2020-2021 Mount Mercy University Assessment Plan Report

Mount Mercy University responds to the Higher Learning Commission's Criterion regarding assessment of student learning. Criterion 4.B. states, "The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through an ongoing assessment of student learning".   Mount Mercy uses a multi-faceted Academic Assessment Plan that incorporates a combination of strategies including assessment of the majors and assessment of the core curriculum, (co-curricular assessment and institutional assessment are covered in their separate, respective plans). The plan includes both direct measures of learning (e.g. instructor evaluation of student work) and indirect indicators such as student and alumni surveys. Some data are collected within courses required for specific academic majors, while other data are collected in core curriculum classes.

In 2018-2019, under the direction of a newly appointed Director of Assessment, the Academic Assessment Plan was amended to include the approach of course-based assessment. Course-based assessment refers to methods of assessing student learning within the classroom, through the use of course goals, objectives and content. Using this method allows for assessing the extent of learning that is taking place. Course-based assessment was used in 2019-2020.

This summary report contains information collected annually from six components of the Academic Assessment Plan. The six components are: 1) the Core Curriculum - Portal Courses; 2) the Core Curriculum - Capstone Courses (with a Capstone student survey); 3) Core Curriculum – Domains of Liberal Study; 4) Academic Major through course-based assessment; and 5) the Senior Survey Assessment.

Additionally, this report contains sections for the results from the Student Services Student Satisfaction Survey; the Co-curricular Assessment Summary; and the Feedback Process.

1. Core Curriculum- *The Mercy Portal Experience*

Incoming first-year MMU students are required to take a Mercy Experience Portal course. The interdisciplinary nature of the course fosters teamwork and leadership in the students. Before they finished the course a survey of student perceptions and experiences in the Portal course is distributed, with favorable results typically obtained.

In 2020-21, 11 Portal courses were offered with a total enrollment of 264 students. The two most substantial changes from 2019-20 are highlighted below. Conducting the survey annually helps monitor patterns in meeting the objectives established for this introductory core course and helps to highlight objectives needing improvement.

Faculty review all of the survey results and focus improvement efforts on those items trending lower and dramatically declining.

Below are some survey questions	**Notable Examples**
1. My portal course taught me about Mount Mercy's values/history.	*88% of students agreed/strongly agreed.* (75% in 2018-19, 62% in 2019-20)
2. My portal course helped me to think about what other core courses to take.	66% of students agreed/strongly agreed. (63% in 2018-19, 57% in 2019-20)

As faculty review findings and meet to strengthen portal course contributions to the students' "first year experience," the following 7 items will be considered.

Below are some survey questions	**Notable Examples**
1. Clarified what the 'domains of liberal studies' include.	75% of students agreed/strongly agreed. (60% in 2018-19, 58% in 2019-20)
2. Taught me about the value of serving the common good.	88% of students agreed/strongly agreed. (87% in 2018-19, 80% in 2019-20)
3. Gave me opportunities to get to know classmates better.	74% of students agreed/strongly agreed. (82% in 2018-19, 75% in 2019-20)
4. Taught me about an important social issue/s.	95% of students agreed/strongly agreed. (90% in 2018-19, 79% in 2019-20)
5. Taught me about Mercy Critical Concerns.	91% of students agreed/strongly agreed. (79% in 2018-19, 66% in 2019-20)
6. Helped me learn about campus services for students.	92% of students agreed/strongly agreed. (81% in 2018-19, 77% in 2019-20)

2. The Core Curriculum - *Mercy Experience Capstone*

MMU seniors are required to take a Mercy Experience Capstone course that is intended as a culminating experience in the liberal studies. Students integrate knowledge they have acquired from each of the core domains and will reflect on their Mercy education in the context of their major discipline. One key component of this one-credit course that is used for assessment purposes is a *Reflection Paper* in which students begin to synthesize and reflect on their work at Mount Mercy as they approach graduation. The paper addresses the institution's mission and goals, with a focus on ways in which studies and experiences in the core curriculum have helped shape their Mercy education.

In addition, during the Capstone course students receive one survey with two parts – 1) *Capstone Student survey; and 2) Senior Student Survey*.   The Capstone Student Survey collects students' perceptions concerning how the Capstone Course prepared them in Mount Mercy's student learning outcomes. The survey responses indicated that MMU seniors had a good Mercy Experience based on the mission-based outcomes.

 In 2020-21, 14 capstone courses were offered with a total enrollment of 258 students.

Capstone Student Survey Results:

Highlights from the past year's findings	Notable examples
Reflective Judgment Capstone Student Survey responses show that the majority of students could demonstrate "reflective judgment".	Capstone Student Survey responses (2020-21) 1. 90% of students agreed/strongly agreed that the capstone course "Helped me evaluate diverse perspectives on a topic". 2. 96% of students agreed/strongly agreed that the capstone course "Pulled together ideas from several disciplines". 3. 95% of the students agreed/strongly agreed their Mount Mercy education prepared them to "think critically".
Strategic Communication Capstone Student Survey responses show that the majority of students could demonstrate "strategic communication".	Capstone Student Survey responses (2020-21) 1. 78% of students agreed/strongly agreed that the capstone course "Gave me opportunities to work with others." Therefore, students improve their strategic communication through working with others.

	2. 99% of the students agreed/strongly agreed their Mount Mercy education prepared them to "communicate effectively". **3.** 93% of the students agreed/strongly agreed their Mount Mercy education prepared them to "locate information to solve problems".
<u>Serving the Common Good</u> Capstone Student Survey responses show that the majority of students could make "serving the common good".	<u>Capstone Student Survey responses</u> (2020-21) **1.** 91% of students agreed/strongly agreed that the capstone course "made me think about the value of serving others." **2.** 96% of students agreed/strongly agreed that the capstone course "taught me about an important social issue." **3.** 91% of the students agreed/strongly agreed their Mount Mercy education prepared them to "understand the value of service". **4.** 88% of the students agreed/strongly agree their Mount Mercy education prepared them to "be aware of the needs in their community".
<u>Purposeful Living</u> Capstone Student Survey responses show that the majority of students are committed to "purposeful living".	<u>Capstone Student Survey responses</u> (2020-21) 1. 80% of students agreed/strongly agreed that the capstone course "encouraged me to take a leadership role in class or school activities".

5. **Core Curriculum-** *Domains of Liberal Study*

Mount Mercy's core curriculum includes seven domains of liberal studies. MMU students in all majors are also required to take Mount Mercy Domains of Liberal Studies courses. These courses give students in all majors a sense of breadth and connection among traditional liberal arts disciplines. These courses are grouped according to the overall concepts covered by each domain: Expressive Arts (including literature and fine arts), Global Awareness, Historical Roots, Holistic Health, The Natural World, Self and Society and Ultimate Questions. Each class in a domain utilizes a common domain assignment. Faculty from each domain collaborated to develop a common assignment addressing the agreed upon outcomes for that area. Performance criteria were also specified and scoring rubrics created.

Randomly selected student assignments are scored by the faculty for domain assessment purposes using the applicable rubric. Faculty members teaching in each domain are also invited to meet periodically, discussing results and process refinements. A key intent of this approach is to empower faculty teaching domain courses to design assignments and criteria that represent meaningful measures of the targeted outcomes.

In 2020-21, 2269 students were enrolled in 112 domain courses. There were 155 artifacts submitted for assessment – 6.8%. According to established practice, some students were randomly selected from each course for evaluation. As shown in the table below, the findings suggest students made good progress in all domains. In areas where the good/excellent rating has dropped below 45-50%, results are being monitored with the faculty.

Seven Domains of Liberal Study	**Notable Examples**
Expressive Arts Domain objectives: explore the relevance of text/work of fine art to themselves and their culture, and also interpret a text/work of fine art from two divergent perspectives.	Each student wrote a paper discussing a particular text or work of art in relation to themselves, their culture and at least two divergent perspectives. 53% of students were rated good/excellent, 36% of students were rated adequate. (0% no basis for review)
Historical Roots Domain objectives: analysis of a major historical issue or event, and then make connection between a major historical event and the contemporary world.	Each student submitted a page critical review of an assigned personal memoir pertinent to the historical era or topic under study. No results were submitted for this domain.
Global Awareness Domain objectives: explore the diversity of human culture in a global context, and examine the interconnectedness of current global issues.	Each student submitted a writing assignment that explores a current global issue and incorporates a discussion about the diversity of human culture. 0% of students were rated good/excellent, 50% of students were rated adequate. (10% no basis for review)
Holistic Health Domain objectives: Identify relationships among several dimensions of wellness (physical, occupational, emotional, social, environmental, financial, intellectual or spiritual). Engage in an activity to promote well-being in one dimension of wellness.	Each student submitted an assignment that had them reflect on the dimensions of wellness for their own life. 100% of students were rated good/excellent,0% of students were rated adequate. (0% no basis for review)
The Natural World Domain objectives: Utilize the process of scientific inquiry, and explain implications of scientific knowledge for human or natural challenges.	Each student submitted an assignment that was a scientific investigation in which they collected and analyzed data for which the student had no prior knowledge of the

	outcome. 10% of students were rated good/excellent, 50% of students were rated adequate. (20% no basis for review)
Self and Society Domain objectives: Identify and critically apply concepts or theories OR identify and critically apply methods. Examine at least two factors (social, psychological, economic or political) that shape individual behavior or social institutions.	Each student submitted a page writing assignment that examines at least two factors that shape individual or social institutions and applies concepts/theories and methods of the course discipline. 58% of students were rated good/excellent, 30% of students were rated adequate. (2% no basis for review).
Ultimate Questions Domain objectives: Understand similarities and differences between two philosophical or religious concepts about the nature or activity of God, at least one of them consistent with the Catholic tradition of philosophical or theological inquiry. Explain two religious or philosophical concepts relating to the dignity and value of the human person, at least one of them consistent with Catholic social teaching, and apply these concepts to a social justice issue.	Each student wrote an essay that compares and contrasts two different views on a philosophical or religious topic that has a clear application to an issue of social justice. 43% of students were rated good/excellent, 33% of students were rated adequate. (17% no basis for review)

6. Learning within Academic Majors: Course-based Assessment

Annual assessment of each major is firmly established at Mount Mercy. Faculty members review and assess selected student learning objectives each year, gathering and interpreting data concerning their graduates and determining appropriate follow-up action. Coordinators for the major are charged with managing and reporting on this assessment process. Chairs fulfill this role for their own disciplines and collaborate with coordinators on behalf of other majors in the department. Coordinators are expected to work closely with their department chairs, sharing findings and reports with them and contributing to ongoing improvement activities. In addition, majors participate in assessment of the college-wide objectives and the core curriculum.

Each major has established learning objectives for students graduating with a major in that discipline. At least two objectives are assessed each year, rotating through all learning objectives in a six-year cycle. Assessment reports are read by the Academic Assessment committee and feedback is given yearly. Workshops focused on assessment are held each term for coordinators to discuss activities and findings.

Programs used different methods to measure their program objectives and student learning. The findings show what and how MMU students did in their majors. Furthermore, the program objectives and goals also correspond to university-wide objectives and goals.

In 2019-20, all programs used the course-based approach. This process is designed to involve more faculty in assessment activities. The focus of this approach is the student learning outcomes that show what students have learned and how well they have learned in relation to program or major objectives. A few examples are presented below to illustrate methods and outcomes.

Highlights from the past year's assessment processes	Notable examples[1]
Measured Strategic Communication Strategic communication requires selecting from a range of options to accomplish a chosen goal in an ethical manner.	**<u>Criminal Justice Program</u>** *Course assessed*: CJ 302 Criminal Justice Research Methods *Assessed Program Objective #1*: Graduates will demonstrate knowledge of the scientific approach. *Outcome:* Graduates will be able to locate/identify scholarly sources of information; will be able to effectively organize scholarly information; and will be able to critically evaluate scholarly sources of information. *Findings:* In the required course, CJ 302: Criminal Justice Research Methods, 13 students completed a "research paper proposal" which required them to locate and identify scholarly sources of information, organize scholarly information, and critically evaluate scholarly sources. Amongst these outcomes, students obtained a mean score of 4.08/5 on their ability to "locate and identify scholarly sources of information." They also obtained a mean score of 4.0/5 on their ability to "organize scholarly information," and a mean score of 4.15/5 on their proficiency in being able to "critically evaluate scholarly sources."

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[1] Interested readers are welcome to contact the programs or Director of Assessment for further information.

	Based on results – any changes to the program: No changes were indicated. **History Program** *Course assessed*: HI 115 History of Modern America *Assessed Program Objective*: History majors will gain a deeper understanding of the social, economic, political, and cultural developments of diverse peoples from different civilizations. *Outcome:* Students will articulate knowledge of historical events that have shaped a variety of peoples, cultures, and nations; will analyze major historical issues, including the successes and failures of the past; and will understand major historic events and make connections to our contemporary world.
Measured Serving the Common Good It includes respect for, and ethical interaction with, every person and the natural environment and, in the spirit of the Sisters of Mercy, service for the well-being of all humanity and action in the cause of justice in the world.	
	Findings: 75.5% are in either "excellence" category or "good" category. 8.9% are in "Adequate" category, and 13.3% are in "poor" category. Only 1 student is in " unacceptable" category. *Based on results – any changes to the program:* The instructor of HI115 revised the book report's questions in Fall 2020. The instructor planned to revise question #2 slightly and make the question more specific.
Measured Reflective Judgement Reflective judgment requires a knowledge of basic fact, examination, and evaluation of assumptions; adequate justification for drawing a conclusion; and understanding the implication of drawing that conclusion.	**Masters of Business Administration Program** *Course assessed*: BN 500 Organizational Effectiveness *Assessed Program Objective*: Students will work in teams and function as a contributing

	team member; and will exhibit ethical decision-making skills. *Outcome*: Students will be able to analyze various behavioral complexities and factors influencing employee behavior; analyze the impact of the global economy in today's organizations; and explain the impact of values and ethics on behaviors in the workplace. *Findings*: 61 of 68 students completed the assignment at the highest level, 7 students completed the assignment at the second highest level. *Based on results – any changes to the program:* No changes were required.

5. Senior Survey – Assessment Report

During the Capstone course students receive one survey with two parts – 1) *Capstone Student survey; and 2) Senior Student Survey*. The Senior Student Survey collects students' perceptions concerning preparation for career or graduate study; students' perceptions on teaching approaches in the major; and students' perceptions of importance regarding campus services for students.

Examples of each section of the survey:

Students were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed as to what extent they felt prepared for career or graduate study:

> Mount Mercy provided the help I needed in making by career-related decision. 38% strongly agreed; 43% agreed; 1% disagreed; and 0% strongly disagreed. (2019-20 results: 29% strongly agreed; 50% agreed; 7% disagree; and 1% strongly disagree).

> My Mount Mercy education provided an opportunity for an internship if I wanted one. 53% strongly agreed; 32% agreed; 4% disagreed; 2% strongly disagreed. (2019-20 results: 51% strongly agreed; 30% agreed; 5% disagreed; 2% strongly disagreed).

> My program prepared me well for success in my current or intended career. 54% strongly agreed; 32% agreed; 1% disagreed; and 0% strongly disagreed. (2019-20 results: 42% strongly agreed; 44% agreed; 2% disagreed; and 1% strongly disagreed).

My Mount Mercy education prepared me for graduate study or professional school. 45% strongly agreed; 39% agreed; 1% disagreed; and 0% strongly disagreed. (2019-20 results: 34% strongly agreed; 45% agreed; 3% disagreed; 1% strongly disagreed).

Students were asked how important were the following approaches used in teaching in the major:

The use of internships or field work. 66% strongly agreed; 23% agreed; 1% disagreed; and 0% strongly disagreed. (2019-20 results: 65% strongly agreed; 22% agreed; 2% disagreed; and 0% strongly disagreed).

The content of the curriculum. 49% strongly agreed; 35% agreed; 2% disagreed; and 0% strongly disagreed. (2019-20 results: 47% strongly agreed; 42% agreed; 3% disagreed; and 0% strongly disagreed).

Students were asked how they ranked the importance of various services on campus.

Importance of their faculty advisor. 46% ranked it very important; 20% ranked it important; 2% ranked it not important. (2019-20 results: 39% very important; 35% important; 4% not important).

Importance of the Academic Center for Excellence. 16% ranked it very important; 11% ranked it important; and 10% ranked it not important. 24% indicated they did not use the ACE Center. (2019-20 results: 11% very important; 18% important: 13% not important).