

SPECIAL POINTS OF
INTEREST:

- "...and scores from ISU music students were..." (p. 2)
- "A vast majority of the averages show that students rated themselves..." (p. 7)
- "This difference partially could be due to differences that are inherent in courses at the two levels in that..." (p. 16)
- "Of those who were employed, the most frequently selected employer classifications were..." (p. 17)

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From the Director

In January 2014, the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA) released the [results](#) of its survey of over 500 provosts at U.S. colleges and universities. The results indicated that provosts feel the most effective means of sharing results are through faculty meetings or retreats, committees, or dean's council. In other words, the most effective means of sharing assessment results is by engaging in meaningful dialogue and conversation with colleagues. Yet, many institutions and programs report challenges in regard to using assessment results for improvement.

One reason for the disconnect between a recognition of effective strategies for using results and challenges associated with articulating their use may have to do with assumptions about the role of results in decision-making. A popular term in improvement literature is 'data-driven decision making;' however, data do not make decisions, people do. Groups of people can only make shared decisions by engaging in dialogue with other colleagues. In this context, data do not drive. They inform. If assessment results are not discussed or people are not engaged in a meaningful dialogue, assessment results are naturally going to sit on the shelf regardless of the quality of the data or their visual presentation.

In our experience, there are effective strategies for using assessment results, including:

- Holding a retreat to talk about the results or program improvement.
- Making learning outcomes a part of regular meeting agenda.
- Focusing on priorities. Programs have a lot of data, but limited time. Focus on the things that are the most important.



- Keeping assessment simple and doing what works. An ambitious and detailed assessment plan works for many programs. Other programs require simpler and more minimal plans. The ultimate value of assessment is in using the results for improvement.

This issue of *Progressive Measures* highlights good work being done in the area of documenting and using results. An article from the College Student Personnel Administration program highlights the use of disciplinary standards. Another article from the Music Education program shows how the results of the edTPA were used to plan for future changes. University Assessment Services has been using the results of the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) to place increased focus on [professional development](#) opportunities for ISU faculty and staff.

All of us at UAS wish you a great semester!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ryan Smith".

Ryan Smith, Ph.D.
Director, University Assessment Services

The Mission of UAS:

"University Assessment Services is responsible for conducting a variety of assessment activities related to student learning outcomes using qualitative and quantitative research techniques, providing support services to other units engaged in such assessment, and sharing best practices for and results of assessment activities."

Music Student Teachers and the edTPA

Dr. David Snyder, Professor, School of Music

The Educational Teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA) will be required of all student teachers in Illinois starting in the fall of 2015. Several universities have already been piloting this new assessment, yielding some data that can help all of us better prepare our student teachers for when this assessment begins next year. The Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning and Equity (SCALE) has released the results of student teachers participating nationally for the 2013-2014 academic year. In addition, 32 Illinois State University music student teachers went through the assessment and were evaluated by Pearson evaluators both in the fall 2013 and the spring 2014 semesters. Results from both groups overall were very positive, and scores from ISU music students were even higher than national averages. There are, however, some rubrics that consistently score lower than other rubrics in the edTPA, both with the national sample and the music students at ISU. It is the goal of this article to take a closer look at these rubrics and give some possible explanations as to why they scored lower than the others and also give some supports for future student teachers taking the edTPA.

Before we get into the results from these two reports, let's review briefly what is involved in the edTPA. The edTPA includes a review of a student teacher candidate's teaching materials (including lesson plans, supplementary handouts, assessments and contextual information about the student population) and short videos of the candidate teaching to document and demonstrate their ability to effectively teach his/her subject matter to all students.

Student teacher candidates are assessed in the areas of Planning, Instruction and Assessment using reflective writing assignments and video critiques of their own teaching. These performance-based portfolios are then assessed by outside evaluators who are themselves professional educators trained by Pearson. The Planning, Instruction and Assessment tasks are further broken down into five rubrics each for a total of 15. Each rubric has a possible high score of 5. There has been a cut score determined by the state of Illinois for passing this exam. Illinois is going to do something similar to Washington State and start with 35 as the cut score but eventually move up to 41 as the passing score by 2019, according to Elisa Palmer, edTPA Coordinator in the

Cecilia J. Lauby Teacher Education Center at ISU. A quick mental calculation reveals that a student teacher candidate must be averaging between a 2 and a 3 on each rubric in order to pass. A closer look at how student teachers have scored on these rubrics should provide some helpful information for all of those who work with future educators.

After averaging both semesters together for the ISU students, the highest scores were found in rubric two under Planning, rubric six under Instruction, and rubric fifteen under Assessment. Rubric two is titled, "Planning to support varied student learning needs." The candidate must specifically address students with IEPs and 504s (student learning assistance programs) in their lesson plans and commentaries to score above a 1 on this rubric. It is indeed encouraging news that ISU students did well on rubric two. It appears that music teacher candidates can create supports for diverse learners within a music classroom. Rubric six deals with the learning environment. Specifically, teacher candidates must point out and reflect on specific instances in their videos that demonstrate good teacher rapport and respectful interaction between teacher and student. Finally, rubric fifteen asks the teacher candidate to reflect on the next steps in their instruction based on what they have learned from their assessment of the students in their class. Candidates are asked to substantiate these proposed supports for student learning with current research or learning theory to achieve the highest score.

On the flip side, rubric four under Planning, rubric ten under Instruction, and rubric thirteen under Assessment had the lowest scores for both the national sample and the ISU students. A closer examination of these three rubrics and what they require the teacher candidates to do should be helpful for those in the teacher preparation profession. Rubric four (which will be addressed later in this article) involves identifying and supporting language demands. Rubric ten asks the candidate to analyze teaching effectiveness, and rubric thirteen includes commentary on how the students being taught will use the feedback provided by the teacher candidate. As mentioned above, rubric ten requires teacher candidates to comment on how they would change their instruc-

Music Student Teachers and the edTPA (cont'd)

tion to better meet the central focus of the lesson and improve student learning. While many candidates addressed how they would improve their own delivery of the content or improve classroom management, they did not actually address their students' learning. As with all of the edTPA, the focus of the reflection and the proposed changes should always be on the students' learning. It is important that we instruct our student teachers to take the focus off of themselves when watching the video and focus instead on student learning and how they (the students) are doing in relationship to meeting the lesson objective. Rubric thirteen has some inherent problems for student teachers with limited exposure to their selected class. This rubric requires candidates to reflect on how they will apply the information learned from their assessment of these students to future lessons. Many teacher candidates do not have opportunities to work with the selected class again after their edTPA segment is over or if they do, they move on to a new topic or a new piece. Both scenarios listed above could then adversely affect a candidate's score.

The language demand portion of the assessment (rubrics four and fourteen) deserve a little extra attention in this article because these two rubrics tend to address issues with which music student teachers are not as familiar. The language demand section is very unclear both in the student handbook and in the scorer training. Teacher candidates are asked to pick one 'language function' for all three lessons, identify supporting vocabulary, and identify an additional language demand, either syntax or discourse. The 'language function' should be the verb used in the learning objective (e.g., identify, analyze, compare, perform, create). Not all candidates clearly understand this and often pick a language function unrelated to their lesson objective. The students being taught need to demonstrate their understanding of the vocabulary necessary for the lesson in some way. Too many teachers simply call on select students to define vocabulary as proof of mastery. The teacher candidate needs to structure the lesson so that the students are actually using the vocabulary during the lessons. The additional language demand required by the edTPA allows the teacher candidate to select either discourse or syntax. It has been observed that candidates have difficulty engaging in discourse. Discourse or class discussion (student to student, teach-

er to student) must focus on the main learning objective using proper vocabulary to be evaluated with a passing score. The final option for an additional language demand is syntax. Nobody seems to know what syntax means in a musical context. The definition of syntax is "conventions for organizing symbols." For those of us in the music teaching profession, this can include the governing principles of reading music (i.e., rests, notes) and musical staff according to the test designers and evaluators.

The fall 2013 ISU student teachers had an overall mean score of 44.7, and the spring 2014 ISU student teachers had a mean score of 45.1. With a proposed cut score of 41 in Illinois, it appears that these students would have had no difficulty passing the edTPA evaluation. This is good news for those in the teacher education profession. Although the edTPA is new and still unfamiliar to many of us, our student teachers have shown that they can be successful and even shine using this assessment. It is important to remind everyone with a stake in this assessment that the edTPA K-12 Performing Arts Student Handbook available through SCALE provides the essential help for our student teacher candidates to be successful in completing the edTPA. An updated version of the handbook will be available in September of this year. Each of the 15 rubrics discussed in this article are included in the handbook, along with suggestions on what the candidates need to do and write to complete that portion of the assessment. Another supplemental handbook titled *Making Good Choices* (also published by SCALE) is an excellent resource for completing the evaluation. The ISU student teachers mentioned in this article had regular seminars (five times over the student teaching semester) that went through the handbook provided by SCALE and specifically addressed each rubric to be used in the assessment. Future classes at ISU will actually see examples of previous students' written commentaries, sample assessments, and lesson plans. All of the music education faculty will require their students to use standardized lesson plans that address the required elements in the edTPA, and they will also require reflective writing assignments during their clinical teaching events that align to the various prompts in the portfolio. It is hoped that this added preparation will both strengthen the instructional skills of future teacher candidates and continue the trend of passing scores on this evaluation.

Using Professional Competencies to Assess Learning in Student Affairs Graduate Programs

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The purpose of this research project was to develop and pilot a process to assess learning in student affairs graduate programs. Using the *ACPA/NASPA Competency Areas for Student Affairs Practitioners* (2010), our research team created an assessment instrument to identify levels of competency reported by students entering a graduate program in student affairs, midway through the program, and at the end of their program. This research was made possible thanks to a grant provided by the NASPA Assessment, Evaluation, and Research Knowledge Community. This article introduces our student affairs graduate program and the professional competencies, briefly reviews previous research, explains the assessment instrument and process, discusses findings, and shares our plans for continuing this research on other campuses. This study contributes to the existing research on graduate students' learning and provides evidence to support curriculum revision and enhancement of other learning experiences that student affairs master's degree students need for success in professional practice, using the ACPA/NASPA competencies as a model.

The CSPA Graduate Program at Illinois State University

College Student Personnel Administration (CSPA) is a two-year Master of Science degree program preparing students to be successful professionals in entry-level student affairs positions in colleges and universities. Coursework covers areas such as student affairs law, history and foundations of student affairs, student development and organizational theory, and educational research and statistics. To provide a holistic learning experience, the program has an emphasis on theory-to-practice, requiring students to hold a graduate assistantship (GA) or full-time employment at a college or

university while enrolled in the program and complete one or two practica. All practical experiences must be within functional areas of student affairs. GAs are one or two year-long work experiences in which students spend 20 hours per week (minimum) working in a student affairs office at a Bloomington-Normal area college or university, such as Illinois State University, Illinois Wesleyan University, Lincoln College-Normal, or Heartland Community College. Examples of offices in which students hold GAs include residential life, student activities, and academic advising. Practica are semester-long, 150-hour internships held in higher education institutions, including those previously listed, institutions across the nation, and occasionally the globe. The opportunity for up to four different practical experiences allows CSPA students to gain experience in different functional offices and types of institutions. Admission to the CSPA program requires completion of a graduate application, completion of the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) for applicants with undergraduate GPAs below 3.0, transcripts from all higher education institutions attended, a personal statement, a résumé, and a program interview with a CSPA faculty member and current students. Students entering the CSPA program come from a wide variety of academic disciplines, spanning the arts and sciences to business, and the program includes recent bachelor's degree graduates and current working professionals seeking a master's degree (http://education.illinoisstate.edu/ms_cspa/). The average undergraduate GPA for new students is 3.6.

ACPA/NASPA Competencies

In 2010, both professional associations in student affairs (ACPA: College Student Educators International, and NASPA: Student Affairs Administrators in

Using Competencies to Assess Learning (cont'd)

Higher Education) collaborated on the development of a comprehensive listing of competencies for student affairs professionals at all levels of their careers. Ten competency areas were developed: Advising and Helping; Assessment, Evaluation, and Research; Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion; Ethical Professional Practice; History, Philosophy, and Values; Human and Organizational Resources; Law, Policy, and Governance; Leadership; Personal Foundations; and Student Learning and Development (ACPA/NASPA, 2010). In addition, competencies were assigned into the categories of Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced so that professionals could continue their growth within the field over time. These competencies allow individual staff members, offices, and divisions within student affairs to develop training and professional development programs to better prepare for higher-level positions. A preferred outcome for students graduating from Illinois State University's CSPA program would be demonstrated competence at the Basic level across all ten competency areas.

Assessment Team/Process

The purpose of this grant-funded research project was to develop and test a process for assessing learning in student affairs graduate programs using the ACPA/NASPA competencies. The assessment team was comprised of a faculty member who coordinates the CSPA program and three graduate students who recently completed the CSPA program and have begun working in full-time positions. At the time of the bulk of the study, the three new professionals were in their final year of the CSPA program. After being awarded the grant, the team began meeting in April 2013 to develop the assessment instrument, complete Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval forms, and collect and analyze data. The team discussed all aspects of the project, completed necessary training and base-level information-seeking, divided up tasks, and set out to complete individual parts of the project. The team met regularly throughout the

summer 2013 and into the 2013-2014 academic year to share and review progress towards completion of the study.

Literature Review

Little research has been conducted on ways that graduate students develop competencies in student affairs preparation programs. Existing literature states that competencies are cultivated through curriculum, graduate assistantships, and practica (Kuk & Banning, 2009; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008) but is unclear about which aspects of graduate work contribute to learning specific competencies. Komives and Smedick (2012) suggested that using standards and outcomes developed by professional associations can help validate programs and services. The primary competencies to be considered in this assessment are those developed by the two primary student affairs professional associations in the ACPA/NASPA competencies. Researchers generally agree that new professionals leave student affairs graduate programs highly competent in knowledge of theory, technology, problem solving, program planning, ethics, and standards of practice (Cuyjet et al., 2009; Dickerson et al., 2011; Herdlein, 2008; Waple, 2006). Research also suggests that new professionals are less prepared at the master's level in strategic planning, budgeting and finance, research, and assessment (Herdlein, 2008; Waple, 2006). In a study by Hoffman and Bresciani (2010) that analyzed student affairs position descriptions, about 27% of jobs posted at a placement conference required competency in assessing student learning outcomes. Both new and senior-level staff believe competency in planning, budgeting, and assessment are important to new professionals in practice (Cuyjet et al., 2009; Dickerson et al., 2011); therefore, it is necessary that students leaving graduate programs have acquired at least basic skills in each of the primary competency areas.

Contact UAS for assistance with your program-level assessment project!

- We can provide assistance at all steps in the assessment process:
 - Developing an assessment plan
 - Collecting assessment data
 - Making sense of the assessment results
- An *Assessment Plan Tutorial* can be found on our website!

- We can provide assistance at all steps in the survey research process:
 - Developing survey questions
 - Collecting survey data
 - Making sense of the survey results
- The data can be used for your *program assessment plan*!

Using Competencies to Assess Learning (cont'd)

Methodology

The *ACPA/NASPA Competency Areas for Student Affairs Practitioners* (2010) defined ten categories of competency and 124 Basic outcome areas in which student affairs professionals are expected to develop a level of confidence in their practice. Using these Basic level outcomes, the research team developed an assessment instrument to gain a better understanding of competency development of individuals enrolled in student affairs master's degree programs. A pilot study was conducted using Illinois State University students enrolled in and alumni who recently graduated from the CSPA master's degree program ($n = 68$). The research design included an online survey administered through Select Survey that was composed of 151 questions: 7 demographic items, 124 ratings of Basic level competencies, 10 rankings of areas where the competencies were developed, and 10 open-ended response questions. Participants self-reported their level of development on all ten competencies using a seven-point scale: 1 = None, 2 = Very weak, 3 = Some, 4 = Moderate, 5 = Confident, 6 = Strong, and 7 = Exceptional. Each of the ten competencies had between eight and seventeen outcomes to rate, yielding a total of 124 rating questions. In addition, participants were asked to report where each competency had been developed or learned. Participants could rank up to three different learning venues from a list of 11 areas: Family/personal life, Undergraduate coursework, Undergraduate involvement, Graduate coursework, Graduate assistantship, Higher education employment, Non-higher education employment, Practicum/ internship, Professional association, Mentor, or Volunteer experiences.

Students who were invited to participate in this pilot study during fall 2013 semester included all current first-year ($n = 26$) and second-year ($n = 24$) CSPA students and all May/August 2013 graduates of the program ($n = 18$). A total of 51 usable surveys were started, for a 75% response rate, although only 46% completed the surveys. There were 35 women and 16 men who completed the survey. Thirty-nine of the respondents were full-time students in the program, 8 were part-time students, and 3 completed the program with a blend of full-time and part-time status. There were 15 participants from the 2013 graduating class, 15 from the 2014 class, and 21 from the 2015 class. The participants were contacted via email and asked to complete the online survey. The par-

ticipants were given two weeks to complete the survey. In addition to the initial email, a reminder email was sent with a week remaining, and two reminder notices were posted on the CSPA 2012-2013 and CSPA 2013-2014 Facebook group pages. Ten \$20 gift cards were provided as incentives to complete the survey and were awarded to respondents through a random drawing.

After data were collected, the results were analyzed using Excel. Demographic data, such as level of program completion, gender, and full- or part-time enrollment status, were examined first in order to contextualize the competency-specific information. The data for each competency stem rating were studied broadly to assess the average development level reported for each competency as a whole. The development area data were also reviewed to measure the frequency of each type of response. From there, the competency areas were divided, and each member of the team was assigned two or three competency results to analyze in depth. For the detailed analysis of each competency, the highest- and lowest-ranked stems were identified, along with the most-frequently cited areas where participants reported that learning took place. Furthermore, patterns and trends were drawn from the qualitative open-ended responses.

As part of completion of the CSPA program, graduating students are required to complete a one-on-one interview with the program advisor. During these exit interviews, participants had the opportunity to respond to additional questions regarding competencies to supplement information that the research team collected from the online survey. Fifteen students who graduated in May 2014 participated in the exit interviews. The advisor gave participants a worksheet and asked them to indicate the competency area(s) where they felt most prepared, least prepared, and most improved directly due to completion of the master's program. Participants were also asked to note any additional comments about their development of competencies within the program. Twelve of the fifteen participants made additional comments. Completing the worksheet encouraged conversation between the participant and advisor, including additional recommendations that would enhance student learning within the graduate program.

Results

For each of the ten competencies assessed, overall

Using Competencies to Assess Learning (cont'd)

Table 1. Mean scores of Competency Survey respondents by class, gender, and student status

Competencies	All responses (<i>n</i> = 51)	1st year students (<i>n</i> = 21)	2nd year students (<i>n</i> = 15)	2013 graduates (<i>n</i> = 15)	Female respondents (<i>n</i> = 36)	Male respondents (<i>n</i> = 15)	Full-time students (<i>n</i> = 39)	Part-time students (<i>n</i> = 8)
Advising and Helping	4.32	4.15	4.50	4.42	4.36	4.21	4.33	4.33
Assessment, Evaluation, and Research	3.05	2.30	3.69	3.74	3.13	2.63	3.10	2.81
Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion	4.21	4.09	4.53	4.12	4.25	4.00	4.27	3.97
Ethical Professional Practice	4.19	4.08	4.42	4.15	4.22	4.04	4.11	4.32
History, Philosophy, and Values	4.13	4.09	4.36	3.99	4.22	3.71	4.08	3.80
Human and Organizational Resources	3.79	3.48	4.32	3.80	3.87	3.38	3.70	4.07
Law, Policy, and Governance	2.99	2.25	3.58	3.62	3.07	2.58	3.06	2.46
Leadership	4.28	4.06	4.56	4.39	4.29	4.26	4.20	4.49
Personal Foundations	4.73	4.69	4.80	4.71	4.77	4.50	4.63	5.07
Student Learning and Development	4.19	4.35	4.22	3.93	4.24	3.95	4.14	4.52

Note. When analyzing data, original scores of 1 through 7 were recoded as 0 through 6 so as not to add value to competencies that students did not possess.

mean scores related to competency development are provided in Table 1. In addition, mean scores are offered as comparisons between first-year students, second-year students, and program graduates; male and female respondents; and full-time and part-time students.

The results of this study were largely in line with existing literature on ACPA/NASPA competencies. The two areas that were significantly lower across all demographics were Law, Policy, and Governance, and Assessment, Evaluation, and Research. As noted in Table 1, the scale is weighted to measure from 0 to 6. A vast majority of the averages show that students rated themselves just above average with a score of about 4 out of 6. Personal Foundations was easily the highest result, with an overall average of 4.73 out of 6. This strong sense of personal foundations is very evident in part-time students, who overall scored 5.07 out of 6.

Keeping in mind that the areas of learning in gradu-

ate school can be a complex combination of multiple factors, Table 2 reflects some variations in demographics that cannot be seen in Table 1. These results combine demographics to reflect multiple identities and how these may impact learning in the graduate program. As can be expected, second-year students and recent graduates tended to rate themselves higher than first-year students. This is especially telling in Law, Policy, and Governance which averaged more than a one-point increase after the first year. This is almost certainly due to the Higher Education Law course that is not offered to first-semester students. Other areas of notable improvement coming after the first year of study within the CSPA program are Assessment, Evaluation, and Research; and Student Learning and Development.

The areas where students reported learning these Basic competencies are reported in Table 3. Although there were eleven choices from which survey respond-

Using Competencies to Assess Learning (cont'd)

Table 2. Mean scores of competency survey respondents accounting for intersectionality

Competencies	All responses	1st year students		2nd year students		2013 graduates		Full-time students		Part-time students	
		Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Advising and Helping	4.32 (n = 47)	4.30 (n = 15)	3.81 (n = 6)	4.45 (n = 10)	5.00 (n = 1)	4.33 (n = 10)	4.58 (n = 5)	4.36 (n = 28)	4.29 (n = 11)	4.33 (n = 9)	3.62 (n = 1)
Assessment, Evaluation, and Research	3.05 (n = 36)	2.37 (n = 13)	2.08 (n = 4)	3.69 (n = 9)	— (n = 0)	3.75 (n = 8)	4.11 (n = 2)	3.26 (n = 21)	2.67 (n = 5)	2.97 (n = 8)	3.56 (n = 1)
Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion	4.21 (n = 36)	4.07 (n = 13)	4.15 (n = 4)	4.53 (n = 9)	— (n = 0)	4.22 (n = 8)	3.71 (n = 2)	4.32 (n = 21)	4.03 (n = 5)	3.99 (n = 8)	3.83 (n = 1)
Ethical Professional Practice	4.19 (n = 34)	4.09 (n = 12)	4.03 (n = 3)	4.42 (n = 9)	— (n = 0)	4.17 (n = 7)	4.06 (n = 2)	4.12 (n = 19)	4.07 (n = 5)	4.46 (n = 8)	3.89 (n = 1)
History, Philosophy, and Values	4.13 (n = 31)	4.31 (n = 11)	3.27 (n = 3)	4.36 (n = 8)	— (n = 0)	3.90 (n = 7)	4.33 (n = 2)	4.16 (n = 19)	3.60 (n = 4)	4.29 (n = 6)	4.07 (n = 1)
Human and Organizational Resources	3.79 (n = 31)	3.56 (n = 11)	3.18 (n = 3)	4.32 (n = 8)	— (n = 0)	3.84 (n = 7)	3.68 (n = 2)	3.80 (n = 19)	3.22 (n = 4)	4.32 (n = 6)	4.00 (n = 1)
Law, Policy, and Governance	2.99 (n = 31)	2.58 (n = 11)	2.31 (n = 3)	3.58 (n = 8)	— (n = 0)	3.68 (n = 7)	3.38 (n = 2)	3.17 (n = 19)	2.56 (n = 4)	3.05 (n = 6)	2.69 (n = 1)
Leadership	4.28 (n = 31)	4.03 (n = 11)	4.18 (n = 3)	4.56 (n = 8)	— (n = 0)	4.39 (n = 7)	4.38 (n = 2)	4.22 (n = 19)	4.07 (n = 4)	4.57 (n = 6)	5.00 (n = 1)
Personal Foundations	4.73 (n = 31)	4.80 (n = 11)	4.33 (n = 3)	4.80 (n = 11)	— (n = 0)	4.70 (n = 7)	4.75 (n = 2)	4.69 (n = 19)	4.38 (n = 4)	4.95 (n = 6)	5.00 (n = 1)
Student Learning and Development	4.19 (n = 31)	3.88 (n = 11)	3.30 (n = 3)	4.22 (n = 11)	— (n = 0)	4.57 (n = 7)	4.86 (n = 2)	4.18 (n = 19)	3.94 (n = 4)	4.29 (n = 6)	4.00 (n = 1)

Note. The survey included an array of gender responses, but male and female were the only ones to garner responses.

ents could choose, the results indicated that most students reported learning from Graduate coursework, Graduate assistantships, and Higher education employment. Family/personal life was also relevant in the development of some competencies that are potentially more likely to vary depending on the temperament and personality of the individual (i.e., Advising and Helping; Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion; and Personal Foundations). Aside from Personal Foundations, Graduate assistantship and Graduate coursework combined to be the most frequent primary origins of learn-

ing reported.

The results of the exit interviews conducted in the spring semester support the findings that were reported in the survey by second-year students during the fall. Participants stated that they believe they are most prepared in Student Learning and Development and in Advising and Helping, which were reported as the second- and third-highest levels of competency among second-year students. In addition, students reported they felt most unprepared in Assessment, Evaluation, and Research and in Law, Policy, and Governance,

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Using Competencies to Assess Learning (cont'd)

which were the two-lowest reported competencies. Students indicated that they gained the most competency development specifically related to the CSPA program in Student Learning and Development and in History, Philosophy, and Values. The survey results showed that the majority of participants indicated their learning in these two competencies took place in Graduate coursework and Graduate assistantships.

Implications for Program Enhancement

In addition to individuals being able to better see what skills and competencies they gained from their graduate experience, the results of this assessment can also help with program-level decisions about where student learning can be enhanced. Information obtained from the online survey and exit interviews provided a number of recommendations for the CSPA program at Illinois State University.

Areas of strength

A significant sign of strength in the CSPA program was that participants reported being moderately competent to competent across the full range of 124 Basic level competencies of the *ACPA/NASPA Competency Areas for Student Affairs Practitioners* (2010). Another key finding was that most learning was reportedly obtained through CSPA program courses. With so much learning taking place in the classroom, it is clearly very important that the curriculum and its alignment with the

NASPA/ACPA competencies are continually evaluated. Last summer during the CSPA program faculty retreat, the main topic of conversation was curricular alignment with the professional competencies. Faculty indicated, through discussion and sharing learning outcomes and assignments, which courses prepared students in each of the Basic level competencies.

Another notable finding was that skills learned in the classroom were more highly rated when students had opportunities to immediately practice these skills outside the classroom. For example, Advising and Helping skills were used on a regular basis in most students' practical experiences, whereas Law, Policy, and Governance were skills not commonly used in graduate assistantships. One participant shared, "Being able to put that knowledge to practice during summer practicum helped me gain confidence in using the competencies." Graduate assistantships were cited as important to student learning, so maintaining contact with supervisors of CSPA students and determining the extent to which the Basic competencies are practiced or reinforced in those offices could be particularly helpful. Another graduating participant shared, "Many of the competencies that I feel I am most prepared in are as a result of my assistantship and practicum experiences...It is very important that students put great thought and intentionality into where they serve as GAs and practicum students."

Table 3. Areas where students reported competency-based learning taking place

Competencies	Primary origin of learning reported	Secondary origin of learning reported	Tertiary origin of learning reported
Advising and Helping	Graduate assistantship	Family/personal life	Graduate coursework
Assessment, Evaluation, and Research	Graduate coursework	Graduate assistantship	Undergraduate coursework
Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion	Graduate coursework	Family/personal life	Graduate assistantship
Ethical Professional Practice	Graduate assistantship	Graduate coursework	Higher education employment
History, Philosophy, and Values	Graduate coursework	Graduate assistantship	Higher education employment
Human and Organizational Resources	Graduate coursework	Graduate assistantship	Higher education employment
Law, Policy, and Governance	Graduate coursework	Graduate assistantship	Higher education employment
Leadership	Graduate assistantship	Graduate coursework	Undergraduate involvement
Personal Foundations	Family/personal life	Graduate assistantship	Graduate coursework
Student Learning and Development	Graduate coursework	Graduate assistantship	Higher education employment

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Using Competencies to Assess Learning (cont'd)

This also has implications for program advisement and ensuring that students are choosing graduate assistantships and practicum sites that will enhance their skills and help direct them to the types of student affairs careers they want.

An aspect of the CSPA program that is heavily emphasized is the concept of theory-to-practice. This model involves exposing students to a number of foundational student development theories and giving students opportunities to utilize skills and insights of the theories in practical settings. This method was affirmed through the survey results. Participants believed they were competent in using theories in their practice, rating the Student Learning and Development competency overall at 4.19. All students surveyed had completed or were finishing the primary course in student development theory, which suggests that the required course focusing on this topic allowed them to feel competent using theory in their work. The current placement of this course at the very beginning of the program seems warranted, and there is clear value of a theory-to-practice emphasis to both current students and recent alumni. One participant commented on the theoretical foundation of the program stating, "Every class and project completed during the program involved student development (theory)."

These findings seemed to validate the current curriculum, program emphasis, and application of classroom learning in work, assistantship, and practicum settings. It is interesting that most students reported that the competencies were learned or developed in graduate school. Perhaps this has occurred because there is no undergraduate major in student affairs, or perhaps the graduate experience is the most recent, and thus the easiest, place in which to attribute these learning outcomes. This could be an area for further exploration in future studies.

Areas of weakness

Participants reported lower competence in Assessment, Evaluation, and Research, which is significant for the future of the program. All students in the program are required to take a basic research class that is also taken by all master's degree students in the College of Education. An additional assessment course is offered as an elective but is not commonly chosen by students due to interest in other elective options and the per-

ceived amount of work that is associated with the assessment course. Assessment is also taught in the final capstone course, but the exposure is brief and the course is not taken by all part-time students who instead develop a comprehensive portfolio as a capstone experience. Assessment is an important skill used regularly by student affairs professionals and in many different student affairs offices. The responses to the survey strongly suggested that graduates of the CSPA program feel deficient in regards to assessment. Perhaps the assessment course should be a required component of the curriculum or the current research class could be modified to better prepare students to conduct assessment. Another suggestion from a current student was to encourage practicum and campus administrators to ask graduate students to "assist with actual campus assessments and evaluations," again amplifying the need students have to apply or use material in order to feel more competent.

Another weakness that was indirectly reported by participants in the exit interviews and open-ended responses on the surveys was the ability to see or understand the "bigger picture." They were comfortable with competencies learned in the classroom that directly related and then could be applied to their work or internship settings but not with areas such as philosophy or history that asked them to think beyond their day-to-day responsibilities for potential uses in practice. One participant did comment about knowing now "where all of this came about" from the course on history and philosophy of student affairs, but typically others preferred when "supervisors drew connections" to implications of different student affairs philosophies and helped students make meaning of them in their work. In addition, "bigger picture" thinking as a concept often relates to policy making in which graduate students or new professionals are not always involved. By having positions where they are not generally involved with making policies, participants responding to the survey may not have been able to use those more conceptual competencies.

A particularly concerning response was that Law, Policy, and Governance was cited as the weakest area across all demographic breakdowns, even though there is a course devoted to legal issues for student affairs professionals. This response may suggest a shortcoming in the effectiveness of the course or be a result of the subject itself. One participant offered an explana-

Using Competencies to Assess Learning (cont'd)

tion in support of the latter stating, "I feel that areas such as law require more time than our program would allow to receive a 'most prepared' rating." Another participant felt that even though they were exposed to relevant case law in the class, students did not understand how the specific policies were developed in response to the law. It would be meaningful in the future for those connections to be made in the classroom and through outside experiences in ways that improve students' skills in this area.

Future Research

The assessment instrument and exit interview are only two aspects of the competency development research that is planned. In spring 2015, the team will partner with student affairs graduate program faculty at Eastern Illinois University and Western Illinois University. These programs have theoretical and practical elements that are similar to the CSPA program at Illinois State University, and being able to compare the results between the three institutions would allow for more discussions and collaborations about our curriculum and shared program outcomes.

Another area for additional research is to further investigate specific assignments and projects completed in CSPA courses to determine whether or not students attribute learning from these various assignments to specific areas of competency development. One way to do this would be to update the current course evaluation process and add a section that correlates with the assignments in each course. Targeted questions could then be asked about individual assignments and the possible connections to the development of specific competencies. The open-ended question about assignments that was asked in the current online instrument yielded varied and sporadic results regarding the types of learning that took place in different courses. Even though it was an option on the survey, there were very few instances where participants indicated any information about detailed aspects of coursework or mentioned specific assignments that informed their development of particular competencies. The information that could come from this proposed future research may further support the conclusions drawn from the current research and could also allow for more detailed recommendations for program improvement and curriculum revision.

Conclusions

Using the *ACPA/NASPA Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Practitioners* (2010), our research team created an assessment instrument and interview protocol, surveyed current students and recent alumni, and assessed the findings. The results were significant in initiating discussions among faculty for curriculum advancements to better prepare future and current student affairs practitioners. Based on the information received through this assessment process, and through the enhanced process planned for spring 2015, we should be able to better support student learning within our CSPA master's degree program at Illinois State University.

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Overview of the 2014 Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) Results

Derek Herrmann, Assistant Director, University Assessment Services

During the spring 2014 semester, University Assessment Services coordinated the administration of the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) at Illinois State University. This survey research is conducted by the Center for Postsecondary Research at Indiana University that administers several surveys of student engagement at colleges and universities in the United States and Canada, such as the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE) that also are administered at Illinois State University. The FSSE questionnaire is used to collect information regarding faculty perceptions of student engagement in different activities, the importance faculty place on different areas of learning and development, the frequency and nature of faculty interactions with students, and how faculty organize their time in and out of the classroom. The items on the questionnaire represent empirically-supported educational practices for student learning and development and compliment many of the items on the NSSE and BCSSE questionnaires.

All faculty at Illinois State University who taught at least one undergraduate course during the 2013-2014 academic year and opted into survey research participation were recruited to participate in the FSSE. These criteria produced a sampling frame of 784 eligible faculty members who received up to four emails encourag-

ing their participation. A total of 232 faculty responded (29.6% response rate), and 212 reported that they did teach an undergraduate course during the current academic year.

Respondents were asked to consider one of the undergraduate courses they taught in the fall semester or were teaching in the spring semester as they completed the questionnaire. Sixty-four respondents selected a lower division course (mostly first-year or sophomore students), while 142 selected an upper division course (mostly junior or senior students); the remaining participants either selected 'Other' [and provided responses such as both junior or senior and graduate students (i.e., 300-level course)] or did not respond to this item. Additional demographic information of the sample (provided to University Assessment Services only in the aggregate) can be found in Table 1.

Results

To assist in the interpretation of the results, the Center for Postsecondary Research has combined similar questionnaire items on the NSSE into ten Engagement Indicators. Because the NSSE and FSSE questionnaires contain similar items, these engagement indicators were used to examine the faculty perceptions of student engagement. The average scores for the entire sample of respondents and for those who selected a

Overview of the 2014 FSSE Results (cont'd)

Table 1. Demographic information for the sample of survey respondents

Demographic	Lower division		Upper division		All respondents	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Employment status						
Part-time	7	13	9	7	16	9
Full-time	49	88	123	93	172	91
Academic rank						
Professor	13	22	30	23	43	23
Associate Professor	11	19	37	28	48	25
Assistant Professor	11	19	47	36	58	31
Instructor	17	29	11	8	28	15
Lecturer	4	7	5	4	9	5
Other	3	5	1	1	4	2
Number of years teaching (at any college or university)						
4 or less	8	14	18	14	26	14
5 to 9	12	21	28	22	40	21
10 to 19	21	36	49	38	70	37
20 to 29	9	16	23	18	32	17
30 or more	8	14	11	9	19	10

lower division or upper division course of the ten Engagement Indicators are provided in Table 2. The average reported for the Quality of Interactions indicator is the mean, whereas for all of the other indicators the average is the median, which is the 50th percentile and is the appropriate measure given the items' scales.

Higher Order Learning

On average, all respondents indicated that their coursework 'quite a bit' emphasizes analyzing an idea, experience, or line of reasoning in depth by examining its parts; evaluating a point of view, decision, or information source; and forming a new idea of understanding from various pieces of information. They also reported that their coursework 'very much' emphasizes applying facts, theories, or methods to practical problems or new situations.

Reflective and Integrative Learning

On average, all respondents indicated that it is 'important' for the typical students in their courses to connect their learning to societal problems or issues; include diverse perspectives in course discussions or assignments; and try to better understand someone else's views by imagining how an issue looks from their perspective. They also reported that it is 'very important' for students in their courses to examine the strengths and weaknesses of their views on a topic or issue; to learn something that changes the way they understand an issue or concept; and to connect ideas in their courses to prior experiences and knowledge. The only discrepancy between faculty who responded based on a lower division or upper division course was those who selected a lower division course indicated that it was 'important' for students to combine ideas from different courses when completing assignments, whereas those who selected an upper division course indicated that this was 'very important.'

Overview of the 2014 FSSE Results (cont'd)

Learning Strategies

On average, all respondents indicated that they 'quite a bit' encourage students in their courses to identify key information from reading assignments; to review their notes after class; and to summarize what has been learned from class or from course materials.

Quantitative Reasoning

On average, all respondents indicated that it is 'somewhat important' for students in their courses to use numerical information to examine a real-world problem or issue and that it is 'important' for students to reach conclusions based on their own analysis of numerical information. The only discrepancy between faculty who responded based on a lower division or upper division course was those who selected a lower division course indicated that it was 'somewhat important' for students to evaluate what others have concluded from numerical information, whereas those who selected an upper division course indicated that this was 'important.'

Collaborative Learning

On average, all respondents indicated that they 'quite a bit' encourage students in their courses to ask other students for help understanding course material

and to explain course material to other students. Faculty who responded based on a lower division course indicated that they 'somewhat' encourage students in their courses to work with other students on course projects or assignments, whereas they 'quite a bit' encourage students to prepare for exams by discussing or working through course material with other students. In contrast, faculty who responded based on an upper division course indicated they 'somewhat' encourage their students to prepare for exams by discussing or working through course material with other students, whereas they 'quite a bit' encourage students to work with other students on course projects or assignments.

Discussions with Diverse Others

On average, all respondents indicated that students in their courses 'somewhat' have the opportunity to engage in discussions with people of a race or ethnicity other than their own; people from an economic background other than their own; people with religious beliefs other than their own; and people with political views other than their own.

Student-Faculty Interaction

On average, all respondents indicated that they 'sometimes' worked on activities other than course-

Table 2. Average scores for the ten Engagement Indicators.

Engagement Indicator	Lower division course selected	Upper division course selected	All respondents
Higher-Order Learning ^a	Quite a bit	Quite a bit	Quite a bit
Reflective and Integrative Learning ^b	Important	Important	Important
Learning Strategies ^a	Quite a bit	Quite a bit	Quite a bit
Quantitative Reasoning ^a	Some	Some	Some
Collaborative Learning ^a	Quite a bit	Quite a bit	Quite a bit
Discussions with Diverse Others ^a	Some	Some	Some
Student-Faculty Interaction ^c	Sometimes/Often	Often	Sometimes/Often
Effective Teaching Practices ^a	Quite a bit/Very much	Very much	Very much
Quality of Interactions ^d	4.57	4.82	4.75
Supportive Environment ^b	Important	Important	Important

^a The scale for these items were Very little, Some, Quite a bit, Very much. ^b The scale for these items was Not important, Somewhat important, Important, Very important. ^c The scale for this item was Never, Sometimes, Often, Very often. ^d The scale for this item was 1 = Poor and 7 = Excellent.

Overview of the 2014 FSSE Results (cont'd)

work with the undergraduate students they teach or advise. They also indicated that they 'often' talked about career plans; discussed course topics, ideas, or concepts outside of class; and discussed their academic performance with the undergraduate students they teach or advise.

Effective Teaching Practices

On average, all respondents indicated that they 'quite a bit' use a variety of teaching techniques; review and summarize material for students; and provide feedback to students on drafts or works in progress. They also indicated that they 'very much' clearly explain course goals and requirements; teach course sessions in an organized way; use examples or illustrations to explain difficult points; and provide prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments. The only discrepancy between faculty who responded based on a lower division or upper division course was those who selected an upper division course 'very much' provide standards for satisfactory completion of assignments, whereas those who selected a lower division course were split evenly between 'quite a bit' and 'very much' in their responses to this item.

Quality of Interactions

On average, all respondents perceived the quality of student interactions with other students to be the highest ($M = 5.24$); followed by faculty ($M = 4.90$); academic advisors ($M = 4.65$); student services staff, such as career services, student activities, and housing ($M = 4.51$), and other administrative staff, such as registrar and financial aid ($M = 4.34$). Faculty who selected a lower division course perceived the quality of student interactions with other students to be highest ($M = 5.06$), followed by academic advisors ($M = 4.51$), student services staff ($M = 4.50$), faculty ($M = 4.44$), and other administrative staff ($M = 4.29$). Similarly to all respondents, faculty who selected an upper division course perceived the quality of student interactions with other students to be highest ($M = 5.30$), followed by faculty ($M = 5.07$), academic advisors ($M = 4.73$), student services staff ($M = 4.51$), and other administrative staff ($M = 4.35$).

Supportive Environment

On average, all respondents indicated that it is

'important' for Illinois State University to increase its emphasis on students using learning support services; providing opportunities for students to be involved socially; providing support for students' overall well-being; helping students manage their non-academic responsibilities; attending campus activities and events; and attending events that address important social, economic, or political issues. Faculty who selected an upper division course also indicated that it was 'important' for the University to increase its emphasis on providing support to help students succeed academically and encouraging contact among students from different backgrounds; however, faculty who selected a lower division course were split evenly between 'important' and 'very important' in their responses to these two items.

Discussion

In examining the ten Engagement Indicators, the average scores suggest that the Illinois State University faculty is doing very well in terms of engaging undergraduate students in general and across both lower division and upper division courses. There were few discrepancies in the average scores among all faculty respondents, those who taught a lower division course, and those who taught an upper division course. One of the two lowest average scores among these three groups was for Quantitative Reasoning which is not surprising given that this is a specific skill that is not a part of the content in many courses; thus, it seems appropriate that some faculty would not structure their courses so that students learn and develop in this area. The other lowest score was for Discussions with Diverse Others, which suggests that more opportunities for students to engage in these conversations can be integrated with courses. This is not to say that faculty does not think this is important; the item simply asked how much opportunity do students have, and it may be that, given the content of some courses, these opportunities are limited. An interesting note regarding this finding is that in response to the 2013 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), both first-year and senior students at Illinois State University on average indicated that they 'often' have discussions with diverse others. This discrepancy suggests that students are having these discussions on their own, potentially both in and outside of the classroom, which underscores the

Overview of the 2014 FSSE Results (cont'd)

importance of the learning that occurs outside of the classroom (such as in co-curricular activities, events, and services).

In examining the individual items that compose the Engagement Indicators, there were no discrepancies in the average responses between faculty who taught lower division or upper division courses regarding Higher-Order Learning, Learning Strategies, Discussions with Diverse Others, and Student-Faculty Interaction. Each of the other Engagement Indicators, however, included at least one item to which the average responses of these two groups differed. Faculty who taught an upper division course indicated that they place a higher level of importance on combining ideas from different courses when completing assignments than faculty who taught a lower division course (from the Reflective and Integrative Learning indicator). This difference partially could be due to the differences that are inherent between courses at these two levels in that students in upper division courses would be expected to combine ideas from different courses because they should have had taken more courses than students in lower division courses; in addition, this also is more likely to be a goal/objective/outcome for students who are nearing the end of their academic program than for students who are at the beginning. These differences in course levels also could be an explanation for the discrepancies regarding the items from the Collaborative Learning indicator. In this case, faculty who taught a lower division course indicated that they encourage their stu-

dents to prepare for exams by discussing course material with other students more than faculty who taught an upper division course; however, faculty who taught an upper division course indicated that they encourage students to work with other students on projects or assignments more than faculty who taught a lower division course. One reason for this difference could be that exams may be used as an evaluation method more frequently in lower division courses, whereas projects may be used as an evaluation method more frequently in upper division courses.

Other discrepancies between faculty who taught a lower division course and those who taught an upper division course were not as well defined. Faculty who taught an upper division course indicated that they provide standards for satisfactory completion of assignments to a slightly greater extent than faculty who taught a lower division course (from the Effective Teaching Practices indicator). Faculty who taught a lower division course responded that the University should increase its emphasis on helping students succeed academically and encouraging contact among students from different backgrounds slightly more than faculty who taught an upper division course (from the Supportive Environment indicator). Both of these are discrepancies are minimal and may have been due more to the difference in the sample sizes between these two groups than differences in course levels.

Some limitations regarding this research need to be mentioned. The response rate was low, and thus, the

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Overview of the 2014 FSSE Results (cont'd)

results are not necessarily generalizable to the entire population of faculty who teach undergraduate students at the University. More than two times the number of faculty who responded to the questionnaire items based on a lower-division course did so based on an upper-division course. This could provide an explanation for some of the discrepancies found between the average scores of these two groups. In addition, no inferential statistics were used to compare the average scores between those who taught lower-division courses and those who taught upper-division courses, so any differences that were noted may not be statistically sig-

nificant. Despite these limitations, the findings from the 2014 FSSE provided information on faculty perceptions of student engagement, the importance faculty place on different areas, and the frequency and nature of their interactions with students. The findings indicated that the Illinois State University faculty promotes higher-order learning, reflective and integrative learning, various learning strategies, and collaborative learning among undergraduate students; use effective teaching practices with undergraduate students; and feel it is important for the University to provide a supportive environment for its undergraduate students.

Highlights from the 2014 ISU Alumni Survey

Jen Brown, Graduate Assistant, University Assessment Services

Last summer, the annual Illinois State University Alumni Survey was administered to those who graduated in 2009 and 2013. The overall response rate was 9.0% (855 received out of 9,542 distributed), and response rates ranged from 1.9% to 29.8% among the departments/schools and programs. To help increase the response rate, ISU Alumni Survey bookmarks to market the survey were included in the survey invitation letters. Respondents included 646 undergraduate alumni and 209 graduate alumni with 361 who graduated in 2009 and 494 who graduated in 2013. The overall results from the survey indicate:

- 49.6% of respondents stated that the quality of their education relative to that of colleagues who graduated from other institutions is above average, and 19.4% stated it was superior.
- 12.6% of respondents have earned an additional degree since earning their degree at ISU, and 28.6% are currently enrolled in a college or university.
- Of those who have earned an additional degree or are currently enrolled, 25.8% stated that they were adequately prepared for their additional degree programs, and 69.1% stated they were well-prepared.
- 48.3% of respondents stated that they accepted their first job before graduation or within one month of graduation, 29.9% accepted their first job between one and six months of graduation, and 6.5% did not seek a job upon graduation.
- 26.8% of respondents stated that they were ade-

quately prepared for their career paths, and 62.8% stated they were well-prepared.

- 83.6% of respondents were employed full-time, 7.4% were employed part-time, and 3.5% were not employed and not seeking employment.
- Of those who were employed, 91.2% were satisfied with their current jobs.
- Of those who were employed, the most frequently selected employer classifications were business (29.2%), elementary/secondary schools (25.3%), and a college or university (15.2%).
- Of those who were employed, 86.8% were employed in a job that is related to their degree major, and 7.1% were employed in an unrelated job by choice.
- 96.1% of respondents had a positive attitude towards ISU, including 51.5% who reported a strongly positive attitude.
- 93.1% of respondents had a positive attitude towards their degree program, including 49.8% who reported a strongly positive attitude.

Although changes to survey and aspects of its administration have been made over the last few years, the low response rate still is a concern in terms of using the results for program improvement. We welcome any suggestions as we continue work to increase the response rate in an effort to make the results more useful and meaningful for the University and its programs.