From the Desk of the Director: The Sound of Students: The Past, Present, and Future Reactions to the College Experience.

Throughout undergraduate matriculation from admission to graduation, all students experience critical assessment points. The content, format and administration of the assessment may differ; however, virtually all students experience the following types of assessments: 1) assessment for placement level, 2) assessment of general education competencies in the core curriculum, 3) assessment of application of general education competencies in the disciplines, and 4) a capstone assessment or culminating experience that occurs at or near graduation. Using different forms of assessment allows educators to focus on specific outcomes that affect a specific group of students.

Two examples of instruments used nationally in student assessments are the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) and National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). The Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) was developed by the American Council on Education under University of California Los Angeles’ Higher Education Research Institute. Colleges and universities have found it to be a flexible and useful tool in their institutional self-studies. Participation in longitudinal CIRP surveys is also frequently cited as evidence of an institutional commitment to assessment and improvement efforts. Through collaborative ventures on campus, results from CIRP surveys are used to establish the need for and the effectiveness of initiatives aimed at improving both the student experience and student learning outcomes. Key sections of the survey examine academic preparedness, concerns about financing college and student demographic characteristics.

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) provides results that are also used to improve the quality of the undergraduate experience. NSSE was developed in 1998 at Indiana University and piloted in 1999 through the funding of The Pew Charitable Trusts. It was seen as a fresh approach to collecting information regarding collegiate quality. Each year, more campuses use NSSE data in innovative ways. Through its student survey, The College Student Report, NSSE annually collects information at hundreds of four-year colleges and universities about student participation in programs and activities that institutions provide for their learning and personal development. The results provide an estimate of how undergraduates spend their time and what they are gaining from attending college.

These types of assessments provide results that can be used in a variety of institutional intervention strategies. They can further serve to indicate the need for increasing emphasis on influencing or shaping particular knowledge, skills, or dispositions across programs and within curricula.

Gerunda B. Hughes

Point of Focus

During HU Homecoming 2012, the Office of Institutional Assessment Evaluation, along with the Department of Alumni Relations conducted a series of focus groups with Howard alumni from several generations. Among the questions posed to the groups was one about the relevance of HBCUs since their relevance is being challenged in some quarters.

The focus group participants gave rich and often passionate testimonies of how Howard University and other HBCUs provide an unparalleled, rewarding academic, social and developmental experience for African American students. Such first-hand information lends further support to HBCUs in the present environment.

Additionally, the focus groups covered a number of other questions that focused on institutional assessment and how they think Howard may be further improved in a number of areas. That information will be useful in campus decision making.
Self-Assessed Emotional Health Among First-Year Howard University Students: A Preliminary Trend Analysis

There is a broad consensus internationally among many education stakeholders that a troubling number of today’s youth too often develop unstable emotional health symptoms and conditions. This display of emotional instability is especially seen in the transition from secondary to higher education (Welle & Graf, 2011; DeBerard, Spielmans, & Julka, 2004). The Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) is the founding and coordinating party of the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP). In 2010, HERI reported that the self-rated emotional health for incoming first-year students nationally was at its lowest point since they began evaluating emotional health aspect of the student experience more than 25 years ago.

Many education stakeholders have observed that the percentage of students arriving at their colleges and universities with detrimental emotional conditions has increased since previous years (Featherman, 2004). Not only has the prevalence of these problems increased, but the nature and severity of these conditions are more troubling than ever before. Fier and Brzezinski (2010) pointed out that the effects of these conditions are understandably reflected to some degree in retention, graduation rates, career successes, personal relationships, and unfortunately may lead to death as reflected in mortality statistics (i.e., student suicide rates).

The percentage of Howard freshman who rated their emotional health “above average” fell below 60% during the following years: 1993 (57%), 1996 (58%), 2001 (59%), and 2009 (59%).

From 2002 to 2009, there was a consistent increase in the percentage of students who reported that they “frequently felt overwhelmed” by all they had to do during the previous year.

Similarly, during that same time period, 2002 to 2009, there was a general upward trend in the percentage of students who reported “frequently feeling depressed” with a relatively sharp increase from 6% in 2008 to 11% in 2009. That rate of 11% in 2009 was the highest percentage for HU student respondents since 1998.

References


The 33rd Annual Charles H. Thompson Lecture-Colloquium
“Stakes is High:” Educating New Century Students

On Tuesday, Nov. 7, 2012 in the West Ballroom of the Armour J. Blackburn University Center, the Charles H. Thompson Lecture-Colloquium Series hosted its Thirty-Third Annual Lecture with Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings as its keynote speaker. Dr. Ladson-Billings is Professor and Kellner Family Chair in Urban Education in the Department of Curriculum & Instruction and faculty affiliate in the Departments of Educational Policy Studies, Afro-American Studies, and African Studies Program at the University of Wisconsin – Madison. She also serves as Assistant Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs. She is well known for her work in Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Critical Race Theory.

The lecture titled, “Stakes is High:” Educating New Century Students,” focused on the “achievement gap” and the changing needs of this century’s African American students. Specifically, she elaborated on the unique blend of technology and globalization, and their incorporation into the learning environment. Dr. Ladson-Billings reminded us that schools still cling to the 19th century curriculum and instructional model. She also identified, “The Debts” - economic, social, and moral — that are among the contributing factors that inhibit the learning and achievement of all minority children, but especially those of African descent.

What types of distinctive programs are offered?
Learning communities and independent study programs are both available to students. It is reported that 12% of first year (FY) students participate in a learning community. By spring of their senior year, 23% of students have done independent study.

How well do students get along with other students?
A majority of first year students report getting along with their peers. 71% of FY students affirm that their peers are friendly, supportive, and give them a sense of belonging.

How often do students talk with advisors or faculty members about their career plans?
It is reported that 85% of seniors at least occasionally discuss career plans with faculty; 15% never talk with faculty members about career plans.

How many students apply their classroom learning to real life through internships or off-campus field experiences?
By spring of their senior year, 78% of students participate in some form of practicum, internship, field experience, co-op, or clinical assignment.

Do faculty hold students to high standards?
It is reported that 62% of FY students frequently work harder than they thought they could in order to meet faculty expectations.

Each year the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) surveys students at hundreds of colleges and universities. The survey focuses on evaluating the time and attention students devote to various learning activities. The topics explored are linked to previous research on student success in college.

Results from NSSE can provide prospective students with insights into how they might learn and develop at a given college. To help in the college exploration process, NSSE developed A Pocket Guide to Choosing a College to provide students and their families key questions to ask during campus visits.
The Effects of Emotional Intelligence, Age, Work Experience, and Academic Performance

Natalie L. Shipley, Mary Jo Jackson, Sharon Larisa Segrest

In recent years, emotional intelligence (EI) has been a popular topic of debate in the field of management. It's been praised as a successful predictor of job performance and leadership ability. There are claims that emotional intelligence predicts success at school, though there is little empirical research to confirm this assertion.

In this study, the relationship between emotional intelligence, as measured by the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire Short Form (TEIQue SF) and academic performance were examined in a sample of undergraduate business students (N=193). Emotional Intelligence was found to be positively correlated with work experience. Despite this finding, emotional intelligence has not been significantly associated with age.

Though global trait emotional intelligence was not significantly associated with academic achievement, it was seen that students in the mid-range GPA had a significantly higher mean “well-being” factor score than students in the lower and higher-ranger GPA. Implications and recommendations for developing emotional intelligence in students are discussed.


Moderating Effect of Gender and Age on the Relationship between Emotional Intelligence with Social and Academic Adjustment Among First-Year University Students

Noor-Azniza, Ishak, Malek, T. Jdaitawi, Yahya Saleh Ibrahim, Farid, T. Mustafa

This study examined whether emotional intelligence is significantly correlated with social adjustment and academic adjustment. The study also explored the moderating effects of gender and age factors as they are related to emotional intelligence and social adjustment as well as academic adjustment among first-year university students.

A sample of 289 first-year university students (148 males and 141 females) at the Irbid Governorate, north of Jordan, participated in the study. The students were categorized based on two age groups, younger students between the age of 18–25 and older students who were 26 and above. Two instruments were used to assess student's emotional intelligence, social adjustment and academic adjustment. Multi-group analysis using structural equation models were used to analyze the data.

The results show no significant relationship between emotional intelligence in either social adjustment or academic adjustment. In addition, the moderating effect of gender was not found. However, there was a moderating effect of age on the relationship between emotional intelligence with social and academic adjustment.


*Abstracts were edited for publication in this newsletter.