

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- “A particularly interesting and informative discussion began when the conversation shifted to the question...” (p. 5)
- “Furthermore, when we split these results and analyzed the responses of student separately from those of faculty/staff, we found that...” (p. 9)
- “The means of the six BCSSE scales indicated that respondents were the least concerned with...” (p. 15)

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<i>A Learning Outcomes Retreat</i>	2
<i>QPR Program Evaluation</i>	6
<i>2012 BCSSE Results Overview</i>	13

From the Director

Greetings!

It is my pleasure to introduce the Spring 2013 edition of *Progressive Measures*, UAS’s newsletter for highlighting the assessment of student learning outcomes.

There is an old saying about improvement that can probably be applied to assessment: *Assessment works best at places that need it the least, and worst at places that need it the most.* This is not to suggest that assessment by itself is an ineffective strategy. Rather, what it means is that in order for assessment to thrive, it must exist in an organizational culture marked by faculty and staff who trust each other and where people work collaboratively and engage in genuine and meaningful conversations about education and improvement. Assessment also works best when used for improvement instead of being punitive and when faculty and staff are valued by leadership for their contributions to learning and helping students achieve their goals. ISU’s dedicated leadership, focus on shared governance, and faculty and staff commitment to students and learning, as reflected in *Educating Illinois*, all mean that ISU is a place where assessment can thrive and be used for meaningful improvement.

The articles in this issue reflect that spirit. Dr. Lane Crothers’ article highlighting a retreat shows how assessment is about more than providing numbers and data but also about creating shared meaning about student



learning outcomes. The article acknowledges the professional development role of assessment and how it is about sharing and learning from each other. A second article looks at a suicide prevention training program evaluation and highlights how assessment can directly lead to actions by using results in decision-making. The final article looks at the results of the Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE). The survey provides a portrait of today’s entering students, telling the story of a group that expects difficulty in managing time and learning new course material but is confident in their ability to access academic support and persevere during their first year of college.

Congratulations on another successful year and have a great summer!

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.”

A Learning Outcomes Retreat for the Department of Politics and Government

**Dr. Lane Crothers, Professor and Director of Assessment,
Department of Politics and Government**

The Department of Politics and Government was awarded an Assessment Initiative Award from University Assessment Services in 2012 to assist the department in facilitating a conversation about its learning outcomes (LOs). The primary questions for this retreat were: (1) Were the department's 2007-12 learning outcomes an accurate reflection of the program's goals for its undergraduate and graduate students?; and (2) Were any gaps in the department's success in achieving these goals best addressed by curricular and pedagogical changes, or ought the department consider adopting other LOs that better captured the department's actual, if currently unspecified, program goals?

Context for the retreat

Before describing what occurred at the department retreat, held March 30, 2012 at the Marriott Hotel, some context about the department's 2007-12 learning outcomes and its experience with assessment will be helpful. The retreat, it will be seen, emerged as a response to several intersecting trends that came to a head in 2012. One key factor was evidence that the department was not achieving some of its LOs as well as it hoped. Another derived from prior assessment practices that did not seem to clearly connect department LOs to assessment strategies and tools.

2007-2012 learning outcomes: Successes and challenges

In 2007, the department changed its learning outcomes in an attempt to create a deeper, more assessable framework from which to evaluate the department's undergraduate and graduate programs. In consultation with the then University Assessment Office, the department adopted new learning outcomes. At the graduate level these were:

- The student possesses the ability to understand and evaluate political institutions and processes at an advanced level;
- The student possesses the ability to conduct independent research on politics and government;

- The student possesses skills at effective oral and written communication in professional communities that deal directly with politics or government; and
- The student possesses skills of effective civic and political engagement.

For the undergraduate program, the learning outcomes were:

- The student possesses the ability to understand and evaluate political institutions and processes;
- The student possesses the ability to conduct research on politics and government; and
- The student possesses skills at effective oral and written communication about politics or government.

Assessments undertaken between 2007-12 provided evidence that the department was doing an effective job of meeting two of these LOs. The two LOs that the department was effective in meeting were:

- The student possesses the ability to understand and evaluate political institutions and processes at an advanced level; and
- The student possesses the ability to conduct independent research on politics and government.

The data were consistent across the available years for study. Department courses were seen to have done an excellent job "teaching the basics" of how politics and government (writ large) work around the world. The department was also shown to have done a good job exposing students to a wide variety of areas of study and of world politics and cultures. It inculcated a strong tradition of critical thinking and capacity for independent thought among its students. It had a strong tradition of teaching and expecting thoughtful writing in its courses. These were all significant accomplishments.

In the case of the LO, "possesses skills of effective civic and community engagement," however, the data made it clear that students did not perceive this as a priority or even a central feature of most of their courses.

A Learning Outcomes Retreat (cont'd)

Likewise, while students consistently reported that their writing skills improved across the department's curriculum, students consistently stated that the department's program did not develop their oral communication skills effectively. Some reported few or no opportunities to make oral presentations, while others indicated that they received little guidance about what was expected in those oral presentations that were assigned. It was clear, then, that there was a gap between what the department pledged to achieve and what its students perceived was happening in our classrooms.

Prior assessment strategies and tools

While student perceptions of the department's successes (and lack of success) in achieving its stated learning outcomes were a driving force behind the decision to have a retreat, it was not the only factor. Another was the department's existing assessment plan. Two concerns with the plan emerged: its organization and its format.

Notably, most programs in the Department of Politics and Government do not require accreditation at either the graduate or undergraduate levels (the department's newest program, Legal Studies, has been accredited by the American Bar Association). Accordingly, neither the department's faculty nor its students have significant experience in assessment matters. Moreover, there are no systematic national standards for political

science programs that the department can draw on as a template in creating either shared learning outcomes or appropriate assessment mechanisms.

This context clearly shaped the department's early work to develop an appropriate assessment mechanism for its learning outcomes. The department assessment director at the time developed a two-

stream process to assess the department's success in achieving its goals. One stream involved annual surveys of undergraduate and graduate majors. These surveys were to involve both pre- and post-tests of department majors (freshmen-senior), but the pre/post test model was never implemented due to student turnover. The other stream was separate focus groups of graduate and undergraduate students. The plan was implemented for the first time in 2008 and was to be implemented annually thereafter. The department did not employ portfolio or other assessment mechanisms.

In addition to these organizational questions, it became apparent on implementation of the plan in 2011, the first year I employed it, that the questions being asked were, in large measure, the kinds of questions usually asked in customer satisfaction surveys rather than department assessment of learning outcomes exercises. Both the survey and focus group questions seemed disproportionately focused on student satisfaction. It asked numerous questions about course offerings, faculty style, and the like, but it asked very little about what kinds of pedagogical exercises students had experienced or whether those assignments seemed to strengthen the students' skills in achieving the department LOs. In addition, the assessment scheme provided no independent means to test student perception: all data were derived from student comments about courses and extracurricular activities. In other words, it was not clear either that the questions asked actually got at the information needed to assess the department's success in achieving its LOs or that the information being collected was a fair representation of how well the department was doing in accomplishing its stated program goals.

It was also not clear that the department's stated learning outcomes were congruent with the skills and talents on which the department's courses and faculty were actually focused. That is, students regularly praised the department's openness, support for students, and its local/national/global focus, but the assessment mechanism did not seek to explore these areas of the department's success. The department seemed to be doing a good job at a lot of things that it was not assessing. This led to the question of whether the 2007 learning outcomes were adequate or appropriate for assessing the real work the department was doing.

Recognizing that these questions and concerns were simply based on my perceptions, I discussed these issues



A Learning Outcomes Retreat (cont'd)

with the department chair at the end of 2011. As I saw it, the department was facing a potential transition point: it could keep doing its assessments as designed, of course, but if it chose to, it could amend its assessment mechanisms in an effort to more effectively measure student achievement in terms of the department's learning outcomes, or it could change its learning outcomes to more accurately reflect the department's goals and desires for its students. It could also take both of the latter two options. Rather than make such a meaningful decision on his (or our) own, the chair and I agreed a department retreat was appropriate to discuss these issues (and any others that might arise in context of this discussion).

Retreat planning

In an effort to ensure that the retreat would be focused on its main task, but that participants—including tenured/tenure track faculty, non-tenure track faculty, and key staff—had the information they needed to discuss the matter in an informed way, I forwarded a retreat background document to the department. This document included the department's learning outcomes and a summary of recent assessment data and findings. This summary derived from the 2008, 2009, and 2011 annual assessments, as well as from a broader summary assessment undertaken in 2010 on the basis of the 2008 and 2009 assessment documents. The retreat background document served as the template for a brief PowerPoint presentation that was used to introduce the retreat on the day it occurred.

The decision was made to hold the retreat off campus and to schedule an entire day for the event. Fortunately, most of the department's faculty and staff were available for at least some portion of the day. Coffee, tea, and light refreshments were provided before the retreat began; lunch was provided as well.

Retreat discussions

With the preliminaries out of the way, discussion at the retreat was engaged and interested. Faculty and staff agreed that its learning outcomes ought to drive the department's commitment to its students, its program review process, and its participation in the broader national discussion about assessment and accountability for outcomes across an array of measures. There was significant agreement on most of the department's

learning outcomes: everyone endorsed the ideas of strengthening students' critical thinking, writing, and oral presentation skills; they likewise endorsed the need for students to develop their research skills about politics and political institutions (understood broadly). Notably, there was extended discussion about the students' perceptions that their oral presentation skills had not been a strong focus of their program. Faculty discussed those courses in which oral presentations are expected and agreed that pedagogical changes would be needed to strengthen the department's efforts to achieve this LO.

Faculty also discussed the question of whether all of the current LOs were appropriate or not. For example, many participants felt that while it was clearly the department's responsibility to help students develop their skills to understand and evaluate political life in its many dimensions, it was not necessarily the department's responsibility to inculcate a pattern of political activism or civic engagement among its students. This concern derived from the fraught nature of teaching politics and government: obvious partisanship can detract from the students' sense that the teacher is presenting or facilitating a discussion of the details of an issue fairly. In a related concern, faculty wondered if the language "skills at effective oral and written communication in professional communities that deal directly with politics or government" in an

LO dealing specifically with graduate students was too narrow and too focused on government or professional communities. A number of the department's graduate students go overseas as part of the Peace Corps or work with domestic social service



A Learning Outcomes Retreat (cont'd)

agencies as part of their programs, for example, so faculty worried that such work might not be captured by the LOs as configured.

A particularly interesting and informative discussion began when the conversation shifted to the question, "Are there other LOs we ought to consider adding, or some we should consider removing?" This related to a supplemental question: "Are our current LOs accurately capturing what the department currently does?" In general, faculty and staff agreed that while the current learning outcomes were appropriate and important (barring some of the concerns noted above), they also seemed generic and technical. The sense was that the existing goals were things that could be assessed but did not really speak to the department's vision of itself and its ambitions for its students. They did not seem to provide a picture of what the department aspired its students to become.

After this discussion, the department agreed to the formation of an ad hoc committee to look into rewriting the department's learning outcomes in light of the extensive discussion at the retreat. There was also an agreement that whenever (if ever) the department adopted new learning outcomes, a new assessment plan would need to be implemented to understand how successfully (or not) the new LOs were being achieved. The retreat then adjourned.

Retreat outcomes

Pursuant to the department's decision at the retreat, the department chair convened an ad hoc committee consisting of both tenure/tenure track and non-tenure track faculty to consider changes to the department's learning objectives. The committee, chaired by Dr. Carlos Parodi, met in the spring and fall semesters. Several members attended UAS workshops on learning goals, and in the fall, the committee drafted new LOs after consulting peer departments' LO statements. After several iterations and discussions the draft was submitted to the department for approval.

The new LOs, as drafted, were more aspirational for the department than the ones of 2007-12 were. As drafted, the new LOs were:

Upon completion of the major in Political Science, students will be able to:

- Apply critical thinking to understand and evaluate political ideas, institutions and processes at the local, national, and global levels, and express that analysis both in writing and orally, using a diversity of research methodologies.
- Articulate their views on a variety of political concerns in a context of respect for academic principles and tolerance for dissenting views.
- Identify normative issues and make informed and well-reasoned judgments in complex environments.
- Recognize and explain the dimensions of the significant events, ideas, individuals, social movements, and institutions that have shaped our world.
- Formulate a critically informed position on participation and citizenship in local, national, and global communities.

These proposed LOs were presented to the department for consideration and discussion in November 2012. After discussion, they were adopted by the department at its December meeting. Work has begun to translate these aspirations into an assessment plan.

Conclusions

The Department of Politics and Government appreciates the support of University Assessment Services in facilitating its discussion of its learning outcomes. The daylong retreat allowed faculty and staff to engage in a conversation about the program in a way the department had not had in some time. The department believes that its new learning outcomes both encompass what we do and offers a foundation for building an assessment plan to help us improve what we do over time.

**UAS will again be offering the Assessment Initiative Awards
during the 2013-2014 academic year!**

Look for an announcement early in the fall semester and submit a proposal!

Evaluation of the Question, Persuade, and Refer (QPR) Program at ISU

Daniel Selvey, Graduate Student, Department of Psychology

Christina Senior, Undergraduate Student, Department of Psychology

Dr. Dakesa Piña, Staff Counselor, Student Counseling Services

Suicide prevention is extremely important on college campuses; while only 7.5 out of 100,000 (.0075%) college students commit suicide (Silverman, 1997), this represents more than half of completed suicides between age 15 and 24 (National Center for Health Statistics, n.d.). With five percent of college students attempting suicide, universities are searching for ways to lessen the major risk factors for this population, such as feelings of isolation, hopelessness and helplessness, and depression (Westefeld et al., 2006). Social support in the form of connections with peers, family, and the university at large is a strong protective factor in college student suicide, but some universities have gone beyond encouraging support and have enacted outreach programs explicitly to train faculty, staff, and students on issues related to suicide and suicide prevention.

Furr, Westefeld, McConnell, and Jenkins (2001) found that, irrespective of the demographic makeup of the college campus, the success of any suicide prevention program will hinge on its ability to educate participants about local resources that are available to students, as well as how to identify and respond to warning signs. Question, Persuade, and Refer (QPR) is a widely-used suicide prevention training program that touches on these and other issues (Tompkins & Witt, 2009). During the first trial of QPR, Tompkins and Witt incorporated it into Resident Assistant (RA) training; the RAs displayed significant post-training increases in suicide prevention knowledge, accuracy in efficacy appraisals, and intentions to perform as gatekeepers.

Current Study

The Illinois State University QPR suicide prevention training was intended to raise awareness of issues related to suicidal ideation, behavior, and referral resources, specifically to increase knowledge of how to recognize and respond to warning signs of suicidal ideation. The training promoted an environment that is supportive of individuals experiencing suicidal ideation

and a campus where issues of suicide can be addressed. Staff and students were encouraged to participate in the QPR training through email and various departmental announcements; the training was required for some staff and students who hold sensitive positions at the university and was voluntary for others. To determine the effectiveness of this program, the Student Counseling Services Program Evaluation Team created a pre-/post-test and an evaluation of the QPR training.

Method

Participants

A total of 231 participants age 18 and above were recruited from ISU. In terms of positions held at the university, 12 participants identified as faculty (5.2%); 175 participants identified as staff (75.8%); and 44 participants identified as students (19%).

Procedures

Individuals who were enrolled in Illinois State University's QPR suicide prevention training were asked to complete the pre-/post-test and assessment. Before the QPR training began, consenting participants completed a pre-test questionnaire to determine the amount of training they had received in the past on suicide prevention and their levels of knowledge and preparation with suicide prevention and reporting. The instrument had three main parts. The 9-question Knowledge component asked about participant's knowledge of suicide interventions, such as signs and symptoms of suicide, and reporting requirements. The 8-question Preparation section asked about how prepared the participants felt to interact with someone who may be suicidal, such as feeling prepared to ask appropriate questions and make appropriate referrals. Lastly, the 4-question Level of Agreement component asked about participants' level of agreement to statements such as, "If an individual contemplating suicide refuses to seek help, it should not be forced".

Evaluation of the QPR Program at ISU (cont'd)

Participants were asked to fill out this same questionnaire as a post-test measure after the QPR training was completed. Participants were also asked to complete a QPR Evaluation Form, which asked participants to rate the effectiveness of specific aspects of the training sessions, as well as to express how they learned about the training, what they gained from it, and the most and least beneficial aspects of the training itself.

Results

QPR Training

We examined changes in participants' knowledge of, and preparation to help individuals with, suicidal ideation and behavior from before to after the QPR training. We also asked participants to determine their level of agreement with four different statements concerning perceptions of suicidal behavior. Participants were separated into two categories—faculty/staff responses and student responses—to further analyze the effects of the QPR training. To do this, we administered a pre-test and a post-test before and after individuals completed the QPR training course, respectively. We then grouped responses to the knowledge and preparation categories and created total scores that reflected overall responses to each group. In other words, instead of measuring changes in responses to individual knowledge categories (e.g., “How to provide appropriate documentation,” “Why an individual might hide suicide ideation or attempt”), we measured how much participants' responses changed in all of the knowledge and preparation categories combined in response to the QPR training. Given the heterogeneous nature of the agreement categories, responses to each were analyzed separately. Group differences were calculated using univariate analyses of variance (ANOVAs). Finally, we gathered information on previous suicide prevention training experiences to measure further group differences.

Total knowledge scores.

In examining total knowledge, faculty/staff had a mean pre-test score of 3.12 ($SD = 1.44$), which reflected having “a little” knowledge, and a mean post-test score of 5.74 ($SD = 0.87$), having between “a fair amount” and “quite a bit” of knowledge. The total knowledge scores of students also revealed a positive change, with a mean pre-test score of 2.72 ($SD = 1.44$),

having between “very little” and “a little” knowledge, and a mean post-test score of 5.03 ($SD = 1.22$), having “a fair amount” of knowledge.

These differences revealed a highly significant main effect for testing condition, $F(1, 4) = 91.94, p < .001$. Putting aside status as a faculty/staff member or a student, this means that total knowledge scores changed significantly from before to after the QPR training. There was also a significant main effect for faculty/staff versus student scores [$F(1, 4) = 4.77, p = .030$], which means that faculty/staff scores differed somewhat from student scores overall. Finally, there was a nonsignificant interaction effect, $F(1, 4) = .38, p = .538$. This nonsignificant interaction shows that differences between pre-test and post-test total knowledge scores were not affected by faculty/staff versus student status. In other words, faculty/staff and students improved similarly from before to after the QPR training in their knowledge of issues related to suicide. Practically speaking, all participants felt more knowledgeable about and comfortable with issues related to suicide after taking the QPR training course, including but not limited to reporting requirements and referral resources, signs and symptoms of suicidal ideation, and what to say and not say when discussing suicide with an at-risk individual.

Total preparation scores.

Turning to total preparation scores, faculty/staff had a mean pre-test score of 2.89 ($SD = 1.55$), reflecting being “slightly prepared,” and a mean post-test score of 5.67 ($SD = 0.94$), being between “fairly well prepared” and “well prepared.” The total preparation scores of students, once again, showed positive growth as well, with a mean pre-test score of 2.43 ($SD = 1.43$), a score between “minimally prepared” and “slightly prepared,” and a mean post-test score of 5.18 ($SD = 1.46$), being “fairly well prepared.”

These differences also showed a highly significant main effect for testing condition [$F(1, 4) = 98.43, p < .001$], revealing that overall total preparation scores changed significantly from before to after the QPR training. There was a marginally significant main effect for faculty/staff versus student scores [$F(1, 4) = 2.93, p = .089$], which means that faculty/staff scores were relatively similar to student scores in total preparation. Finally, there was a nonsignificant interaction effect,

Evaluation of the QPR Program at ISU (cont'd)

$F(1, 4) = .002, p = .962$. This nonsignificant interaction shows that differences between pre-test and post-test scores on total preparation were not affected by faculty/staff versus student status. Practically speaking, all participants improved similarly from before to after the QPR training in terms of feeling prepared to, for example, ask appropriate questions about suicide, persuade a suicidal individual to seek help, report suicidal ideation and suicide attempts, and make appropriate referrals after they finished QPR training.

Agreement scores.

Additionally, we measured the differences between faculty/staff and student pre-test and post-test responses to each of the four agreement categories (see Table 1) to determine if the QPR training had different effects on these two groups. We found highly significant overall differences between pre-test and post-test responses to all four agreement statements (see Table 2). These differences show that participants were more in agreement with the proper protocols for interacting with individuals with suicidal ideation and behavior and felt more confident and comfortable helping suicidal individuals after the QPR training than before. We also found that there were only marginal and nonsignificant differences between faculty/staff and student pre-/post-test responses to each agreement category (see Table 3). That is to say, the appropriateness of faculty/staff responses and student responses increased in a similar fashion from the pre-test to the post-test, revealing that both groups were impacted by and took away the positive messages that were presented in the QPR training.

Amount of previous training.

In examining the effects of the QPR training, we also asked participants to report the amount of previous training they had received on the topic of suicide prevention to determine if the QPR training would have a greater effect on individuals who had less experience with suicide prevention than those who had more experience. We added up the number of previous training experiences had by each participant to determine total training scores. Since each individual's pre-test and post-test were not

Table 1

Descriptive statistics for responses to the agreement categories

			<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
If an individual experiencing thoughts of suicide does not acknowledge the seriousness of the situation, there is very little I can do to help	Pre-test	Faculty/Staff	92	2.77	1.51
		Student	32	2.03	1.23
		Total	124	2.58	1.48
	Post-test	Faculty/Staff	65	1.31	0.68
		Student	9	1.44	0.73
		Total	74	1.32	0.68
I do not have sufficient training to assist individuals who are contemplating suicide	Pre-test	Faculty/Staff	92	4.79	1.73
		Student	32	4.50	1.65
		Total	124	4.72	1.70
	Post-test	Faculty/Staff	65	2.35	1.60
		Student	9	3.33	1.94
		Total	74	2.47	1.66
I feel comfortable discussing issues related to suicide with individuals	Pre-test	Faculty/Staff	92	4.10	1.75
		Student	32	4.03	1.75
		Total	124	4.08	1.74
	Post-test	Faculty/Staff	65	4.91	1.60
		Student	9	5.56	1.51
		Total	74	4.99	1.59
If an individual contemplating suicide refuses to seek help, it should not be forced	Pre-test	Faculty/Staff	92	2.86	1.36
		Student	32	2.38	1.36
		Total	124	2.73	1.37
	Post-test	Faculty/Staff	65	2.15	1.58
		Student	9	1.89	1.05
		Total	74	2.12	1.53

Note. *n* is the number of responses; *M* is the mean, and *SD* is the standard deviation.

linked, the mean number of previous training experiences would need to be nearly equal in order to use total training scores to make pre-/post-test comparisons. We found a mean pre-test total training score of 1.33 ($SD = 0.82$) and a mean post-test total training score of 1.94 ($SD = 1.08$); these scores represented a highly significant dif-

Evaluation of the QPR Program at ISU (cont'd)

Table 2

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) results of overall pre-test to post-test differences in agreement scores

	<i>df (between, within)</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
If an individual experiencing thoughts of suicide does not acknowledge the seriousness of the situation, there is very little I can do to help	1, 196	47.41	< .001
I do not have sufficient training to assist individuals who are contemplating suicide	1, 196	82.09	< .001
I feel comfortable discussing issues related to suicide with individuals	1, 196	13.35	< .001
If an individual contemplating suicide refuses to seek help, it should not be forced	1, 196	8.47	.004

ference between pre-test and post-test reports of previous training, $F(1, 153) = 14.98, p < .001$. This means that individuals reported having more previous training experiences after completing the QPR training than before. Researchers believe this difference is because of the way the item 2 on the pre-/post-test was worded. Participants answered questions in the post-test based on the various modalities used to teach the QPR training (i.e., video, lecture, role play, etc.) instead of simply marking that they had attended the QPR training solely. Because of this shift, researchers were unable to use number of previous training experiences as a further measure of the success of the QPR training.

QPR Evaluation

Quality and benefits.

After the QPR training was completed, we asked participants to evaluate different aspects of the training, such as the quality of the training and information presented therein, on a Likert-type scale from “Strongly Disagree” (1) to “Strongly Agree” (7). Frequency data split by faculty/staff versus student responses for these Likert-type questions are included in Table 4. Participants reported a mean level of agreement to the seven

Likert-type questions of 6.11 ($SD = .81$), which corresponds to a high level of agreement with such statements as “I learned a variety of new information” and “I would recommend this training to others.” Furthermore, when we split these results and analyzed the responses of students separately from those of faculty/staff, we found that there were nonsignificant to marginal differences in agreement scores on individual items and overall, showing that faculty/staff and students rated each aspect of the training similarly (see Table 5).

Program introduction and pros/cons.

Participants also responded to four open-ended questions about the training itself, asking how they learned about it, which aspects were the most and least helpful, and what they gained from the training. When running frequency distributions on the data, we found that most participants learned about the training through email (21.7%) or Visor/GA training (13.9%). Participants were also asked about the pros and cons of the training. They were asked questions such as, “What did you gain from this training?” and “What was the most/least helpful aspect of the training?” A large pro-

Table 3

Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) results of faculty/staff vs. student pre/post-test responses to agreement categories

	<i>df (between, total)</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
If an individual experiencing thoughts of suicide does not acknowledge the seriousness of the situation, there is very little I can do to help	1, 197	3.06	.082
I do not have sufficient training to assist individuals who are contemplating suicide	1, 197	3.40	.067
I feel comfortable discussing issues related to suicide with individuals	1, 197	1.06	.305
If an individual contemplating suicide refuses to seek help, it should not be forced	1, 198	0.14	.710

Evaluation of the QPR Program at ISU (cont'd)

portion of participants stated that they gained knowledge about warning signs and creating plans (48.7%) and that the most helpful aspect of the training was the video (30.4%). A coded list of responses to these open-ended questions, arranged according to response frequencies and percentages, is included in Table 6.

Discussion

The examination of pre-/post-test response differences revealed much about the success of the QPR training program as is. Not only did faculty/staff and students gain a significant amount of knowledge concerning suicide prevention, the training left both groups feeling prepared to resolve suicide-related crisis situations. The QPR training was also successful in increasing both groups' confidence in their intervention skills. On the surface, QPR was a complete success with both of the target populations; there is little doubt that there will be a positive shift on campus in terms of awareness of suicide and proactive steps being taken toward reducing suicide.

Limitations

One of the limitations of this study was our inability to use the data that were compiled on previous suicide prevention training experiences. We attributed the shift in reported previous training experiences from pre-test to post-test primarily to faulty test design; the original wording of the QPR Training questionnaire was unclear as to whether participants were supposed to report experiences with suicide prevention including each activity that took place that day in QPR, or if that day's activities were to be excluded. For the purposes of evaluating the QPR training program in the future, the wording of this question has been changed to ask, "How much training about suicide prevention have you had prior to today?" Another strategy that could remedy this issue in the future would be to link individuals' pre-tests with their post-tests, allowing researchers to examine both individual and group changes according to differing amounts of previous training. It is also important to note that there is researcher bias when choosing the items decided to place on the pre-/post-test and evalua-

Table 4

Descriptive statistics for responses to items on the QPR evaluation

		<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
The overall quality of this training was high	Faculty/Staff	85	6.16	0.88
	Student	30	6.30	0.92
	Total	115	6.20	0.89
I learned a variety of new information	Faculty/Staff	85	5.85	1.34
	Student	30	6.27	0.94
	Total	115	5.96	1.26
The training met my learning needs	Faculty/Staff	85	6.08	0.92
	Student	30	6.17	0.95
	Total	115	6.10	0.92
I would recommend this training to others	Faculty/Staff	84	6.37	0.83
	Student	30	6.47	0.82
	Total	114	6.39	0.83
The PowerPoint presentation was beneficial	Faculty/Staff	85	5.96	1.18
	Student	30	6.50	0.73
	Total	115	6.10	1.10
The role-play activity was beneficial	Faculty/Staff	80	5.86	1.20
	Student	29	5.34	1.32
	Total	109	5.72	1.25
The video was beneficial	Faculty/Staff	57	6.21	1.21
	Student	30	6.47	0.97
	Total	87	6.30	1.13
Overall agreement score	Faculty/Staff	85	6.07	0.83
	Student	30	6.22	0.74
	Total	115	6.11	0.81

Note. *n* is the number of responses; *M* is the mean, and *SD* is the standard deviation.

tion measure. The items chosen create statistics for only the information researchers chose to analyze.

A second possible limitation arose in terms of how participants designated their position at the university. Participants were asked to, "Please indicate whether you are: faculty, staff, or student." Given that graduate students at

Evaluation of the QPR Program at ISU (cont'd)

Table 5

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) results of faculty/staff vs. student evaluations of the QPR

	<i>df (between, within)</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
The overall quality of this training was high	1, 113	0.51	.477
I learned a variety of new information	1, 113	2.49	.117
The training met my learning needs	1, 113	0.18	.668
I would recommend this training to others	1, 112	0.31	.581
The PowerPoint presentation was beneficial	1, 113	5.42	.022
The role-play activity was beneficial	1, 107	3.77	.055
The video was beneficial	1,85	1.01	.319
Overall agreement score	1,113	0.78	.378

ISU are also technically considered staff if they hold a graduate assistantship, this item could have left participants unsure as to how to respond. Some participants responded to this ambiguity by indicating that they were both students and staff. To resolve this confusion in the future, this item on the QPR pre-/post-test and evaluation form have been changed to instead ask participants to, "Please indicate your primary role at the University." It is hoped that this language will be more clear, allowing for further accuracy in evaluating the outcomes of the QPR training.

Future QPR Training

The findings from this study will be applied to future QPR training programs. It is important for the designers of the program, as well as the training staff, to know what captures and maintains the attention of QPR participants, as well as what information and activities to keep or exclude. For example, since participants saw the role-play activities as the least beneficial component of the training, in the future they could be replaced with an activity that participants deem more effective. Contrarily, participants viewed the video as being a helpful tool; therefore, the video should remain a part of future QPR training programs. Because of the significant increase in participants' knowledge

Register now for CTLT's 2013 Summer Institute for the 21st Century Educator!

A complete list of offerings is available on the CTLT website at <http://ctl.t.illinoisstate.edu>, and registration is available at <https://my.illinoisstate.edu/summer-institute>.

Also, be sure to mark your calendars for the **Summer Institute Kick-Off!**

Tuesday, May 14 from 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM

Join the CTLT staff for food, Little Ideas for Teaching (LIFTs), door prizes, and more! (no registration required for this event)



Evaluation of the QPR Program at ISU (cont'd)

Table 6

Frequencies and percentages of responses to open-ended items on the QPR evaluation

Item and response	#	%
How did you learn about QPR?	-	-
Email	25	21.7
Visor/GA Training	23	20.0
Sorority	18	15.7
Supervisor, Professor, Work	17	14.8
RA Training	16	13.9
What was the <i>most helpful</i> aspect of the training?	-	-
Video	35	30.4
Learning the right questions to ask	31	27.0
Role-play activities	23	20.0
Learning how to start a conversation with someone who is suicidal	13	11.3
How/what to report, resources	13	11.3
PowerPoint	12	10.4
Statistics	9	7.8
What was the <i>least helpful</i> aspect of the training?	-	-
Role-play activities	18	15.7
PowerPoint (too much information)	11	9.6
Statistics (outdated, boring, not enough)	9	7.8
Time (presentation too quick, ran out of time)	8	7.0
What did you gain from QPR?	-	-
Learning the warning signs and creating a "plan" for when they arise	56	48.7
Increased confidence/comfort in role	28	24.3
Learning that it is okay to ask questions about suicide	24	20.9
Tools (statistics, scripts, handouts, booklets, resources)	12	10.4

and preparation from before to after the training, those who use the QPR training program on college campuses can feel confident in the information being presented and the knowledge that participants gain.

Another addition that could be made would be to extend the reaches of the QPR program beyond the initial training seminar. Manning and VanDeusen

(2011) took a unique approach to suicide prevention, implementing a university-based social network in addition to conducting training in-person and online. The purpose of the social network was to increase social support and student dialogue on suicide between those who had taken the training as well as with other students; they found that, while students were at first

Evaluation of the QPR Program at ISU (cont'd)

apprehensive about using the social network, both students and the surrounding community were receptive of the resource and found it highly beneficial. Using technology in this way to increase campus unity and decrease isolation could significantly improve ISU's already successful QPR training program.

References

Furr, S. R., Westefeld, J. S., McConnell, G. N., & Jenkins, J. M. (2001). Suicide and depression among college students: A decade later. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 32*, 97-100.

Manning, J., & VanDeusen, K. (2011). Suicide prevention in the dot com era: Technological aspects of a university suicide prevention program. *Journal of American College Health, 59*(5), 431-433.

National Center for Health Statistics (n.d.). *Vital statis-*

tics of the United States, 1900-1984.

Silverman, M. M., Meyer, P. M., Raffel, M. F., & Pratt, D. M. (1997). The Big Ten suicide study: A ten-year study of suicides on Midwestern university campuses. *Suicide and Life Threatening Behavior, 27*, 285-303.

Tompkins, T. L., & Witt, J. (2009). The short-term effectiveness of a suicide prevention gatekeeper training program in a college setting with residence life advisers. *The Journal of Primary Prevention*. doi: 10.1007/s10935-009-0171-21

Westefeld, J. S., Button, C., Haley, J. T. H., Jr., Kettmann, J. J., MacConnell, J., Sandil, R., & Tallman, B. (2006). College student suicide: A call to action. *Death Studies, 30*, 931-956.

An Overview of the 2012 Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE) Results

Derek Herrmann, Coordinator, University Assessment Services

During the summer of 2012, University Assessment Services coordinated the administration of the Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE) to incoming first-year students during their Preview orientation sessions. The BCSSE is one of several student engagement surveys [the most popular being the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)] that is administered by the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research (IUCPR). According to IUCPR, student engagement includes the amount of time and effort students allocate to their academic and co-curricular activities and the ways that institutions allocate resources for students to participate in activities related to their learning. Institutions can use the results of these student engagement surveys to identify areas of excellence and opportunities for improvement, as well as to inform discussions related to teaching and learning. The items on the student engagement surveys are based on best practices regarding student engagement and student learning, and the BCSSE specifi-

cally is used to examine incoming students' high school experiences, both academic and co-curricular, and their expectations for their first year of college.

University Assessment Services staff worked with Preview staff to administer the BCSSE during a group meeting on the first day of incoming students' Preview sessions. A total of 2,016 students responded, which is 64.7% of all students who attended Preview and 89.2% of sampled students (data were not collected during the first and last weeks of Preview). The majority of these students (89.2%) graduated from public high schools, and most (96.8%) reported that most of their high school grades were 'B-' or above. On average, respondents completed four years of English/literature coursework, four years of math coursework, four years of science coursework, three years of history/social sciences coursework, and three years of foreign language coursework during high school. Respondents on average completed one Advanced Placement (AP) class and two honors (non-AP) classes. In addition,

An Overview of the 2012 BCSSE Results (cont'd)

33.6% of respondents completed one or more college courses for credit during high school.

Results

Many of the BCSSE items have been combined to form six scales that allow for a focused examination of the results. These scales are (1) High School Academic Engagement, (2) Expected Academic Engagement, (3) Expected Academic Perseverance, (4) Expected Academic Difficulty, (5) Perceived Academic Preparation, and (6) Importance of Campus Environment. Table 1 provides the means (M) and standard deviations (SD) for the six scales. A closer examination of each of the BCSSE scales follows.

Expected Academic Difficulty

This scale consisted of four items related to academic difficulty during the first year of college, and each item was rated on a six-point scale (where a higher score indicated more difficulty). Respondents expected that managing their time ($M = 4.2, SD = 1.3$) and learning course material ($M = 3.9, SD = 1.0$) would be the most difficult. They also expected getting help with their school work ($M = 3.1, SD = 1.1$) and interacting with faculty ($M = 2.8, SD = 1.2$) to be the least difficult.

High School Academic Engagement

This scale consisted of twelve items related to engagement in educationally-relevant behaviors during the last year of high school, and each item was rated on a four-point scale (where a higher score indicated more often). Respondents reported that asking ques-

tions in class and contributing to class discussions ($M = 3.1, SD = 0.8$) and working with other students on projects during class ($M = 2.9, SD = 0.7$) were the behaviors in which they were most often engaged. They also indicated that working with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments ($M = 2.3, SD = 0.7$) and discussing ideas from their readings or classes with teachers outside of class ($M = 2.0, SD = 0.9$) were the behaviors in which they were the least often engaged.

Expected Academic Engagement

This scale consisted of eight items related to engagement in educationally-relevant behaviors during the first year of college, and each item was rated on a four-point scale (where a higher score indicated more often). Respondents expected that working with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments ($M = 3.1, SD = 0.7$) and asking questions in class or contributing to class discussions ($M = 3.0, SD = 0.7$) would be the behaviors in which they were the most often engaged. They also expected that discussing ideas from their readings or classes with others (such as other students, family members, etc.) outside of class ($M = 2.7, SD = 0.8$) and discussing ideas from their readings or classes with faculty members outside of class ($M = 2.6, SD = 0.8$) would be the behaviors in which they were the least often engaged.

Expected Academic Perseverance

This scale consisted of six items related to student persistence when experiencing academic adversity, and each item was rated on a six-point scale (where a high-

Table 1
Descriptive statistics for the six BCSSE scales

BCSSE scale	Mean (M)	Standard deviation (SD)
Expected Academic Difficulty	5.0	1.6
High School Academic Engagement	5.3	1.3
Expected Academic Engagement	6.0	1.6
Expected Academic Perseverance	7.2	1.5
Importance of Campus Environment	7.3	1.7
Perceived Academic Preparation	7.4	1.5

Note. Scales range from 0 to 10.

An Overview of the 2012 BCSSE Results (cont'd)

er score indicated more certainty). Respondents reported that finishing something they have started when they encounter challenges ($M = 5.0, SD = 0.9$) and asking instructors for help when they struggle with course assignments ($M = 4.8, SD = 1.1$) were behaviors that they were the most certain they will do. They also indicated that studying when there are other interesting things to do ($M = 4.2, SD = 1.1$) and participating regularly in course discussions even when they do not feel like it ($M = 4.1, SD = 1.1$) were behaviors that they were the least certain they will do.

Importance of Campus Environment

This scale consisted of six items related to the importance of an institution providing a challenging and supportive environment, and each item was rated on a six-point scale (where a higher score indicated more importance). Respondents reported that having support to help them succeed academically ($M = 5.3, SD = 0.9$) and opportunities to attend campus events and activities ($M = 4.9, SD = 1.1$) were the most important. They also indicated that having support to help them thrive socially ($M = 4.4, SD = 1.3$) and assistance coping with their non-academic responsibilities ($M = 4.2, SD = 1.3$) were the least important.

Perceived Academic Preparation

This scale consisted of seven items related to incoming students' perceptions of their academic preparation during high school, and each item was rated on a six-point scale (where a higher score indicated more preparation). Respondents reported that working effectively with others ($M = 5.2, SD = 0.9$) and learning effectively on their own ($M = 4.9, SD = 1.0$) were the areas in which they were the most prepared. They also indicated that using computing and information technology ($M = 4.4, SD = 1.1$) and analyzing math or quantitative problems ($M = 4.2, SD = 1.3$) were the areas in which they were the least prepared.

Overall engagement

Eight additional items on the BCSSE allow for a broad examination of how incoming students spent their time during their last year of high school and how they expect to spend their time during their first year of college. Respondents reported that during their last year of high school, they spent an aver-

age of 6-10 hours per week preparing for class, 11-15 hours per week participating in co-curricular activities, 6-10 hours per week working for pay, and 11-15 hours per week relaxing and socializing. They also indicated that during their first year of college, they expected to spend an average of 16-20 hours per week preparing for class, 6-10 hours per week participating in co-curricular activities, 6-10 hours per week working for pay, and 11-15 hours per week relaxing and socializing.

Discussion

The means of the six BCSSE scales indicated that respondents were the least concerned with the expected academic difficulty during their first year of college and they feel that they are very well-prepared for their first year of college. Two areas in which incoming students expected the most difficulty were managing their time and learning course material. During their last year of high school, respondents most often asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions and worked with other students on projects during class. They expected to ask questions in class or contribute to class discussions during their first year of college, but, unlike in their last year of high school, they expected to work with other students outside of class to prepare class assignments. Incoming students also reported that they did not discuss ideas with others outside of class often during their last year of high school, and they expected to continue this trend during their first year of college. They felt the most certain that they would be able to finish something when they encounter challenges and that they could ask instructors for help if needed. Respondents also felt that having support to help them achieve academic success and opportunities to attend campus events and activities were very important. In addition, respondents felt the most prepared to work effectively with others and learn effectively on their own.

Incoming students expected to spend more time each week preparing for class and less time each week



An Overview of the 2012 BCSSE Results (cont'd)

participating in co-curricular activities during their first year of college compared to their last year of high school; however, they did not foresee any change in the amounts of time they expected to spend working for pay each week and relaxing or socializing each week during their first year of college compared to their last year of high school.

In examining these results, it seems that time management is a concern for incoming students, so an increased emphasis can be placed on scheduling enough time for course assignments, as well as providing information for assistance in developing this skill. Incoming students seemed to have lower expectations for discussing ideas with others outside of class, so faculty and staff can encourage students to do this, which can help to show how course material can be applied outside of the classroom. Incoming students felt confident in asking their instructors for help, so faculty and staff can continue to be available and encourage students to seek assistance if needed. Similarly, incoming students felt it was important to have academic support, so faculty and staff can continue to provide information on resources and support on campus. Incoming students felt that it was important to have opportunities to attend campus events and activities, and participation in these, such as events through the Dean of Students office and departments and schools and activities through registered student organizations (RSOs), can be encouraged by faculty and staff. Lastly, incoming students felt prepared to work with and learn from others, so learning in groups can be encouraged through course assignments such as group projects.

There are some limitations to the findings from this research. One of them is the sample size. Although over 2,000 students responded to the BCSSE, this

number represents only 64.7% of all students who attended the Preview orientation sessions; however, this number also represents 89.2% of all students during the sampled timeframe (exclusion of the first and last weeks of Preview). Thus, there is a higher level of confidence that these results are representative of incoming students who began college at Illinois State during the fall 2012 semester. In addition, the items that were examined specifically here were chosen because they had the highest and lowest mean scores of the items on each of the BCSSE scales. Sometimes, the differences between these means were small, especially given the range of potential responses (i.e., four or six response options). These items were chosen only to provide a comparison of incoming students' perceived strengths and potential limitations, not because of any statistically significant differences between scores on the items.

Despite these limitations, the results from the 2012 BCSSE provide useful information for faculty and staff to consider as they interact with students. In the future, these results will be examined further and will continue to be disseminated to the University community. The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) was administered during spring 2013 to first-year and senior students at Illinois State. Those first-year students who responded to the BCSSE were reminded of this in their NSSE recruitment letter in an effort to increase the response rate of this sample of students. Examining these students' responses to both the BCSSE and the NSSE will provide a longitudinal view of student engagement before and across the first year of college. And examining the responses of first-year and senior students will provide a cross-sectional view of student engagement at the beginning and end of students' time here at Illinois State University.

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

Consultation

We can provide assistance at all steps in the assessment process:

- Developing an assessment plan
- Collecting assessment data
- Making sense of the assessment results

Online Surveys

We can provide assistance at all steps in the survey research process:

- Developing survey questions
- Collecting survey data
- Making sense of the survey results

Visit <http://assessment.illinoisstate.edu/> to learn more!