Dear Colleagues,

I am delighted to welcome you to the first edition of Pace University’s Assessment News, which is being made possible by a grant awarded through the Charles Engelhard Foundation that supports the Bringing Theory to Practice Project (BT to P), an initiative of the Association of American Colleges and Universities. Pace is now part of the Bringing Theory to Practice Leadership Coalition whose institutions are committed to providing successful models of actively engaging students in learning, evaluating their success in doing so and addressing the full dimensions of the intellectual, emotional, and civic lives of students.

One of the most powerful agents for strengthening the campus culture for learning is assessment of its success, already embraced at Pace University by a significant number of its faculty and staff. As the Team Report for our recent Middle States reaccreditation visit noted, “The key components for effective assessment of student learning outcomes are in place at Pace… The University is to be commended for the level of commitment toward assessment evident among faculty and staff on both its main campuses.”

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to all the faculty and staff who have worked so hard through thoughtful formative and summative assessments. In strengthening the culture of learning at Pace University, this grant will help to support faculty interest in “high-impact practices.” Plans for the Spring 2010 Term include:

- Hosting faculty colloquia where Dr. Jillian Kinzie, Associate Director of the National Survey of Student Engagement, will address high impact practices along with the college conditions that enhance student achievement. Dr. Kinzie is a co-author of Student Success in College: Creating Conditions That Matter.
- Pace will also be going forward to pilot a new cognitive assessment, the ETS Proficiency Profile. This new instrument will provide an opportunity for Pace to add its own questions to the testing format that will be administered to seniors.
- In addition, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) will be launched in February providing first-year and senior students the opportunity to share Pace experiences and indicate the extent to which they participate in effective educational practices here at Pace. Since 2002, the NSSE has provided Pace faculty and administrators with important feedback about the Pace experience and how it might be improved.
- Finally, the Annual Dyson Day and the Faculty Institute will also provide important opportunities for faculty to extend their expertise and to network with colleagues.

I hope you will be able to take advantage of the exciting faculty and staff events and that you will continue to seek out the best ways to provide an active and effective learning environment for our students.

-Pace University's Pride in Assessment Best Practices at Pace

Geoffrey L. Brackett, DPhil (Oxon), Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

Inside this issue:

| Message from the Provost                | 1 |
| Assessment Institute 2009              | 2 |
| Spotlight on Assessment: Library Experience Survey | 3 |
| NSSE 2009: Pace University Results     | 4 |
| High-Impact Educational Practices     | 6 |
| Spotlight on Assessment: Lubin School of Business | 6 |
| Resources                              | 7 |
| Call for Submissions                   | 8 |

Assess • Improve • Inspire
From October 25 to 27, a number of Pace faculty and staff attended and presented at the Assessment Institute in Indianapolis. Organized by the Office of Planning and Institutional Improvement at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, this year’s installment of the Assessment Institute featured workshops and sessions focused heavily on five subjects: Civic Engagement, ePortfolios, Faculty Development, First-Year Experiences, and Student Development.

**Issues of Interest**

A hot topic at both plenary sessions was the assessment of critical thinking and “generalizable skills.” One panelist posited that there is no evidence of generalizable skills, but that mastery first must be built within a domain before skills can be transferred to other areas.

The subject of ePortfolios received a great deal of attention, even at sessions not designed specifically about them, due in part to the AAC&U’s (via the VALUE program) championing of ePortfolios as an authentic way to assess student learning. There was some dissent about whether ePortfolios could simultaneously be used for accountability purposes. Indeed, the tension between the use of assessment for purposes of accountability versus its use for improvement was a recurring theme at the Institute.

On October 26, the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment released “More Than You Think, Less Than We Need: Learning Outcomes Assessment in American Higher Education,” the findings of a national study on learning outcomes measurement at colleges and universities. Some of the conclusions of the study were highlighted during Assessment Institute plenaries and presentations, including the burgeoning of assessment at for-profit institutions and the need for implementation of assessment results at all levels.

**Pace University at the Institute**

Dr. Mary Ann Murphy, Dr. Weihua Niu, Heather Novak and Sangeeta Rao presented a session entitled “Assessment of the Relationship Between Civic Engagement and Community-Based Learning: Institutional and Theoretical Concerns.” Reflecting upon their seminar, the team says, “the Pace Assessment of Civic Engagement Team has been working since 2007 to assess student, core and institutional impacts of Civic Engagement and Public Values courses at Pace University. [In this workshop] we provided a unique example of the incorporation of civic engagement and service-learning into a core curriculum.” About their experience at the Assessment Institute, the team notes that “...Pace University is on par or leads its peers in civic engagement assessment and implementation. We found many of our peers interested in not only how we assess what we have done at Pace with civic engagement, but also how we accomplished the implementation in the first place.”

Assess • Improve • Inspire
In another session, Pace assessment gurus Dr. Allen Stix and Andreea Cotoranu, Seidenberg School of Computer Science and Information Systems, demonstrated implementation of results in their workshop “Direct Assessment Methods: A Quantitative and Qualitative Synthesis.” Says Dr. Stix, “It was rewarding to be among so many professionals who can appreciate and learn from our work, just as we learned from them. Certainly, the development and implementation of assessment in Seidenberg has been a long process, one which we hope to continue improving and innovating.” Andreea Cotoranu adds, “after our workshop, a young woman approached me with several questions, including ‘how do you get the faculty involved?’ As I gave her advice and—I hope—encouragement, I was struck by the fact that I am actually further along in the assessment journey than others, and even as I strive to meet the challenges of my own work, I can offer some help to those who are just beginning to implement assessment.”

Assessment Institute 2009 provided the attendees with an opportunity for learning, sharing and even debating about assessment practices and policies. Perhaps Dr. Stix best summarizes the experience with this observation: “Where else can you find 900 people who all do assessment?!!”

### Spotlight on UNIVERSITY LIBRARY Assessment: Library Experience Survey

Through our “Library Experience Survey” the Pace University Library has assessed incoming first year students since the fall of 2000. We collect data on several different items such as reported usage of libraries in high school, how and with what tools the students begin a research project, and how confident they are in their abilities to use the library and the Internet. Some interesting trends have emerged over the years.

Surprisingly, less than two-thirds of the students have used an online library catalog, a number which has varied slightly but not significantly over the years. Approximately the same percentage of students report having used a subscription database and, when asked what databases they use, a few students consistently list internet search engines such as Google, internet browsers, and library catalogs.

When we ask students how they determine if the information they retrieve from the Internet is reliable, the results have varied over the years. In general, the top responses fit into four categories: compare the information with other sources, look at the webpage address, look for sources or citations, or look for an author. There are no outstanding trends to these answers, so Pace librarians always try to help the students evaluate their internet sources. We are happy to report that two answers to this open-ended question are consistently low: approximately one percent of the students don’t try to determine reliability and just a few more state that they can’t or don’t know how to determine reliability.

Assess • Improve • Inspire
Library Experience Survey, continued

For some questions, the answers were consistent from year to year, so those questions were removed from the survey. For the first four years we asked students if they were comfortable asking librarians for help, and consistently over 92 percent of the students answered this positively, which is certainly positive for us! We also wanted to know if they were comfortable using an internet browser and close to 90 percent of the incoming first year students replied that they were.

In 2005, we changed those questions to ask about their ability to use the library and the Internet. These numbers have varied slightly, but approximately 60 percent of students rate their ability as very good or excellent when using the Internet but only 20 percent give themselves a similar rating for using the library. This data confirms what we see every day as students ask questions at the Reference Desk, over the phone, and online using the Library’s Chat Service.

For further information about the Library Experience Survey, please contact Karen DeSantis kdesantis@pace.edu or Sarah Burns Feyl sburnsfeyl@pace.edu.

Karen DeSantis and Sarah Burns Feyl, University Library

National Survey of Student Engagement 2009: Pace University Results

As part of Pace’s ongoing commitment to assessing the quality of the undergraduate experience, our freshmen and seniors have completed the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) every year from 2002 through 2009. This year, Pace’s use of NSSE to achieve improvement is recognized in the NSSE resource guide entitled Using NSSE to Assess and Improve Undergraduate Education: Lessons from the Field.

NSSE presents the data in a number of useful analyses. The Office of Planning, Assessment and Institutional Research then distills this information into targeted views of the Pace student experience. One such report has been tracking Pace results over time compared to the results of several groups of benchmark institutions: in 2009, the percentages of Pace students responding in selected ways to given items were compared to those of Carnegie Peers, Urban Institutions and a group of selected 2009 Benchmark institutions. These percentages help to illuminate whether improvement or decline can be noted in the Pace responses and also help to demonstrate how close or distant Pace responses are from the comparison groups. Several Pace percentages indicate an increase between 2008 and 2009. To identify true improvement at Pace in challenge areas, a statistical analysis using the mean ratings of Pace students was performed. The responses to the following items are significantly different when 2008 and 2009 Pace responses are compared; first, some increases:

- Senior ratings on their entire educational experience at Pace increased significantly.
- Senior ratings on the likelihood of choosing Pace again increased significantly.
- Senior ratings on the quality of academic advising increased significantly.
• The ratings by both freshmen and seniors on relationships with administrative personnel and offices increased and are statistically significant for each campus. On the New York Campus, the increase in ratings is significant at the p<.05 level and on the Pleasantville Campus the increase in ratings is significant at the p<.001 level. These results suggest some real improvement in this area.

• Freshmen appear to be spending more time on academic activities. Freshman time usage responses demonstrate a significant increase in spending 11 hours or more per week preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, analyzing data, rehearsing and other academic activities).

And some decreases:

• Senior responses demonstrate a significant decrease in asking questions in class or contributing to class discussions.

• Senior responses demonstrate a significant decrease in including diverse perspectives (different races, religions, genders, political beliefs, etc.) in class discussions or writing assignments.

Student Satisfaction:

The two critical satisfaction questions: “How would you evaluate your entire educational experience at this institution?” and “If you could start over again, would you go to the same institution you are now attending?” both saw increases in positive responses with the seniors’ responses being significantly more positive than 2008 responses. The important item concerning the quality of academic advising also saw an increase in positive responses from both first-year and senior students. The overall trend in these satisfaction variables is positive compared to 2008.

The 2009 NSSE Benchmark Group

The choice of NSSE Benchmarks is limited by the institutions who participate in NSSE in any given year. Previously, Pace benchmarked against the entire NSSE population, but in 2009, Pace chose a selected group of schools representing some of our national benchmarks and regional competitors.

The 2009 NSSE Benchmark institutions are CUNY Baruch, DePaul University, Drexel University, Long Island University – C.W. Post Campus, Northeastern University and Seton Hall University.

Comparing Pace responses against this urban, northeastern peer group gives insight to the effect of regional differences on the student experience as reflected in NSSE. For example, Pace seniors tend to respond more negatively than their peers in the Urban Universities group and the Carnegie Peers group (both of which include institutions from around the nation) on the item addressing the quality of their relationship with administrative personnel and offices, but respond similarly to the 2009 NSSE Benchmarks.
High-Impact Educational Practices


These ten teaching and learning practices have been shown to be beneficial for college students from many backgrounds; research suggests that these practices increase rates of student retention and student engagement.

First-Year Seminars and Experiences
First-year seminars or other programs bring small groups of students together with faculty or staff and place an emphasis on critical inquiry, frequent writing, information literacy, collaborative learning, and other skills.

Common Intellectual Experiences
The “core” curriculum could take a variety of forms, such as a set of required common courses or a vertically organized general education program that includes advanced integrative studies; often combines broad themes with a variety of curricular and co-curricular options.

Learning Communities
The key goals are to encourage integration of learning across courses and to involve students with “big questions” that matter beyond the classroom. Students take two or more linked courses as a group and work closely with one another and with their professors.

Writing-Intensive Courses
These courses emphasize writing at all levels of instruction and across the curriculum, including final-year projects. Students are encouraged to produce and revise forms of writing for audiences across disciplines.

Collaborative Assignments and Projects
Collaborative learning combines two key goals: learning to work and solve problems in the company of others, and sharpening one’s own understanding by listening seriously to the insights of others.

Undergraduate Research
The goal is to involve students with actively contested questions, empirical observation, cutting-edge technologies, and the sense of excitement that comes from working to answer important questions.

Spotlight on LUBIN Assessment
The Lubin School of Business assessment plan evaluates learning goals for both the BBA and MBA programs. We use a course embedded method of assessment, collecting materials students create in their courses including assignments and exams and evaluating the materials relative to the learning goals for each program.

In spring/summer 2009 we completed our first full scale assessment of all learning goals in our programs. Our undergraduate learning goals are: Communication; Critical thinking, problem solving and decision making; Interpersonal interaction, social responsibility and ethics; Global perspective; and Quantitative applications.

We are beginning to apply improvements to our program using a set of mini grants and new oversight procedures in our core courses.

The Lubin MBA program has a more advanced set of learning goals including: Analyzing and evaluating global business data; Focusing on customers; Effective communication; Using ethical principles in decision-making; Managing conflict; Anticipating and facilitating change; and Working successfully in teams.

Our new MBA program implemented in Fall 2009 emphasizes these skills and our graduates will be even better positioned for their management careers.

Randi Priluck, Lubin School of Business

Assess • Improve • Inspire
Diversity/Global Learning
Courses/programs that help students explore cultures, life experiences, and worldviews different from their own.

Service Learning, Community-Based Learning
Field-based “experiential learning” with community partners gives students the opportunity to both apply what they are learning in real-world settings and reflect in a classroom setting on their service experiences.

Internships
Another common form of experiential learning, internships provide students with direct experience in a work setting and give them the benefit of supervision and coaching from professionals in the field.

Capstone Courses and Projects
These culminating experiences require students nearing the end of their college years to create a project that integrates and applies what they’ve learned.

Resources

LINKS
2009 Assessment Institute
American Association of Colleges and Universities
 Bringing Theory to Practice
 LEAP – Liberal Education and America’s Promise
 VALUE – Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education
E-Portfolio Initiative at Pace University
NSSE – National Survey of Student Engagement
NILOA – National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment
Pace University Assessment Committee

BOOKS

Note: A number of Pace faculty and staff are referenced throughout this volume. See Chapter Eight, “Use of Technology Profiles,” for “Multifaceted Portfolio Assessment: Writing Program Collaboration with Instructional Librarians and Electronic Portfolio Initiative” by Linda Anstendig, Dyson College of the Arts & Sciences and Sarah Burns Feyl, University Library.


**CONTACT ASSESSMENT NEWS**

Pace University’s *Assessment News* welcomes comments and suggestions. To reach the editors, please send an email to jtatusko@pace.edu, including *Assessment News* in the subject line. Paper may be sent via interoffice mail to OPAIR/Assessment News, Dow Hall, BRC or via commercial carriers to Planning, Assessment and Institutional Research, Pace University, Dow Hall S115A, 235 Elm Road, Briarcliff Manor, NY 10510.

**CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS**

Would you like to write 1,000 to 2,000 words (four to eight double-spaced pages) about your experiences with assessment of student learning outcomes or program outcomes? *Assessment News* is looking for original, previously unpublished content for its next issue. We would like a member or members of the Pace community to explore the theme of “Sustaining a Culture of Learning” as it is evidenced in their practice of assessment at Pace. *Assessment News* is pleased to offer an honorarium of $250 to the author/s of the selected article. This honorarium is funded by a grant, written by Provost Geoffrey L. Brackett, from AAC&U’s Bringing Theory to Practice project, which advocates the “academic community’s support of engaged learning and the relationship of such learning to student health and civic development” (AAC&U 2009).