



**LOYOLA**  
COLLEGE IN MARYLAND

**Plan for Assessment and Continuous Improvement**

**February 2005**

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

### **A. Institutional Mission, Assessment, and Continuous Improvement**

Assessment and continuous improvement effectively nurture the College's mission:

*Loyola College in Maryland is a Jesuit Catholic university committed to the educational and spiritual traditions of the Society of Jesus and to the ideals of liberal education and the development of the whole person. Accordingly, the College will inspire students to learn, lead, and serve in a diverse and changing world.*

Assessment attempts to determine if the College is achieving its mission. If it is not, well-thought out changes must be enacted to achieve the mission. Then these changes must be assessed to determine if they have the desired effect. This cyclical process of identifying areas that need improvement, enacting new policies, procedures, and curricular improvements to enhance these areas, and evaluating their impact capture the spirit and intent of assessment. In effect, assessment is the process of gathering and analyzing information regarding student learning, service, or process, purposely leading to improvement of student learning, service, or process in achieving the College's mission.

Assessment should not be confused with the evaluation of individuals. While certain tools used for evaluation such as course evaluations and student exams may be used in aggregate for assessment of student learning, the purpose of collecting assessment data is to provide enhanced opportunities for students to learn. This assessment must be done principally by faculty with staff support. Faculty must own the assessment process by setting goals, identifying objectives, gathering information, and evaluating results. Appropriate resources must be provided to support assessment processes. Loyola faculty should establish their own internal standards for assessment that are aligned with broader standards in their academic disciplines, accrediting associations, and professional organizations.

Assessment at Loyola has been organized around two areas: Student Learning and Institutional Effectiveness. Student learning is central to the mission of the College. Therefore, the assessment of student learning is the primary focus of this assessment plan. At the same time, many institutional processes and support services enhance student learning. Ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of these administrative processes and services is discussed in the final section of this document.

### **B. Organization of this Document**

This document is divided into three major sections:

1. The introductory section presents a brief history of assessment at Loyola, describes the principles that guide assessment efforts, explains the relationship of this assessment plan to the College's Strategic Plan, and delineates responsibilities for reviewing the plan and maintaining its currency.

2. The second section focuses on the assessment of student learning. It describes the processes, plans, and anticipated timeline for developing learning aims and goals, assessing their achievement, and continuously improving the curriculum based on assessment results. It also includes descriptions of ongoing institutional assessment of student learning and development.
3. The third section focuses on the assessment of institutional effectiveness. It includes descriptions of ongoing institutional assessment of academic and administrative processes and services.

Attached as appendices are Academic Program Review Guidelines, Support Services Review Guidelines, Undergraduate Educational Aims, and Graduate Learning Goals.

### **C. History**

Loyola College, like any reflective educational institution, has been evaluating itself since its inception over 150 years ago. However, the 1980s was a decade of increasing calls (primarily by accrediting agencies) for the assessment and improvement of educational institutions as a whole, particularly the quality of student learning. Therefore, in 1991, the College Council, the highest governing body of the College at that time, formed an Assessment Planning Committee of faculty and administrators. The Committee gathered information on (1) a mission statement and relevant background information; (2) indicators and assessment mechanisms; and (3) the impact of assessment from many areas of the College. Its optimistic findings were included in the College's 1995 Middle States Periodic Review Report.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, the Committee was not able to complete one of its goals: the formation of an institutional assessment plan. During the 1994-95 academic year, the Assessment Planning Committee was replaced by two committees: the Academic Assessment Committee (reporting to the Academic Senate) and the Institutional Effectiveness Assessment Committee (reporting to the Loyola Conference).

In 1996, assessment was mentioned for the first time in a College Strategic Plan. Later, the Steering Committee appointed to oversee the 1999 accreditation report to Middle States was charged with including a chapter on assessment. In fact, about one-fifth of the College's Self-Study was devoted to assessment.<sup>2</sup> These pages discussed Assessment Principles and applied these principles to Student Learning Outcomes (called "the most important area covered"), Program Evaluation, Faculty Evaluation, Faculty Development, Benchmark Studies, and Assessment in Administrative Areas (Academics, Finance, College Relations, and Student Development). In turn, the 1999 Middle States Evaluation Team issued a 12-page report (Evaluation Team Report), two-and-a-half pages of which responded to the College's report on its own assessment. In contrast to the optimism expressed in the College's 1995 Middle States Periodic Review Report, the review team reported that "attention to assessment is uneven throughout the institution." It made a number of recommendations, including asking the College

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<sup>1</sup> 1995 Middle States Periodic Review Report, pp. 80-81 and pp. 87-88, including "... overall at the College assessment activities are already deeply ingrained" (p. 87)

<sup>2</sup> Prepared for presentation to the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, November 8-10, 1999, Chapter IV (pp. 80-99)

“to determine if there is any articulation between student learning inside and outside of the classroom,” “to establish a second benchmark group” of schools with which to make comparisons, “to create a culture of assessment at Loyola,” and “to outline the goals of faculty development.”

As part of its ongoing strategic planning efforts, Loyola’s current Strategic Plan addresses a number of issues raised by the College’s Self-Study and the Evaluation Team Report. The Plan includes strategies that aim to create a culture of assessment, including continuing work on the goals of faculty development (for example, IV.E.1; F.1, 3, 5; G.1, 3) as well as articulation between student learning inside and outside of the classroom (for example, II.A.1; B.3, 4, 5, 7, 8). With respect to the recommendation that Loyola establish a second set of benchmark schools, the recent practice has been to benchmark specific processes at other specific institutions (rather than continue to develop lists of benchmark schools for every process).

During the development of the current Strategic Plan, the College’s Mission statement was revised, and Vision and Values statements were developed. Based on these, the current Strategic Plan contains a number of general objectives, more specific goals, and concrete strategies. Many of the specific strategies call for the improvement of student learning and institutional practices by assessing how well those practices attain their goals and how well student learning goals are met. Specific groups within the College are already working on action plans to implement these strategies according to agreed-upon timetables.

Assessment for continuous improvement is and always will be an unfinished task at Loyola College. The purpose of this plan is not to summarize each of these ongoing efforts. Rather the goals are:

1. To rearticulate the main principles that guide efforts to improve Loyola College on the basis of assessing its aims and goals: the Guiding Principles for Assessment and Continuous Improvement.
2. To articulate the relationship among College assessment and improvement plans and to delineate responsibilities for enacting periodic as well as ongoing assessment for continuous improvement of student learning.
3. To inventory the main assessment instruments that the College is already using, and plans to use, to improve both student learning and institutional effectiveness.

#### **D. Definitions and Principles**

The following definitions clarify the meaning of the terms below as they are used in the context of this plan.

*Undergraduate Educational Aims and Graduate Learning Goals:* the aspirational aims and goals that the College desires of all its graduates (of undergraduate programs and graduate programs, respectively). Learning aims and goals complete the phrase: “It is an aspirational aim that Loyola College graduates be able to \_\_\_\_\_.” Learning aims and goals can address

multiple dimensions such as knowledge, cognitive skills, behaviors, achievements, attitudes, and values. While student learning is a partnership between students and faculty, students ultimately bear the responsibility for their own learning. For the College's graduate programs, the words "learning goals" were strategically chosen, as specific goals and outcomes must often be achieved in order for students to join a profession and/or advance within a profession. Aims and goals can be articulated at the institutional level, program level, core curriculum level, and course level. The Undergraduate Educational Aims and Graduate Learning Goals are in Appendices C and D, respectively.

*Institutional Educational Aims:* aspirational aims/goals toward which the College strives, i.e., desired outcomes for all students. Collectively, the Undergraduate Educational Aims and Graduate Learning Goals comprise Loyola's Institutional Educational Aims.

*Program Goals:* those learning outcomes that encompass the types of student performance expected of all students in a program.

*Core Curriculum Goals:* those learning outcomes addressed in the Core Curriculum.

*Course Goals:* intended outcomes of instruction that faculty expect of all students in a given course. Course goals address the types of specific student performances that demonstrate student achievement of more general institutional, program, and core curriculum goals.

*Assessment:* the process of determining whether the College's aims/goals are being achieved.

*Actual Outcome:* the actual result in comparison to the original aims/goals.

*Continuous Improvement:* the consistent use of assessment results to bridge gaps between the College's aims/goals and actual outcomes.

*Direct Assessment:* evidence-based student learning data provided through actual observations of student performance or behavior (e.g., looking at samples of student work).

*Indirect Assessment:* perception-based student learning data provided through such means as student surveys, alumni surveys, employer surveys, focus groups, and exit interviews.

### *Guiding Principles for Assessment and Continuous Improvement*

Loyola College has identified a set of principles to guide the institutional assessment process. While some of these principles were included in the College's Self-Study, others have been developed since that time. The guiding principles include four general principles for assessment and continuous improvement.

## General Principles for Assessment and Continuous Improvement

1. Assessment is connected to the real concerns and core values of an institution. Its purpose is to improve student learning and institutional processes. Assessment is used to ask new, often novel questions, and to make meaningful decisions. It helps an institution define and measure the extent to which it meets its goals.
2. Effective assessment plans are ongoing and cyclical in nature. Assessment results are used for continuous improvement.
3. Academic assessment must be done principally by faculty with staff support. Faculty must own the assessment process - setting goals, identifying objectives, gathering information, and evaluating results. Appropriate resources must be provided to support assessment processes.
4. Loyola faculty should establish their own internal standards for assessment that are aligned with broader standards in their academic disciplines, accrediting associations, and professional organizations.

### Establishing Assessment Goals

*[What do we want our students to know, be like, or be able to do?]*

5. Assessments must be accompanied by explicit statements of proficiencies (knowledge, skills, and dispositions) that students are expected to demonstrate. The purpose of defining learning aims/goals and assessing them is the improvement of student learning. Aims and goals should focus on the profound and truly important learning that the College, its programs, and its faculty desire and not on a trivial checklist.
6. All sections of a course should have some common learning aims/goals. Faculty may, as appropriate, specify additional learning aims/goals for their individual course sections and are always free to choose their own approaches to structuring and teaching the course content.

### Measuring the Achievement of Assessment Goals

*[How can we measure our success or failure in that regard?]*

7. The best assessments contain both direct and indirect measures of student learning.
8. Qualitative as well as quantitative approaches to assessment should be used across the institution as a whole, although individual departments may choose qualitative or quantitative approaches.

## Using Assessment Results for Change

*[How can we use the information that is gathered to make positive changes?]*

9. Data collected for the purpose of assessment are primarily used to improve student learning and institutional processes, not to review or evaluate individuals. However, the College, its departments, and faculty are responsible for efforts to improve student learning and institutional processes when assessment results indicate this is needed.
10. Assessment results that expose shortcomings will be used for positive change and continuous improvement, not blame or punishment.
11. Informing the various constituencies of the findings of assessment and evaluation is important. Key stakeholders and decision-makers must be identified and involved.
12. One of the principal benefits of assessment is that it triggers communication and collective reflection among the faculty of what students are learning and what is truly important. Careful analysis of assessment results and consideration of possible improvements require time for reflection. Therefore, assessment results should take into account the rhythms of contemplation and action appropriate to liberal education and/or professional learning in different departments and programs.
13. The College must create a positive environment that places emphasis on the continuous quality improvement of programs through assessment and avoids the temptation of a quick fix.

### **E. Relationship with the College's Strategic Plan**

The entire College community was involved in developing the most recent Strategic Plan. Additional inputs to the Strategic Plan included the College's Self-Study, the Evaluation Team Report, results from various ongoing assessment activities (e.g., CIRP, NSSE, CSS surveys), and other assessment data that were available at the time the plan was developed. The Strategic Plan outlines numerous strategies for assessing and improving student learning and institutional processes related to that learning. Draft action plans have already been developed for many of these strategies.

There clearly is overlap between this assessment plan and the College's Strategic Plan, as there should be. This plan summarizes assessment initiatives already taking place and articulates how the College plans to assess student learning for continuous improvement. It brings together in one place the College's efforts, ideas, and plans related to the aims, goals, assessment, and improvement of student learning as well as institutional effectiveness.

### **F. Responsibilities for Drafting, Reviewing, and Implementing the Plan**

The Academic Assessment Committee of the Academic Senate had primary responsibility for drafting this assessment plan with the assistance of the Deans and Vice President for Academic

Affairs. The President's Executive Council monitored the development of the plan, including the non-academic components dealing with instructional effectiveness and support services review.

The student learning components of the plan (Section II in particular) were presented to the Academic Senate for review and feedback. The Academic Senate approved Section II as well as the Assessment Principles in Section I on November 9, 2004. The entire assessment plan was submitted to the Loyola Conference in its role as the Steering Committee for the Middle States Periodic Review Report. The Loyola Conference approved the plan on February 15, 2005. The plan was forwarded to the President and the Board of Trustees; the Board reviewed a draft on December 8, 2004 and approved it on April 20, 2005.

Responsibility for implementing the student learning sections of the plan rests with the vice presidents, deans, department chairs, and program directors of the College who ultimately rely on faculty and staff. The Academic Assessment Committee will help facilitate implementation of the plan by periodically synthesizing institution-wide assessment practices, fostering ongoing dialogue and discussion, and providing resources such as workshops and speakers for the continuous improvement of assessment processes. Any additionally-needed resources will be brought to the attention of the deans and vice presidents. The Director of Institutional Research, who is an ex-officio member of the Academic Assessment Committee, will assist with these efforts. A representative from each of the deans' offices will assume responsibility to assist with assessment within each school. The Academic Assessment Committee and the Council of Academic Deans will review this aspect of the plan annually or biannually and monitor its progress. The Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs is responsible for maintaining the plan.

Responsibility for implementing the institutional effectiveness sections of the plan rests with the President's Executive Council and the vice presidents of the College. The Institutional Effectiveness Committee, which is chaired by the Director of Institutional Research and which has representation from across the entire institution, will facilitate implementation of this aspect of the plan.

## **II. STUDENT LEARNING**

Student learning aims/goals can include multiple dimensions such as knowledge, cognitive skills, behaviors, achievements, attitudes, and values. At Loyola College, learning aims/goals have been divided into Institutional Educational Aims (including Undergraduate Educational Aims and Graduate Learning Goals), Program-Specific Learning Aims/Goals, Undergraduate Core Curriculum Learning Aims, and course learning aims. In developing learning aims/goals, assessing the extent to which they are being achieved, and using these results as a tool for improving student learning, the College is following the blueprint contained in the College's Self-Study. The Evaluation Team Report stated that Loyola should "take the steps necessary to make assessment a part of the culture of the college."<sup>3</sup> While many undergraduate and graduate programs at the College have been active in assessment for quite some time, the current *Loyola*

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<sup>3</sup> 1999 Self-Study, pp. 80-83

*College Plan for Assessment and Continuous Improvement* is designed to build on these existing strengths and help promote an institution-wide culture of assessment.

Middle States Standard 14 states, “Assessment of student learning demonstrates that the institution’s students have knowledge, skills, and competencies consistent with institutional and program goals and that graduates meet appropriate higher education goals.” In providing the context for this standard, Middle States notes,

“The systematic assessment of student learning outcomes is essential to monitoring quality and providing the information that leads to improvement. [...] The mission of the institution provides focus and direction to its outcomes assessment plan.”<sup>4</sup>

This section is divided into the three phases of assessment whose principles were summarized above: (a) setting learning aims/goals, (b) assessing learning aims/goals, and (c) using assessment results for the improvement of student learning. The section concludes with an outline of the timeline and responsibilities that are associated with each of these processes.

### **A. Process for Setting Loyola College Institutional Educational Aims**

Loyola’s Undergraduate Educational Aims and Graduate Learning Goals, collectively referred to as Institutional Educational Aims, are directly related to the College’s Jesuit, Catholic mission and values and reflect aims and goals that are paramount to faculty and staff who work most closely with students. Faculty from all academic departments as well as personnel from the offices of Student Development, Center for Values and Service, and Campus Ministry, initially drafted the Undergraduate Educational Aims. These aims were refined by the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee after receiving feedback from academic departments. The aims were debated, further refined, and approved by the Academic Senate. The College also developed and approved a set of learning goals common to graduates of its graduate programs in the College of Arts and Sciences and the Sellinger School of Business and Management. These Graduate Learning Goals were developed by the Graduate Curriculum Committee and approved by the Academic Senate.

#### *Process for Developing Program Learning Aims/Goals*

At the academic program or major level, faculty are responsible for developing Program Learning Aims (undergraduate) and Program Learning Goals (graduate). The deans have requested that each undergraduate and graduate program develop its own set of learning aims/goals. Department chair workshops on learning aims/goals have been held in which departments that have successfully developed their own aims/goals have shared their work with other departments. Departments have received a copy of *Student Learning Assessment Options and Resources* by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education to aid them in developing program learning aims/goals and devising ways to assess whether their aims/goals are being achieved. Some departments, especially those that undergo program accreditation, have already developed learning aims/goals for their programs, begun to assess actual student outcomes against those aims/goals, and made improvements based on the assessment results. The deans

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<sup>4</sup> Middle States Commission on Higher Education. (2002). *Characteristics of excellence in higher education: Eligibility requirements and standards for accreditation*. Philadelphia, PA: Author.

will initially review these aims/goals. They will later be reviewed by other faculty and external consultants as part of the Academic Program Review process. The Academic Program Review Guidelines are in Appendix A.

### *Process for Developing Course Learning Goals*

Faculty within a program are responsible for developing course goals for courses in the program. These faculty will decide exactly how this will be done. It is the responsibility of the faculty in the program, under the leadership of the department chair, to review the learning goals of courses in the program. The purpose of this review is to ensure that program learning aims are adequately addressed in the goals of appropriate courses in the program's curriculum.

### *Process for Developing Core Curriculum Learning Aims*

An *Ad Hoc* Committee for Core Review has been charged with reviewing the undergraduate core curriculum and proposing learning aims, which are related to the College's Undergraduate Educational Aims. The proposed Core Curriculum Learning Aims will be presented to the Academic Senate for its consideration and approval. They will then be forwarded to the President and Academic Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees.

### *Relationship of Learning Aims/Goals at Different Levels*

What is the relationship between the Institutional Educational Aims and Program Learning Aims/Goals?

At Loyola, the Undergraduate Educational Aims and Graduate Learning Goals (referred to collectively as the Institutional Educational Aims) were passed by the Academic Senate in Spring 2002. Their attainment relies on all the experiences that students have in and outside of the classroom, as well as in co-curricular and extracurricular activities.

For undergraduate programs, individual Program Learning Aims will vary in their alignment with the institution-wide Undergraduate Educational Aims. Some Program Learning Aims will be closely aligned with some of the Undergraduate Educational Aims; typically in such cases, they will be more specific than the institutional statements, relating the learning aim to the particular discipline. Others may be unique to the program and not directly related to the Undergraduate Educational Aims. Some Undergraduate Educational Aims will not be included among the Program Learning Aims except, perhaps, to state that all undergraduate students should achieve those aims through the core curriculum and through the many other experiences students have at Loyola. Through a survey of departments in 2002, the College has learned which individual departments contribute to undergraduate students' attainment of each Undergraduate Educational Aim. In general, there is variation in the number of Undergraduate Educational Aims addressed by each department across the College. Some are addressed by many programs, while others are addressed by only a few programs.

In contrast to the undergraduate aims, each of the College's graduate programs will address all of the institution-wide Graduate Learning Goals.

What is the relationship between the Core Curriculum Learning Aims and the Undergraduate Educational Aims?

Coordinated by the *Ad Hoc* Committee for Core Review, a set of Core Curriculum Learning Aims will be developed and will be closely aligned with the Undergraduate Educational Aims. The Core Curriculum Learning Aims will address a subset of the Undergraduate Educational Aims and may be articulated in greater detail. It is possible that the process of developing the Core Curriculum Learning Aims may eventually result in refinements to the Undergraduate Educational Aims.

What is the relationship between Course Learning Aims/Goals and Program Learning Aims/Goals?

Courses within programs will address one or more of the Program Learning Aims/Goals so that all of the Program Learning Aims/Goals will be achieved as a student progresses through the entire program. Just as Program Learning Aims/Goals vary in their relationship to Institutional Educational Aims, so too may the Course Learning Aims/Goals vary in their relationship to Program Learning Aims/Goals.

## **B. Assessing Program Learning Aims/Goals: Developing and Implementing Plans**

All departments and programs should be familiar with the Middle States booklet *Student Learning Assessment Options and Resources*. This booklet, distributed to all department chairs in Fall 2003, provides concrete examples of assessment measures (ranging from class tests and grades to departmental portfolios and nationally-normed achievement tests) as well as descriptions of technical vocabulary used in much of the assessment literature. Chairs and programs directors who need other resources (e.g., outside advisors) for the development of their assessment plans should consult their deans and the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

In order to develop a coherent assessment plan, departments will first define Program Learning Aims/Goals for each of their academic programs and then identify areas of alignment between these aims/goals and Loyola's Institutional Educational Aims. Similarly, course learning aims/goals will be established by faculty in the program to implement the program learning goals already agreed upon. After a list of program-specific learning aims/goals has been established and aligned with the Institutional Educational Aims, a methodology to assess these aims/goals will be constructed by the academic department. Some departments and programs (particularly those with outside accrediting agencies) have already developed such methodologies while others have not. Faculty may elect to begin with the assessment of some subset of aims/goals as they work toward a more comprehensive assessment plan. The choice is not between assessing everything and assessing nothing. Instead, faculty will develop ambitious, yet achievable, plans that provide departments with valuable information about the degree to which they are achieving one or more of their aims/goals. As departments and programs complete various aspects of their assessment plans (e.g., for assessment of departmental contributions to the undergraduate aims and graduate goals, core courses, and majors), these plans will be submitted to the Academic Assessment Committee for the purpose of sharing best practices. The Committee will provide

feedback to departments on how their assessment plans compare with those of other departments. The Office of Institutional Research will keep a comprehensive library of assessment plans from across the campus.

After assessment plans have been developed, programs will begin implementing those plans. Representatives from programs, along with the Academic Assessment Committee and College administrators, will lead broader discussions of assessment methods focused on particular aims/goals. The intention is to have all programs develop meaningful ways of assessing and improving student learning related to each of their Program Learning Aims/Goals and the Institutional Educational Aims to which their program contributes. Eventually, the intention is to promote greater depth and quality of assessment practices for all of the aims/goals. In addition, these processes will promote institution-wide knowledge of key assessment practices that may simultaneously address several aims/goals.

Over time and through experience, the College hopes to identify which assessment methods provide the most useful information for improving student learning and institutional processes. The Middle States' booklet *Student Learning Assessment Options and Resources* provides a range of methods that faculty will use. These methods include: (1) direct assessment (based on direct evidence of student learning); (2) indirect assessment (e.g., based on surveys of student judgment of their learning); (3) summative assessment (assessment used for the purpose of evaluation, e.g., grades); and (4) formative assessment (assessment used for the purpose of improvement, e.g., repeated brief evaluations of teaching in order to make adjustments to improve or enhance opportunities for students to learn). In addition to assessment activities with currently enrolled students, additional methods for assessing long-term learning aims/goals may include alumni surveys, alumni focus groups, and analysis of graduate/ professional school placement and employment patterns. Program faculty will explore possible uses for any appropriate combination of these types of assessment measures. In the process, they will learn the extent to which various types of assessments yield information that directly leads to improvement. Programs will report their assessment results in their departmental annual reports and report plans for addressing their higher priority improvement areas.

Resources will be provided to faculty and others to support assessment processes. These resources could possibly include, but are not limited to, participation in assessment workshops and conferences, faculty consultants in the discipline from other colleges and universities, release time, and support for data collection and analysis from the Office of Institutional Research.

In avoiding the temptation of a “quick fix” (see Guiding Principle #12), it is important to acknowledge that the assessment of Program Learning Aims/Goals within departments and the assessment of Institutional Educational Aims across the College are iterative processes. While some departments may already have strategies in place for assessing many of their Program Learning Aims/Goals, they may find that certain ones are not well-formulated. In such cases, departments may want to revisit their Program Learning Aims/Goals to determine if revisions are needed. Similarly, the Academic Senate may want to revisit the Institutional Educational Aims if the College-wide assessment process reveals that one or more aims/goals is not well-formulated.

The College will also explore the possibility of student self-assessment as part of the overall college-wide assessment plan. The intention would be to promote students' ownership of their learning and show their attainment of Institutional Educational Aims. One of the possible tools is a final summative portfolio that demonstrates development in, and understanding of, the Institutional Educational Aims. Other approaches that will be explored by some departments or by the Academic Assessment Committee are exit surveys, exit interviews, and alumni surveys and interviews.

### **C. Using Assessment Results for Improving Student Learning**

Middle States points out that “perhaps the most difficult part of assessing student learning is the process of effecting change in teaching and learning as a result of information gained through assessment practices” (*Student Learning Assessment Options and Resources*, p. 66). The gauge of assessment measures is whether they help faculty and students improve learning. Thus, departments and programs will need to develop plans for using their assessment results to improve student learning. As in the case of developing and assessing aims/goals, plans for using the results of assessment should be appropriately ambitious and realistic. That is, if an aim/goal is not being achieved, perhaps the aim/goal needs reformulation, or perhaps a department or program needs to experiment with other measures for its achievement. In addition, departments and programs may discover that while some of their Program Learning Aims/Goals may be assessed immediately, the achievement of other aims/goals may only be assessed over time, even well beyond a student's graduation. As stated above, the process is iterative: developing aims/goals, assessing their achievement, and using the results of assessment to improve student learning is a process that must be practiced over time to have its maximum impact.

Departments and programs will summarize their efforts to improve student learning in their annual reports and in their 7-year Academic Program Reviews. The deans and Academic Assessment Committee should keep a record of these efforts and facilitate sharing best practices with other departments and programs.

### **D. Recommended Timeline and Responsibilities**

The practice of assessment is an example of what Loyola's Core Values statement calls “discernment,” i.e., a habit of reflection and self-examination in relation to our aspiration for academic excellence. Discernment takes time, and timetables must take into account the rhythms of contemplation and action appropriate to liberal education and/or professional learning in different departments and programs.

The timeline and responsibilities for assessment outlined in this section pertain to the following two strategies in the College's Strategic Plan:

*Strategy III.A.5* Each department will develop and periodically review its own programs' learning outcomes.

*Strategy III.A.6* The faculty will periodically review the overall College learning outcomes.

This timeline is intended to represent an initial implementation of this plan for all academic programs in the College, both undergraduate and graduate. Since some academic departments

house multiple programs with different learning aims/goals, this timeline is intended as a guide for assessment at the program level rather than at the entire department level. Thus, it is possible that different programs within the same department may be on separate assessment timelines. Figure 1 suggests a timeline for programs that are further along in their initial assessment efforts (i.e., they have already developed and agreed upon program learning aims/goals and are developing assessment plans). Approximately one-third of Loyola's programs are following this first timeline. Figure 2 suggests a timeline for programs that are just beginning to assess student learning in the more formal manner described in this document (approximately two-thirds of Loyola's programs). It also represents the anticipated timeline for the *Ad Hoc* Committee for Core Review's assessment of student learning in the undergraduate core curriculum. After this initial implementation, programs will develop their own timelines for periodic assessment and continuous improvement of student learning. Departments will summarize in their normal annual reports and in their 7-year Academic Program Review their progress on assessment efforts and on the use of assessment results to improve student learning.

**Figure 1: Recommended Timeline for Initial Implementation of Plan  
(For Programs Where Formal Assessment Is Already Underway)**

Action	Define institution-wide learning aims/goals	Programs develop learning aims/goals	Programs develop assessment plans*	Programs implement assessment plans	Programs continue to implement assessment plans and analyze gaps between aims/goals and assessment results	Programs initiate/implement appropriate changes to improve student learning based on gaps between aims/goals and assessment results
<b>Who</b>	UCC GCC Senate	All Departments	All Departments	All Departments	All Departments UCC GCC	All Departments UCC GCC
<b>Target Completion Date</b>	Completed	Underway	Fall 2004	Spring 2005	Fall 2005	Spring 2006

\* Given that the Ad Hoc Committee for Core Review is focusing on the assessment of student learning in the core curriculum, undergraduate programs are encouraged to focus on the assessment of student learning in the major rather than the core.

**Figure 2: Recommended Timeline for Initial Implementation of Plan  
(For Programs Where Formal Assessment Is Just Beginning)**

Action	Define institution-wide learning aims/goals	Programs develop learning aims/goals	Programs develop assessment plans*	Programs implement assessment plans	Programs continue to implement assessment plans and analyze gaps between aims/goals and assessment results	Programs initiate/implement appropriate changes to improve student learning based on gaps between aims/goals and assessment results
<b>Who</b>	UCC GCC Senate	All Departments	All Departments	All Departments	All Departments UCC GCC	All Departments UCC GCC
<b>Target Completion Date</b>	Completed	Underway	Fall 2005	Spring 2006	Fall 2006	Spring 2007

\* Given that the Ad Hoc Committee for Core Review is focusing on the assessment of student learning in the core curriculum, undergraduate programs are encouraged to focus on the assessment of student learning in the major rather than the core. The Vice President for Academic Affairs, the deans, and the chairs should work together on appropriate adaptations to these timetables in particular cases.

## **E. Ongoing Assessment Related to Student Learning and Development**

In addition to the assessment of learning aims/goals, other assessment activities already in place at the College provide useful information about the improvement of student learning and institutional processes. Ongoing institution-wide initiatives that pertain to undergraduate student learning and development are described in this section. The results of these assessment measures will be studied regularly by the Academic Assessment Committee and Council of Academic Deans, as well as by leaders in Student Development, Campus Ministry, and the Center for Values and Service. These groups will make timely and targeted recommendations as to which results might be useful to others such as academic departments, program directors, and administrators. Working together, opportunities for improvement will be identified, priorities will be set, and plans will be developed for improvement in higher priority areas. This section summarizes ongoing assessment activities at the institutional level that focus on undergraduate student learning and development. The assessments are presented chronologically, following the typical path of a college student from pre-matriculation through alumni status.

### **New Student Survey**

*Contact: Assistant to the Vice President for Student Development (Kathy Clark Petersen)*

The New Student Survey is administered to all incoming first-year students during summer orientation. It covers a wide range of topics related to students' academic and social expectations for college and pre-existing perceptions of campus life at Loyola. Data are collected regarding student attitudes, behaviors, and opinions in a variety of areas ranging from community service and technology use to drinking and living with roommates. A parallel survey is administered to all parents attending orientation. The survey results are presented during the second day of orientation to highlight similarities and differences between student and parent responses and to initiate discussions about the realities of college life.

### **CIRP and CSS**

*Contact: Director of Institutional Research (Jennifer Frank)*

Loyola administers the CIRP (Cooperative Institutional Research Program) Freshman Survey and CSS (College Student Survey) through UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute (HERI). The two surveys ask similar questions about student expectations, behaviors, beliefs, and values. The College is able to link the responses of first-year students with seniors to review changes and outcomes during the undergraduate years. Information from the CIRP survey is used to examine such topics as participation in and time spent on various activities during high school, student expectations for college life, and reasons students decided to come to Loyola. The CSS survey, administered as students graduate, is used to evaluate the usefulness of various programs and services at Loyola as well as to gain an understanding of the various activities students participated in during college. These surveys have been administered annually; to ensure that students are not over-surveyed the College is considering administering them bi-annually.

### **Your First College Year Survey (YFCY)**

*Contact: Director of Institutional Research (Jennifer Frank)*

The Your First College Year (YFCY) Survey is designed to provide comprehensive information on the academic and personal development of first-year college students. YFCY collects information on a wide range of cognitive and affective measures, providing institutional and comparative data for analyses of persistence, adjustment, and other first-year college outcomes. Further, YFCY is designed as a follow-up survey to the annual CIRP Freshman Survey and allows for longitudinal research on the first year of college. In Spring 2005, YFCY will be administered to all first-year students at Loyola. The results will be used to help improve Loyola's first-year programs. It is anticipated that the survey will be administered every other year thereafter.

### **Research on First-Year Programs**

*Contact: Dean of First-Year Students and Academic Services (Ilona McGuinness)*

The College uses both national and Loyola-specific assessment instruments to evaluate the residential, social, spiritual, and academic experiences of first-year students. Integrated relational databases have been established to track the developmental progression of first-year students and to conduct longitudinal student retention and engagement studies. In addition, qualitative assessment is conducted through focus groups with students, faculty, and administrators. Results are used to make ongoing improvements to the College's first-year academic programs (e.g., Alpha, Collegium, FE 100, and the Honors Program) and to help the campus community develop a better understanding of the student experience during the first year.

### **National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)**

*Contact: Director of Institutional Research (Jennifer Frank)*

In Spring 2000 and 2004, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) was administered to Loyola undergraduates through Indiana University's Center for Postsecondary Research and Planning. The survey items represent student behaviors that are highly correlated with many important learning and personal development outcomes of college. The results of the 2000 survey were shared with the Loyola Conference, the Academic Senate, and the group of over 100 faculty, staff, and administrators who developed the first draft of the College's Strategic Plan. Many initiatives in the Strategic Plan were, at least in part, shaped by the results of the NSSE, addressing needed improvements. Loyola also participates in a Jesuit consortium that develops questions for the NSSE that pertain specifically to student learning experiences in Jesuit colleges and universities. NSSE will be administered every three years to assess progress and establish priorities. The College is developing means to better disseminate the voluminous data in ways that can be more widely understood and acted upon.

### **National Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE)**

*Contact: Director of Institutional Research (Jennifer Frank)*

In Spring 2004, the National Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) was administered for the first time to all tenured and tenure-track faculty at Loyola. This survey is part of a

national research program on student learning coordinated through Indiana University's Center for Postsecondary Research and Planning. The FSSE focuses on such topics as faculty perceptions of how often their students engage in different types of learning activities, the importance faculty place on various domains of student learning and development, and the types of interactions faculty have with students. The survey results provide valuable information about ways in which Loyola faculty members involve students in learning both inside and outside the classroom. In conjunction with NSSE (see above), FSSE will be repeated every three years to assess progress and establish priorities.

### **Student Lifestyle Survey**

*Contact: Assistant Director of Alcohol and Drug Education (Cindy Parcover)*

The Student Lifestyle Survey is administered to a sample of undergraduate students at Loyola once every two years. The purpose of this survey is to collect assessment data related to student health and wellness that can be used to inform drug and alcohol education outreach efforts, programming in the residence halls, and student services in the counseling center, health center, and other areas on campus. The data are also used as part of Loyola's ongoing efforts to create positive social norms on campus and to educate students about healthy lifestyle choices. Topics addressed on the survey include physical health, mental health, diet and exercise, body image, alcohol use, drug use, tobacco use, and stress management.

### **Harvard School of Public Health College Alcohol Survey**

*Contact: Director of Alcohol and Drug Education and Support Services (Jan Williams)*

Loyola participates in this national survey on a periodic basis, most recently in 2001 and 2004. The survey examines the prevalence of high risk behaviors among college students, including heavy drinking, smoking, drug use, gun possession, violence, and other issues confronting today's college students. At Loyola, the data are used in prevention and harm-reduction educational interventions in a variety of formats throughout the academic year. Survey results are routinely shared with faculty, staff, and administrators in key departments, residence hall staff, student leaders, and the Board of Trustees.

### **Annual Follow-up Study of Placement**

*Contact: Director of the Career Center (CreSaundra Sills)*

Each year, the Career Center disseminates a summary report on the professional activities of students six to nine months after graduation. The report is organized by major and includes information about full-time or part-time employment (including position and name of company/organization), full-time or part-time attendance in graduate school (including degree sought and name of institution), military service, and the number of students still seeking employment. These data are used to assess the effectiveness of the College's career development programs and services and to track the placement rates of graduates over time.

## **MHEC Alumni Survey**

*Contact: Director of Institutional Research (Jennifer Frank)*

Every three years, the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) administers an alumni survey to bachelor's degree recipients the year after they attained their degree from a public or private college or university in the State of Maryland. The survey instrument covers such areas as initial post-college employment patterns (e.g., career field, place of employment, and salary), graduate school attendance, college loan debt, self-perceived gains from attending college, and overall satisfaction with the institution attended. Comparative data for benchmarking are available to all participating colleges and universities.

As indicated by the summaries above, the majority of Loyola's assessment activities related to student learning are annual and ongoing. In addition, however, targeted "one-time" assessment projects are initiated as particular needs arise. For example, Loyola participated in a national assessment of the core curriculum through ACTC in 2002. An outside consultant studied the evolution of the core requirements at Loyola and compared these requirements to those of other institutions in the study and to those of a select group of benchmark institutions. The results of this study are now being used as part of the review of Loyola's core curriculum.

## **III. INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS**

Assessment of institutional effectiveness involves assessing processes and services. The College does this in a number of ways. Academic processes are examined primarily as part of the academic program review process. Administrative processes are assessed primarily through the support services review process. Ongoing practices are summarized in this section under the following three topics: comprehensive campus-wide assessment initiatives (academic and administrative), other assessment of academic processes, and other assessment of administrative processes. The results of these assessment measures are studied regularly by the President's Executive Council and appropriate offices and departments across the College. These groups make timely and targeted recommendations as to which results might be useful to others. In this way opportunities for improvement are identified, priorities are set, and plans are developed for improvement in higher priority areas. The guidelines for Academic Program Review and Support Services Review are in Appendices A and B, respectively.

### **A. Comprehensive Campus-wide Assessment Initiatives: Academic and Administrative**

The two primary means to assess institutional effectiveness are academic program review and support services review.

#### **Academic Program Review**

*Contact: Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs (Donald Boomgaarden)*

Each academic program in the College participates in the program review process once every seven years. This process provides an opportunity for periodic review of the program's progress and efforts to improve student outcomes. The review requires a program self-study that addresses

quality, faculty, students, support, resources, and viability. It also involves an internal review team and at least one external consultant in the discipline area. For academic programs with external accrediting bodies and standards, program reviews are timed and coordinated with the self-study and other review processes required for program accreditation. After the review is completed a memo of understanding is sent by the dean and the Vice President for Academic Affairs. The department develops a plan of action based on this memo. All program review materials are reviewed by the President; external letters and the memo of understanding from the dean and the Vice President for Academic Affairs are reviewed by the Academic Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees. The Academic Program Review Guidelines are in Appendix A.

### **Support Services Review**

*Contact: Director of Institutional Research (Jennifer Frank)*

Conducted on a 7-year rotating cycle, the Support Services Review process is designed to evaluate the effectiveness, quality, and efficiency of campus services and the degree to which these services are central to the mission of the College. In general, this process is intended to assist administrative offices and departments with self-evaluation, problem-solving, strategic planning, and continuous improvement efforts. The reviews are important tools for identifying services and processes within the College that cross departmental lines so that interdependencies and cross-functional responsibilities can be assessed. The review involves a self-study (addressing such areas as mission, responsibilities, staffing, resources, and planning), an internal review team, and often, external consultants from other colleges and universities. The Support Services Review Guidelines are in Appendix B.

### **Institutional Characteristics**

*Contact: Director of Institutional Research (Jennifer Frank)*

The College carefully tracks institutional characteristics on an annual basis. Loyola submits annual reports to the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) and the Maryland Independent Colleges and Universities Association (MICUA). These annual institutional performance accountability indicators include access, diversity, effectiveness, efficiency, and quality. These are also included in the Factbook that is distributed throughout the College and posted on the Office of Institutional Research website.

### **Data Dashboard Indicators**

*Contact: Director of Institutional Research (Jennifer Frank)*

In Fall 2004, a new “data dashboard” was created as a management tool to help facilitate the analysis of significant short-term and long-term trends affecting Loyola. This tool organizes and consolidates data that is normally housed in different divisions across the institution and presents this information in a visual format that is more conducive to integrative trend analysis. The initial version of the dashboard is divided into three overarching areas: (1) Students and Faculty, (2) Admissions and Financial Aid, and (3) Development and Finance. It will be presented annually to the President’s Executive Council and the Board of Trustees.

## **B. Other Assessment of Academic Processes**

### **Annual Assessment of Academic Advising**

*Contacts: Dean of First-Year Students and Academic Services (Ilona McGuinness), Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences (Jim Buckley), Dean of the Sellinger School of Business and Management (Lee Dahringer)*

Student satisfaction with academic advising is assessed annually through the Core Advising Survey and Major Advising Survey. The Core Advising Survey is administered when undergraduate students initially declare a major area of study. The Major Advising Survey is administered to all seniors prior to graduation. In addition providing feedback about their faculty advisors, students are also asked to provide feedback about their experiences with the College's Center for Academic Services and Support (C.A.S.S.). The results of these assessments are used to help individual advisors, academic departments, and C.A.S.S. make improvements to the advising process, advising materials, and advisor training.

### **Peer Evaluation of Research**

*Contacts: Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences (Jim Buckley), Dean of the Sellinger School of Business and Management (Lee Dahringer)*

Peer evaluation of research occurs in every department for the purposes of annual evaluation, salary determination, and promotion and tenure. Departments undergoing program review or program accreditation, collect and analyze the data as a whole to systemically assess the quality and quantity of research in the department for purposes of systemic improvement.

### **Student and Peer Evaluation of Teaching**

*Contacts: Dean of Arts and Sciences (Jim Buckley), Dean of the Sellinger School of Business and Management (Lee Dahringer)*

Students complete course evaluation forms in every course every semester. The standard College form has two parts, quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative part is scored and a summary report is provided to the faculty member. The qualitative part is read by the faculty member and the department chair and used for self-improvement. Several departments are experimenting with an instrument that provides national norms for evaluation results. In addition, peer (faculty-to-faculty) evaluation of teaching is used in many departments. Departments undergoing program review or program accreditation collect and analyze the data as a whole to systemically assess the process of teaching and learning for purposes of systemic improvement.

## **C. Other Assessment of Administrative Processes**

### **Annual Salary Assessment**

*Contacts: Vice President for Academic Affairs (David Haddad) and Vice President for Administration (Terrence Sawyer)*

Faculty salaries are analyzed annually by rank and discipline and compared to a comprehensive list of peer institutions using information from American Association of University Professors

(AAUP) and College and University Professional Association (CUPA). Additionally, a statistical model is run to detect and correct any gender disparities in faculty salaries. Results are reported to the annually the Faculty Compensation Committee. In addition, periodic assessments are conducted to analyze staff and administrator salaries in comparison to similar external organizations and local market conditions. Structural, merit, and market adjustments are made to bring these salaries to target levels and to adjust the targets.

### **Financial Audits**

*Contact: Director of Resource Management (David Daughaday)*

The financial status of the College is affirmed on an annual basis by an audit that is performed by an independent accounting firm. Prepared using generally accepted accounting principles and guidelines set by the Financial Accounting Standards Board, the audit provides a certified statement of the College's financial position to any outside constituency. The audit looks at the validity of the College's Financial Statements, reviews processes, and does testing of transactions. Since the Financial Statements resulting from the audit follow an industry-wide standard format, they allow for year-to-year comparisons internally and with other institutions. Ratios, developed from the certified Financial Statements, are used to look at a series of key financial statistics, both in terms of internal trends, and in comparison with various industry groups, including other institutions and those with similar ratings. This ratio analysis gives the College the tools to improve its financial profile in order to better carry out its mission. The audit is presented annually to the Board of Trustees by the auditor.

### **Admitted Student Questionnaire (ASQ)**

*Contact: Dean of Admissions (William Bossemeyer)*

The Admitted Student Questionnaire (ASQ) is designed to assess the attitudes, opinions, and perceptions of students who are admitted to Loyola. It compares the responses of enrolling versus non-enrolling students to each other as well as to a group of competitor cross-applicant institutions. The ASQ is used to help Loyola attract the type of student body it would like to have, to assess the quality of its recruitment efforts and admissions process, and to examine external perceptions of the College.

### **ACUHO-I Residence Hall Survey**

*Contact: Director of Residence Life (Leonard Brown)*

A nationally-normed instrument, the ACUHO-I Residence Hall Survey is administered once every two years to all on-campus undergraduate students living in the residence halls at Loyola. It measures student satisfaction with multiple aspects of residential life, including amenities and services, safety and security, roommates, special interest housing, academic and social climate, and rules and regulations. Results are used by the Office of Residential Life for continuous improvement in such areas as renovations, hiring and training resident assistants, and educational programming in the residence halls.

As indicated by the summaries above, the majority of Loyola's assessment activities related to institutional effectiveness are annual and ongoing. In addition, however, targeted "one-time" assessment projects are initiated as particular needs arise. Examples of such targeted assessment projects include the McGuire Assessment of Graduate Programs, which was designed to study the perception of Loyola graduate programs in the external marketplace, and the Kaludis Assessment of Technology Services, which was initiated to help the College plan for and prioritize evolving information technology needs.

Loyola is planning to launch additional assessment initiatives in areas that either are not currently being assessed or have not been assessed for some time. For example, the College will administer a campus-wide climate survey to all faculty, staff, and administrators during the spring 2005 semester. The survey will cover such topics as communication, diversity, workload, benefits and compensation, opportunities for advancement and development, and overall employee satisfaction.