

# Plan — Research — Assess!

## Welcome

Welcome to the Winter 2010 issue of **Plan — Research — Assess!** This newsletter is published by the Planning, Research and Assessment Office (PRA) at Penn State Berks.

The purpose of the PRA newsletter is to disseminate information on current assessment, institutional research, and planning projects at the College.

The PRA office is grateful for the student workers who make the PRA newsletter possible.

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## Academic Program Assessment Cycle & Scorecard

### Introduction

In 2008, Berks revised the Academic Program Assessment Cycle. The Assessment Cycle is akin to a schedule of assessment.. A four year cycle, the Berks Program Assessment Cycle ensures that the programs are engaging in the critical stages of assessment each year. Further, the cycle articulates the sequence of those critical assessment phases.

### It Takes Four Years

As mentioned, the type of activities differs depending on where the program is in the cycle. Correspondingly, the cycle articulates the assessment activities for each year:

- 1st Year: Administer assessment
- 2nd Year: Review & interpret results
- 3rd Year: Make changes to the program
- 4th Year: Determine if changes improve student learning.

The cycle parallels the Plan, Do, Check, ACT

(PDCA) Cycle proposed by Edward Deming.<sup>1</sup> Expectedly, the cycle continues and repeats itself after the fourth year. It is this continuous emphasis on assessment that helps to improve student learning.

### Assessment Score Card

Certainly, Berks is no stranger to scorecards. The strategic plan momentum is driven by the progress indicated by the scorecard. In parallel, a scorecard has been developed for program assessment. Figure 1 depicts the

**Figure 1:** The Academic Program Assessment Scorecard

	Good Progress	50.0%
	Some Progress	40.9%
	Very Little or Unknown Progress	9.1%

Academic Program Assessment Scorecard. Also shown is the extent the programs are pursuing and using the assessment of student learning. This is indicated by the percents adjacent to each status category.

At present, half of the programs are doing assessment as well as using the assessment results to make changes the curriculum, examining resources, and/or developing or revising new assessments. The other programs are planning to administer assessments in 2009-10. "The key is to have faculty involved at each stage of the assessment process: planning, doing, checking, and acting" emphasizes Dr. Mary Lou D'Allegro, Senior Director, Planning, Research, and Assessment. The Program Assessment Cycle will help to achieve that goal.

<sup>1</sup> Arveson, P. (1998) The Deming Cycle. Retrieved November 20, 2009 from <http://www.balancedscorecard.org/TheDemingCycle/>

## Assessment Grant Announced

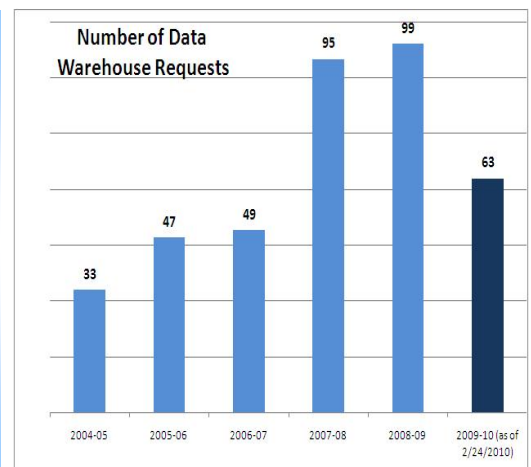
The second annual Berks Assessment Grant was announced recently. At the heart of the Assessment Grant Program is to encourage the evaluation of student learning. Funding from the Assessment Grant can be used toward:

- Development and administration of authentic assessments (student demonstration of skill, knowledge, competency),
- Construction and use of rubrics and similar scoring metrics, or
- National or external benchmark comparisons to program or support area assessment results.

Additional information, the application and explanation of the application process is on the PRA web site: <http://www.bk.psu.edu/Information/30566.htm?cn711>. Also listed is the 2008-09 grant recipients and the Assessment Grant Projects.

Consultation with PRA must be scheduled by 4/1/10. Applications are due 4/15/10. Recipients will be notified by 5/7/10. Questions about the grant should directed to Dr. Mary Lou D'Allegro, Senior Director for Planning, Research, and Assessment ([mad23@psu.edu](mailto:mad23@psu.edu)).

## Data Warehouse Requests



# Final Analysis of First Year Engagement

## Thriving Quotient Survey

At the end of September and again in the third week of November 2009, sixteen First Year Seminar (FYS) sections administered the *Thriving Quotient Survey* (TQS). This survey asks students to indicate:

- The extent they engage in study behaviors,
- How effectively they manage their time and responsibilities,
- Attribute success to themselves or external factors,
- Social connectedness,
- The frequency that they meet with faculty outside of class, and
- If they seek advice from faculty advisors.

In other words, students were asked to identify the frequency they were engaging in behaviors known to improve academic success. The survey was administered twice to decipher any gains in these behaviors or attitudes. Comparisons of the extent of the gains between those FYS sections that have been exposed to

the Strength Based approach and the sections that have not were compiled separately.

## Results of the FYS Assessment

For the first administration of the *Thriving Quotient Survey*, there was little difference between the two section types. Similar results were posted for the second administration.

For example, the four items with the largest satisfaction scores were the same for both the Strength Based FYS and non-Strength Based FYS sections. The item means for both groups for the second survey administration are listed below. Note that the items were rated on a six point scale (1= Strongly Disagree, 6= Strongly Agree).

Also examined were the gains or losses between administrations. The Strength Based

**Figure 2:** Four Largest Item Means for the Second Administration of the TQS

Item	Strength Based FYS Sections Item Mean	Non-Strength Based FYS Sections Item Mean
Intend to Enroll Next Year	4.93	5.27
This Institution is a Good Fit for Me	4.82	4.92
Motivated To Do Well in School	5.03	4.92
Pursue My Educational Goals	4.84	4.80

FYS sections had gains in about sixty percent of the items.

## Recommendations

Several recommendations have been gleaned from this assessment research. Mainly, resources and FYS faculty training need to be enhanced. Further, this training needs to be implemented before the start of the semester. A network of Strength Based faculty and staff has also been proposed.

# Progress of Strategic Plan Year 2 Action Steps

## Time Gone By...

Hard to imagine but it is true. Almost one-third of the 2008-2013 Strategic Plan has passed. Fortunately for Berks, much progress has been made on the Year 2 action steps associated with the 2008-2013 Strategic Plan, *Building on 50 Years of Excellence*. This is due to the diligence and dedication of the Strategic Plan Committee (SPC) and the Strategic Plan Advocates. Both groups meet at least twice a semester and keep the College abreast of the latest developments regarding their assigned action steps. Also discussed are issues in implementation,

budget concerns, and other factors that may affect the Plan's realization.

## The Scorecard

Briefly, the status of each action step for each of the five goals 2008-2013 Strategic Plan Scorecard are color coded based on the extent the action step has been implemented. Action steps can be assigned to one of four status categories:

- BLUE— Complete & Ongoing,
- GREEN— Complete,
- YELLOW— In Progress, and
- RED— No progress.

As indicated in Figure 3, Berks is making

exceptional progress with sixty (60.5%) percent of the Year 2 Action Steps *Complete & Ongoing or Complete*.

**Figure 3: 2008-2013 Strategic Plan:** Year 2 Action Steps



# General Education Assessments Underway

## Introduction

Penn State students must complete a comprehensive core of courses beyond that of major requirements. Dubbed, general education, these courses are designed to enable students to:

- Acquire knowledge through critical information gathering,
- Analyze and evaluate,
- Integrate knowledge from a variety of sources,
- Develop skills to maintain health,
- Communicate effectively,
- Be able to collaborate with others,
- Understand international interdependence and cultural diversity, and
- Comprehend the role of aesthetic and creative activities.<sup>1</sup>

All told, seven general education areas comprise this curriculum, (1) Writing, (2) Quantification, (3) Health & Physical Activity, (4) Natural Sciences, (5) Arts, (6) Humanities, and (7) Social & Behavioral Sciences.

Berks has begun to develop and implement assessment of the Writing and Quantification areas. Interestingly, the assessment methodology are as diverse as these two areas.

## General Education Assessment

For the writing assessment, four English Composition Faculty were trained to use a rubric to evaluate student writing. The rubric consists of six criteria. In Spring 2010, seventy-two papers were submitted electronically for these readers to grade using the rubric. Two readers were randomly assigned to each of these papers.

Special thanks to the four readers, Amy Berger, Dr. Tom Bossard, Dr. Jayne Browne, and Dr. Raymond Mazurek. Also thanks to Dr. Jeanne Rose for the design of the rubric and the “norming” session.

For the assessment of the general education area, quantification, Dr. Janet Winter tasked each Mathematics faculty with identifying items from several Mathematics final exams with the four quantification objectives.

<sup>1</sup> Pennsylvania State University. (2008) What is General Education. Retrieved February 18, 2010 from <http://bulletins.psu.edu/bulletins/bluebook/>

## Quick Fact

Over **one-third** (35.6%) of the new baccalaureate degree seeking students in fall 2009 were in enrolled in Science, Technology, Engineering, or Mathematics (STEM) majors

