

## ***Results from annual Mount Mercy Longitudinal Study on Student Growth***

### **2012–2013**

To measure the extent to which Mount Mercy students improved in strategic communication (measured through their attitudes toward engaging in literary activities) the experiences of all undergraduate students new to the institution (n=283) were tracked during the 2012-2013 academic year. Pretest data were collected at the beginning of their tenure at Mount Mercy, and parallel posttest data were obtained from the same students at the end of their first year at the institution (n=126). As expected, and consistent with national survey results of college students, there was a slight decline in students' attitudes toward engaging in literary activities from the beginning to the end of the first year. Specifically, those in the sample scored 3.45/5 on the pretest, and 3.38/5 on the posttest. However, students' exposure to several effective educational practices taking place at Mount Mercy was associated with gains in this important outcome.<sup>1</sup> Future research will continue to examine the influence of these effective practices on additional student outcomes that are associated with the goals of Mount Mercy University.

### **2013-2014**

The experiences of all students who were new to Mount Mercy during this academic year were tracked from the time they started at the institution (n=298) to the end of their first year (n=141). The initial purpose of tracking these experiences was to ascertain which educational practices at Mount Mercy are linked to increased odds of persistence. Unfortunately, due to differences between responders and non-responders, it was impossible to estimate predictors of persistence. It was possible, however, to determine the extent to which students are being exposed to effective / high-impact practices that are empirically linked with a wide-range of important student outcomes, including student achievement and persistence.

---

<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that the longitudinal design allows one to estimate actual gains in the outcome measure. This has been demonstrated empirically elsewhere, e.g., Pascarella, E.T., Wolniak, G.C., & Pierson, C.T. (2003). Explaining student growth in college when you don't think you are. *Journal of College Student Development*, 44(1),122–126. doi: 10.1353/csd.2003.0007

Highlights from 2012-13 and 2013-14	Notable patterns and examples
<p><b><u>2012-13</u></b></p> <p>Students’ growth in the Mount Mercy goal of strategic communication was measured by assessing their proclivity to engage in literary activities.</p>	<p>Although there was a slight decline from the beginning to the end of this academic year among all students entering MMU (3.45/5 to 3.38/5, respectively), the following MMU experiences led to gains in this important measure: Exposure to clear and organized instruction, interactional diversity experiences, and student perceptions of high faculty expectations.</p>

<p><b><u>2013-14</u></b></p> <p>Student experiences were assessed over this academic year using a longitudinal design. Students reported being exposed to several effective educational practices that are empirically linked to greater odds of persistence in college.<sup>2</sup></p>	<table> <tbody> <tr> <td>Satisfaction with MMU<sup>3</sup></td> <td>3.38/4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Collaborative learning</td> <td>3.08/4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Instructor feedback</td> <td>3.74/5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Instructor clarity</td> <td>3.97/5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Instructor organization</td> <td>4.26/5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Integrative learning</td> <td>3.37/5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Academic integration</td> <td>3.70/5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Social integration</td> <td>3.37/5</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>These results suggest students are being exposed to a number of “good practices” that are associated with increased odds of persistence.</p>	Satisfaction with MMU <sup>3</sup>	3.38/4	Collaborative learning	3.08/4	Instructor feedback	3.74/5	Instructor clarity	3.97/5	Instructor organization	4.26/5	Integrative learning	3.37/5	Academic integration	3.70/5	Social integration	3.37/5
Satisfaction with MMU <sup>3</sup>	3.38/4																
Collaborative learning	3.08/4																
Instructor feedback	3.74/5																
Instructor clarity	3.97/5																
Instructor organization	4.26/5																
Integrative learning	3.37/5																
Academic integration	3.70/5																
Social integration	3.37/5																

**(Data collected and analyzed by Chad Loes, Director of Student Outcomes Research.)**

<sup>2</sup> Many of these practices are also linked to a range of important student outcomes including critical thinking, academic achievement, academic motivation, and student use of deep approaches to learning, for example. For a review of this evidence, please see: Loes, C. N., & Pascarella, E. T. (2015). *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 15(2), 1-13.

<sup>3</sup> x/5 refers to the average on a five-point scale, where x/4 refers to the average on a four-point scale.