

Oklahoma State University Assessment Report 1998-1999

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Executive Summary

Entry-Level Assessment

The purpose of entry-level assessment is to assist academic advisors and faculty in making placement decisions that will give students the best possible chance of academic success. Three methods assess student's readiness for college-level coursework at OSU: scores from ACT subject tests, results from a locally developed Entry Level Placement Analysis (ELPA), and scores from COMPASS placement tests. ELPA is a multiple regression model that uses high school GPA, high school class rank and size, and ACT subject area scores to predict student grades in selected entry-level OSU courses. The predictions are based on the success of past OSU freshmen with similar academic records. All new students are assessed using ACT subject area and composite scores (or SAT equivalent) and results of ELPA. Students scoring below the designated cutscores on the ACT and with predicted grades from ELPA of less than "C" in a particular subject area are required to take remedial coursework. Students who are required to take remedial coursework may waive this requirement if they demonstrate proficiency in the subject area by achieving a passing score on the COMPASS placement test. All students undergo entry-level assessment during admission, enrollment, and initial advisement. After all entry-level assessment was completed in 1998-99, 709 enrolled new students (18.8% of the total number enrolled) were required to take at least one remedial course.

No major changes were made to the entry-level assessment process in 1998-99. OSU administrators and consultants from ACT evaluated cutscores for COMPASS placement tests, but no changes were made. The ELPA program was updated this year to utilize current data in the regression equations that predict student grades in entry-level courses; this activity is consistent with our Institutional Assessment Plan.

Additional entry-level assessment studies conducted in 1998-99 include:

- *The CIRP Freshman Survey.* Approximately 60% of new OSU freshmen participated in this national survey of college freshmen conducted jointly by the American Council on Education and the University of California at Los Angeles. The survey, conducted in the first week of class, provides information about the expectations, attitudes, and experiences of freshmen at OSU and from peer institutions nationwide. Results of the survey showed:
 - 82% of OSU freshmen used the internet for homework in high school (compared to 74% for peer institutions);
 - 62% of OSU freshmen reported average grades of "A" in high school (compared to 38% for peer institutions);
 - 24% of OSU freshmen reported studying more than 6 hours per week in high school (compared to 36% for peer institutions), and

- comparisons with previous years show that freshmen report increasing volunteerism and declining interest in politics. This trend is consistent among freshmen nationwide.
- *The College Student Inventory.* The College Student Inventory (CSI) measures motivational variables that are closely related to persistence and academic success in college. In 1998-99, the CSI was administered to all freshmen and transfer students in enrolled the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (n=257) and the College of Human Environmental Science (n=121). Information from the survey is used to enhance advisement and identify problems that could impede academic success. Overall results are used to develop programs and strategies to enhance student retention.
- *Assessment of the Summer Freshmen Enrollment Program.* In spring 1999, 220 OSU second-semester freshmen participated in a survey designed to assess the effectiveness of OSU freshmen orientation programs, particularly the Summer Freshmen Enrollment Program. Results of the study showed that 90% of second semester freshmen had positive perceptions of the quantity and quality of the orientation material provided during the summer enrollment program. No major changes to the Summer Freshmen Enrollment Program are planned as a result of this study.

Mid-Level Assessment

Assessment of general education is currently under revision at OSU. Previously, mid-level assessment at OSU has included use of the *Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP)* standardized exam and a locally developed test of writing and critical thinking skills. These methods were used in 1992 - 1995 but were discontinued because of dissatisfaction with the standardized instrument and lack of motivation by students to participate in the assessment and provide a true measure of their abilities. From 1994 through 1997, the Mid-Level Writing Assessment Project was conducted to evaluate OSU student writing competencies at the mid-level. Although the study provided valuable assessment of student writing skills, it did not result in a viable method of assessing mid-level competencies on a continuous basis.

In 1998-99, the faculty Assessment Council worked towards developing a plan for continued mid-level assessment at OSU. The Council developed a list of expected outcomes of general education, studied general education assessment methods used at other institutions, and presented their initial ideas to the General Education Committee. The Assessment Council and General Education Committee will work cooperatively towards developing assessment of general education in 1999-2000.

In addition to the work of the Assessment Council, funding was provided to two academic units to develop mid-level assessment methods within their programs. The College of Human Environmental Science initiated a pilot study to evaluate the critical thinking skills of students who have completed most of their general education requirements. The Zoology Department is mid-way through a study designed to evaluate problem solving skills of students who complete the department's newly revised introductory course as part of their general education requirements. Both of these studies will be completed in 1999-2000.

The final report on the 1994 - 1997 Mid-Level Writing Assessment Project was completed in December 1998. The report consisted of eight separate studies that assessed writing of incoming freshmen, student writing while enrolled in English Composition I and II courses, student writing

in other general education courses, and a longitudinal study of OSU undergraduate writers. Major findings of the study were:

- College writing occurs primarily in Composition I and II and general education courses. This should be commended, supported, and extended wherever possible.
- Efforts should be undertaken to improve the quality of writing instruction students receive relative to all assignments.
- A comprehensive, writing across the curriculum program at OSU would enhance student writing competency.

Program Outcomes Assessment

Program outcomes assessment at OSU is organized and reported by individual colleges, departments, or individual academic units that award undergraduate degrees. Methods used for outcomes assessment vary widely among academic units and include (with number of colleges of departments that used each method):

- Exit interviews (22)
- Alumni surveys (21)
- Student surveys (22)
- Internships (14)
- Capstone courses (13)
- Tracking academic records (12)
- Intercollegiate competitions (10)
- External review of student work (9)
- Standardized exams (15)
- Tracking retention / graduation data (10)
- Portfolios (7)
- Employer surveys (4)
- Tracking student employment status (4)
- Faculty evaluation of student work (3)
- Course-embedded assessment (2)
- Computer assessment software (1)
- Focus groups (1)
- Senior Projects (1)
- Student resumes (1)
- Summer camp evaluation (1)

Findings from outcomes assessment and uses of assessment data were unique for each academic unit and are reported in the assessment reports submitted by each unit. All units reported using information gained through program outcomes assessment for reviewing, revising, and improving their curricula. Sixty percent of academic units reported using the results of program outcomes assessment to implement specific changes within their curricula for undergraduates.

Student Satisfaction Assessment

The Noel-Levitz, Inc., Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) has been conducted annually at OSU to provide feedback from undergraduates across campus regarding their perceptions of academic programs and campus services. The *Institutional Priorities Survey* (IPS), which closely parallels the SSI, was also conducted in 1998-99. Whereas the SSI is designed to measure *students'* satisfaction with a wide range of college experiences, the IPS assesses the priority *faculty, staff, and administrators* believe the institution should place on the same range of student experiences and the agreement that the institution is meeting student expectations. A total of 1,682 undergraduates participated in the 1999 Student Satisfaction Inventory, and 158 faculty, staff, and administrators participated in the Institutional Priorities survey.

The major findings from the 1999 Student Satisfaction and Institutional Priorities surveys were:

- OSU students and faculty/staff indicated highest satisfaction with topics related to enjoyment of being part of the OSU community, the friendliness towards students on this campus, campus safety and security, and campus appearance. Students and faculty also agreed that strengths of OSU included faculty expertise and the variety of courses offered.
- Satisfaction scores given by OSU students were consistently higher than responses of students at 4-year, public institutions nationwide.
- Overall, 85% of OSU students said they were satisfied with their college experience so far, and more than half said their college experience so far was 'better than they expected'.
- Areas of concern identified by students and faculty/staff included the ability to register for classes without conflict, students getting the 'run-around' when seeking information, and the unbiased treatment of students by faculty.

Graduate Student Assessment

Graduate student assessment will resume campus-wide at Oklahoma State University in 1999-2000. In spring 1999, the faculty Assessment Council revised guidelines for graduate student assessment at OSU. Academic units are charged with reviewing and revising their program assessment plans to include graduate programs, and the Assessment Council and Graduate College are charged with developing a campus-wide assessment of graduate student satisfaction. In 1998-99 some graduate students were assessed as part of their academic unit's outcomes assessment program. Results are described in the individual assessment reports or report summaries submitted by each college, department, or degree program.