

Office of Assessment & Quality Initiatives NEWSLETTER

A Better Marshall through Assessment



Are you an assessment skeptic? We hope that, after reading the first of our semi-annual assessment newsletters, you will come to see how assessment can help us make a difference at Marshall University. From direct assessment of student learning in the classroom or in co-curricular activities to indirect assessment derived from the results of student surveys or focus groups, we can determine our strengths and weaknesses as an institution and work together to continuously improve the student experience at Marshall.

Each newsletter will feature at least one academic or co-curricular program's assessment story, with a focus on how its faculty, staff, and students worked together to determine the program's relative strengths and weaknesses in supporting students' achievement of important learning outcomes. Programs will share how they used assessment results to make curricular or pedagogical modifications to improve student learning. Newsletters also will highlight important upcoming assessment related events on campus, such as the administration of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), which Marshall's freshmen and seniors will be invited to complete this semester.

We hope you'll see the value of our sharing this information with the campus community. If you have questions about determining the best ways to assess your programs, don't hesitate to reach out. We look forward to providing you with updates about our assessment program!

Mary Beth Reynolds, Associate Vice President
Assessment & Quality Initiatives

OUR MISSION

The Office of Assessment & Quality Initiatives operates within the Division of Academic Affairs. The mission of the Office of Assessment & Quality Initiatives at Marshall University is to support best practices in assessment of student learning at the course, program, and institutional levels, resulting in continuous improvement in teaching and learning.

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Department SPOTLIGHT

The Marshall University Department of English is leading the way with its assessment practices. By creating a culture of assessment, and involving its faculty in the process, the English department has expanded the possible uses of the data it collects.

Dr. Robert Ellison, assistant professor, has taken a direct role in the department's assessment efforts. Several years ago, he created an organization within Blackboard for the English department's assessment activities. Instructors who taught courses with key B.A. and M.A. program level assessments, instructors who taught the advanced composition course, and students enrolled in all sections of these courses, were manually enrolled in this Blackboard organization. The embedded assignments used for B.A., M.A., and composition assessment were created and student artifacts were collected. Then, two years ago, Marshall added Blackboard Outcomes to its existing Blackboard suite. At first, Dr. Ellison hesitated to move the assessment process from Blackboard Organizations to Blackboard Outcomes.

"When I was first told about Blackboard Outcomes, my first instinct was 'don't mess with a good thing,'" Ellison said. "Then I saw what it could do. It makes things so much more efficient on the back end."

To use Blackboard Outcomes, faculty align the B.A., M.A., or composition assignments they create in Blackboard Learn to the appropriate student learning outcomes the English faculty have specified. Then, students submit their final artifacts using the assignment module in Blackboard Learn. At the end of the course, Blackboard Outcomes makes clean copies of all artifacts associated with each program or composition assignment and stores them for later assessment. At the end of the spring semester, Dr. Ellison pulls samples of artifacts from the B.A. and M.A. collections. After norming the assessment rubrics, each student artifact is scored independently by two readers from the English faculty's assessment team. This helps to ensure interrater reliability and as fair and objective an assessment process as possible. A team of English faculty use the same process early in the summer to assess the composition artifacts.

Another vital piece of the assessment puzzle is increasing participation from the faculty and staff. The process outlined above involves faculty from the entire department. After Dr. Ellison collates results, the faculty engage in discussions to determine what those results mean and how they might inform curricular or pedagogical modifications to improve student learning. Through widespread involvement in this process of collecting actionable data and taking reasonable steps to use those data, the English department has significantly increased interest and participation from faculty, staff, and students.

Assessment results don't "just disappear, they (faculty) hear about the results in curriculum committee meetings, they look over the results in faculty meetings, and we discuss what we can do for continuous improvement,"

— Dr. Allison Carey,
chair of the English department

When starting or building upon assessment activities, Dr. Kelli Prejean, associate professor, said it is important to start small. "We trust the system; it's streamlined," she said. She also noted, "People started to see the results, and the work that Robert was doing."

Consistency is key, and the English department's assessment team has remained the same for three years. The committee has been able to share results across the department and take action based on those findings.

Assessment results don't "just disappear, they (faculty) hear about the results in curriculum committee meetings, they look over the results in faculty meetings, and we discuss what we can do for continuous improvement," Dr. Allison Carey, chair of the English department, said.

Through a series of assessments, the department found that their students consistently self-reported as being weak in the area of research. Carey said, "It kept coming up, so that was our inspiration to have some departmental initiatives to really inject research more broadly into the curriculum." The English department's assessment will next focus on whether, following this greater emphasis on research in the curriculum, a larger percentage of students are meeting (or exceeding) their degree programs' learning outcomes.

SURVEY REMINDERS - NSSE

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) will be administered this semester to freshmen and seniors at Marshall.

According to the NSSE website, "Student engagement represents two critical features of collegiate quality. The first is the amount of time and effort students put into their studies and other educationally purposeful activities. The second is how the institution deploys its resources and organizes the curriculum and other learning opportunities to get students to participate in activities that decades of research studies show are linked to student learning."

We encourage freshmen and seniors to watch their email for an invitation from NSSE (subject line: Please help Marshall by completing NSSE). Emails will be sent February 26, March 3,

March 9, March 17, and April 6. Freshmen and seniors also can complete the NSSE survey through links in MU Online and myMU.

Student who complete the survey by April 7 will be eligible for a prize drawing. The prizes include one Apple Watch, three \$100 VISA gift cards, two \$50 VISA gift cards, two \$25 gift cards, and five \$10 Amazon gift cards.

Prize drawings will be held on April 9.

Those interested in viewing results from previous surveys may see them on the Office of Assessment and Quality Initiatives website: www.marshall.edu/assessment/national-survey-of-student-engagement/.

Indirect Assessment of Student Learning and Experience: National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)

www.marshall.edu/assessment/SurveyReports.aspx

* = Results are at least comparable to those of students at the top 50% of NSSE institutions.

** = Results are at least comparable to those of students at the top 10% of NSSE institutions.

Prior to Implementation of Core Curriculum						Following Implementation of Core Curriculum				NSSE Revised		Beginning with class of 2014, seniors may have experienced the Core Curriculum												
Benchmark	2008		2009		2010		2011		2012		Theme	Engagement Indicator	2013		2014		2015		2016		2018			
	Fresh	Senior	Fresh	Senior	Fresh	Senior	Fresh	Senior	Fresh	Senior			Fresh	Senior										
Academic Challenge							*		*		Academic Challenge	Reflective and Integrative Thinking	**			*	*	*						
												Higher-Order Learning	*			*	*	*				*	*	
												Learning Strategies	*		*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
												Quantitative Reasoning	**	**	**	*	**	*	**			**		**
Student/Faculty Interaction							*				Experience with Faculty	Student/Faculty Interaction		*		*								
												Effective Teaching Practices				*	*						*	
Active and Collaborative Learning											Learning with Peers	Collaborative Learning		*		*								
												Discussion with Diverse Others											*	
Supportive Campus Environment											Campus Environment	Quality of Interactions												
												Supportive Environment												

Response Rates

Year	2008		2009		2010		2011		2012		2013		2014		2015		2016		2018	
Class	Fresh	Senior																		
Response Rate	18%	23%	37%	34%	21%	32%	22%	25%	16%	27%	19%	22%	19%	28%	20%	24%	30%	24%	20%	20%

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