Opinions Matter
Evidence of, by and for Howard Stakeholders

Office of Institutional Assessment and Evaluation (OIAE)

We devote this Volume to student learning outcomes. It includes Spring 2011 College of Arts & Sciences Senior Comprehensive Exam score distribution and longitudinal data. It also includes student performance data in quantitative reasoning and written communication, which are part of the general education requirement at Howard University. These data represent direct measurement of student learning outcomes, whereas opinions represent indirect measurement. So, What is your opinion about student performance? Lastly, student and faculty opinions regarding some key issues that may affect learning outcomes are listed for comparison. We encourage stakeholders to utilize the assessment data available on campus to help improve student learning outcomes. Your action matters!

Spring 2011 College of Arts & Sciences Senior Comprehensive Exam

The College of Arts and Sciences requires a senior comprehensive examination for graduation. The examination is administered twice a year by the department in which the student declares a major. In order to pass the examination, students must score at least 60 percent.

Spring 2011 Senior Comprehensive Exam Results – College of Arts & Sciences

![Graph showing examination score distribution]

*Mean = 71.39
Std. Dev. = 12.175
N = 308*

Excluded: The Division of Fine Arts and in the Division of Natural Sciences, Comprehensive Sciences and Preprofessional Education.

Working together to cultivate a culture of evidence-based decision making.
2011 Quantitative Reasoning

The Office of Institutional Assessment and Evaluation (OIAE) used data from the departmental examinations of College Algebra I, College Algebra II, and Pre-calculus to measure the general education learning outcome, quantitative reasoning. There were 1,177 students enrolled in the three courses during the Spring Semester 2011 with 611 in College Algebra I, 408 in College Algebra II, and 158 in Pre-Calculus. OIAE attained a 100% response rate among mathematics professors. See full report at OIAE website, http://assessment.howard.edu.

Findings: Overall, the sooner students enroll in the entry level mathematics courses upon initial matriculation, the more likely they are to succeed in those courses.

Recommendation:
Academic advisors should continue to collaborate with enrollment management personnel and faculty to carefully monitor students’ performance (grades) so that students’ course-taking behaviors lead to successful completion of entry-level courses, and students are able to apply what they have learned in upper division courses (OIAE).

Findings: The high attrition rate in College Algebra I, especially among freshman (47%), females (51%) and males (59%), may indicate that students lack the necessary prerequisite skills – mathematical, study or personal skills --- to persist and succeed in the entry-level college credit-bearing mathematics courses. The rates of attrition in the entry level mathematics courses lead to higher institutional costs and possibly more student debt or time-to-degree.

Recommendation:
The University should set performance expectations for quantitative reasoning competencies. Faculty and students should strive to meet these expectations (OIAE). Proper placement, advising and academic support could lead to a reduction in the estimated cost for retaking mathematics courses.
2011 Written Communication

The Office of Institutional Assessment and Evaluation used student-performance data in English 003 for the purpose of determining the extent to which students demonstrated competence in written communication. The English Department used a rubric of five criteria to grade each essay. For each criterion, maximum score is 20 points with a passing score of 14. Two studies were conducted on the English 003 essay data. See full report at OIAE website.

**Methodology**

**Study 1** – Students in one section of English 003 were assigned two essays and allowed to revise them after receiving feedback. Student performance on 5 criteria “before revisions” was compared with performance “after revisions.” (N= 55 observations)

**Study 2** – Students in all other sections of English 003 were assigned 4-5 essays -- each essay represents a different genre and style. Student performance on each of 5 criteria is averaged over all essays. (N=2,138 observations)

**Score range for each criterion:** 0-20

See criteria at bottom of this page.

**Written Communication** is the development and expression of ideas in writing. It involves learning to work in many genres and styles. Written communication abilities develop through iterative experiences across the curriculum (AAC&U).

**Development B:** Explains opposition and refutes it; uses documentation.

**Grammar/Mechanics:** Facility with conventions (grammar, usage, and mechanics).

**Development A:** Identifies and analyzes important features of the argument and supports the main points of the argument.

**Style:** Control of language, including diction and syntactic variety.

**Organization:** Organizes ideas and connects them with clear transitions.
College of Arts & Sciences Senior Comprehensive Exam

Longitudinal data from Spring 2006 to Spring 2011 show the popularity of different majors among undergraduate students.

![Diagram showing number of students who took the Senior Comprehensive Exam in Arts & Sciences from Spring 2006 to Spring 2011.]

### 2009 NSSE-FSSE Comparison

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) collects data annually from samples of first-year and senior students about the nature and quality of the undergraduate experience. The Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) measures faculty members' expectations of student engagement and parallels the NSSE. Howard University participated in NSSE and FSSE in 2009. NSSE and FSSE will be administered again at Howard this Spring 2012. The following table contains student and faculty responses to several parallel items of interest from the 2009 administration of NSSE and FSSE.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NSSE Item</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Very Much or Quite a Bit</th>
<th>FSSE Item</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Very Much or Quite a Bit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work</td>
<td>FY</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>Requiring students to spend significant amount of time studying and on academic work</td>
<td>LD</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SR</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td></td>
<td>UD</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing the support you need to help you succeed academically</td>
<td>FY</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>Providing students the support they need to help them succeed academically</td>
<td>LD</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SR</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
<td>UD</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing the support you need to thrive socially</td>
<td>FY</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>Providing students the support they need to thrive socially</td>
<td>LD</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SR</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td></td>
<td>UD</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: LD is Lower Division and UD is Upper Division; FY is First Year and SR is Senior.*