

# Institutional Research and Evaluation

## 2010-2011 Annual Report

The mission of Institutional Research & Evaluation (IR&E) is to provide data, reports, and research that support institutional planning, strengthen student learning, and promote understanding of the nature and quality of education at St. Olaf College. During 2010-11, IR&E continued to advance both its mission and its vision to be a national leader among liberal arts institutions in institutional research and the assessment of student learning.

In addition to the usual work of the office, IR&E said farewell to its Senior Research Analyst in summer 2010 and revised and advertised the position. An experienced institutional researcher was interviewed and hired into the newly revised position of Research Associate, beginning December 1, 2010. The office staff also purged and prepared files and supplies for a move across campus to office space in the newly renovated Tomson Hall in late January 2011.

### Supporting Institutional Planning

#### 1. Gathering and reporting institutional survey data

- *Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) Survey of Faculty* – St. Olaf participated in this triennial survey for the fifth time this year, administering the survey in the fall semester to 182 faculty. 111 (61%) faculty completed the survey; institutional reports will be sent in July 2011. We also share our data with the Higher Education Data Sharing (HEDS) Consortium and additional analysis will be forthcoming this fall.
- *Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE)* – In conjunction with the BCSSE and NSSE surveys (see below), St. Olaf administered the FSSE to a sample of 182 faculty teaching during the spring semester. 108 (59%) completed the survey; results will be received in August 2011.
- *National College Health Assessment (NCHA)* – IR&E administered this survey in spring 2010. National comparison data was received in fall 2010 and shared with the VP and Dean of Students. The Board of Regents Student Committee (BORSC) prepared an analysis for the October 2010 Board meeting. The IR Director prepared further summaries to share with the Board's Community Life Committee at its February 2011 meeting.
- *Survey of the Class of 2011* – This year the IR Director worked with staff from Career Connections, Alumni & Parent Relations, and the VP and Liaison to the Board of Regents to revise both the format and the collection methods for the annual survey of recent graduates in order to get a more comprehensive response rate. The survey was administered to the graduating class both at GradFest and during Senior Week; 92% of the class responded to the survey before leaving campus in May and preliminary reports have been prepared for the President.

#### 2. Conducting and assisting with institutional data analyses

IR&E conducted numerous analyses of institutional data to support administrative decision-making, and assisted work in other offices to ensure institutional data policy compliance and integrity. Examples include:

- The Director of Institutional Research and the Director of Evaluation and Assessment are serving on the four-person Steering Committee for HLC reaccreditation in 2012-13. The Steering Committee is continuing its preparations for the institutional data analysis component of our reaccreditation review under the HLC's new "Pathways" model for such reviews.
- At the request of the Main Street Steering Committee, the IR&E Research Associate and Office Coordinator worked in tandem with Student Research Assistants from IR&E and Alumni and Parent Relations on a survey which collected input from the St. Olaf community on the Main Street Steering Committee Preliminary Report on Programming Options. This team of eight individuals composed, administered, and analyzed the survey and its results, and provided reports on those results to the Main Street Steering Committee and President Anderson.
- At the request of two staff members from the Partners in Annual Giving, the Research Associate assisted in the creation of a survey intended to gather information about the effectiveness of fund-raising practices at the college. It is anticipated that the Research Associate will also be assisting in the administration of the survey, and in the collection and analysis of the results.
- In addition to the NCHA summary for the Community Life Committee of the Board noted above, the IR Director compiled institutional data on various aspects of student life for the committee, including students athletic and music organization participation, student engagement and satisfaction, majors declared, and a profile of the graduating class. Data summaries were presented at each meeting of the committee in October, February and May.
- The Director of Institutional Research attended one meeting of the Value Proposition Working Group established by the Board to assist with the development of the strategic plan, and provided several data summaries to inform their work and the resulting plan.

### **Strengthening Student Learning**

#### **1. Gathering and analyzing assessment data**

- *Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE)* – Administered to all incoming first-year students, 534 (63%) completed this online survey. Individual reports for each participant were prepared for student advisors and distributed at the beginning of the spring semester. Further analysis will be completed in conjunction with the NSSE results (see below).
- *National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)* – During the spring semester, the first-year students were given this follow-up to the BCSSE. Half of the class (415) completed the survey. 53% (359) of seniors also completed the survey. Institutional reports will be received in August 2011. This data is also shared with HEDS; further reporting will be received from that organization this coming fall.
- *Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP)* – St. Olaf was invited to participate in the final pilot study of this innovative survey of arts alumni from the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research. 663 St. Olaf alumni with at least one major in the Fine Arts from the classes of 1990, 1995, 2000, and 2005-2009 were contacted for this online survey. 352 (53%) responded. Our institutional report was received in late April and results will be shared beginning this summer.

- *Beliefs, Events and Values Inventory (BEVI)* – The IR&E Office Coordinator, together with the Coordinator of Advising & Student Activities in International and Off-Campus Studies (IOS), attended training in June 2010 to become certified facilitators to manage the group process of administration and reporting for the BEVI. Staff then worked with the Director of IOS to administer the survey in spring 2011 as a pre-experience assessment to the students participating in the St. Olaf Global Semester in fall 2011. BEVI provides a new model to better understand how individuals 1) understand what they believe and value about themselves, others and the world at large and 2) reflect upon how such beliefs and values may be conducive to learning, personal growth, relationships and the pursuit of life goals. Reports can be used by 1) individual students to receive feedback before, during, and after an international learning experience; 2) program directors and course instructors to understand better who their students are as well as the effectiveness of the learning experiences they provide; and 3) administrators and evaluators who are interested in examining “big picture” issues of how, when, and under what circumstances learning does and does not appear to occur at a programmatic and institutional level.
- *Development of new assessment instruments for study abroad and interdisciplinary concentrations.* IR&E worked with the Director of IOS, the Associate Dean for Interdisciplinary and General Studies, and the directors of interdisciplinary concentrations to develop and pilot assessment questionnaires that capture student learning in off-campus programs and in interdisciplinary concentrations. The [Study Abroad Learning Assessment](#) and the [Interdisciplinary Concentration Learning Assessment](#) questionnaires incorporate the AAC&U’s list of “essential learning outcomes” for liberally-educated students, and the initial administrations provided a rich array of evidence of student learning in these distinctive programs.
- *Integrative assessment reporting by specific learning outcome or theme* – To make it easier to use assessment evidence to inform academic decision-making, IR&E launched a new series of assessment reports that synthesize evidence from multiple sources (e.g., CLA, NSSE, and HEDS Senior and Alumni Surveys) around a single learning outcome (such as effective writing, critical thinking, research proficiency) or a particular theme (learning in the fine arts, civic engagement, life after college). These [assessment reports by topic or issue](#) are now available in a new section of the IR&E assessment website.
- *Planning for General Education assessment in 2011-12* – IR&E collaborated with a faculty/staff/student working group, the Assessment Subcommittee, the Curriculum Committee, and the Dean of the College to develop an innovative plan for campus-wide [assessment of General Education](#) in 2011-12. Every faculty member teaching a course or other learning experience that carries GE credit will participate.

## 2. Promoting campus engagement with assessment evidence

- *Engagement with assessment evidence by departments and programs* – In our [multi-year schedule](#) for assessment activities in departments, programs, and General Education, AY 2011-12 was designated as a year for departments and programs to reflect on and use assessment evidence, rather than to gather more evidence. IR&E collaborated with the Curriculum Committee and the Dean of the College in developing [guidelines](#) for departmental deliberations and reporting, and disseminated its new integrative assessment reporting website to departments to support their work. IR&E also prepared integrative reports on institutional-level assessment data of particular interest to each of the five Faculties to make it as easy as possible for departments to consider institutional-level data as well as their own department-level data in their discussions and plans.

- *Engagement with assessment evidence by faculty committees* – In conjunction with our Teagle-funded State Your Case! grant (see below), IR&E collaborated with the Assessment Subcommittee to prepare an integrative report on [writing proficiencies and experiences](#), which was extensively discussed by the full Curriculum Committee in its review of the writing requirements in the St. Olaf General Education curriculum. The review will continue next year in conjunction with full-scale GE assessment. Assessment evidence, particularly findings from the 2009-10 Essential Learning Outcomes Assessment questionnaire, also informed the recommendations of the Tenure and Promotion Task Force and the Faculty Life Committee in the process of revising college policies on tenure and promotion reviews.
- *Engagement with assessment evidence by the St. Olaf Board of Regents* – The Director of Evaluation and Assessment conducted a [seminar on student learning outcomes](#) at St. Olaf with the Board of Regents during its October 2010 meeting. The Director also served as a member of the Academic Excellence Working Group established by the Board to assist with the development of the strategic plan, and provided numerous assessment reports to inform the working group and the resulting plan.
- *Engagement with assessment evidence by the Main Street Steering Committee* – IR&E prepared reports on relevant assessment data for the [Main Street Initiative](#) steering committee; the reports are posted on the IR&E website for [assessment reports by topic or issue](#) and on the [Main Street Initiative Planning Process](#) website.
- *Promoting engagement with assessment evidence through the faculty reward system* – In her leadership role in the College’s revision of its criteria and procedures for tenure and promotion reviews (see below), the Director of Evaluation and Assessment drafted language referencing engagement with assessment as evidence of a faculty member’s continued development as an instructor (the fifth criterion under “Contributions to student learning and development” – *Faculty Manual* 4.VII.C.1.(e)) and enhancement of the organizational effectiveness of a department or program (the first criterion under “Contributions of service and leadership” – *Faculty Manual* 4.VII.C.3.(a)). This language was adopted in the [final version of the revisions](#).
- *Promoting engagement with assessment evidence through a website index* – The IR&E Research Associate worked closely with the IR&E staff and student research assistance to restructure and update the Student Learning Item Catalog (SLIC), a listing of questionnaire items and recent results from assessment surveys indexed by the aspects of student learning addressed in the items rather than by the source of the data. Use of the catalog enables the examination of findings from multiple sources concerning both learning experiences (e.g., students’ participation in high-impact educational practices, students’ use of time, types of assignments completed, etc.) and learning outcomes (e.g., critical thinking, effective writing, research proficiency, global perspective).

### 3. Assessing student learning in grant-funded projects

- *Teagle-funded State Your Case! project* – In this third year of the St. Olaf-led *State Your Case!* collaboration with Carleton and Macalester, IR&E supported an inter-institutional workshop on teaching effective oral communication across the curriculum in June 2010; supported follow-up mini-workshops in early Spring 2011; and hosted an inter-institutional *State Your Case!* symposium in April 2011. Additional funds remain for a no-cost extension to support continued activities in AY 2011-12.
- *Wabash Study 2010* – In July 2010, IR&E collaborated with the Office of the President to prepare a successful application to participate in the three-year [Wabash Study 2010](#) being conducted by the Center of Inquiry in the Liberal Arts at Wabash College. The goal of the

inter-institutional project is “for institutions to use evidence to identify an area of student learning or experience that they wish to improve, and then to create, implement, and assess changes designed to improve those areas.” The St. Olaf project focuses on the implementation and evaluation of the Main Street initiative, in large part because the initiative is serving as our Quality Improvement project for reaccreditation in AY 2012-13, and the timeline and purposes of the Wabash Study coincide perfectly with the timeline and purposes of our HLC project. During this first year of the Wabash project, IR&E gathered the assessment evidence that project participants were asked to gather (and which we had already been planning to gather) and began the process of finding institutional partners to assist with the interpretation and use of the findings.

- *NSF-funded Polaris Project* – In December 2010, the Director of Evaluation and Assessment completed an extensive report to NSF on student learning outcomes in the third and final year of the Polaris Project, an inter-institutional grant-funded project supporting undergraduate education and research, faculty research, and public awareness of Arctic ecosystems and global climate change. An application to NSF for an amplified four-year Polaris Project was funded in late Spring 2011, so IR&E will continue to gather evidence of student learning in the project for the next four years.
  - *Assessment in other grant-funded projects* – IR&E provided research advice and assistance in the Academic Civic Engagement project led by the Center for Experiential Learning and funded by AAC&U. We also continued to work on assessment of the three-year Lilly Sustaining Fellows program.
- 4. Assisting with course evaluations** – IR&E has continued to advise faculty and staff in course evaluation development and administration. The Director of Evaluation and Assessment and the Office Coordinator were appointed to a student-faculty Task Force reviewing college policies and practices with respect to course evaluations, which began meeting in Spring 2010 and continued into the 2010-11 academic year.
- 5. Conducting or assisting with student evaluations of teaching for faculty reviews** –
- *Student evaluations of teaching in faculty reviews* -- IR&E has continued to assist with sampling, questionnaire supplements, administration, and reporting of student evaluations of teaching for tenure and promotion reviews and more comprehensive pre-tenure reviews.
    - *Development and adoption of tenure and promotion policy revisions* -- IR&E contributed substantially to the revision of [criteria and procedures for tenure and promotion reviews](#) during 2010-11. The Director of Evaluation and Assessment convened the original Task Force appointed by the Dean of the College to draft revisions to the relevant section of the *St. Olaf Faculty Manual* (Section 4.VII-XI), which worked through the summer and early fall of 2010. The Director then served as the principal writer for the Faculty Life Committee in its deliberations on and revisions to the Task Force’s recommendations throughout the rest of the academic year. Other IR&E staff and student assistants provided extensive research and technical support. The legislation was passed by the faculty in April 2011 and approved by the Board of Regents in May 2011.
    - *Implementation of revised tenure, promotion and other faculty review policies* – Since the revised tenure and promotion policies were effective immediately, IR&E worked to overhaul all its forms, procedures, and [website information on tenure and promotion reviews](#), and to assist the Office of the Dean of the College in doing the same, in late spring 2011. The new policies are now being implemented successfully in the reviews of the 2011-12

candidates. IR&E also worked with the Faculty Life Committee to plan for the implementation of the new post-tenure review policies during the 2011-12 academic year.

### **Promoting Understanding of St. Olaf College**

#### **1. Preparing external reports required or optionally submitted to various agencies, organizations, and publishers.**

This year IR&E staff submitted or contributed to 23 reports or unit-record data collections from institutional associations or consortia, 16 college guide surveys, 9 federal government reports (IPEDS), 2 academic department associations' data updates, and information for a high school counselors' guide coordinated by the State of MN (complete list of reports available upon request). Much of this data was also recorded in the Common Data Set (CDS), which can be found on the IR website (<http://www.stolaf.edu/offices/ir/cds.html>).

In addition, the staff administered an online Survey of Recent Graduates to the Class of 2010 to gather information on their activities in the first year after graduation. The data from this survey is summarized on the IR website (<http://www.stolaf.edu/offices/ir/alumni.html>), as well as reported to the MN Private College Research Foundation for their annual report.

#### **2. Disseminating information about St. Olaf through publications and the IR&E website**

Another part of providing information about the college to external audiences is working with the Marketing & Communications staff on various college publications and maintaining an informative website. The IR&E website is continually updated with new data and reports on all aspects of the institution.

### **Serving as Leaders in Institutional Research and Assessment**

#### **1. Providing regional and national leadership**

- *Higher Education Data-Sharing Consortium.* In June 2010 the Director of Institutional Research was re-elected for a second term as Chair of the Board of Directors of the Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium (HEDS). In that role, she also served on the HEDS Director Search Committee in fall 2010. The Director of Evaluation and Assessment continued as a member of the Research Advisory Committee and in that capacity spearheaded a major revision to the HEDS Alumni Survey which focuses the survey much more explicitly on the essential learning outcomes and high-impact educational practices advocated by AAC&U.
- *Associated Colleges of the Midwest.* In April 2011, IR&E led a successful application for an ACM FaCE grant that will support the development of inter-institutional policies for protecting human subjects in student inquiry projects. The Director of Evaluation and Assessment is serving as project director, the Director of Institutional Research is a St. Olaf participant, and the Office Coordinator is providing administrative support.
- *2010 AAC&U Engaging Departments Institute.* The Director of Evaluation and Assessment served as a consulting/presenting faculty member for the second annual [Engaging](#)

[Departments Institute](#), offered by the Association of American Colleges and Universities in July 2010

## 2. Engaging in dissemination

- Beld, J. (2010, July). [Inquiry in Support of Student Learning: Engaging Department Faculty in Gathering and Using Assessment Evidence](#). Presentation at AAC&U Engaging Departments Institute. Philadelphia, PA.
- Beld, J. (2010, July). [Mission-Driven, Meaningful, and Manageable: Practical Strategies for “Actionable” Department-Level Assessment](#). Presentation at AAC&U Engaging Departments Institute. Philadelphia, PA.
- Beld, J. (2011, January). Linking Assessment to Employers’ Priorities for Student Learning: A Case Study in Effective Practice Presentation to the Clute Institute International Academic Conference, Lahaina, HI.
- Beld, J. (2011, January). Utilization-Focused Assessment: Principles and Practices. Presentation to the Southern Education Foundation Student Learning Institute, San Antonio, TX
- Beld, J. and D. Booth. (2011, March). Fostering Faculty Ownership of General Education Assessment – Revisited. Presentation to the AAC&U Network for Academic Renewal Conference on General Education and Assessment, Chicago, IL (with D. Booth).

### ***IR&E Goals: Reflection and Planning***

#### 1. Status of Goals for FY 2011:

- **Continue to create stronger connections with current and prospective users of IR&E data through use of the IR&E website and other venues.** See in particular two sections above – *Supporting Institutional Planning, Item 2* and *Strengthening Student Learning, Item 2*.
- **Collaborate with the Office of the President, and provide organizational and research support, for the “Main Street Project,” the improvement initiative St. Olaf is launching in anticipation of our 2013 re-accreditation review.** See *Strengthening Student Learning, Item 3, Wabash Study 2010*.
- **Continue to serve on the student-faculty task force on course and teaching evaluations initiated in Spring 2010, and provide leadership and research support to a faculty task force on tenure and promotion criteria and procedures appointed by the Dean of the College in Spring 2010.** IR&E staff stayed with the task force as long as it continued to work. The recommended policies were passed by the faculty and are now being implemented (see various sections above, including *Strengthening Student Learning, Item 5*).
- **Improve policies, procedures and education for the protection of human subjects, focusing in particular on student projects.** See *Serving as Leaders in Institutional Research and Assessment, Item 1, Associated Colleges of the Midwest*. The Institutional Review Board also received a grant from the Faculty Life Committee to support a St. Olaf summer study group

to meet our own needs in this area and provide a foundation for the inter-institutional work during AY 2011-12.

- **Continue national leadership and dissemination.** See *Serving as Leaders in Institutional Research and Assessment* section above.

## 2. Goals for FY 2012:

- Continue to create stronger connections with current and prospective users of IR&E data through use of the IR&E website and other venues.
- Implement GE assessment successfully and stimulate use of the findings to improve GE curriculum and teaching.
- Make substantial progress in Year 2 of our Wabash Study project and in preparation for reaccreditation.
- Implement revised pre-tenure, tenure, promotion, and post-tenure review policies successfully.
- Start a faculty conversation about strengthening our course evaluation program especially since course evaluations are now an important component of post-tenure review.
- Improve policies, procedures and education for the protection of human subjects, focusing in particular on student projects.
- Continue national leadership and dissemination.

Respectfully submitted,

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