

# Eye on Assessment

An important year in the Office of Institutional Assessment (OIA)

## Assessment Activities in 2013-14

Last year brought many changes to OIA. We welcomed three new full-time staff members:

- Nicole Long, PhD - *Assessment Analyst*
- Sarah Pérez-Kriz, PhD - *Associate Director*
- Zhicheng Zhang, PhD - *Associate Director*

Dr. Zhang is responsible for developing and overseeing major student surveys administered by OIA, including student exit and career surveys. She and Dr. Long work together to analyze survey data and prepare reports for the university community. Dr. Pérez-Kriz manages the Academic Program Review (APR) process and works with units to develop learning and program outcome assessments.

OIA is ready for a busy fall semester. Major initiatives have been planned and many are already underway.

### General Education Assessment

General Education courses are reviewed via course portfolios on a 6-year cycle. When a general education category is under review, all faculty, regardless of appointment status, who teach an approved course or section during fall and spring semesters may be required to submit a course portfolio. For courses with multiple sections, OIA selects a random sample of those sections.

This fall, the categories of Oral Communication and Natural Science are being reviewed. Dr. Stephanie Hazel, Associate Director, has been working closely with the faculty, departments, and colleges to prepare for the assessment.

### Academic Program Review

Academic Program Review (APR) is a multi-year process in which an academic unit identifies the mission, goals, and learning outcomes of its degree programs. The unit, with help from OIA, uses a variety of data sources to measure whether program goals and learning outcomes are being achieved. APR can be a very rewarding process. It not only identifies areas in which a program can be improved, it illuminates successes as well. Many of the activities involved in APR can enhance communication and collaboration among faculty within a program. Seven departments/programs are starting APR this fall and six are finalizing their assessments to report in January.

In 2012, OIA and the Provost began giving an award for Excellence in Academic Program Review. The unit is honored with a ceremony and is given a monetary award to be used towards faculty development or resources that can be utilized by faculty members in the unit. Previous recipients of the award are the Department of Communication (2012) and the School of Dance (2013).



## OIA UPDATES

### WEB SITE

OIA launched a new web site in August. It has a streamlined navigation and incorporates the same look as Mason's homepage. Visit us at [assessment.gmu.edu](http://assessment.gmu.edu).

### MATS

Don't forget to put your unit assessments in MATS. This fall begins year 3 of the 2011-14 reporting cycle. Do you need access to MATS? Send us an email at [assessment@gmu.edu](mailto:assessment@gmu.edu).

### WORKSHOPS

OIA offers workshops throughout the year on topics ranging from developing learning outcomes to building curriculum maps. Information on upcoming workshops and registration can be found on our web site.

### NSSE

Mason's *NSSE 2012 Self and Peer Comparison Report* is available at [assessment.gmu.edu](http://assessment.gmu.edu). Watch for the BCSSE 2013 report coming later this year.



## Survey Development and Administration

OIA was busy this summer administering the Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE). All incoming freshmen were invited to participate and seven students won a NOOK® at Freshman Orientation. The survey closed in early September and data analyses will be performed this semester.

In addition to our work on national surveys, OIA collaborates with units to develop Mason surveys including student exit surveys and the Career Plans Survey (graduating seniors and graduate students), the Recent Alumni Survey (alums one year post-graduation), and departmental alumni surveys (a component of APR).

OIA analyzes survey results and prepares written and oral reports for the university community, including special reports that integrate multiple data sources that focus on topics of interest. Online and customizable results are also available for many of our locally developed surveys at [assessment.gmu.edu](http://assessment.gmu.edu). Results are customizable at the college, department, and degree level.

## Students as Scholars

In 2009, Mason adopted *Students as Scholars*, a university-wide initiative that connects undergraduate students with faculty across the disciplines to engage in authentic research and creative activity. OIA partners with the Office of Student Scholarship, Creative Activities, & Research (OSCAR) to conduct ongoing assessment of program and student learning outcomes using multiple methods and tools.

OIA has partnered with the University Libraries and *Students as Scholars* on a special project. The team was selected by the Association of College & Research Libraries to be part of a national learning community to increase the capacity of academic librarians to contribute to program design and assessment. Mason's project aims to promote collaboration between faculty and librarians in Research and Scholarship (RS) intensive courses. Librarians will work with these courses to help students learn research skills.

## Other Projects and Initiatives

OIA is currently working with several offices, including the Registrar and University Life, to develop and maintain a University Survey Calendar. The calendar captures major student surveys conducted on campus. The calendar is intended to promote planning and coordination of data collection activities and reduce undue burden on students. The calendar can be found at [assessment.gmu.edu](http://assessment.gmu.edu).

In collaboration with other Provost offices, OIA is evaluating and planning for the assessment needs of Mason's Songdo campus in Korea. OIA will work with faculty prior to departing for Songdo and will thereafter provide ongoing support of assessment efforts.

Questions? Please contact us at [assessment@gmu.edu](mailto:assessment@gmu.edu) or 703.993.8834.

## OIA STAFF

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