

2021-2022 Mount Mercy University Assessment Plan Report (October 2022)

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 starting 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.

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 2021-22, 10 Portal courses were offered with a total enrollment of 219 students. Some notable comparisons with 2020-21 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.

<u>Below are some survey questions</u>	<u>Notable Examples</u>
1. My portal course taught me about Mount Mercy's values/history.	80% of students agreed/strongly agreed. (88% in 2020-21, 62% in 2019-20)
2. My portal course helped me to think about what other core courses to take.	53% of students agreed/strongly agreed. (66% in 2020-21, 57% in 2019-20)

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

<u>Below are some survey questions</u>	<u>Notable Examples</u>
1. Clarified what the 'domains of liberal studies' include.	67% of students agreed/strongly agreed. (75% in 2020-21, 58% in 2019-20)
2. Taught me about the value of serving the common good.	82% of students agreed/strongly agreed. (88% in 2020-21, 80% in 2019-20)
3. Gave me opportunities to get to know classmates better.	76% of students agreed/strongly agreed. (74% in 2020-21, 75% in 2019-20)
4. Taught me about an important social issue/s.	85 of students agreed/strongly agreed. (95% in 2020-21, 79% in 2019-20)
5. Taught me about Mercy Critical Concerns.	85% of students agreed/strongly agreed. (91% in 2020-21, 66% in 2019-20)
6. Helped me learn about campus services for students.	83% of students agreed/strongly agreed. (92% in 2020-21, 77% in 2019-20)

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 2021-22, 17 capstone courses were offered with a total enrollment of 289 students.

Capstone Student Survey Results:

Highlights from the past year's findings	Notable examples
<p><u>Reflective Judgment</u> Capstone Student Survey responses show that the majority of students could demonstrate "reflective judgment".</p>	<p><u>Capstone/Senior Student Survey responses (2021-22)</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 83% of students agreed/strongly agreed that the capstone course "Helped me evaluate diverse perspectives on a topic". 2. 89% of students agreed/strongly agreed that the capstone course "Pulled together ideas from several disciplines". 3. 94% of the students agreed/strongly agreed their Mount Mercy education prepared them to "think critically".
<p><u>Strategic Communication</u> Capstone Student Survey responses show that the majority of students could demonstrate "strategic communication".</p>	<p><u>Capstone/Senior Student Survey responses (2021-22)</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 87% of students agreed/strongly agreed that the capstone course "Gave me opportunities to work with others." Therefore, students improve their

	<p>strategic communication through working with others.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. 90% of the students agreed/strongly agreed their Mount Mercy education prepared them to “communicate effectively”. 3. 82% of the students agreed/strongly agreed their Mount Mercy education prepared them to “locate information to solve problems”.
<p><u>Serving the Common Good</u> Capstone Student Survey responses show that the majority of students could make “serving the common good”.</p>	<p><u>Capstone/Senior Student Survey responses (2021-22)</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 92% of students agreed/strongly agreed that the capstone course “made me think about the value of serving others.” 2. 89% of students agreed/strongly agreed that the capstone course “taught me about an important social issue.” 3. 92% of the students agreed/strongly agreed their Mount Mercy education prepared them to “understand the value of service”. 4. 86% of the students agreed/strongly agree their Mount Mercy education prepared them to “be aware of the needs in their community”.
<p><u>Purposeful Living</u> Capstone Student Survey responses show that the majority of students are committed to “purposeful living”.</p>	<p><u>Capstone/Senior Student Survey responses (2021-22)</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 72% of students agreed/strongly agreed that the capstone course “encouraged me to take a leadership role in class or school activities”.

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 2021-22, 2730 students were enrolled in xxx domain courses. There were 390 artifacts submitted for assessment 14.3%. 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.

<u>Seven Domains of Liberal Study</u>	<u>Notable Examples</u>
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. 57% of students were rated good/excellent, 28% of students were rated adequate.
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. 72% of students were rated good/excellent, 28% of students were rated adequate.
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. 68% of students were rated good/excellent, 22% of students were rated adequate.
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. 72% of students were rated good/excellent, 21% of students were rated adequate.
The Natural World Domain objectives: Utilize the process of scientific inquiry, and	Each student submitted an assignment that was a scientific investigation in which they

explain implications of scientific knowledge for human or natural challenges.	collected and analyzed data for which the student had no prior knowledge of the outcome. 0% of students rated good/excellent and 79% of students rated adequate.
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. 62% of students were rated good/excellent, 27% of students were rated adequate.
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. 10% of students were rated good/excellent, 67% of students were rated adequate.

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 2021-22	Notable examples¹
<p>Measured Strategic Communication Strategic communication requires selecting from a range of options to accomplish a chosen goal in an ethical manner.</p>	<p><u>Criminal Justice Program</u></p> <p><i>Course assessed:</i> CJ 305 White-Collar Crime</p> <p><i>Assessed Program Objective #1:</i> Graduates will demonstrate knowledge of the scientific approach.</p> <p><i>Outcome:</i> Graduates will be able to critically analyze ethical dilemmas and make principled choices in the field of criminal justice.</p> <p><i>Findings:</i> In the required course, CJ 305: White-Collar Crime, 16 students completed a take-home midterm exam which required them to critically evaluate scholarly sources of information. An analysis of the results revealed that students obtained a mean score of 3.69/5 on their ability to “critically evaluate scholarly sources of information.” Next, students in this course also completed the “Questionnaire on attitudes toward criminal justice ethics.” Students obtained a mean score of 2.38/3 on this instrument.</p> <p><i>Based on results – any changes to the program:</i> No changes were indicated; however, they will continue to emphasize the importance of evaluating scholarly sources and</p>

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

<p>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.</p>	<p>making ethical decisions in the field of criminal justice.</p> <p><u>Mathematics Program</u></p> <p><i>Course assessed:</i> MA 162 Discrete Mathematics</p> <p><i>Assessed Program Objective:</i> To progress on the updated Mathematical Program Objectives that were updated in 2019. The new objectives consist of four goals:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1- Learn to apply precise, logical reasoning to problem solving. 2- Develop persistence and skill in exploration, conjecture and generalization. 3- Read and communicate mathematics with understanding and clarity. <p>Mathematical modeling.</p> <p><i>Outcome:</i> Students should be able to read, write, and speak mathematically; read and understand technically-based materials; contribute effectively to group efforts; communicate mathematics clearly in ways appropriate to career goals; conduct research and make oral and written presentations on various topics; locate, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information; create and document algorithms; think creatively at a level commensurate with career goals; and make effective use of the library. Students should possess skill in expository mathematical writing, have a disposition for questioning, and be aware of the ethical issues in mathematics.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1- <i>Findings:</i> In the first assignment, most students were frustrated with the typing aspect but did well, 3 students out of 9 (33%) had problems with typing their work. This number dropped to 1 student only (11%) by the third assignment. The other 8 students (89%) were able to type their mathematical work elegantly and efficiently.
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	<p>2- In the first assignment, almost all students (8 out of 9, 89%) presented very basic solving and proving techniques. Their solutions lacked justifications and their plans were not clear if communicated at all. This number dropped to 22% for the second assignment and then to 11% for the third one. Where only one student still needed to work more on their communicating their plans and solutions.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Based on results – any changes to the program:</i> continue to standardize our approach to writing mathematics across our curriculum. 2. expand our writing-based homework approach to more classes. 3. find more low-cost technology solutions. For example, this year we are going to be exploring the online SageMath platform CoCalc.com 4. provide more opportunities for students to communicate mathematics orally.
<p>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.</p>	<p><u>Masters of Management Program</u></p> <p><i>Course assessed:</i> BN 505 Managing People & Teams</p> <p><i>Assessed Program Objective:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PLO 1 Construct solutions to management problems using, facts, concepts, principles and analytical techniques and theories used in the study of management • PLO 2 Demonstrate a capacity to successfully engage in collaborative activities

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PLO 3 Express themselves through written and verbal communication to various audiences most desired by employers • PLO 4 Apply human capital principles, risk management and laws to effectively create solutions to problems and solutions <p><i>Findings:</i> As demonstrated by the scores connected with achieving the course objectives, the class learning outcomes were met. The Instructor fully assesses student's work.</p> <p><i>Based on results – any changes to the program:</i> We will continue to evaluate the core classes.</p>
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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. 31% strongly agreed; 52% agreed; 3% disagreed; and 1% strongly disagreed. (2020-21 results: 38% strongly agreed; 43% agreed; 1% disagree; and 0% strongly disagree).

My Mount Mercy education provided an opportunity for an internship if I wanted one. 53% strongly agreed; 32% agreed; 0% disagreed; 1% strongly disagreed. (2020-21 results: 51% strongly agreed; 30% agreed; 5% disagreed; 2% strongly disagreed).

My program prepared me well for success in my current or intended career. 52% strongly agreed; 39% agreed; 3% disagreed; and 0% strongly disagreed. (2020-21 results: 54% strongly agreed; 32% agreed; 1% disagreed; and 0% strongly disagreed).

My Mount Mercy education prepared me for graduate study or professional school. 32% strongly agreed; 52% agreed; 1% disagreed; and 1% strongly disagreed. (2020-21 results: 45% strongly agreed; 39% agreed; 1% disagreed; 0% strongly disagreed).

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

The use of internships or field work. 71% strongly agreed; 22% agreed; 2% disagreed; and 0% strongly disagreed. (2020-21 results: 66% strongly agreed; 23% agreed; 1% disagreed; and 0% strongly disagreed).

The content of the curriculum. 49% strongly agreed; 41% agreed; 2% disagreed; and 0% strongly disagreed. (2020-21 results: 49% strongly agreed; 35% agreed; 2% disagreed; and 0% strongly disagreed).

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

Importance of their faculty advisor. 38% ranked it very important; 38% ranked it important; 2% ranked it not important. (2020-21 results: 46% very important; 20% important; 2% not important).

Importance of the Academic Center for Excellence. 6% ranked it very important; 6% ranked it important; and 51% ranked it not important. 24% indicated they did not use the ACE Center. (2020-21 results: 16% very important; 11% important; 24% indicated they did not use the ACE Center).

Co-Curricular Assessment Summary for 2021-22

Outcomes: While COVID-19 continued to provide unique challenges throughout the year, we had the following outcomes we'd like to highlight for FY22 at Mount Mercy University. The main way in which we solicited feedback on outcomes was via our annual climate survey (77 questions sent to all students), which is summarized below based on 152 responses (roughly 10% response rate):

- *Athletics:* Student-athletes were given a chance to provide feedback again this past year on their coaches, trainers, and support staff in addition to what they perceive as needs for the institution. In addition to creating a student-centered group to partner with dining services on healthy food options, the main request from the survey stated a need for greater resources related to mental health.
- *Mental Wellbeing:* Based on student-athlete feedback and from the general student population, we re-invested in hiring a Director of Counseling Services whom began in July 2022. In addition, feedback from students stated the current space for counseling was not accessible, so the University invested \$10,000 to repurpose a current living space into two counseling offices and a waiting area for students.
- *Student Engagement:* We saw a 1.26% increase in the *Offers Enough Programming & Activities* to 4.01/5. While COVID-19 regulations were relaxed in the Spring of 2022,

much of our social distancing, masking, and isolation policies were still in effect in the Fall of 2021 prior to this survey. Many adjustments were made to both engage students and be mindful of federal/state guidelines.

- *Leadership*: The Leadership Survey Assessment from this past year showcased key areas where students wanted to grow in leadership, so Student Services partnered with the Student Government Association to launch the [Mustang Leadership Program](#). The program was created with a focus on the Social Change Model of Leadership grounded in our Mercy heritage. This program received >\$5,000 funding from the SGA to engage both traditional undergraduate students, non-traditional, and graduate students in learning about their individual, group, and community values. We hosted monthly speaker series with seven speakers throughout the year, workshops on mindfulness, strengths, as well as vocation, and self-reflection. **DATA still being calculated**
- *Mentorship*: In the 2nd year of our Mustang Mentor program, 58.9% of first-year students met with their peer mentor at least once in their first semester at MMU, and there were over 280 one-on-one mentoring meetings with participating students.
- *Diversity*: Every one of our questions related to *Cultural Interactions* increased (table below) this year which are all focused on contact, communication, and interaction with people that are different than the respondent. We hired a new Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity in June 2021 and he held monthly programming focused on an event to Reflect-Engage-Serve in conjunction with the Mercy Critical Concerns. Additionally, the Director moved forward the DEI Strategic Plan in partnership with the campus and surrounding community. These efforts also highlighted a \$50,000 investment from the Student Government Association to remodel a space on campus that opens Fall 2022 focused on inclusivity, the JEDI (Justice-Equity-Diversity-Inclusivity) Room.

Question- 1= <i>strongly disagree</i> ; 5 = <i>strongly agree</i>	2021	+/- 2020
Have contact with people outside family who speak more than 1 language	3.07	+8.87%
Spend time with people from diff ethnic backgrounds	3.61	+8.08%
During my free time, I join activities to meet new people	3.28	+8.61%
Have friends who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender	3.97	+4.20%
Have friends whose backgrounds (ability, race, sexual orientation) are different from mine	4.27	+2.15%
Make an effort to make students with different backgrounds welcome	4.14	+3.24%
Eat lunch with people from different races and cultures	3.42	+11.4%

- *Vocation*: In the first year of measuring the impact of the Office of Career Services, students rated a 3.56/5 when responding to the statement, *Based on my interactions with Career Services, I feel more prepared to identify my career interests and develop career management skills.* (Pending updated feedback)

Action: Each year, departments will review the outcomes and student wants/needs to identify opportunities for improvement going forward. This typically includes the creation of a proposal to include a program overview, cost-benefit analysis, and measures of success. All new proposals are reviewed by the Vice President of the area, typically for co-curricular activities that is the Vice President for Student Success. If there are costs associated with the new program or initiative, they are included in the in the budgeting process which is reviewed by the Budget Committee and the Cabinet prior to board approval. Typically, items requesting >\$5,000 will require a special presentation and review by the University Cabinet for consideration. Additional programs that are student-centered may receive funding from the Student Government Association (SGA) as a part of their Activity Fee – Additional Funding Request process where they student Cabinet reviews all proposals for consideration.

- *Persistence:* This past year, we finalized and received positive feedback from our HLC Quality Initiative related to first-year persistence that has increased our first-to-second year persistence from a 20-year low <70% to consistently above that mark.
- *Student Engagement:* The Mount Mercy Activities Planning (M2AP) Board increased their student activity fee request from SGA by ~\$25,000 to bring back a full slate of programming post COVID-19.
- *Diversity:* In partnership with our SGA, the Department of Diversity, Mission and Ministry and several areas on campus received a grant to bring training for Crucial Conversations. This training focuses on building upon our framework of civil discourse that is utilized during a monthly *Hot Lunch – Hot Topic* series facilitated by students to engage the campus community. The SGA, Office of Diversity, and Mission and Ministry Office collaborated to create a \$25,000 *Sister Cora Marie Billings Diversity Endowment* that focuses on bringing diversity programming to our students based on survey and climate assessment outcomes noted above.
- *Student Health:* Based on the survey outcomes, the University has made the decision to continue with the contract partnership with the local hospital. This will allow students to have additional services and access to health support on-campus instead of being routed to local clinics.
- *Vocation:* The Director of Career Services has implemented a required meeting for all *Exploring* majors in their first year to address vocational questions while providing tools to assess their aptitudes and abilities related to their field of study; this includes an optional 1-credit course students can take as well.

Budgeting Requests for 2023-2024 (submitted Feb 2022) CONFIRM AT CENSUS

Under academic assessment, funding requests for 2023-2024:

Under co-curricular assessment, funding requests for 2023-2024 include the following:

Follow-up on 2021-22 Budget Approvals

Under academic assessment, funding requests for 2022-2023:

Director of Student Outcomes Research (\$4,000) **FUNDED**

Academic Center for Excellence work-study increase to support Peer Academic Coaches (\$5,000) **FUNDED**