

OSU Perspective

Understanding the 'Facts' & 'Figures'
about our students and their learning . . .

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Student Leaders of Positive Innovation Make Recommendations to Provost's Council

In May, 2003, the students in the Leaders of Positive Innovation Program at OSU presented recommendations to the Provost's Council about ways in which OSU could better engage first year students. Their recommendations are based upon a combination of OSU's results on the 2002 National Survey of Student Engagement, other data available at OSU, and the students' own research. The following summarizes the work of these students.

Increase Effectiveness of the Residential Environment:

- **Implement a housing internet entrance survey:** Using preferences, interests and compatibility factors students could choose a roommate. OSU clubs and organizations might also use this information to recruit members.



- **Increase use of theme halls:** Faculty need to be more involved in these residence halls by holding office hours, living, and teaching some seminar courses in them. Living and learning environments are common at many universities nationwide.

- **Develop stronger penalties for early termination of the housing contract:** Early termination of the housing contract disrupts potential learning opportunities in the residential environment. As revenue declines because of early termination, other residents are placed in a position of having to share in the hardship resulting from those breaking their contracts. Early termination of the housing contract that resulted in a significant financial penalty may create the opportunity for a valuable learning experience, as students may be more

willing to work out conflicts or concerns.

Create Campus Club Awareness:

- **Encourage clubs to create a web site:** The site could describe activities, provide accurate meeting times, and list contact names. Students could search the site to find clubs that interest them.
- **Create an online survey for new students:** This could allow students to match their interests with clubs and organizations that fit those interests.
- **Create a "clubs and organizations board:"** This would provide advertising as well as contact information for all clubs and organizations.

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Increase Student-Faculty Contact:

- **Encourage faculty to hold office hours at two or more time slots that would not likely be the slot for the same class during the week.** For example, Tuesday 2-3pm and Friday 1-2pm, rather than Tuesday and Thursday 2-3pm.

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Student Affairs Assessment Council Wants You!

The Student Affairs Assessment Council was initiated to guide the division-wide assessment efforts, to insure that a structure is in place that will produce a common data reporting system, to monitor

departmental assessment plans, and to implement the use of data for improvement.

Anyone who wants to be involved with an energetic and committed group of people engaged in on-going

dialogue about assessment is welcome. For more information, call or email Rebecca Sanderson at 737-8738, email: Rebecca.sanderson@oregonstate.edu

Gap Measurement Analysis: A Useful Model for Service Quality Assessment

Submitted: Bonnie Allen, Associate University Librarian, OSU Libraries

Providing quality service to students is an often mentioned goal of departments in higher education. The desire to improve the quality of service has roots in both the mission of the institution as well as the business model that keeps the institution competitive. Providing useful, timely and effective campus services contributes to student satisfaction with the educational experience and also differentiates one institution from another. Finding reliable measurement techniques for service quality has been a source of frustration for service providers for some time. Most quality control measures were developed for the quality of goods and do not address the particular issues of service quality. Unlike quality control for manufactured goods, service quality is hard to standardize or to control to the satisfaction of consumers. Students as consumers bring their own unique experiences to a service interaction that informs their perception of quality. As difficult as it is to objectively measure, the students' evaluation of the quality of service the university delivers remains a critical component in assessment. In response to this need, the gap analysis model has been successfully used in higher education settings.

The gap analysis model, developed in the late 80s by Berry, Parasuraman and Zeithaml, was intended for use in the retail industry and soon expanded to applications in other service industries. It provides an objective measurement of service quality by analyzing consumer need and expectation against what they perceive as the level of service provided. This is done by scoring on multiple service dimensions in order to create a picture of the

service quality in the organization as a whole. Gap measurement allows for scores on a given item to be interpreted using different ratings of the same item. The gap that is being measured is the aberrance of responses between the different ratings. This model was used in higher education in the early 90s and most recently became the basis for a research effort sponsored by the Association of Research Libraries (ARL). The ARL began development of a survey instrument named LibQual in 2000 to measure service quality in academic libraries including OSU. The survey has now been tested, refined and validated through rigorous statistical analysis. At this time the survey has been administered to hundreds of thousands of users of libraries and expanded beyond academic libraries to include those of various size, type, region and country.

In 1999, the OSU Libraries began outcome-based assessments of its collections, instruction programs and the overall quality of its services. OSU Libraries has long gathered operational data of completion of work, materials added to the collection and service provided. While the Libraries still collect data of this type to inform a variety of operational decisions, the Libraries recognized a need for additional assessments to measure the quality of our work, the success of our programs and the changing needs of our users. Gap measurement is a model that has been used in these assessments as a means to establish a benchmark for service and will be used in the future to monitor progress toward outcome goals.

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Assessment Expert to Consult at OSU

Dr. Marilee Bresciani, Director of Assessment, Division of Undergraduate Affairs and Visiting Assistant Professor, at North Carolina State University, will be on the OSU campus on November 12-13, 2003. Dr. Bresciani will present a two hour briefing on contemporary student outcome assessment practices and then will consult with departments in the Division of Student Affairs about student outcomes and their departmental assessment plans. She will also work with Academic Programs regarding outcome assessment.

Dr. Bresciani's visit to OSU is sponsored by the Division of Student Affairs and the Student Affairs Assessment Council. For Dr. Bresciani's biographical sketch and vita, go to: http://www.ncsu.edu/undergrad_affairs/assessment/files/behindscene.htm

For more information about her visit to OSU, contact Rebecca Sanderson, Director of Student Affairs Research and Evaluation, 737-8738.

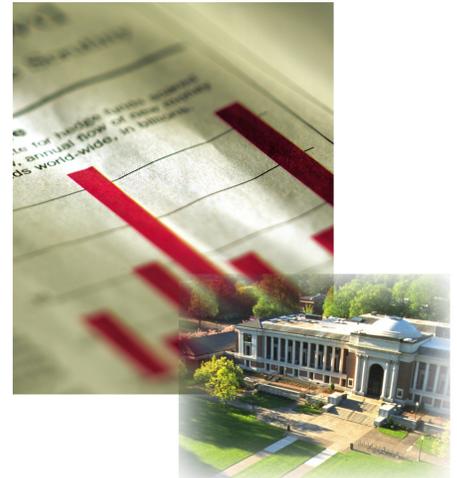


MU LOOKS GOOD!

The OSU Memorial Union recently participated in an assessment of student perceptions of our college union and its programs for 2002-03. The assessment was sponsored by the Association of College Unions International and developed by Educational Benchmarking Inc. (EBI). The MU participated in this same study two years ago and results were compared to measure progress.

We're very pleased to report that the MU's results showed improvement in the statistical mean score in nearly every category from the previous study. Additional information can be gained by what EBI calls the "select six" comparison, a comparison to all of the Carnegie Class institutions in the study, as well as a final comparison to all fifty institutions participating in the study, regardless of their size or classification. The "select six" group of institutions are those chosen by Oregon State University from all participants whose institutional profile is most like that of OSU.

More complete results will be shared at a later date, but it may be of interest to note that the OSU Memorial Union had the highest rating among the select six comparison for "overall satisfaction with the college union," and the second highest rating for that same question when compared with all Carnegie Class institutions. Watch for more details of this study in later issues of this newsletter.



Gap Measurement Analysis

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OSU Libraries assessments using the gap analysis model include the ARL LibQual survey, an evaluation of the quality of our collections, and more recently to measure Library staff perceptions of priorities and service performance. LibQual has been the most complex application of this model. OSU Libraries has been among the initial cohort of libraries working with ARL to establish a library service quality survey instrument. This study has included two web delivered surveys have been administered to a sample of OSU students, faculty and staff. The survey has asked over forty questions concerning library collections, service delivery, facility and instruction. For each of these questions, respondents were given three dimensions for service levels - the minimum level required, desired level and the perceived level. For each of the three dimensions they were asked to rate their responses to the questions on a nine-point scale. The gap

that is being measured is the aberrance of the mean score between each dimension. The measurements will tell us if the perceived level of service meets the minimum level required, if we exceed the desired levels or if we fall somewhere in between.

The collection assessment is another applications of the gap analysis model that is less complex than LibQual. The Libraries assessed each subject area of the collection against a variety of quantitative models to establish the existing level of collection and the needed level to support the curriculum. Faculty was then asked for their perception of the collection from a user's perspective. The resulting gap is the difference between the goal level, existing level and the faculty perceived level of each collection. From these quantitative and qualitative measures we are working to achieve the needed depth and breadth in our collections.

With the growing arsenal of assessment surveys directed at student experience, the gap analysis model

provides a methodology to include user perception of quality that includes the user's expectation and need. Based upon the Libraries' experience to date, the gap model provides the necessary piece that gives the full picture of level of service, quality of the service and desirability for improvement.

Highlights from the OSU LibQual service quality survey will be reported in the next issue of the **OSU Perspective**.

For Further Reading

Joint Task Force on Student Learning (1998). [Powerful partnerships: A shared responsibility for learning.](#) American Association for Higher Education, American College Personnel Association, National Association of Student Personnel Administrators. http://www.aahe.org/teaching/tsk_frce.htm

Palomba, C.A., & Banta, T.W. (1999). [Assessment essentials: Planning, implementing, and improving assessment in higher education.](#) San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

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- **Encourage faculty to briefly share something about themselves with the class on the first day**—perhaps about their family or non-research interests. This will make them seem more accessible to students, rather than just being a face at the front of the room.

- **Encourage faculty to make greater use of OSU's electronic resources**, including Blackboard, OSU listservs, and frequent email checking. Perhaps the faculty who already use these resources could be asked to deliver workshops for the faculty who do not.

Increase Academic Challenge and Support:

- **Institute a two-term writing course sequence followed by a communications course.** This would replace the Writing II and III requirements. Make this communications course a required course. This sequence should increase critical thinking, writing effectiveness and speaking effectiveness.

- **Increase the number of papers assigned in Writing 121** (currently 3 papers per term). These additional papers could be graded by graduate teaching assistants. If this is not feasible, feedback from upper division students without a grade is suggested.

- **Enforce the rules established for Writing Intensive Curriculum (WIC)**, especially concerning class size. Some departments allow too many students in their WIC courses and consequently, cannot assign as many papers or grade them as thoroughly.

- **Advertise the academic support services such as the Writing, Math, and Science Learning Centers in the residence halls** where most first year students live.

- **Condense the Lifetime Fitness for Health course (HHS 231) from 2 credit hours to 1 credit hour.**

Oregon high schools require health and thus most students have already taken a full year of health before they arrive at OSU.

- **Attend to academic advising.** There is a huge discrepancy in the capacity for quality advising between departments and colleges. For example, there is one advisor for 300 Art students, versus one advisor per 25-30 students in the College of Agriculture. Use of graduate students or upper division students to serve as advising assistants may be one way in which to ameliorate this discrepancy.

- **Encourage thinking rather than memorization in all courses.** Often exams test for memorization rather than for higher order thinking.

Create Noon to One—Free of Classes:

- **Schedule noon to 1:00pm everyday as class-free.** This schedule provides a time everyday for students to attend to those things that are out-of-class necessities and needs (e.g., meeting with a faculty member, getting help at one of the learning centers, attending a cultural program, meeting with an advisor, going to an initial club meeting, etc.) Friday could be used to make up for the lost class time M-TH.

Retain Orientation Programs

- **Continue START, CONNECT, and ODYSSEY Programs.** While these programs do an excellent job of integrating students into the OSU environment, many students indicated that it ends rather abruptly, leaving the students without activities or ways to get involved. Provide students a hand-out listing all of the student organizations with a brief description of

activities, a statement of purpose, and contact information. Email the "Open Doors" newsletter to the email accounts of all students.

So What?

Some departments are considering the student recommendations while others have begun to act. For instance, University Housing and Dining Services (UHDS) has implemented a stiffer penalty for early termination of the housing contract. They are currently developing the on-line Housing Internet Entrance Survey and anticipate its use by Fall, 2004. The emphasis on intentional living environments and learning communities has increased significantly with the partnership between UHDS and Academic Affairs.

Thus, the challenge is before us. Do we have the capacity to listen to students and to respond responsibly to their recommendations?

**OSU Perspective:
 What is it?**

The **OSU Perspective** was developed to provide assessment and other information about our students and programs. We hope that by making this information available to OSU faculty and staff, we can stimulate conversation that helps keep students and student learning at our core.

The **Perspective** is published quarterly both in print and on the web: http://oregonstate.edu/student_affairs/research/perspective.html

Ideas and suggestions for subsequent **OSU Perspective** publications are welcomed.

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