

College of *Charleston*

Institutional Effectiveness Report Summary

2000-2001

Offices of Assessment and Planning and
Institutional Research

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Date: August 2, 2001

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INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS SUMMARY

Introduction

Recognizing that Assessment is inextricably linked to Planning, the College's Assessment program is now housed administratively in the Division of Assessment and Planning. The success of the College's Assessment program, however, will always be dependent upon the hard work and diligence of the entire campus community - its faculty, staff, and students.

One example of the College's assessment efforts is the use of the Annual Alumni survey. The College surveyed its 1997-98 graduates to determine their satisfaction with their major and general education program and instruction, as well as their ability to find gainful employment after graduation. From the survey results, it appears that the College of Charleston graduates are extremely satisfied with the education they have received and that this education has made them readily employable. The survey revealed that more than 90% of the College's alumni respondents were either "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the program in their major and only slightly less satisfied with the general education program (84%) and the instruction in this program (85%). Most importantly, 91% of the alumni surveyed indicated their satisfaction with their overall academic experience at the College of Charleston, and only 2% expressed any dissatisfaction with their overall academic program.

Additionally, as part of the alumni survey, the College assessed the employability of its alumni and has determined that the alumni of the College are indeed readily employable. Of the 1997-98 alumni seeking gainful employment upon graduation, 43% found full-time employment within the first month of graduation; 74% had found employment within the first three months; 85% within the first six months; and within one year of graduation 91% of the graduating class had found full-time employment.

This year's report will focus on General Education, Majors/Concentrations, and Academic Advising. Procedures for Student Development and Library Resources and Service were reported on in 1999 and will be reported again in 2002.

COMPONENT SUMMARIES

General Education

Based upon the recommendations of the 1999-2000 Faculty Committee on Institutional Effectiveness, the College of Charleston adopted the ETS Academic Profile as one measure of effectiveness of the general education requirements. A pilot test administration was unsuccessfully attempted during the summer 2000 when it was decided to use our Freshman Seminar 101 (FRSR 101) cohort in order to resolve problems experienced with attracting a viable cohort during summer 2000. The Profile was successfully administered to 512 students in the FRSR 101 classes, with 465 tests sent to ETS for scoring. Of those 465 tests, 447 were used in the ETS analysis of results. The 18 tests which were sent to ETS but not used in the final analysis were those who answered less than half of the questions. Of those 18, 15 tests did not contain a name and/or student identification number and three tests were identifiable by student. ETS also noted four students who had very low scores, but who did answer more than half of the test questions. Preliminary results indicate that the College of Charleston compares favorably with other institutions of similar type and mission. The overall average score of 444.7 compares to a 444.6 (n=26,511) for freshmen at comprehensive institutions and a 443.5 (n=33,794) freshmen at other liberal arts institutions. In the Academic Area subscore sections of the test, the College was also at or slightly above average for all areas (Humanities, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences). The Skills Dimension sections (Reading, Writing, Critical Thinking, and Using Mathematical Data) had the same results.

The ETS Academic Profile will be readministered to the cohort of 447 students enrolled in the FRSR 101 classes for the academic year 2002-2003. For further comparison, the Profile will be administered to FRSR 101 classes in 2002-2003 and 2004-2005, with follow up on these cohorts in 2004-2005 and 2006-2007.

Additionally, certain departments and schools (e.g., the School of Science and Mathematics) have decided to undertake a review of their general education requirements via the annual assessment process. Data on from this initiative will be available during the reporting phase beginning 2002-2003.

Majors and Concentrations

The College continues to utilize a three-year assessment cycle in order to assure adequate programmatic assessment. The three cycles are planning, collecting data, and reporting on the assessment efforts. Each program develops an assessment plan during the first year of their cycle. The second year is devoted to collecting the data required by the assessment plan. Some departments request an extension on this phase to allow for multi-year or longitudinal studies which provide additional assessment data. At the end of the third year of the cycle, each department submits a comprehensive report on the

results of their assessment efforts. This report also describes how the results of the assessment cycle will be used to improve services and/or programs at the College.

The Office of Assessment and Planning distributes a detailed report to all offices outlining the annual planning process as well as the assessment planning cycles. The budgeting process is also described. The annual calendar for planning and assessment are included in this report as are the schedules regarding departmental placement in the cycle. A comprehensive schedule for the academic and the administrative departments has been developed and distributed. The Office of Assessment and Planning and the Faculty Committee on Institutional Effectiveness collaborate to offer training sessions for all department heads, deans, directors, and interested faculty on the assessment and planning cycles and processes. The planning and assessment documents are collected by the Faculty Committee on Institutional Effectiveness (the academic departments) and by the Office of Assessment and Planning (the administrative departments). This cycle has allowed the institution to integrate the planning, assessment, and budgeting processes in order to “close the loop” for institutional planning. Budget documents are submitted based upon the planning and assessments process in place for each department.

The three-year cycle results in a number of academic and administrative reports being due for each year of the cycle (roughly one-third of the departments are in any one phase of the cycle at any given time). Summaries for Mathematics and Computer Science follow. Public Affairs has been deferred until 2002-2003 to allow for additional time for data collection.

Computer and Information Science

The Department of Computer Science has formalized assessment goals as a part of a growing and more comprehensive assessment of the program and department objectives as stated in the annual planning documents (the annual and five-year plans). Currently there are a number of assessment mechanisms in place including: Course-Instructors evaluations for every course every semester; annual evaluation of faculty; faculty self-assessment survey; online student degree audits conducted by advisors; department annual plan; departmental five-year plan; and annual undergraduate curriculum review by committees and via a faculty retreat format. Additionally a learning outcome comparison based upon course objectives are conducted formally with courses and are a part of the formal assessment process. In each case the assessment activity is used as a “feedback loop” for process and outcome improvement for programs in computer science, computer information systems and in the service courses for majors and non-majors alike.

The 2001-2002 Computer Science Assessment Plan identified two additional programmatic objectives for formal assessment: They are: to provide undergraduate research experiences, and to determine if Computer Science graduates are prepared for jobs in the industry. The intent of this additional assessment mechanism is to improve the assessment cycle by examining program objectives at a finer level of granularity using quantitative and qualitative metrics. Data collected through multiple measurement methods will be used to evaluate the department success and/or failure in these

endeavors. Changes and improvements will be based upon the assessment outcomes and will be documented in the assessment report due in 2003.

Mathematics

During the fall 2000 term, the Department of Mathematics prepared a departmental self-study in preparation for the spring CHE program review. The self-study document included two reports: one each on the B.S. and M.S. programs in mathematics. These reports include numerical data on the department, faculty, students, and programs; lists of special faculty accomplishments, lists of faculty research accomplishments and service contributions (including public service); reports on external funding received; tables of undergraduate research activity; descriptions of facilities, equipment, and software; and descriptions of all assessment efforts.

As a part of the assessment efforts of the Department of Mathematics, an external review was conducted during the 2000-2001 academic year. The review team consisted of Stephen Davis, Chair of Mathematics at Davidson College, and Elias Saab, Chair of Mathematics at the University of Missouri. They reviewed the CHE self-studies and visited campus for two days to meet with administrators, faculty, and students. They are preparing a review of the B.S. and M.S. programs which will address the following: the quality of the faculty (including the quality of the research activity and the instruction provided by the department); the quantity and quality of space for the programs; the size of the departmental operating budget; the faculty salaries; the instructional staff needs; the computer equipment, software, and technical supports needs; and the quality of the degree programs. That report will outline areas of improvement and is expected fall 2001.

Public Administration

The assessment report for the Public Administration program has been deferred.

Achievement of Students Transferring From Two to Four Year Institutions

This component is not applicable to the College of Charleston.

Academic Advising

Academic advising at the College of Charleston is regularly assessed according to current trends and practices in place nationally. The results of the assessment efforts are utilized to effect changes and improvements to the policies and procedures that govern the advising system. Personnel in the Center for Academic Advising maintain currency in advising as a discipline via attendance at appropriate conferences and through research in

the field of advising and retention of students. The Director of Advising serves on the regional board of directors for NACADA (the National Academic Advising Association) and helps to form policy as well as procedure for the southeast region. His involvement in advising both regionally, nationally, and internationally allows for the most up-to-date information on the theory and practice of advising in the 21st century. Departmental advising is governed by faculty advisors who are trained through the Center for Academic Advising and who receive regular updates from CAA regarding changes to campus advising policies and procedures.

The advising process at the college is evaluated formally or informally each year. The changing student body demands an advising system that is responsive to student need and to the technology available today that enhances the students' advising and registration procedures. The CAA works closely with the academic departments, the Registrar's Office, Enrollment Management, and CofC students in order to identify and effect necessary changes to our system. The assessment efforts (including student surveys) in recent years identified a key issue to be addressed: aiding the incoming student (through new student orientation) to become proficient regarding our student information system while becoming familiar with the advising rules and regulations in place. At the same time, students needed to be introduced to the concept of "departmental advising" earlier in their career, establishing a relationship with the department of the intended major as early as possible. Over the past two years, CAA has instituted a new system for advising incoming students which divides the students into "pods" based on major that are advised through the departments for known majors and through the CAA for undecided students. The pods afford the departments and CAA with the opportunity to get to know incoming students through advising that takes place on site in the department and/or CAA rather than in a central "area" where all students are advised (previous system). At the same time, the students are introduced to the Cougar Trail system (online registration) and are able to enroll themselves using Cougar Trail from their first registration. The efficacy of this system will be assessed over the next two years and modifications will be made as needed.

Procedures for Student Development

This component was last submitted to the Commission on Higher Education in July 1999. Based on the institution's schedule of reporting, a report for this component will next be submitted to the Commission in July 2002.

Library Resources and Service

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