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Assessment Committee
Summary and Interpretation of Faculty/Staff responses to the
Assessment of Student Learning Survey, Spring 2004

The purpose of this report is to summarize and interpret the results of a survey of Augsburg faculty and staff about the assessment process at Augsburg College. 64 faculty and staff responded to the survey: Five are faculty chairs, and ten are program directors, thirty-nine are faculty members, and nineteen are staff members.

This report is organized into four sections: I. Background of the Survey; II. Overall Interpretation of Results; III. Item Specific Results; and IV. Next Steps.

I. Background of the Survey

Based on North Central Association's "Assessment of Student Academic Achievement: Levels of Implementation" (1 March 2001), this survey of faculty and staff was designed and distributed by the College's Assessment Committee to get baseline evidence of second-stage implementation of assessment—"making progress in implementing assessment programs"—in these three areas: Institutional Culture, Institutional Support (both resources and structures), and Efficacy of Assessment. In an effort to see whether we were developing an institutional sense of "shared responsibility" for assessment, surveys were developed for and distributed to faculty and staff, board and administration, and students.

The first time the survey was given was Spring 2003, and the Assessment Committee's report on those results was finalized in a document dated November 21, 2003. This report focuses on our second iteration of the survey, and much of the analysis will draw comparisons with results from last year. Like last year, this report deals only with the faculty/staff survey. The results have been recast to shed light on shared values (institutional culture), awareness of structures and resources (institutional support), and efficacy of assessment at the institutional, departmental, and individual levels of assessment.

II. Overall Interpretation of Results

We begin with the same caveat that opened last year's report: Nowhere on the survey did we define "assessment" for respondents. Consequently, when respondents answer the survey questions, we have no way of knowing what they have in mind. What assessment means for one person may be different than what it means for another. With that noted, what follows is our analysis of the pattern of responses to the survey.

The survey asked 14 questions about various dimensions of the assessment process at Augsburg College. Most questions are given a Likert scale response pattern, “Strongly Disagree,” “Disagree,” “Neutral,” “Agree,” “Strongly Agree,” and “Don’t Know.” The results were tabulated into percentage distributions for every response. To interpret the results, we combined the categories of: Strongly Disagree & Disagree; Agree & Strongly Agree; and Neutral & Don’t Know. We looked for patterns in the responses, noting when a majority responded in agreement or disagreement, and when there was no clear agreement across response options.

Overall, response patterns show that more faculty and staff are aware of, and are engaging in, assessment practices than they were last year. This is the primary finding in this report. These results indicate some modest but notable gains in perceptions and involvement in assessment practices at Augsburg.

Like last year, the general pattern of responses indicates that that faculty and staff respondents may be less aware of efforts toward assessment in areas of the institution that are further away from their daily work lives. Respondents’ perceptions and involvement in assessment continue to resonate more at the individual level and department level, than the college level. However, we found that there was improvement on this issue as well.

Specifically, responses to questions 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9b) and c), 11, 12, 13, 14b) and c), all show higher numbers of respondents answering “agree” or “strongly agree.” This indicates that faculty and staff are reporting higher levels of awareness and involvement in assessment than last year. Also, answers to questions 1, 3, 4, 6, 7b) and c), 8, 9b) and c), 12, 13, and 14, show fewer people responding “Don’t Know/Neutral” than they did last year. We interpret this as an indication that more faculty and staff are confident in giving “agree” or “disagree” opinions about assessment as they become more aware of assessment practices on campus.

III. Item Specific Results

The survey questions address the assessment processes at Augsburg College at various levels: Questions 1 – 4, and 12 - 14 are questions about assessment at the level of the College; questions 5 - 8 are questions about Departments and Programs; questions 9 - 11 are about Faculty and Staff.

Questions at the level of the College

1. *“I understand the _____ of the college’s assessment of student learning*

	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Neutral/DK</u>
a) <i>“meaning”</i>	71	8	17
b) <i>“goals”</i>	74	10	13
c) <i>“characteristics”</i>	49	20	29
d) <i>“value”</i>	75	6	16

2. *“I’m knowledgeable about the College’s assessment program in terms of its...”*

a) <i>“structures”</i>	41	26	30
b) <i>“components”</i>	40	31	28
c) <i>“timetable”</i>	29	34	43

3. *“Assessment of student learning is valued across the institution.”*

	49	19	26
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4. *“The College has a sustainable structure in place for ongoing assessment.”*

	43	21	32
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12. *“Regular feedback from the Assessment Committee has been provided about department/program plans for assessment.”*

	38	17	43
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13. *“Sufficient informational resources have been provided to assist in department or program assessment plan...”*

	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Neutral/DK</u>
a) <i>“development”</i>	50	17	30
b) <i>“implementation”</i>	43	17	35

14. *“Augsburg provides sufficient financial support for assessment in terms of...”*

a) ¹ <i>“material needs”</i>	20	64	54
b) <i>“release time”</i>	13	50	33
c) <i>“hiring consultants”</i> ¹⁶		22	60

With the exception of questions 1 and 14, there are no majority responses, which is similar to last year’s patterns. However, as noted earlier in this report, there is an increasing percentage of people answering in agreement or disagreement, and fewer answering “don’t know” than last year. Our interpretation is that respondents remain comparatively unaware of various dimensions of the assessment process at the level of the college, but that this lack of awareness is changing slowly.

To Question 1 -- which asked if respondents understand the meaning, goals, and value of the college’s assessment program -- a majority of respondents responded affirmatively. What they didn’t understand were the “characteristics” of the program. This pattern is identical to last year’s response pattern, and we offer a similar interpretation: Faculty and staff understand the meaning and value of the college’s assessment program in the abstract, but not its particular features.

Questions at the level of the Department/Program

5. *“My department/program considers assessment of student learning to be an integral part of its functioning, not an “add on.”*

	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Neutral/DK</u>
	61	17	20

6. *“My department has a structure in place for ongoing assessment.”*

	61	17	18
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¹ The response rate for this question is 138%. This appears to be a tabulation error, although we are still in the process of confirming this.

7. *“My department/program is...”*

	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Neutral/DK</u>
a) <i>“collecting data”</i>	70	6	21
b) <i>“interpreting data”</i>	59	10	28
c) <i>“using results”</i>	64	12	22

Like last year, all the responses show a majority agreement to departmental/program efforts toward assessment of student learning. Faculty and staff indicate that departments and programs view assessment as integral, have created structures for ongoing assessment, and are in the process of collecting data. One significant change from last year are the responses in questions 7b) and c): Last year, less than a majority answered “agree” or “strongly agree”; this year, those percentages have increased to clear majorities. This indicates that, for those who completed the survey, more are involved in assessment practices.

Questions at the level of Individual Faculty/Staff

8. *“I take responsibility to insure student learning is aligned with my department or program’s...”*

	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Neutral/DK</u>
a) <i>“educational goals”</i>	88	3	8
b) <i>“measurable objectives”</i>	70	6	21

9. *“I am engaged in...”*

a) <i>“collecting data”</i>	72	14	12
b) <i>“interpreting data”</i>	66	20	12
c) <i>“using results”</i>	64	20	14

10. *“I contribute to discussions/activities related to assessment of student learning.”*

	74	10	16
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11. *“These discussions/activities are a resource for my efforts to improve student learning.”*

<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Neutral/DK</u>
68	11	19

Like last year, these results indicate clear majority agreement in faculty and staff actions to assess student learning. At the individual level, respondents are confident that they are engaging in assessment practices. Curious, however, is the increase of “don’t know/neutral” responses to questions 10 and 11, an exception to the general pattern throughout the survey.

Answers to questions 2d and 13c

This section is based on responses to two questions: 2d asks respondents to identify dimensions of Augsburg’s assessment process about which they need more information; 13c is the only part of the survey that offers a written response option to respondents. We highlight responses to these questions because both ask for feedback beyond simple agreement statements. Below we provide the full text of questions 2d and 13c, and our interpretation of the responses.

2d. *“About which of the aforementioned areas [Augsburg assessment structures, components, and timetable] do you feel more information is needed?”*

(52 responses to this question were received)	
all	11
components	16
structure	4
timetable	18
need more information	2
none	1

Compared to last year, only “components” and “timetable” have higher responses than last year. This suggests that fewer people feel the need for more information at a general level (i.e., last year 21 people wanted more information about “all” as compared to this year’s 11), but are more certain that they need specific information about “components” and “timetable.” With regard to the first: One problem may be how respondents are interpreting the term “components,” as that term is not defined for respondents. Regarding the “timetable”: While AQIP is asking institutions to conform to certain rates of progress, the Assessment Committee has agreed that our current goal is to get departments “on board” first, and to facilitate progress when and wherever we can. The Assessment Committee doesn’t demand specific time constraints because the variability in expertise, compliance, and involvement is still rather high.

13 c. *“What informational resources do you feel are needed to accomplish the aforementioned tasks [development and implementation of department or program plan to assess student learning].”*

Three major themes emerged from the 22 written responses to this question: Communication and Resources, and Time Constraints. They are summarized below. A complete list of actual responses is available upon request.

COMMUNICATION AND RESOURCES

Communication continues to be a consistent theme in the responses to 2d. and 13c. But it appears that respondents have more specific concerns than just “we need better communication.” Respondents ask for more information and clearly articulated expectations; more specific feedback and guidance from the Assessment Committee; access to more resources, such as examples of ideal assessment plans from other departments, models/templates, and specific methods/techniques of assessment; one respondent called for more inter-departmental communication across a larger division. One respondent asked for more information for adjuncts and non-teaching staff. One respondent asked for an assessment director.

TIME CONSTRAINTS

Three respondents mentioned the time constraints that members of the Augsburg community face. Like last year, these respondents expressed concern about adding assessment procedures to their existing responsibilities and the time they take.

IV. Next Steps

As stated in the opening section of this report, the purpose of this survey was to formulate baseline data on, and analysis of, the implementation of assessment programs at Augsburg College. In the future, we will refer to these and past years’ results to inform our committee’s practices. Last year we completed a website and will continue to use that to disseminate information including this report. Second, we will continue gathering and disseminating assessment resources for the same purpose. Finally, we will strive to increase awareness of and support for what’s being done—e.g., we will give more timely feedback on reports, and increase committee contact with departments. Last year’s efforts by all committee members to meet with and respond specifically to department/program reports represented a first step in that direction.