

## **Co-Curricular Assessment**

Year-End Report: 2021-2022

Updated Fall 2022

## Overview

As a Catholic institution founded by the Sisters of Mercy, Mount Mercy University is committed to our mission *that provides student-focused education in the spirit of the Sisters of Mercy and welcomes people of all beliefs to join our community in pursuit of baccalaureate and graduate education and compassionate service to those in need. We strive for excellence in accomplishing our mission through four interdependent goals: Using reflective judgment, Engaging in strategic communication, Serving the common good, and Promoting purposeful living.*

It is through this mission and our goals that we provide opportunities for our students to grow outside of the classroom in co-curricular activities along their vocational journey. Whether one of our nearly 600 student-athletes, a part of our growing musical ensembles, on a faith journey with Mission and Ministry, a student enjoying the residential experience, or a leader in one of our 30+ registered student organizations, students have the opportunity to find their own diverse path on the Hill.

We recognized the need for a more robust co-curricular assessment plan following the previous HLC meeting and took note of the feedback shared:

*It should be noted here that there was little evidence of co-curricular assessment. The team saw ample evidence of a culture of assessment, evidence that frameworks for successful assessment have been implemented at the curricular level, and evidence that faculty are challenged institutionally to apply their assessment to their planning and practice to the years ahead. The social and organizational infrastructure to support co-curricular learning is present at Mt. Mercy; however, there is no evidence that co-curricular learning is actively being assessed.*

*At the request of the visiting team, a two-page narrative document describing co-curricular assessment was submitted by Jan Handler on July 17, 2017. There was reference to one question on the current senior survey (how important were clubs or activities related to the major – rank by importance). There was reference to a new pilot reflection paper for students asking them to address their service experiences. There is reference to objectives to increase co-curricular activities in the strategic plan, but specific objectives for those activities was not included in the narrative. The narrative describes attempts by the assistant director for diversity and engagement to create new activities to include assessments, but these are plans only. The narrative describes hopes for a mobile app, OOH LALA, to provide for future assessment of co-curricular activities, but this too is plan only.*

*NSSE data was cited in regard to the number of hours that students participate in community service and co-curricular activities, but no assessment of those activities was provided. There was a single question regarding co-curricular assessment cited under criterion 3B.*

*Although there was not enough evidence for the team to conclude that co-curricular assessment is vibrant, active, and institutionalized at Mt. Mercy, there is evidence that Mt. Mercy is aware of this deficiency, has plans to overcome the deficiency, and has the social and organizational infrastructure to be successful. The team strongly recommends that Mt. Mercy use its strengths in curricular assessment to inform and influence its practices in co-curricular assessment prior to the next review. The team also recommends that the team conducting the comprehensive visit follow up and ensure that a robust program of co-curricular program is in place.*

Based on this feedback, we have continued to build up our *Every Mustang. Made by Mercy.* plan. Over the last two years, we have worked to align our University mission to engage students outside the classroom while focusing on several key learning objectives to help them Reflect-Engage-Serve-Live.

### **Methodology**

We have built our plan around our mission, values, and the Principles of Good Practice that are grounded in Catholic Social Teaching and formed in partnership with the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU) and the Association of Student Affairs at Catholic Colleges and Universities (ASACCU). These principles were recently updated and released to institutions during the ASACCU Annual Conference in June 2022. We continue to focus on the following areas of student life outside of the classroom with both qualitative and quantitative tools: Student Engagement, Leadership, Athletics, Diversity, Campus Ministry, Service, Residence Life, Student Health, and Vocation. The specific assessment tools that were utilized are included in the appendices including the frequency of distribution.

**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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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.