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Plan — Research — Assess!

Welcome

Welcome to the second fall 2009 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.*

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Planning, Research & Assessment

Strategic Planning

Results

Results

Research   Assessment

Contact Information

Dr. Mary Lou D'Allegro
Senior Director
JCC8
mad23@psu.edu

Stefanie Kerns
Assistant Director
JCC9
slk37@psu.edu

Inside This Issue

Assessment Cycle- Closing the Loop

The Deming Cycle (PDCA)

Introduced in the 1950s, W. Edwards Deming proposed that organizational effectiveness should be measured by instituting a continuous improvement (CI) model that emphasized Planning, Doing, Checking, and Acting (PDCA). Specifically, effective organizations:

PLAN– Design assessment that were pertinent to the organization's mission.

DO– Implemented evaluations.

CHECK- Assess the results of the evaluations.

ACT- Change or improve the organization's process based on the results of the evaluation (Arveson, 1998).

Correspondingly, assessment would be continued by planning, doing, and checking on the changes that were made from the previous assessment cycle.

PDCA Comes to Penn State Berks

This is precisely what has been the focus of program assessments this fall.

Several programs that have both planned (PLAN) and undergone assessments (DO) in the last year or last two years are now identifying the changes (ACT) based on the results of those assessments. To that end, the effort and resources needed to conduct assessments become meaningful and improve student learning. Some of the programs that are currently acting on recent assessments include:

- Applied Psychology– has hired a faculty specifically to ensure that internships align with the program objectives. This was based on focus group results and a close examination of Psychology program accreditation standards.
- Business– Likewise, the Business internship has improved drastically since an internship evaluation by both the intern and intern supervisors was considerably changed in summer 2009.
- IST– After examining the results of the 2008 -09 Recent Graduate Survey, Dr. Sue Samson, Program Coordinator, has asked PRA to ask IST graduates what specific areas

they felt they needed more academic and/or practical preparation.

Dr. Lolita Paff, Associate Professor of Business Economics reports that students very much benefit from the assessments, "...The result has been an increase in meaningful assignments, since these duties must be connected back to the learning goals of the business program."

The academic programs are not the only units engaging in PDCA. As a result of focus groups, surveys (DO), and a feasibility study (CHECK), more campus space has been allocated for commuter students including storage space and lounges (ACT).

Further, the results of the NSSE (DO, CHECK) have been one driving force in the development of Internationalization goals that speak to improving global education at Berks (ACT).

Arveson, P. (1998) The Deming Cycle. Retrieved November 20, 2009 from http://www.balancedscorecard.org/TheDemingCycle/tabid/112/Default.aspx.

Assessment Committee Established

The saying, "the more things change, the more they stay the same" holds true for many aspects of the Berks campus. This is especially true for the number of committees relative to the number of faculty and staff. That said, the Academic Council will assume an additional responsibility of providing expertise and oversight to the campus assessment efforts. Renamed the Academic & Assessment Council, membership will not change with the exception that several program coordinators will be asked to serve on the new committee. Current members will continue to participate on the committee. Additional charges for the committee include:

- Ensure that all campus units are engaging in meaningful assessment and follow-up,
- Providing expertise in assessment design, implementation, collection of results , and dissemination,
- Provide a central "clearinghouse" for sharing and reviewing assessment instruments, resources, best-practices, and
- Address issues in assessment planning, implementation, and use.

Dr. Martha Aynardi, Science Faculty, believes that two committees "go hand-in-hand." Certainly, positioning assessment oversight within the operations of the campus, especially those focused on student learning will be beneficial.

Data Warehouse Requests

Number of Data Warehouse Requests

2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10 (as of 11/24/09)
33	47	49	95	99	31
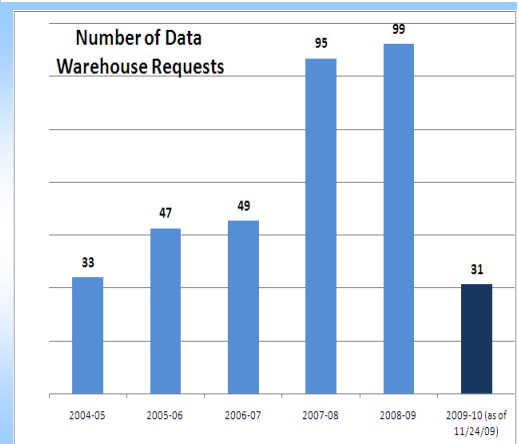
Preliminary Analysis of First Year Engagement

Introduction

In fall 2008, the University required every campus to submit a First Year Experience (FYE) plan. The purpose was to ensure that every incoming student at PSU had opportunity to engage in academic study, forge faculty and staff relationships, and become familiar with the vastness that is Penn State. An assessment of the FYE was required to be submitted with the plan.

FYE Assessment

The FYE Assessment has four components. FTCAP Experience Survey, Student Orientation Survey, Assessment of the FYS (PSU 005) experience, and Compilation of Student Success Indicators including:

First Semester
   GPA
   Credits Enrolled
   Credits Earned

First Year
   GPA
   Credits Earned

One Year Retention

In addition, four and six year graduation rates will be compiled.

In October, sixteen FYS sections administered the *Thriving Quotient Survey*. The survey asks students about study behaviors including time management, meeting with faculty outside of class, and seeking advice from faculty advisors.

The survey will be administered again at the end of the semester to determine gains in these behaviors, demonstrated to improve the probability of academic success. Further, a comparison 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 will be ascertained.

Results of the FYS Assessment, PART I

For the first administration of the *Thriving Quotient Survey*, there was little difference between the two section types. That said, the students in the Strength Based FYS sections were more likely to indicate they were:

- Good at managing responsibilities,
- Intended to enroll next year, and
- Thought the institution is a good fit.

On the other hand, students in the "non-Strength Based" FYS sections were more likely to state:

- Get to know people from different cultures,
- State that performance is not related to effort, and
- Other people have more friends.

The students in the both FYS sections were similar in the responses to items such as recognition of contributions, optimism of the future, and, incidentally, know how to apply personal strengths to succeed.

Peer Mentor Survey

First Year Seminar instructors are invited to utilize a peer mentor each semester. Peer Mentors are sophomore, junior, or senior students who are trained to assist the first year seminar faculty. The students take a training course the semester prior to becoming a peer mentor. This program has been a great success thus far.

To gage how well the students enrolled in the first year seminar sections view the peer mentors effectiveness, a survey was distributed. These surveys are not only used for college FYS assessment but also for the mentors themselves to learn where they can improve. The favorable results may also entice new FYS faculty to utilize peer mentors in their classes.

Below are some of the results from the Fall 2009 Peer Mentor Survey.

- Ninety percent (89.6%) of respondents appreciate having a mentor in their FYS,
- Over (83.5%) either agree or strongly agree their mentor has met their expectations,

- Over ninety (93.4%) percent of those surveyed believe their peer mentor communicates effectively and 89.6% say their peer mentor is an effective presenter,

- Nine out of ten (92.2%) FYS students agree or strongly agree that if they need assistance, they could call on their peer mentor to help, and

- 181 out of 182 students either agree or strongly agree that their peer mentor is prepared for class.

In addition, the fall 2008 results were compared to the fall 2009 results to determine if the peer mentors were consistently providing value to the learning environment in the FYS.

Assessment Resources on ANGEL

Introduction

In November 2009, an ANGEL site of Penn State Assessment resources has been assembled. Although, the ANGEL site is not complete and is being piloted by a few faculty, several assessment links and instruments have been made available. These include:

- The *Group/Teamwork Rubric* (soon other rubrics & assessment instruments will be made available),
- An assessment discussion forum to share best practices & post questions, and
- Links to other colleges & assessment resource web sites.

"One-Stop Shopping"

The purpose of the ANGEL site is to "provide an accessible location for faculty to share assessment instruments and best practices. Importantly, the location can be easily accessed" remarks Dr. Mary Lou D'Allegro, Senior Director of Planning, Research & Assessment. At the very least, the instruments and assessment designs from the Assessment Grant recipients will be posted to this ANGEL group.

Using ANGEL as the platform for the Assessment Clearinghouse makes practical sense regarding familiarity and ease of navigation.

Next Steps

Additional capabilities are planned as more faculty use the ANGEL site. One such capability is a shared space to create, edit, or capture certain elements of assessment instruments. This would afford the customization of instruments that have already been designed and validated. In turn, this should increase the authentic assessment of student learning.

Assessment Toolbox

Background

Several faculty and staff have requested information on the development, use, and administration of assessment tools. It is anticipated that the *Assessment Toolbox*, slated to be a regular feature in the *PRA Newsletter* will fit that bill. In this edition, the use and development of online surveys will be discussed.

Online Surveys

With the proliferation of the use of the internet, more faculty and staff have been using online surveys. The use of vendors such as Survey Monkey, Zoomerang, and Adobe Professional seem to be most prevalent.. Consider the following when choosing an online survey vendor.

- Type of items (multiple choice, open ended, check box) the vendor provide.
- Options for downloading data including data formats, and
- How will data from the surveys be secured.