

Plan — Research — Assess!



Introduction

Welcome to the second issue of Plan — Research — Assess! This newsletter is published by the Planning, Research, and Assessment (PRA) Office at Penn State Berks. The purpose of the newsletter is to disseminate information on current assessment, institutional research, and planning projects at the College.

Steff Galeano, Senior Professional Writing major and student worker in the PRA Office, is responsible for design, content, and editing of this newsletter.

Comments on the newsletter? Email: [PRA.Office](mailto:PRA.Office@psu.edu).

Inside this Issue

Strategic Planning	1
Economic Impact Study	1
Degree Interest	2
Commuter Survey	2
General Education Assessment	2

Contact Information
Dr. Mary Lou D'Allegro
Senior Director
Phone number: 610-396-6389
E-mail: mad23@psu.edu



Strategic Planning 2008-2013

"Berks Campus is committed to engaged-learning that encourages individual growth, cultural awareness, ethical decision-making, and civic responsibility for all members of the community." -Penn State Berks Mission

Strategic Planning, a Brief Primer

Strategic planning provides direction to abet the achievement of an organization's vision and mission. It is a "disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization is, what it does, and why it does it." (Dooris & Sandemeyer, 2006).

Strategic plans help organizations move from the current state of affairs to a more efficient operation by identifying priorities and direction. In fact, strategic plans help to focus every-day decision making, budgeting, and policy development on these priorities and direction.

The development of the 2008-2013 strategic plan is chaired by Dr. Blaine Steensland, Senior Director of Student Affairs & Enrollment Management and Jim Laurie, Internal Consultant and faculty.

"We are interested in an active and viable strategic plan. If it's not dynamic, it's dead. We are committed to living and breathing strategic plan subject to constant review

and change," states Dr. Steensland.

The 2008-2013 strategic plan at Penn State Berks comprises of five goal areas:

- Student Learning & Academic Excellence
- Enrollment Management
- Diversity & Sense of Community
- Community Outreach
- Research & Scholarship.

For each goal, several initiatives have been articulated to further refine the goal's intent and direction.

Involvement

"Over 100 faculty, staff, and students have been involved in the development and review of the plan. The willingness to participate in the development of the plan and the amount of time spent on this iterative process is very encouraging," states Dr. Mary Lou D'Allegro, Senior Director of Planning, Research, and Assessment.

Moreover, there are several planning groups dedicated to the success of the 2008-2013 strategic plan.

The **Core Planning Group** oversees the other planning groups, sets the schedule, and reviews recommendations from the **Strategic Planning Council (SPC)**. The SPC makes suggestions for change to the plan and the planning process. The **five task force groups**, one for each goal area, develop and review the goal initiatives and action plans.

Schedule for 2008-2013 Strategic Plan

October 2007: Task force reports due.
First draft written.

November 2007: First draft revised.

December 2007: Second draft shared with SPC, SGA, Advisory Board, and other external constituents.

January 2008: Strategic plan sent to Faculty Senate for review and comment.

March 2008: Final document sent to printer.

Dooris, M. J. & Sandemeyer, L. (2006). Planning for improvement in the academic department. *Effective practices for academic leaders.*, 1, 10.

Economic Impact of Berks County Colleges and Universities

"An economic impact analysis traces spending through an economy and measures the cumulative effects of that spending" (Economic Development Research and Training Center, 2001).

The Higher Education Council of Berks County (HECBC) released the 2007 HECBC Economic Impact Study in October, 2007. The HECBC consists of five colleges in Berks County: Albright College, Alvernia College, Kutztown University, Penn State Berks, and Reading Area Community College.

Results indicate that the five colleges are responsible for contributing more than \$1

billion (\$1.2 billion) to the Berks County economy in 2004-05, the fiscal year the information for the study was collected. The study was conducted by Dr. Lolita Paff, Associate Professor of Business Economics and Dr. Mary Lou D'Allegro, Senior Director of Planning, Research & Assessment, both of Penn State Berks.

The five economic impact indicators used in the study: core spending, discretionary student spending, student spending on housing, visitors to campus, and student volunteerism.

The study calculated both direct and indirect economic impact. Direct impact hones

in the spending of colleges and related enterprises. Indirect spending quantifies the collective effects of subsequent spending as a result of direct remuneration to a region.

The study also identified several intangible benefits that colleges provide including faculty research, charitable donations, cultural offerings, and increased earning power of alumni. Dr. Susan Phillips Speece, Chancellor, Penn State Berks, stated "we attract students to our area and many of our graduates remain here to live and work." Certainly, the 2007 HECBC Economic Impact study demonstrates the value of higher education in Berks County.

Economic Development Research and Training Center. (2001). *Economic impact analysis.*

Degree Interest Program

“Success is a science; if you have the conditions, you get the result.” -Oscar Wilde

In Spring 2007, a degree interest study was conducted in response to new majors proposed within the Science Division at Penn State Berks. Proposed programs are Biology Major General Option, Biology Major Genetics and Developmental Biology Option, Physics Major, and Physics Minor. Students from Math 026, Math 140, and Math 141 were administered the survey.

Participants were asked to identify some additional qualifying information including the campus they prefer to complete their degree, most important reason to stay at Berks to complete their degree, and current major.

Over three-fourths (78.0%) of the respondents were

male. Not surprisingly, most respondents (70.0%) were first year students. About 160 students completed degree interest surveys.

About half (49.4%) of the respondents indicated they would stay and complete a baccalaureate at Penn State Berks if a Physics Degree with a general option was offered. One-third (33.3%) of the respondents indicated that they would stay and complete a baccalaureate at Berks if a Biology Degree with a general option was offered.

“The survey really enables us to learn about our market. The goal is to keep students here for four years,” states Dr. Paul Esqueda, associate dean.



General Education Assessment

“We’re capitalizing on the good assessment currently being conducted in general education courses and general education assessment as a whole.”
-Dr. Mary Lou D’Allegro

According to Middle States Commission of Higher Education (2007), there are three levels of assessment: institutional, program, and course.

Institutional assessments evaluate overall effectiveness of an organization in achieving its mission and goals. An institution’s prudent use of resources is also under the purview of institutional assessment.

Program assessment looks at student learning in curricular and co-curricular programs. At the heart of program assessment is the achievement of student learning outcomes.

Penn State Berks is currently reviewing current institutional and program assessment initiatives. Specifically,

the College is developing a comprehensive general education program.

The Faculty Retreat, in January 2008, will focus on general education assessment. Faculty will develop student learning outcomes that align with the University’s general education objectives. In spring 2008, methodologies and strategies to evaluate these student learning outcomes will be constructed and piloted.

No other Penn State campus or University Park has deployed a comprehensive general education assessment. In fact, the University is looking for Penn State Berks to provide leadership in general education assessment. Berks continues to be a key factor in the University’s general education assessment process.

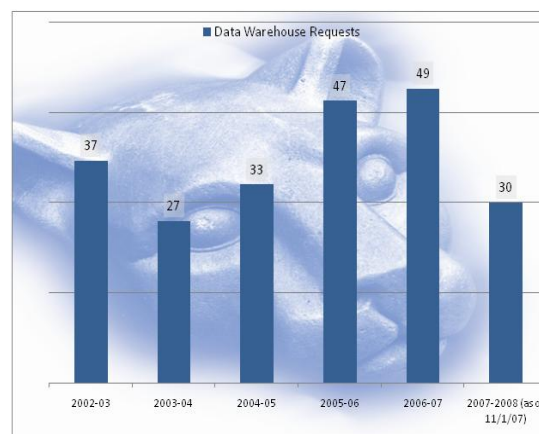


Figure 1: Number of Data Warehouse Requests Per Academic Year

For data requests contact:

Stefanie Kerns, MBA
Statistical Data Analyst
E-mail: slk37@psu.edu
Phone: 610-396-6386



Commuter Student Survey

A commuter survey was administered in spring 2007 to determine the level of satisfaction of several campus areas considered fundamental to the commuter experience. Specifically, commuters were asked to rate the importance and satisfaction in these areas:

- Quiet study areas
- Library noise level
- Availability of computers
- Storage space
- Classroom desk condition and comfort
- Campus food choices.

About one-third of the commuter students enrolled in spring 2007 (34.7%) responded.

Survey results indicated that approximately sixty percent (61.9%) of the commuter respondents were satisfied with the quiet areas in the library but expressed concern with students using cell phones.

That said, over half (60.8%) of the commuter respondents were dissatisfied with the availability of computers especially in the library. Nevertheless, most respondents indicated the importance of the availability of computers.

Over one-half of the commuter survey respondents (62.1%) were dissatisfied with the availability of storage space (ex. lockers).

One-half (50.6%) of the respondents were dissatisfied with the amount of desktop space for learning. Two-fifths (44.1%) were dissatisfied with how the classroom desks the accommodate the physical size of students.

Ninety-six (96.0%) percent of the respondents indicated that they drive to campus. About three-fifths (61.9%) of the respondents stated that they were not able to find a parking spot near the building of their choice.

Two-fifths (39.1%) of the respondents indicated that they use *LionCash* to purchase food or a campus meal plan. About one-third of the respondents would like to use the *LionCash* at off-campus locations. Over one-half (51.0%) of the respondents indicated that they eat at home.

The Commuter Student Survey has initiated discussion around campus about various ways to get commuters involved in more campus events and clubs. For example, Peter Coleman, Assistant Director of Student Affairs / Student Support Services acknowledges that the resources available at Penn State Berks requires more advertisement. “Students should get involved. Activities are available for commuters to network with other students. Statistics show that those students who get involved with their college are more likely to become successful,” states Coleman.