

# Plan — Research — Assess!

## Welcome

Welcome to the second fall 2008 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.

**FYI:** Go directly to articles by clicking on article titles listed below *Inside This Issue*.

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



### Contact Information

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## What and How do I Get Student Information?

### Types of Information

As indicated by the number of data warehouse requests, (see Data Warehouse Requests) Planning, Research & Assessment can provide several types of information. By downloading information from the PSU Data Warehouse and other University data facilities, faculty and staff have access to (examples in parentheses):

- Admissions (applied, accepted, SAT averages, FTCAP scores)
- Student enrollment characteristics (gender, ethnicity, age, major),
- Course information (number of internships, courses taught by full vs. part-time faculty)
- Degrees conferred (associate, baccalaureate),
- Financial-aid information (percent of students eligible for need based aid),

- Contact information (email, phone),
- Retention and graduation rates, and
- Pennsylvania and US census, demographic and economic indicators.

### What else can be had from the PSU Data Warehouse?

Information is not limited to current PSU Berks students. Information about the other campuses, historical information, and even information about future semester enrollment. Examples of PSU Data Warehouse requests include:

- Number of students in Applied Psychology for fall 2006, fall 2007, and fall 2008,
- Percent of Fall 2008 enrolled IST students by gender and ethnicity,

- Email addresses for enrolled PSU Berks students, and
- Number of change of assignment (location) to UP by academic program to other campuses.

### How to Make a Request

To make a request, first check the PRA Report website: <http://www.bk.psu.edu/information/30464.htm?cn711>. The PSU Berks Fact Book, information about survey projects, and links to other PSU, state, and national data sources are archived here.

Complete the Data/Data Warehouse Request form at: <http://berks.psu.edu/information/PRAforms/DataWarehouseRequestform.pdf>. The request will be sent directly to PRA.

If unable to find information needed, the PRA Request form is disabled idn your email application, or if further clarification on the data available is needed, email Stef Kerns at [slk37@psu.edu](mailto:slk37@psu.edu).

## PRA is More than a Three Letter Acronym

The Planning, Research & Assessment Office provides numerous services to enable the efficient use of resources, maintain a campus culture of continuous improvement, and maximize the institutional effectiveness of Penn State Berks. Below are some of the fundamental responsibilities of the office:

### Strategic Planning

- Provide meaningful departmental strategic planning and devise continuous improvement strategies.
- Construct or assist in development and conducting bench marking, "best in class," and peer-analyses studies to make meaningful comparisons with other institutions regarding student learning.

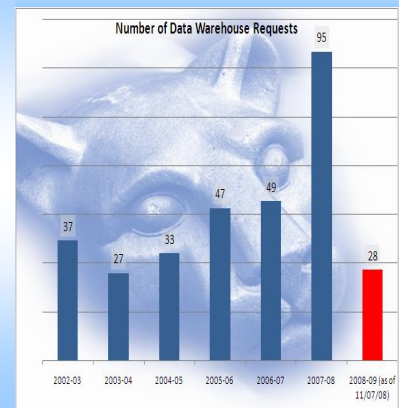
### Research

- Proactively implement institutional research studies that address student learning of all students and specific student cohorts.
- Work with college and departments to identify and understand factors that affect retention and graduation.

### Assessment

- Assist departments in the understanding, interpretation, and uses of assessment results to make meaningful changes in programs and the curriculum that improve student learning.
- Help in the design and administration of questionnaires, focus groups, and other inquiry techniques.

### Data Warehouse Requests



## Berks NSSE Goes University Wide



### Introduction

Penn State Berks is no stranger to the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) Project. Several PSU Berks committees are currently working on proposals based on the results of the survey. However, Penn State University participated in the national survey project for the first time in spring 2008.

To refresh, NSSE asks students to identify the extent he/she are engaged in good academic and co-curricular practices. Specifically, five items factor into five composites:

- Level of Academic Challenge,
- Active and Collaborative Learning,
- Student-Faculty Interaction,
- Enriching Educational Experience, and
- Supportive Campus Environment.

### Comparative Information and Benchmarking

The true value of the NSSE is the multitude of comparative information that is available.

University Park respondents were compared to the respondents at five other big ten schools. University Park will also be providing NSSE results for each college in comparison to the overall University's tabulations.

### Now What...

With over 70 items, and five composites drilled down among:

- first year and senior respondents,
- University and peer institutions,
- for each college at the University, and
- the eight participating campuses

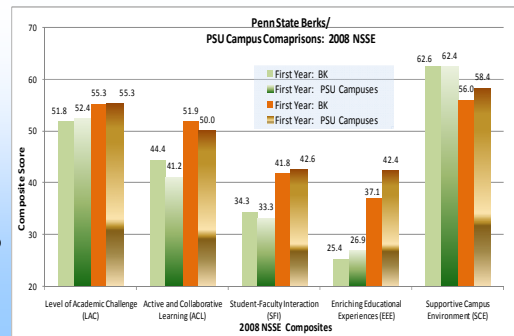
the NSSE results can be intimidating to say the least.

Penn State Berks will have the opportunity to discuss how the NSSE results were disseminated among key Berks constituents,

What information was presented, and how recommendations were gleaned from these reports. Chart 1 is shown below to illustrate some of the information that has been examined by the campus.

Lessons learned, future direction, alignment with the strategic plan, and other campus initiatives will also be presented.

**Chart 1:** PSU Berks Comparisons to eight PSU Campuses on the Five NSSE Composites (2008)



## “Building on 50 Years of Excellence”, Strategic Plan Update

Those who were on campus last year can attest to the effort that was exerted developing *Building on 50 Years of Excellence*, Penn State Berks 2008-2013 strategic plan. With the help of the Strategic Planning Council (SPC) and the Strategic Plan Advocates (SPA), a strategic plan scorecard has been developed and will be maintained by the SPC.

### Strategic Plan Scorecard

A scorecard is a summary of the status of several key operations. With respect to *Building on 50 Years of Excellence*, the strategic plan scorecard will provide information on the extent that each of the first year action plans

are being realized. This one page document will provide a quick glance on how well the strategic plan overall is being implemented.

More specifically, the status of each action plan will be represented by either a green, yellow, or red stoplight. The stop light colors represent if the action plan is:

- Completed—Green
- In progress—Yellow
- Not started—Red

### Getting the Word Out

Again, communicating the content and direction provided by *50 Years of Excellence*, and the progress of the strategic plan is key. The

strategic plan scorecard will be updated every two months and shared via:

- Posted on the faculty/staff drive and on the intranet when it becomes available,
- Faculty on the SPC have been asked to share strategic plan updates and status at their respective *division meetings*,
- The *Budget & Strategic Planning Subcommittee* will also monitor its progress, and report to the faculty senate, and
- Dr. John Romano, Vice-President of Commonwealth Campuses will discuss the implementation of the strategic plan at the *Faculty Retreat* in January 2009.

## Planning at PRA

In September 2008, the PRA Office invited several faculty and staff to participate in the development of the PRA strategic plan. The purpose of the meeting was twofold. First, the PRA staff solicited feedback on how well PRA was meeting the current needs of the campus. Second, participants were asked to identify additional services that PRA should be providing to the campus.

Based on this feedback, PRA developed a

strategic plan. In essence, the plan addresses the future expectations and needs of the campus and the community served by Penn State Berks.

Some of the recommendations offered by those who attended the PRA planning meeting include.

- Make visible the PRA services to faculty & staff,

- Share assessment “best practices”, and
- Provide student information to help Program Coordinators understand the demographics of their respective majors.

A draft of the PRA strategic plan including mission, vision, and initiatives can be found on the web at the PRA website: <http://www.bk.psu.edu/information/25995.htm?cn711>. Staff and faculty are encouraged to send comments to Dr. Mary Lou D’Allegro at [mad23@psu.edu](mailto:mad23@psu.edu).

## Current Survey Projects

PRA works year-round on several survey projects. PRA invites you to contact the office when considering a questionnaire, survey, or focus group project. PRA can provide advice on instrument development, research design, and survey administration. PRA also constructs online surveys, analyzes survey

results, and provides guidance in the development of recommendations and distribution of results. Current survey projects include:

- Audio-Comments as a Teaching Tool (Teaching & Learning Innovation Grant),
- Summer and Fall 2008 Recent Graduate Survey,
- Academic Advising Exit Survey,
- Career Services “Client” Survey,
- First Year Student Peer Mentor Program, and
- Survey on Smoking and Substance Abuse.