, Alumni, Communication, Academic Affairs, OIE) to centralize data collection and dissemination within the College.

Action 4: An Office of Institutional Effectiveness will be fully funded by the College beginning October 1, 2006.

Action 5: Learning outcomes assessment as documented in “A Plan for Learning Outcomes Assessment at St. Norbert College” will continue in preparation for the next accreditation site visit in 2011.

Goal 3: All SNC research activities and grant proposals will be rigorously reviewed to ensure compliance with the criteria governing federally sponsored research.

Action 1: An Internal Review Board with responsibility for reviewing campus research activities and grant proposals will be established.

Action 2: A process for reviewing all non-exempt proposals or activities will be established.

Goal 4: In response to unanticipated changes attributable to OARS implementation, academic advisement will be improved by refocusing on the developmental model.

Action 1: The Director of Advisement will develop an assessment plan for academic advisement and an evaluation instrument for academic advisors.

Action 2: Advisement responsibilities will become more uniformly distributed among faculty and participating staff.

Action 3: The dedicated freshmen advisor program (piloted in 2003-4) will be fully implemented to strengthen advisement and improve retention.

Action 4: The Advisor Manual will be updated and placed on the web.

Action 5: Academic Advisors will receive additional training, focusing on the developmental model and Banner.
institutional research component. This component would oversee the majority of IR data gathering and dissemination activities for the entire College. Many issues (e.g. mission, responsibilities, data access, coordination with other units, staffing, location) would need to be addressed in the transition.

In recent years, grant solicitation by the College has increased and been systematized. Many grants require evidence of an Internal Review Board (IRB) to ensure that any campus research activity meets criteria for federally-sponsored research. Although St. Norbert College abides by its own Guidelines for the Collection, Use and Release of Assessment Data, the Human Dignity Statement, and subscribes to the Principles and Indicators for Student Assessment Systems elaborated by The National Center on Fair and Open Testing (FairTest) and the American Association for Higher Education statement on Fair Assessment Practices, it does not have an IRB. Procedures for systematic review of campus research and grant proposals need to be brought up to date.

In 2003, the Director of Advisement was asked to report to the Director of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness.

Goals, Action Steps, and Implementation

Goal 1: Student learning outcomes assessment data will be used to improve student learning in all academic, student life, and Mission & Heritage programs.

Action 1: The Office of Institutional Effectiveness will provide expertise, resources, and support for assessment activities and will accomplish all Title III Grant objectives.

Action 2: The College will adopt a comprehensive student learning outcomes assessment plan.

Action 3: All academic, student life, and Mission & Heritage programs will have a viable assessment plan, engage in ongoing data collection, and be able to document use of these data for program review and/or improvement.

Action 4: Assessment data will be used in College decision-making.

Goal 2: An Office of Institutional Effectiveness augmented by institutional research expertise will centralize data collection and dissemination within the College.
Action 6: An Outstanding Advisor Award will be established.

Assessment

The performance of the current Office of Institutional Effectiveness is documented in the Annual Performance Report Submitted to the Department of Education at the end of each grant year. The effectiveness of the OIE will also be reflected in the focussed visit results, i.e. how close SNC will be to meeting the Higher Learning Commission’s "New Criteria for Accreditation with Patterns of Evidence".

The establishment of a consistent and workable process for review of campus research and grant proposals will be evidenced by IRB minutes.

Indicators of a successful post-grant transition for the OIE will include full budgetary support, a central office location with identifiable signage, hiring of qualified staff, regular dissemination of needed data, and administration of a prioritized assessment calendar.

Prepared by the Institutional Effectiveness Team, October 31, 2003