

# Pitzer College

**Interim Report to the Western Association of Schools and Colleges  
Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities**

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## **List of Topics or Concerns (from issues identified in the Action Letter)**

The following represent the topics of concern cited from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) Commission Action Letter to Pitzer College dated July 5, 2011.

### **Assessment of Student Learning and Achievement**

Pitzer has made major strides in beginning to create a culture of evidence, with faculty now embracing the value of assessment of student learning. The team found that "the infrastructure is now in place for assessment at all levels of the institution." However, the Commission is concerned that, because this infrastructure is so new, the team was only able to review minimal systematic evidence. Only a small number of pilot assessment programs, involving few students, had been completed with evidence of changes made based on the results. While student learning outcomes have been developed for almost all programs and courses, some are not framed in a way that can be assessed and will need to be refined. Additionally, Pitzer is urged to move beyond pilot studies and to expand assessment practices to all programs and courses in order to assess the achievement of all student learning outcomes. By the time of its next interaction with WASC, the Commission will expect the College to have implemented a complete assessment system for both academic and student life programs, with evidence that results are being used to improve educational effectiveness. (CFRs 2.6, 2.11, 4.6- 4.8)

### **Program Review**

The College's academic program review process is new and only one or two pilot programs have completed it. The Commission was pleased to see that the process has been generally embraced, the value of external review has been established, and changes have been made in the pilot programs as a result of the reviews. The team noted that the faculty sees this new process "as much more effective as a tool of assessment of educational effectiveness and program structure" than the previous process. However, the process did not include "analyses of the achievement of the program's learning objectives and outcomes [and] program retention and completion" as set forth in CFR 2.7. The Commission expects the program review process to be revised so that it includes results of assessment of student learning and to be fully implemented. Pitzer needs to move forward quickly to complete a substantial number of reviews in the field areas and thereby to be able to demonstrate the efficacy of both the program review process and the new assessment systems. (CFRs 2.6, 2.7, 4.4)

### **Institutional Research**

When the Comprehensive Program Review (CPR) team visited campus, it found that progress had been made in building capacity for institutional research; however, the EER team found that this initiative was "stalled" and that there had been "little progress in terms of overall data collection and analysis since 2008." The Commission shares the team's concern that the current institutional research function appears not to have the capacity to carry out the work required in this area. The lack of adequate data impacts all areas of campus. As one example, the team found that Pitzer has not collected and analyzed disaggregated retention and graduation data, which would help it to better understand the remarkable increase in graduation rates, from 52 percent in

1995 to 75 percent in 2005, and to use this evidence to continue improvement. Another example is that the impressive percentage of Pitzer graduates receiving Fulbright Fellowships (11 percent for the Class of 2010) has never been analyzed. The Commission expects Pitzer's capacity for institutional research to be strengthened with sufficient personnel and support, so that the College will be able to demonstrate that data such as those mentioned in this letter are being collected, analyzed and used for institutional improvement. (CFRs 2.6, 2.10, 4.4, 4.5)

### **Campus Life Outcomes**

The institution's third theme for this comprehensive review was connecting academic life with campus life. During the CPR visit, Pitzer asserted that the construction of new Gold LEED-rated residence halls was going to provide a major new source for co-curricular development. Given the importance of this theme and the emphasis on the new residence halls, the team had hoped that during the EER, "residential life programs, along with other campus life programs, would be systematically examined in an effort to demonstrate the extent to which 'integrative (co-curricular/ academic) learning' actually occurs." However, the team found that it is not clear that a culture of assessment exists" and that assessment of these important areas of campus life is only in the "infancy or initial stage." By the time of the next interaction with WASC, the Commission expects that the recommendations in the team report dealing with the third theme, including the development of student learning outcomes for co-curricular areas, the impact of co-curricular learning on student success and a fuller demonstration of the extent to which learning is integrated into campus life will have been addressed. (CFRs 2.3, 2.11, 2.13, 4.6)

### **Sustainability of Educational Effectiveness Initiatives**

The Commission commends Pitzer for developing so many new educational effectiveness initiatives. However, the Commission shares the team's concern that "the community's current level of engagement will not be sustained." There is no evidence that these new initiatives are now so deeply embedded in the systems and culture of Pitzer that they will be refined and sustained following this review. The Commission was encouraged to hear your update on what Pitzer has already done since the visit and to read Pitzer's response to the team report, which shows progress on these initiatives and follow-up on many recommendations in the team report. At the time of the College's next interaction with WASC, the Commission expects to see continued evidence that resources, personnel, and training at a high level have been provided to support the sustainability of this important work. (CFR 3.5, 4.1, 4.4-4.7)

## **Institutional Context**

Founded in 1963 and first accredited in 1965, the mission of Pitzer College is to produce engaged, socially responsible citizens of the world through an academically rigorous, interdisciplinary liberal arts education emphasizing social justice, intercultural understanding, and environmental sensitivity. This mission is embodied in our educational objectives:

- 1) Breadth of Knowledge
- 2) Understanding in Depth
- 3) Critical Thinking, Formal Analysis, and Effective Expression
- 4) Interdisciplinary Perspective
- 5) Intercultural Understanding
- 6) Concern with Social Responsibility and the Ethical Implications of Knowledge and Action

The Board of Trustees approved the College mission statement in February 2005. This marked the beginning of a period of focused institutional self-reflection and re-envisioning, which continued into spring 2005 when the College embarked on its most recent accreditation review with a series of campus-wide discussions. These discussions led to:

- Submission of Institutional Proposal to WASC in May 2006
- Completion of the Comprehensive Program Review Report in July 2008
- Intensive college-wide strategic planning from 2008 – 2009
- An academic strategic plan for 2010-2015, *Pitzer College: The Future of an Idea*, ratified by College Council in February 2010
- Developing a tactical plan (2011-2016), which was approved in spring 2010
- Submission of the WASC Educational Effectiveness Review in December 2010
- WASC Educational Effectiveness Review Team Visit March 2011
- WASC Commission's Action Letter received July 2011

These campus-wide activities bolstered the College's assessment efforts and provided critical guidance in understanding and articulating the reasons for Pitzer's successes. This included continued discussions of educational objectives and graduation guidelines for three educational objectives – social responsibility, interdisciplinary study, and intercultural understanding. We also focused on overall assessment frameworks for the College. One key outcome of these conversations was the creation of the Educational Objective Task Force (Section 1), convened by the Dean of Faculty/Vice President for Academic Affairs in Spring 2013. Its charge was to identify *what we want our students to know* and *how we know that they know it* specifically in relation to the three educational objectives listed above. This report details our efforts to date and shows our continual, positive momentum in establishing a culture of assessment at the College.

## **Statement on Report Preparation**

In October 2010, the College formed an *ad hoc* Accreditation Committee to plan and organize the WASC Educational Effectiveness Review visit in spring 2011. Consisting of faculty representatives, staff, and administrators, this committee continued to meet regularly after Pitzer received the WASC Commission's Action Letter in order to advance our assessment efforts with the momentum already gained.

#### Membership of the Accreditation Committee at Pitzer College\*

- Vice President for Academic Affairs/Dean of Faculty (Muriel Poston)
- Vice President for Student Affairs (Brian Carlisle)
- Associate Vice President for International Programs (Michael Ballagh)
- Associate Dean of Faculty (Kathleen Purvis-Roberts)
- Director of Information Technology (Robert Goldstein)
- Assistant Dean of Faculty (Barbara Junisbai)
- Registrar (Eva Peters)
- Director of Institutional Research (Jason Rivera)
- Interim Academic Assessment Coordinator (Omar Safie)
- Accreditation Liaison Officer (Thomas Poon)
- Faculty Representative, Academic Planning Committee (Azamat Junisbai)

\*Names of members in parentheses

In fall 2013, Thomas Poon, Pitzer's Academic Liaison Officer, began drafting the Interim Report. A first draft was shared with the Accreditation Committee in March 2014, and a subsequent iteration was brought to Pitzer's Academic Planning Committee on September 2, 2014. The Academic Planning Committee reviewed and made changes to the Interim Report prior to forwarding the Report to the Faculty Executive Committee, whose members include the President, the Dean of Faculty and Vice President for Academic Affairs, four elected faculty members, and two appointed student senate members. After receiving comments, a final draft was forwarded to the President at the end of September 2014. The Interim Report was presented to Educational Policy Committee of the Board of Trustees and approved pending revisions on October 11, 2014.

We used the areas of concern identified in the WASC action letter as a guide to examine Pitzer's assessment infrastructure. As a result, we are using the Interim Report as an opportunity to share what we have done to address the concerns raised in the WASC action letter and to show how the individual pieces fit together in our collective push in assessment for the future.

#### **Response to Issues Identified by the Commission**

The Educational Effectiveness Review Visiting Team's insightful feedback and the clear directives provided by the WASC Commission have allowed Pitzer to take productive action towards developing a culture of assessment and data driven self-reflection. Each section of this Interim Report highlights actions the College has taken to address the issues the Commission identified in 2011.

## Section 1. Assessment of Student Learning and Achievement

In its Action Letter, the Commission wrote, “Only a small number of pilot assessment programs, involving few students, had been completed with evidence of changes made based on the results. Additionally, Pitzer is urged to move beyond pilot studies and to expand assessment practices to all programs and courses in order to assess the achievement of all student learning outcomes.” One of our goals in addressing this concern was to move beyond the program level (field groups) and conduct assessments of programs and institutional objectives that involve all students so that assessment can be integrated at levels of the college.

We began his process systematically by assessing student writing through the First Year Seminar program during academic year 2011-2012. This activity provided the opportunity to assess student learning in Effective Expression through Writing, an educational objective. This has continued annually. Since we believe Information Literacy impacts this education objective in particular, we have also instituted an assessment of student learning in this area. This section also details our efforts in assessing the educational objectives of Social Responsibility and Interdisciplinary and Intercultural Understanding. Please find below an overview of these assessments and their results.

**A. Assessment of Writing Competency via the First Year Seminar program.** A core education objective is Effective Expression through Writing. One avenue for assessing this objective is through the assessment of students’ writing competency. The primary means that students fulfill the Written Expression educational objective is through the First Year Seminar Program.<sup>1</sup> Pitzer has greatly bolstered its teaching and learning in the First Year Seminar program, and conducted yearly assessments to measure our progress. This process began with the development of the First Year Seminar Task Force in 2012 under the auspices of the Academic Planning Committee. Our examination of writing competency through the First Year Seminar program included direct assessment of student work and resulted in a number of program changes:

- 1) Creation of collaborative assessment tools (First Year Seminar rubric): We created the First Year Seminar Writing Rubric in 2012, which has been continuously used and revised
- 2) Development of specific First Year Seminar guidelines to assist faculty in strengthening student writing and First Year Seminar-related learning outcomes
- 3) Organization of First Year Seminar faculty development workshops twice a year, indicating institutional support for faculty development in this area
- 4) Linking First Year Seminar students to faculty mentors by implementing a two-year collaboration between the First Year Seminar program and the Institute for Global-Local Action and Study, beginning AY 2013-2014

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<sup>1</sup> The current Pitzer Catalog specifies that, “[i]n order to be eligible for graduation, students are expected to demonstrate the ability to write competently by completing one full-credit writing-intensive course. It is assumed that most students meet the objective by successfully completing a First-Year Seminar course. These seminars have been designed as writing-intensive courses and are required of all first-year students.”

Using the First Year Seminar Task Force model—which includes a student survey, direct assessment of First Year Seminar student writing, and a faculty focus group—we have continued to collaboratively assess Writing Competency and Information Literacy on an annual basis. Here is what we have learned over the last few years from the Writing Competency assessment and what has been done to address the findings:

- 1) In 2011, very little emphasis on the process of writing (see Table 1)
  - Implemented faculty workshops in May and August to prepare faculty teaching in the First Year Seminar program, a Capstone workshop, and First Year Seminar faculty lunches.

*Resulted in increased emphasis on writing over the years (see Table 1).*

- 2) In 2011, students were not aware of the writing and library resources available to them (see Table 1).
  - The First Year Seminar program provided students a list of resources in each course verbally and in writing. There was also increased marketing from relevant offices.

*Resulted in increased awareness of resources by students (see Table 1).*

FYS Student Survey Results, 2011-12, 2012-13, 2013-14			
(taken the spring following the fys)			
<b>In comparison with other courses you've taken at Pitzer, how much focus was placed on writing and writing techniques in your first-year seminar?</b>	<b>fall 2011</b>	<b>fall 2012</b>	<b>fall 2013</b>
Much less focus on writing than in other courses.	13%	5%	6%
Somewhat less focus on writing than in other courses.	44%	22%	23%
About the same focus on writing as in other courses.			
Somewhat more focus on writing than in other courses.	43%	73%	71%
Much more focus on writing than in other courses.			
<b>In my FYS, the total number of pages (including formal assignments and polished essays, in-class writing, and informal writing exercises outside of class) that we were assigned to write during the semester was:</b>	<b>fall 2011</b>	<b>fall 2012</b>	<b>fall 2013</b>
more than 25	59%	68%	61%
20-25			
15-19	20%	20%	23%
10-14	17%	10%	13%
5-9	4%	2%	2%
less than 5	0%	0%	0%
<b>Of the formal assignments and essays assigned, my professor provided extensive written comments on:</b>	<b>fall 2011</b>	<b>fall 2012</b>	<b>fall 2013</b>
10 or more pages	56%	76%	71%
less than 10 pages	32%	19%	21%
My professor provided few or no written comments on my work	12%	5%	8%
<b>Of the formal assignments and essays, my professor provided me the opportunity to revise and re-write:</b>	<b>fall 2011</b>	<b>fall 2012</b>	<b>fall 2013</b>
10 or more pages	51%	66%	59%
less than 10 pages	27%	21%	30%
I was not given the opportunity to rewrite	22%	13%	11%
<b>In your FYS, were you informed of other writing resources? Please check all that apply.</b>	<b>fall 2011</b>	<b>fall 2012</b>	<b>fall 2013</b>
Writing or citation style manual (online or print)	38%	50%	82%
Writing Center	87%	92%	94%
Electronic library resources	64%	83%	92%
On-site library resources	57%	75%	92%
Designated FYS or other librarian(s)	n/a	n/a	81%

Table 1. Results of the Annual First Year Seminar Student Survey, 2011-2013

- 3) Student achievement on two out of the three Student Learning Outcomes assessed for writing has slightly declined, yet the third has improved slightly (see Figure 1).
  - Revised the First Year Seminar Writing rubric to provide more separation of Student Learning Outcomes being assessed to allow for a more detailed analysis of student work.
  - Emphasized alignment between syllabi, coursework, and writing Student Learning Outcomes

*Results of closing the loop will be determined after completing the assessment of the 2013-2014 First Year Seminar student work.*

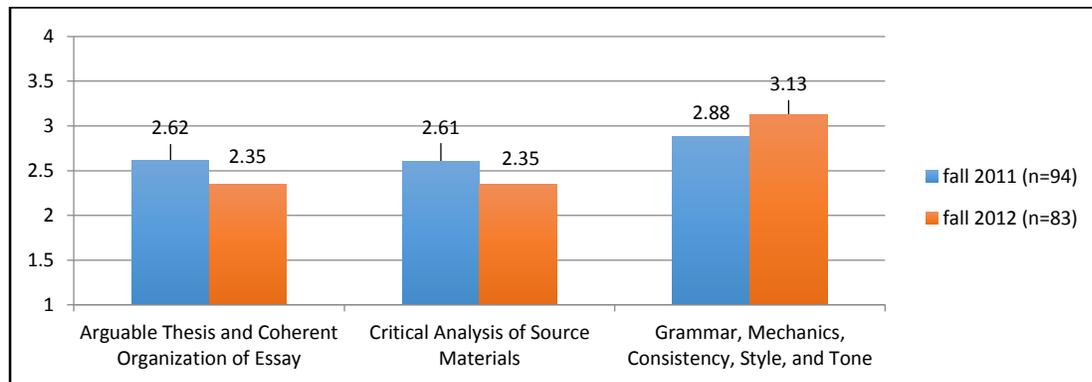


Figure 1. First Year Seminar Writing Rubric Scores, 2011-12

- 4) Multiple indirect assessments could result in assessment overload.
  - Currently considering merging the student survey with student course evaluations.
- 5) Assess students closer to graduation.
  - We are currently developing a plan to conduct this assessment.

Regarding the first three First Year Seminar program changes (page 3), our findings emphasize the results of a revision-based approach to writing in First Year Seminar, in which drafting, peer review, and sequencing of assignments are central to improve student writing. The fourth program change derived from the First Year Seminar Task Force is currently being implemented and assessment will not be finished until the completion of the two-year pilot. However, we have conducted faculty focus groups to gain insight on how to improve the pilot program. The overarching theme from the focus group was that greater support for faculty was needed. To address this, the College has implemented the following measures:

- Creation of an online suppository of First Year Seminar and mentoring specific resources by faculty for faculty.
- The First Year Seminar coordinator now holds an intensive mentoring workshop each year, the goal of which is to orient faculty to the psycho-social and developmental aspects of mentoring, as well as to clarify graduation and major requirements in fields like the sciences.
- The First Year Seminar coordinator now sponsors outside experts on advising to meet with faculty and emphasize the importance of mentoring—not only in terms of student retention, but also in terms of students’ intellectual and long-term development.

Overall, the First Year Seminar program is methodically addressing our student’s writing needs through program implementation and continued assessment. We plan to continue our successes and expand our assessment through professional development and program improvement supported by the Office of Academic Assessment.

**B. Assessment of Information Literacy.** Information Literacy is assessed by Claremont Colleges Library librarians through the coursework collected in the First Year Seminar courses. The Claremont Colleges Library currently defined Information Literacy as:

The ability to use critical thinking to create meaningful knowledge from information. The information literate Claremont Colleges student engages in a process of **inquiry** in order to frame intellectual challenges and identify research needs; strategically accesses and **evaluates** information; **communicates** information effectively; provides clear **attribution** of source materials used; and develops **insight** into the social, legal, economic, and ethical aspects of information creation, use, access, and durability.

Although it is not an educational objective we decided to continuously assess Information Literacy as it has a direct impact on the writing of our students as well as being a WASC core competency. This assessment process began in 2011 and has continued every year since. With last year’s assessment completed, the following was found:

- 1) Students performed admirably for an introductory course in all three dimensions and demonstrated continued growth from 2011 to 2013 with students performing very well in the evaluation of sources (see Figure 2). In partnership with the Claremont Colleges Library, we have closed the loop by:
  - Increasing Claremont Colleges Library Instructional Services to programmatic integration of Information Literacy instruction into First Year Seminar courses.
  - Including Claremont Colleges Library librarian professional development in First Year Seminar workshops
  - Increasing collaboration between the First Year Seminar coordinator, the Writing Center, First Year Seminar faculty, and Claremont Colleges Library librarians

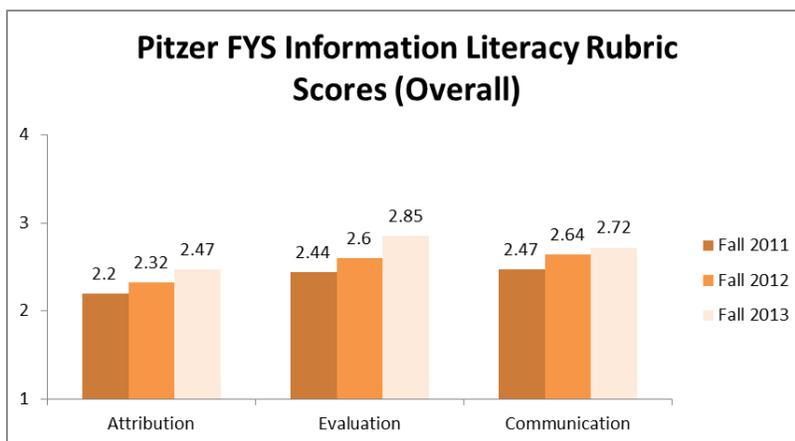


Figure 2. Information Literacy Rubric Score Growth

- 2) Increased levels of Claremont Colleges Library librarian engagement at the course level was directly related to higher rubrics in the direct assessment of student work (see Figure 3).

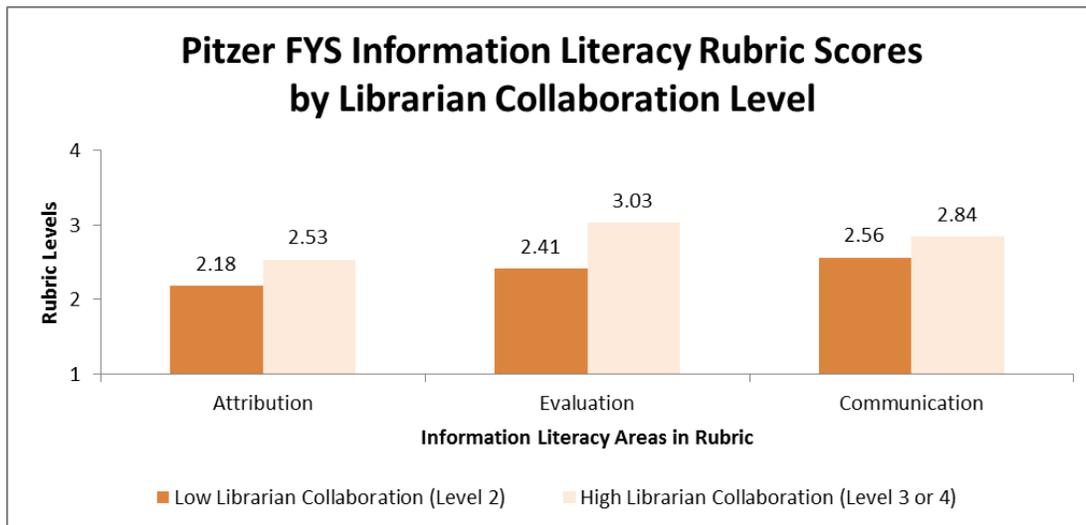


Figure 3. Information Literacy Scores by Collaboration Level

Information Literacy has improved since 2011, which means that the adjustments we made are having a positive impact. However, there are a few suggestions that will help in our process of continuously closing the loop:

- 1) We will continue the work of expanding strategic librarian-faculty collaboration in class and behind the scenes via faculty development and syllabi/assignment design support.
- 2) We will emphasize attribution and proper citation methods, formatting, as well as effective selection of authoritative sources.
- 3) We will assess students' Information Literacy achievement closer to graduation; we are currently developing a plan to do conduct this assessment.

**C. Assessment of the Social Responsibility educational objective.** In academic year 2012-13, the Office of Academic Assessment began the first part of a strategic examination of institutional level objectives by assessing the Social Responsibility educational objective. This is only the first iteration of Social Responsibility assessment here at Pitzer. But as part of an overall assessment plan cycle that will, over a number of years, touch on all institutional level objectives at Pitzer, we will be repeating and refining it. We decided to start with Social Responsibility as it is one of the two identified by the 2010-2015 Tactical Plan.

At present, the educational objective is described in the course catalog as follows:

**Concern with Social Responsibility and the Ethical Implications of Knowledge and Action.** By undertaking social responsibility and by examining the ethical implications of knowledge, students learn to evaluate the effects of actions and social policies and to take responsibility for making the world we live in a better place.

In order to fully understand our students' level of Social Responsibility achievement, we implemented a mixed-methods approach that utilized direct and indirect assessment:

- 1) We focused on the direct assessment of student work using two rubrics: (1) American Association of Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) Civic Engagement VALUE Rubric and (2) Pitzer's Community Engagement Center Rubric for Assessing Student Learning on Community-Based Education.
- 2) We reviewed Non-Credit Option forms for word count and emergent themes.
- 3) We administered faculty and student surveys soliciting feedback on the Social Responsibility designated courses.
- 4) We reviewed course syllabi for learning outcomes, grading schemes, and assignment types.

From this assessment, we found that:

- 1) Less than 50% of students achieved developed or highly developed on 10 of 11 dimensions from both rubrics (see Figure 4).

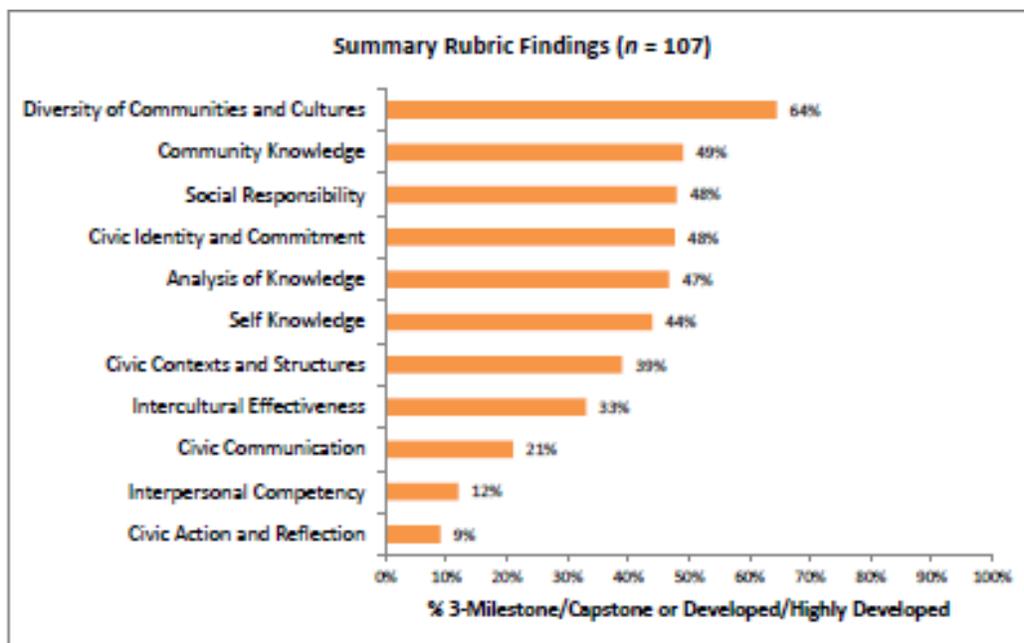


Figure 4. Summary Findings from Social Responsibility Direct Assessment

- 2) There was wide variability of student experiences and written evidence for the non-credit option.
- 3) Syllabi, faculty, and students all seem to indicate a curricular framework and positive impacts related to Social Responsibility, but course-based evidence was mixed in terms of specific dimensions of learning.

The findings from the Social Responsibility assessment indicated a need for faculty discussion on the dimensions of civic engagement or community-based education that are relevant to the curriculum and should thus be emphasized in students' Social Responsibility coursework. This finding reinforced the charge of the Educational Objectives Task Force in closing the loop and provided evidence of dimensions that may be more aligned to Pitzer's mission. As such, the

Educational Objectives Task Force is currently working on the following for the Social Responsibility educational objective:

- Defining Social Responsibility for Pitzer
- Creating clearly defined Student Learning Outcomes that are to be aligned for Social Responsibility courses.
- Researching examples of assessment tools that could be used in assessing these Student Learning Outcomes.
- Identifying alignment of existing courses to newly defined Social Responsibility Student Learning Outcomes.

The Educational Objectives Task Force is nearing the completion of its work and will present its suggestions in fall 2014, with the goal of clarifying the educational objective and developing methods to observe student learning in this area. After changes are implemented, we will continue assessing and refining.

**D. Assessment of Interdisciplinary and Intercultural Understanding.** Continuing with the plan set forth in the 2010-2015 Tactical Plan, Interdisciplinary and Intercultural Understanding was assessed and evaluated in AY 2013-2014. Interdisciplinary and Intercultural Understanding was assessed as part of the overall assessment cycle that will guide the timely assessment of all of our educational objectives.

At present, Interdisciplinary and Intercultural Understanding is presented in the course catalog as the following:

- **Interdisciplinary Perspective.** By integrating the perspectives of several disciplines, students gain an understanding of the powers and limits of each field and of the kind of contribution each can make; students learn how to understand phenomena as a complex whole.
- **Intercultural Understanding.** By learning about their own culture and placing it in comparative perspective, students appreciate their own and other cultures, and recognize how their own thoughts and actions are influenced by their culture and history.

In order to fully understand Pitzer's student level of Interdisciplinary and Intercultural Understanding achievement, we implemented a mixed-methods approach that utilized direct and indirect assessment of Interdisciplinary and Intercultural Understanding. After examining student work using the AAC&U Integrative Learning and Intercultural Knowledge and Competence VALUE rubrics and analyzing Interdisciplinary and Intercultural Understanding courses, we observed the following:

- 1) Interdisciplinary and Intercultural Understanding courses are predominantly selected from a few fields across the college, but there are no specific criteria that guide this self-selection (see Table 2).

Field/Discipline	# of Times Selected as Meeting IIE Requirement
Sociology	60
Anthropology	56
International/Intercultural Studies	53
History	49
Political Studies	49
Psychology	47
Spanish	43
Study Abroad	34

Table 2: Top fields/disciplines from which students select Interdisciplinary and Intercultural Understanding courses, AY 2012-2013

2) Course evidence was limited in representing 10 out of 11 rubric dimensions used to analyze learning for interdisciplinary and intercultural understanding, the one exception being Integrative Learning Connections to Discipline (see Figures 5 and 6).

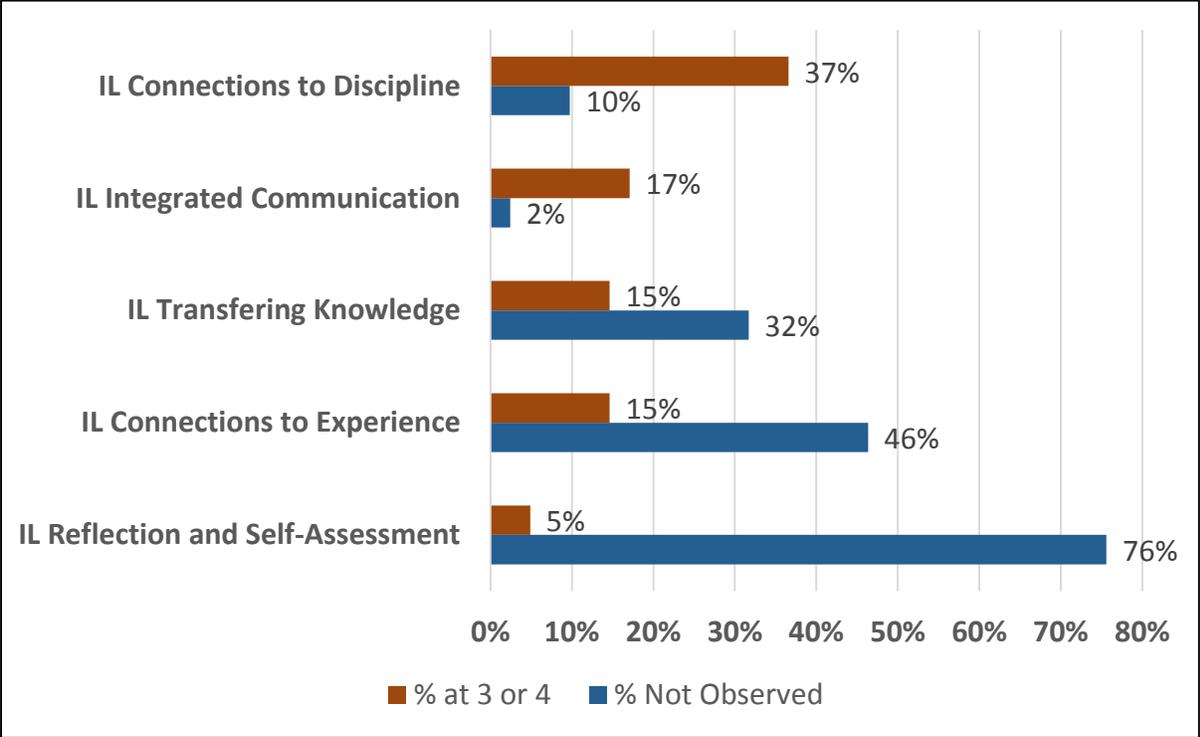


Figure 5: Integrative Learning Rubric Percent Scoring at a 3 or 4

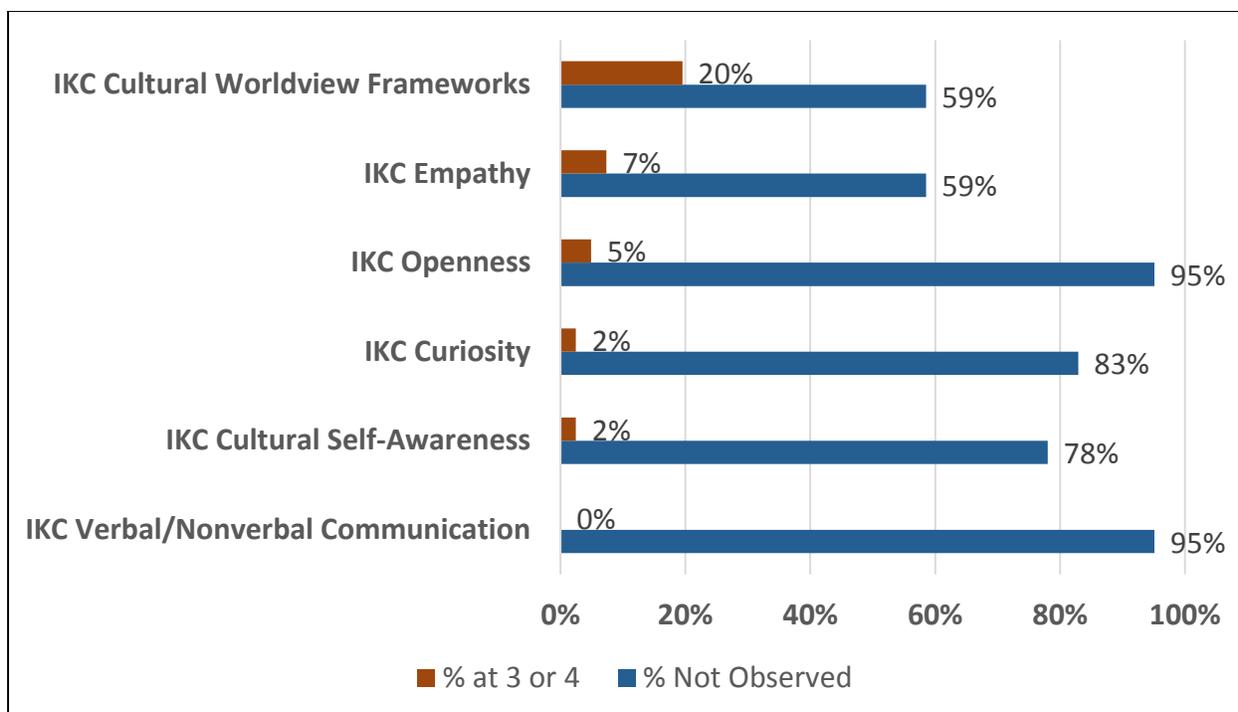


Figure 6: Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Rubric Percent Scoring at a 3 or 4

These two key findings from the Interdisciplinary and Intercultural Understanding assessment indicated a need for faculty to discuss the dimensions of integrative learning or intercultural knowledge and competence that are relevant to the curriculum and should thus be emphasized. The findings also suggest that there is a set of fields/courses in which these dimensions could be represented. In order to close the loop, the Educational Objectives Task Force is currently working on the following:

- Redefining the Interdisciplinary and Intercultural Understanding educational objective
- Creating clearly defined Student Learning Outcomes that align with courses.
- Researching examples of assessment tools that could be used in assessing these Student Learning Outcomes.
- Identifying alignment of existing courses to newly defined Interdisciplinary and Intercultural Understanding Student Learning Outcomes.

The Task Force is nearing the completion of its work and will present its suggestions to all faculty members in fall 2014. The College's regular institutional assessment cycle will provide evidence of the effectiveness of said changes in clarifying the Interdisciplinary and Intercultural Understanding learning occurring in our academic programs.

## Section 2. Student Learning Outcome Assessment by Field Groups

In its Action Letter, the Commission wrote, “While student learning outcomes have been developed for almost all programs and courses, some are not framed in a way that can be assessed and will need to be refined.” In response we sought to establish an assessment process for student learning outcomes, which would result in incremental assessment and refinement. Each Field Group now has Student Learning Outcomes and must submit an annual Student Learning Outcomes assessment report, a process that began in 2012-13. The purpose of the annual Student Learning Outcome assessment is to provide Field Groups with the following:

- 1) A way to assess Student Learning Outcomes through an incremental and manageable process
- 2) Information on student learning that will contribute to a Field Group’s Program Review
- 3) A framework to revise Student Learning Outcomes so they can be readily assessed

The Office of Academic Assessment developed a Student Learning Outcome assessment report plan and template for Field Groups. These tools emphasize the main points each FG needs to address:

- 1) What are your student learning outcomes and which one(s) are you going to assess this year?
- 2) How did you assess your Student Learning Outcome(s) this year?
- 3) What did you learn from the assessment?
- 4) What are your plans (if any) for addressing the findings in terms teaching/learning?
- 5) What are your plans (if any) for addressing the findings in terms refining the assessment process?
- 6) What are your plans (if any) for revising your Student Learning Outcome(s)?

To supplement the Student Learning Outcome assessment template, the Office of Academic Assessment drafted a guide for creating Student Learning Outcomes and provided support for the task of revising Student Learning Outcomes.

In 2012-2013, 66% of Field Groups completed their annual Student Learning Outcome assessment report, and two themes were prevalent in the reports provided. First, the quality of Student Learning Outcomes needed additional improvement. Second, greater outreach was required to improve the completion rate of annual Student Learning Outcome assessment reports. To close the loop, the Office of Academic Assessment completed the following:

- Met with 50% of Field Groups to provide support in reviewing their report, Student Learning Outcomes, and the assessment process.
- Established “Assessment Office Hours” where any Field Group, program, or individual faculty member or program representative can ask questions and receive support.
- Implemented two workshops in spring 2014 on a) creating Student Learning Outcomes and their importance to teaching and learning, and b) integrating Student Learning Outcome assessment into existing classroom assignments.

A number of our Field Groups have demonstrated their commitment to academic assessment by conducting annual assessment projects that enable them to refine their curriculum, Student Learning Outcomes, and assessment tools. For example, the History Field Group has made substantive changes in this area that will be reassessed at their next Program Review. This Field

Group created student learning outcomes in fall 2010, three of which were assessed in spring 2011 where faculty analyzed senior seminar papers. The learning outcomes assessed predominantly pertained to Pitzer's third educational objective: Critical Thinking, Formal Analysis, and Effective Expression. Since 2011, the Field Group has continued its commitment to assessment by refining its assessment tools, conducting annual assessments of student work, and expanding its assessment to include senior thesis projects. Of the 30 students who have completed the senior seminar from AY 2010-2011 to AY 2013-14, 22 were deemed "Developed" or "Highly Developed" in those categories. All seniors writing thesis projects were "Developed" or "Highly Developed" for every outcome assessed.

Although the review of this year's annual Field Group Student Learning Outcome assessment reports is not complete, the outreach efforts of the Office of Academic Assessment has led to an 89% completion rate for this year. More work is needed, but we have seen promising results thus far and believe that the quality of Student Learning Outcomes and the meaningful use of annual Field Group Student Learning Outcome assessment reports in the Program Review process can be achieved.

### **Section 3. Assessment of Student Learning on Direct-Run and Exchange Study Abroad Programs**

Pitzer Study Abroad Programs and Exchanges are an important academic co-curricular program. They provide opportunities for students to explore Pitzer's educational objectives, especially the objectives of Intercultural Understanding and Concern with Social Responsibility and the Ethical Implications of Knowledge and Action. They draw potential students interested in study abroad and contribute to the success of Pitzer students.

In its Action Letter, the Commission commended Pitzer for developing many new educational effectiveness initiatives, emphasizing the need to sustain this assessment. We are pleased to report that one of our first initiatives in educational effectiveness assessment not only continues to be sustained, but has closed the loop. As discussed in the 2010 Educational Effectiveness Review, the Office of Study Abroad began to assess student intercultural learning outcomes on our direct-run study abroad programs in Nepal and Costa Rica. Since Nepal is our oldest direct-run program, we completed its program review first. The Costa Rica program and Exchange programs are currently undergoing review.

#### **A. Assessment of Direct-Run Study Abroad Programs**

Pitzer's direct-run programs employ a **community-based, cultural immersion educational model** designed to provide students with deep engagement with the host culture, maximizing the intercultural and language learning that comes through this experience. Although each site is different, the programs follow the same set of student learning outcomes:

- 1) Students will be able to interact with members of the host culture around specific issues and topics (assessed through specific assignments that include detailed conversations and interviews with individuals from the host community)
- 2) Students will be able to analyze issues from multiple perspectives within the host culture (checks tendency to make generalizations about the culture based on one person or one group's perspective).
- 3) Students will be able to integrate personal experience and/or observations (especially conversations with individuals from the host community) with readings and lectures.
- 4) Students will be able to observe behaviors within host communities without interpreting or judging based on one's own culture (four non-judgmental observations of the new culture).
- 5) Students will be able to acknowledge and express personal feelings arising from interactions within the host community without judging host culture.
- 6) Students will demonstrate empathy, respect, and understanding for host culture perspectives.
- 7) Students will be able to analyze issues/events from perspective of own culture and that of host community; analysis of local issues in light of global processes (assessed through the global-local reflection on issues assignment).
- 8) Students will develop a new understanding/perspective of own culture based on interactions with host culture or vice-versa (global-local reflection on culture).
- 9) Students will develop an improved understanding of social justice issues related to topic/assignment.

For the Nepal Program Review (2009 through 2011), the primary goal of direct assessment was to identify general and holistic indicators of intercultural learning. These included, for example, writing that demonstrates interaction and empathy with members of the host culture, regardless of topic or content. Using the student field book as the indicator, 66 student essays from six field book assignments were coded for evidence of the first 8 learning outcomes mentioned above. Using a rubric, we coded each assignment as either 1=Not Evident, 2=Somewhat Evident, or 3=Strongly Evident. Below are the four major findings, as well as actions taken to improve student learning (Figure 7):

- 1) There may be a misalignment of field book assignments to Student Learning Outcomes. This resulted in the following changes: revising specific field book assignments, including assignment prompts so that they are more explicit about what students must demonstrate
- 2) Curriculum as a whole was not representative of Student Learning Outcomes. As a result, programs created a specific curriculum matched to the Student Learning Outcomes
- 3) Programs needed to revise Student Learning Outcomes to align more closely with program goals, student expectations, and the program’s assessment capacity. The following then changes took place: subtle revisions to Student Learning Outcomes and the addition of Student Learning Outcome #9 listed above
- 4) Assignments were not being utilized to analyze growth of student learning from one assignment to another throughout the semester. As a result, field book prompts are now used to provide feedback to students during their time abroad in a direct-run program.

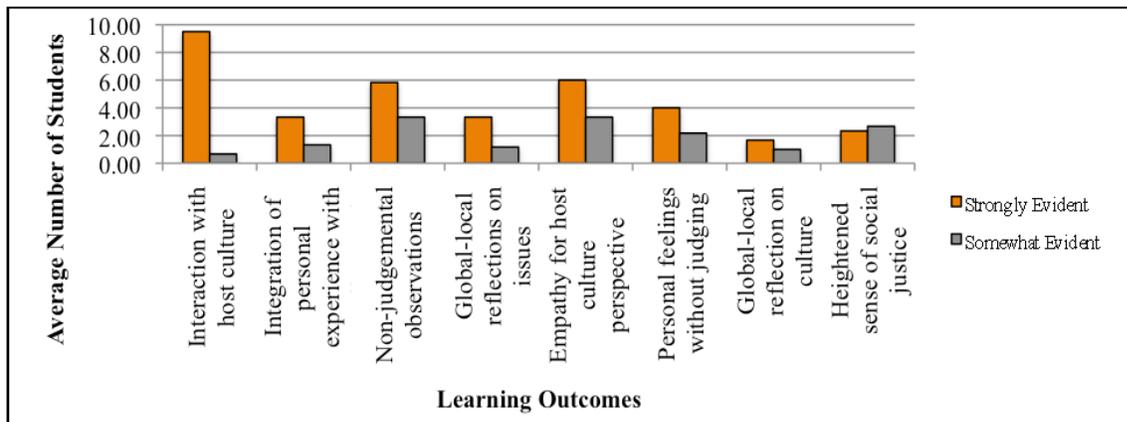


Figure 7. Alignment of Rubric to Evidence by Average Number of Students

By closing the loop after the Nepal program review we used the Costa Rica program review (2011 to Present) as a continuing assessment point (Figure 8).

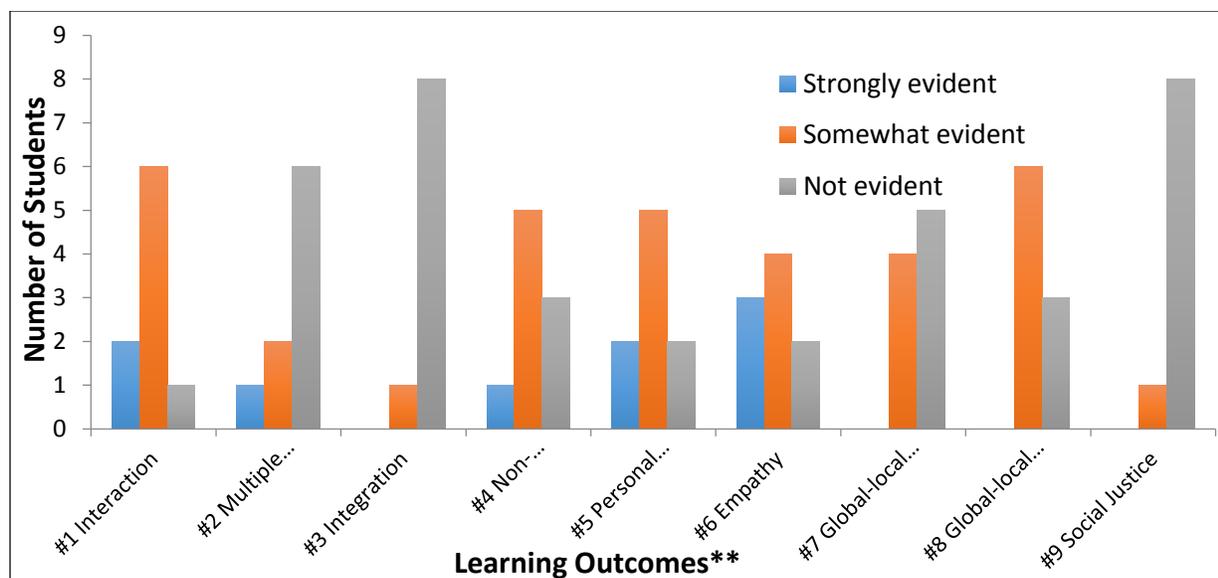


Figure 8. Rubric Assessment of Alignment of Critical Incident Assignment in Costa Rica to Learning Outcomes

Employing the same methodology used in Nepal, we reached the following four conclusions:

- 1) Students did not demonstrate strong evidence of intercultural learning through the Critical Incident assignment in which they described and reflected on a specific experience that was important or challenging to their learning. This was in contrast to findings from the same assignment in other programs (e.g. Nepal, Summer Study in Japan) (Figure 8). As a result, the program made the following changes:
  - It revised the Critical Incident assignment prompt to explicitly require interviews with Costa Ricans and integration of readings and lectures.
  - The course instructor will be more intentional in both explaining this key part of the assignment and providing opportunities for students to conduct interviews with Costa Ricans.
  - All Pitzer direct-run study abroad programs will emphasize intercultural learning to provide consistency across programs.
- 2) Through the Life History Analysis assignment, students generally performed well on three intercultural learning outcomes: #1 Interaction, #4 Non-Judgmental Observations, and #6 Empathy (Figure 9).
- 3) Students completing the Life History Analysis assignment did not, however, effectively connect the events of an individual's life to a wider context of major concepts, events, and issues (Figure 9). The program will now incorporate the following changes:
  - Create a revised prompt that has clearer expectations, and/or
  - Have students complete a second draft of the assignment after the initial interview

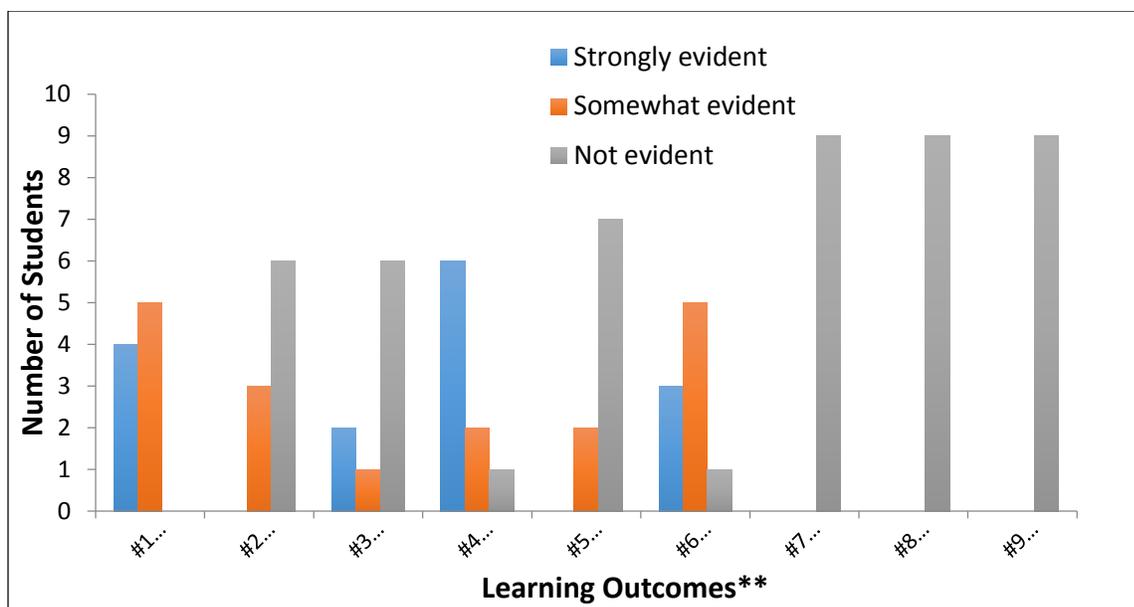


Figure 9. Rubric Assessment of Alignment of Life History Analysis Assignment in Costa Rica to Learning Outcomes

- 4) In general, students need more opportunities to connect material from readings and lectures to their daily conversations and observations. Consequently, we added a Contemporary Issues Assignment to the field book. This requires students to read one or more articles on a particular issue of interest and explore that issue through interviews with a wide cross section of Costa Ricans, as well as draw on materials presented in the core course.

Continuing with the assessment process, the direct-run program will continue to assess, make changes, and reassess to ensure that our curriculum is well aligned to our Student Learning Outcomes and that it is reflected in the work students produce.

In establishing an assessment protocol for Pitzer’s direct-run programs, we are able to design curricula that can be modified to ascertain the types of knowledge and skill-sets we expect our students to attain. The next goal was to develop an assessment protocol that would allow us to determine educational growth on our exchange programs.

### **B. Assessment of Pitzer’s Exchange Study Abroad Programs**

Exchange students attend various university-based programs around the world and represent approximately 29% of Pitzer students studying abroad. To maintain alignment, the exchange program utilizes the same Student Learning Outcomes as the direct-run programs. However, there is no on-site director to facilitate intercultural learning or assessment. To compensate for this, we began a virtual distance-learning course (MLLC 110 Intercultural Learning: Portfolio Writing) taught by a Pitzer professor. Using a custom version of the AAC&U Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Value Rubric, in 2013-2014 we assessed Intercultural Knowledge and Competence for students enrolled in exchanges (Figure 10).

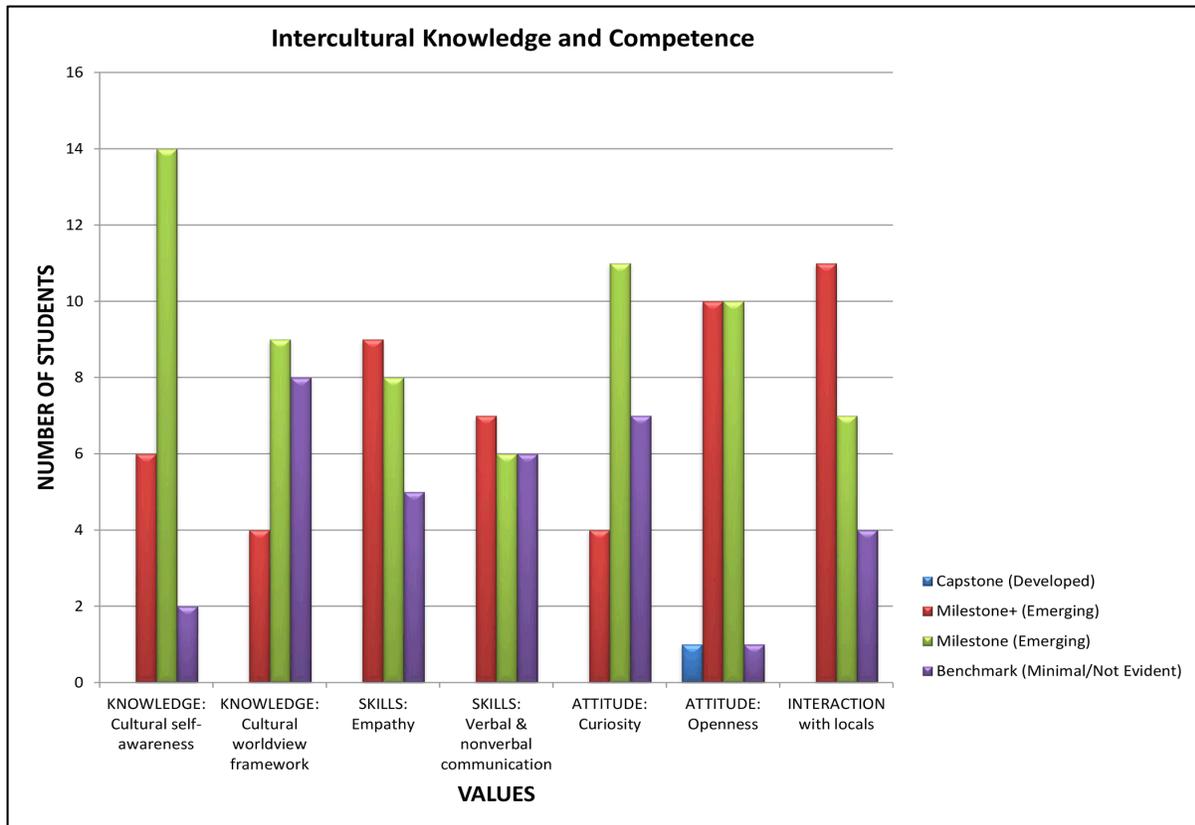


Figure 10. Assessment of Intercultural Understanding in Exchange Programs

Through our assessment, we found:

- 1) Students did well in maintaining an open attitude, the level and type of interactions they had with local inhabitants, and being cultural self-aware. We plan to enhance their learning by explicitly requiring interaction with host culture members in assignment prompts.
- 2) Students need improvement in the other criteria for Intercultural Knowledge and Competence. This may be addressed by requiring fewer, more targeted assignments such as: utilizing the most effective direct-run program assignments, and developing new assignments specific to exchange programs

We plan to continue the exchange program assessment using an annual assessment model similar to the annual Student Learning Outcome assessment plan of Field Groups (see Section 2).

## **Section 4. Assessment System for Academic and Student Life Programs**

In its Action Letter, the Commission wrote, “By the time of its next interaction with WASC, the Commission will expect the College to have implemented a complete assessment system for both academic and student life programs, with evidence that results are being used to improve educational effectiveness” (CFRs 2.6, 2.11, 4.6- 4.8). Above, we presented large-scale assessments of the academic programs that have become regularized, which will continue in *Section 5: Program Review*. In this section and *Section 8: Campus Life Outcomes*, we describe our accomplishments and goals for assessment systems in assessing Student Affairs and Co-Curricular programs.

This section provides an overview of measures the College has taken to address, first, assessment in academic programs and, second, assessing student learning outcomes in student life and co-curricular programming.

### **A. Assessment System Overview: Academic Programs**

Currently in its second year of implementation, our assessment system for academic programs emphasizes an incremental approach. This system has two parts. The first is an annual Student Learning Outcome assessment report, which is discussed in greater detail in *Section 2: Student Learning Outcome Assessment by Field Group*. Second, each program must go through a program review approximately every eight years. This is discussed further in Section 5. The program review system has been in place since 2006 and was revised in 2012 to formally require the inclusion of direct assessment. Nearly all academic programs have progressed through their first program review. The annual assessment report system has now been in place since AY 2012-2013 and has increased in completion rate from 66% in AY 2012-2013 to 89% in AY 2013-2014. Eventually, academic programs will use the annual assessment reports of student learning during the program review process.

### **B. Assessment of Student Learning: Student Affairs and Co-Curricular Programs**

We currently implement the assessment system described above in academic programs, and we are currently modifying it to fit within the Student Affairs and Co-Curricular program structure. What follows is a brief overview of what Student Affairs and Co-Curricular Programs have accomplished thus far, as well as next steps to fully implement the assessment plan.

In AY 2012-2013, the College created a plan to assess Student Affairs and Co-Curricular programs annually at the program level using a tailored Student Learning Outcome assessment report template. The method of assessment emphasized the connection between outcomes, activities, and flexibility:

- Largely due to a) personnel restructuring and recruitment for a new Vice President of Student Affairs and b) the complexity of the Student Affairs and Co-Curricular report template, we had 58% completion rate for AY 2012-2013.
- Nearly all of the Student Affairs and Co-Curricular assessment reports collected for AY 2012-2013 had alignment issues between learning outcomes and the assessment method.

To address the above two findings from the AY 2012-2013 assessment reports, we implemented changes to the assessment report process for AY 2013-2014. These included:

- Development of a simplified the annual Student Affairs and Co-Curricular assessment report template that emphasized revising learning outcomes and establishing alignment between outcomes and assessment methods.
- In AY 2013-2014, the Office of Academic Assessment created and distributed a how-to guide for creating Student Affairs and Co-Curricular specific learning outcomes.
- The Academic Assessment Coordinator met with each program area leader to discuss learning outcomes and assessment plans during AY 2013-2014.

These activities, which aimed at closing the loop from AY 2012-2013, resulted in 100% completion of the revised annual Student Affairs and Co-Curricular assessment report in AY 2013-2014. Half of the reports included learning outcomes that are assessable, and a quarter of the reports included aligned assessment tools. The activities from the Office of Academic Assessment appear to have made a difference, and we plan on using this momentum to continue our assessment efforts.

### **C. Creation of a Strategic Plan for Student Affairs and Co-Curricular Programs**

In addition to the changes implemented from the Office of Academic Assessment to support assessment, the College hired a new Vice President of Student Affairs (Brian Carlisle) in the fall of the 2013-2014 academic year. At the onset of his hire, he brought with him an understanding of the importance of assessment. Working with all members of his office, Student Affairs created a Strategic Plan focusing on the following four objectives:

- 1) **Leadership and Citizenship.** The ability to be interpersonally effective in a way that serves others, advances the common good, and empowers others to take on leadership roles. This involves being able to positively influence and direct groups of people; motivate, manage and define goals, and also to listen; be empathetic to the needs of others; and demonstrate a commitment to community.
- 2) **Community & Social Justice.** The ability to collaborate with diverse community members to build healthy and just communities. This requires being mindful of the ways in which we may have privilege or power, how global and institutional change starts with local and personal actions, and creating safe space for marginalized people and ideas.
- 3) **Self-Efficacy.** The ability to care for and develop oneself intellectually, physically, spiritually, and emotionally. The ability to make positive choices, engage in self-reflection, advocate for oneself, discern appropriate life goals, and pursue them effectively.
- 4) **Identity & Values.** The ability to connect one's life to a larger context of meaning. The ability to articulate personal beliefs and translate them into ethically consistent life choices.

The creation of the above learning objectives coincided with the creation of the revised Student Affairs and Co-Curricular annual assessment report template (discussed above). This facilitated the incorporation of the annual assessment process into the Strategic Plan. We are currently working to develop an assessment plan that addresses the four objectives above in a systematic manner and anticipate it mimicking the academic program review process. The Student Affairs

and Co-Curricular strategic Plan was approved in May of 2014, along with a three-year plan for Student Affairs and Co-Curricular to align themselves with academic programs' assessment cycle.

The process of building the capacity for assessment in Student Affairs and Co-Curricular follows the timeline below:

- 1) Phase 1 (2013-2014):
  - Develop Student Affairs and Co-Curricular Strategic Plan with defined learning objectives and restructured program areas (guided by new Vice President of Student Affairs)
  - Conduct AY 2013-2014 annual assessment with the purpose of supporting Strategic Plan
- 2) Phase 2 (2014-2015):
  - Create alignment map of Student Affairs and Co-Curricular program area learning outcomes to Student Affairs and Co-Curricular learning objectives and assessment activities
  - Continue annual assessment of program area learning outcomes utilizing revised assessment tools.
    - Student Affairs and Co-Curricular will now be on an annual assessment cycle similar to academic programs (see Section 2). *Note: Assessing either one program activity and all associated learning outcomes or one learning outcome across a program area and will build up to program area reviews similar to the academic program review*
    - Reflect on implementation of assessment and revise as necessary
- 3) Phase 3 (2015-2016):
  - Finalize timeline for program area program reviews
  - Continue annual assessment of Student Affairs and Co-Curricular program area learning outcomes
  - Continue to use feedback loops to refine assessment and program implementation to ensure achievement of program area learning outcomes and Student Affairs and Co-Curricular learning objectives (see Figure 11)

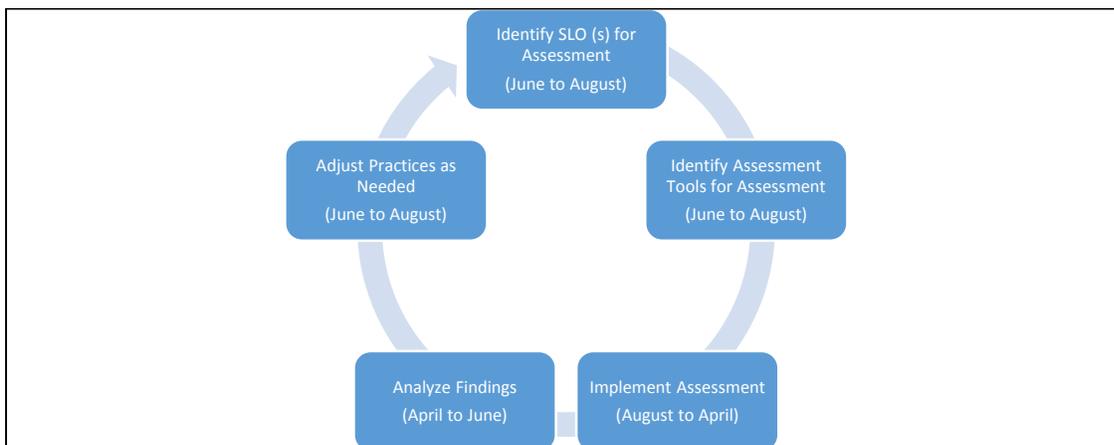


Figure 11. SA&CC Annual Assessment General Overview

**Summary**

The Student Affairs and Co-Curricular assessment only began in AY 2012-2013, but we have already observed growth in terms of participation, quality of learning outcomes, and alignment of overall Student Affairs and Co-Curricular learning objectives to program area learning outcomes. Within the next few years, purposeful assessment will be the norm and will be part of a program area review process.

## Section 5. Program Review for Academic Field Groups

Program Reviews for Field Groups involve the following components: a self-study, an external team visit and report, and a Field Group response to the report. The Commission identified such program reviews as an area in need of improvement. It wrote, “The College’s academic program review process is new and only one or two pilot programs have completed it.” Although the Commission acknowledged that Pitzer had a process in place for conducting program reviews, it argued that, “the process did not include ‘analyses of the achievement of the program’s learning objectives and outcomes [and] program retention and completion’ as set forth in CFR 2.7. The Commission expects the program review process to be revised so that it includes results of assessment of student learning and to be fully implemented. Pitzer needs to move forward quickly to complete a substantial number of reviews in the field areas, thereby demonstrating the efficacy of both the program review process and the new assessment systems” (CFRs 2.6, 2.7, 4.4).

To address the Commission’s concerns, we made policy changes in the Faculty Handbook. This was a year-long process involving several standing committees and movement through Pitzer’s governance system. These changes are described below:

- The length of time for a Field Group to complete the program review process was shortened from three to two years (Handbook IV.C.2.a-c).
- The oversight for program review was reassigned from the Faculty Executive Committee to the Academic Planning Committee (Handbook IV.C.1).
- More specific directions to Field Groups were provided regarding assessment of their programs. For example, Field Groups are now required to provide data on the following (Handbook IV.C.3.a):
  - The main Student Learning Outcomes of the major and how the Field Group assesses these learning outcomes
  - How the Field Group incorporate assessment of college-wide educational objectives
  - Evidence that students meet major learning outcomes and educational objectives (e.g., assessing senior theses, sample coursework, and tests)
  - A statement from the Field Group concerning which student learning outcomes and educational objectives need improvement and why.
- Field Groups now “Must include direct assessment of student learning for majors and non-majors” (Handbook IV.C.3.a).

In addition to the changes in the Faculty Handbook, a Self-Study Report template has been created to operationalize the Handbook changes and provide academic program areas with guidance on crafting a self-study report that is tailored to their program review needs. These changes and continued support of the administration and the Offices of Academic Assessment and Institutional Research have led to the completion of many program reviews since 2006 (Table 1). If we continue on our current trajectory, we will have an overall participation rate of 97% by 2017, meaning 97% of our Field Groups and programs will have completed or be in the process of completing their first round of program review.

		# of First Round Program Review Completions	# of First Round Program Reviews in Progress	# Unable to Complete Program Review	Anticipated Completion Rate for First Round by 2017	# of First Round Program Reviews to Begin by 2017	# on Track to Begin Second Round within Next 3 Years
<b>Field Group</b>	<b>Pitzer Specific (N=14)</b>	10	3	1	93%	N/A	3
	<b>Joint Programs (N=7)</b>	2	1	0	43%	4	0
	<b>Intercollegiate Programs (N=7)</b>	5	2	0	100%	N/A	3
	<b>Academic Co-Curricular (N=4)</b>	1	1	0	67%	2	0
	<b>Study Abroad (N=4)</b>	1	1	0	50%	2	0
	<b>Total</b>	19	8	1	75%	8	6

Table 3: Program Review Progress in Academic Areas. *Note: Field Groups are disciplinary or interdisciplinary groupings of faculty. Academic co-curricular programs include the Community Engagement Center (CEC), Pitzer Art Galleries, Pitzer in Ontario, and the Writing Center. Study Abroad programs include direct-run Pitzer programs in China, Botswana, Costa Rica, and Nepal.*

Overall, we have made good progress in program review implementation. A general timeline for program reviews over the next few years is presented in Figure 12. Those highlighted in green are programs that are currently undergoing their program review, those highlighted in yellow are set to begin the process between fall 2014 and spring 2016, and those in blue are set to begin the process between fall 2015 and spring 2017. Because the program review process in academic areas has only recently incorporated assessment of student learning, we do not yet have examples of field groups or program areas that have closed the loop. But given our current timeline for completing this new, enhanced round of program reviews, we will have a number of illustrative examples by our next WASC review.

F2012	S2013	F2013	S2014	F2014	S2015	F2015	S2016	F2016	S2017	F2017
EWL - Anticipated Timeline to Completion										
				Africana Studies - Intercollegiate Timeline to Completion						
				Asian American Studies - Intercollegiate Timeline to Completion						
				Chican@/Latin@ Studies - Intercollegiate Timeline to Completion						
				Economics - Timeline to Completion						
				Environmental Analysis - Timeline to Completion						
Media Studies - Intercollegiate Timeline to Completion										
	Neuroscience - Timeline to Completion									
	Philosophy - Timeline to Completion									
	Political Studies - Timeline to Completion									
			Psychology - Timeline to Completion							
	Pitzer in Ontario - Timeline to Completion									
Pitzer in Costa Rica - Timeline to Completion										
						Gender and Feminist Studies - Timeline to Completion				
						Religious Studies - Timeline to Completion				
						Science, Technology, and Society - Timeline to Completion				
						Writing Center - Timeline to Completion				
						Pitzer in Botswana - Timeline to Completion				

Figure 12. Timeline of Current and Projected PRs through fall 2017

## Section 6. Data Collection and Analysis

The Commission wrote, “When the Comprehensive Program Review team visited campus, it found that progress had been made in building capacity for institutional research; however, the Educational Effectiveness Review team found that this initiative was ‘stalled’ and that there had been little progress in terms of overall data collection and analysis since 2008.” It also stated that, “the current institutional research function appears not to have the capacity to carry out the work required in this area.” The Commission further “expects Pitzer’s capacity for institutional research to be strengthened with sufficient personnel and support, so that the College will be able to demonstrate that data such as those mentioned in this letter are being collected, analyzed and used for institutional improvement” (CFRs 2.6, 2.10, 4.4, 4.5).

Much has changed since the Educational Effectiveness Review Team visit regarding Pitzer’s capacity to collect and analyze data for institutional improvement. The involvement of the Office of Academic Assessment signals a significant institutional commitment to assessment (see Sections 1 and 2), including its commitment to capacity building throughout the college (see Section 9). The Office of Institutional Research has played a major role in these efforts, given the institutional data it provides to all programs and Field Groups during the program review process, as well as its work surveying and analyzing data across the college. These improvements were made possible by the following structural changes:

- 1) **Separate Offices:** The Offices of Institutional Research and Academic Assessment were split in two with a full-time, non-faculty Director and a part-time Data/Research Analyst responsible for each.
- 2) **Separate Responsibilities:** The Office of Academic Assessment handles all requests regarding *direct* assessment of academic and co-curricular programming. By contrast, the Office of Institutional Research focuses on reporting data and *indirect* assessment (surveys) of academic and co-curricular programs. The two offices plan assessment activities collaboratively.

By addressing our structural needs, the capacity of the two offices together has resulted in many institutional improvements. We have also enhanced our capacity to institutionalize assessment throughout the College through the concerted efforts of the Offices of the Registrar and Information Technology, as well as the Writing Center and the Academic Planning Committee.

### A. Office of Institutional Research

This office has made a number of contributions assessing college performance at institutional, area, and program levels. We highlight four main areas of advancement.

First, the Office of Institutional Research produces Dashboards on an annual basis. Field Groups and academic programs use these for program planning as part of the program review process. Dashboards also enable the President’s Cabinet to monitor overall college performance and direct strategic planning. For an example, see:

<http://pitweb.pitzer.edu/institutional-research/wp-content/uploads/sites/33/2014/02/2013-Public-Dashboard.pdf>

Second, the Office of Institutional Research creates regular reports on graduation and retention rates. Through analyzing such data, we became concerned with sophomore retention. As a consequence, we created the Sophomore Year Experience. For an example of Institutional Research reports on graduation and retention used internally, see:

<http://pitweb.pitzer.edu/institutional-research/wp-content/uploads/sites/33/2014/09/Retention-and-Graduation-Rates.pdf>

Third, this office recently acquired a site license for Qualtrics Survey Software and provides full support for the creation, implementation, and analysis of survey data throughout the college. This change has reined in the use of *ad hoc* surveys. More importantly, the Institutional Research Director has increasingly participated in the pedagogical implementation of assessment surveys in the classroom.

Lastly, the Office of Institutional Research is responsible for responding annually to roughly 15 external requests, including IPEDS, US News, and the Common Data Set (CDS). As result, Institutional Research has increased its collaboration with the Registrar's Office, Human Resources, Financial Aid, Admissions, and the Treasurer. This has also led to enhanced data consistency.

## **B. Office of Academic Assessment**

This office has succeeded in developing an institutionalized framework of assessment across the college. We highlight a number of the areas below.

- Created how-to guides for crafting assessable Student Learning Outcomes in Student Affairs and Co-Curricular programs and academic programs. This intervention is evident in annual reports from a) Resident Assistant and New Student Mentor programs in Student Affairs and Co-Curricular , and b) Revising Pitzer in Ontario's Student Learning Outcomes as part of their self-study report
- Created a self-study report template for the program review process. Faculty have communicated that there is now less ambiguity in the self-study report process, as well as improved focus on assessment. Current programs under review include: Neuroscience, Pitzer in Ontario, English and World Literature, Philosophy, Political Studies, Environmental Analysis, and Economics
- Created a curriculum/program mapping template to be used by Student Affairs and Co-Curricular and academic programs as part of the program review process. Student Affairs and Co-Curricular programs currently use this to align programs to Student Learning Outcomes and assessment activities, and it will be used by English and World Literature, Environmental Analysis, and Economics for program reviews
- Conducted assessment workshops for the first time in AY 2013-2014 on crafting assessable Student Learning Outcomes and integrating assessment into the classroom. For example, the Modern Languages Literatures and Culture program utilizes the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages Oral Proficiency Interview to assess student proficiency in Spanish and provide feedback within the curriculum
- Created a long-term assessment plan for Field Group program review, which has increased lead time for Field Group preparation and decreased ambiguity in the process

- Created annual Student Learning Outcome assessment plan for Student Affairs and Co-Curricular and Academic programs, which will result in decreased assessment workload during the program review process. This development highlights the connection between annual assessment and program review
- Established open Assessment Office hours two days a week
- Assisted in revising the Faculty Handbook to include direct assessment and simplified the program review process
- Participated in the 2014 WASC Assessment Leadership Academy

The College made the above activities possible by increasing institutional capacity. This has led to the Offices of Institutional Research and Academic Assessment being central points for all activities related to assessment and evaluation. For example, the Office of Academic Assessment has supported faculty in the submission of four research and program grants, such as to the National Science Foundation and Project Kaleidoscope. The Office of Institutional Research has become a place for faculty and staff to ask questions related to survey methodology. The increase of Student Affairs and Co-Curricular annual assessment report completion rate from 58% (AY 2012-2013) to 100% (AY 2013-2014) and the increase of Field Group annual assessment report completion rate from 66% (AY 2012-2013) to 89% (AY 2013-2014) are also evidence of the impact of these initiatives. As one faculty member put it, “I felt fully supported in my assessment efforts” (personal communication, Phillips, S.).

In addition to the structural changes to the Offices of Institutional Research and Academic Assessment, additional changes have occurred in other offices to further support the College and its assessment practices.

### **C. Office of the Registrar**

This office has achieved number of goals since the Educational Effectiveness Review, including the time-intensive project of digitizing thousands of student records dating back to 1965. The college now has easy access to student records, facilitating their use in assessment. Using Acalog, the Registrar’s office has also moved to an online catalog, which has streamlined the flow of information between CX, the academic portal, and the catalog. Data availability and clarity are now more consistent, decreasing time for cataloging and sharing information. Lastly, the transition to Cognos 10 and Query Studio for professional and *ad hoc* report authoring, respectively, is simplifying the reporting process.

### **D. Office of Information Technology**

The Office of Information Technology has implemented a data process aimed at increasing availability and access to information. It has improved data entry and access, as well as bridged existing silos with near real time sync for up-to-date data and with data warehouse for reporting.

This office has also enabled the effective use of technology in the classroom by staying abreast of industry trends in classroom technology and their applicability to the college’s classrooms.

## **E. The Writing Center**

The College has demonstrated its commitment to improving student writing and the assessment of student writing through a number of institutional advancements, including hiring a new tenure-track professor who directs the Writing Center.

Beyond our progress in assessing the First Year Seminar program, the Writing Center also conducted additional assessments, such as:

- Tracking the number and types of tutoring sessions and writing workshops the Center delivers
- Creating for the first time an assessment tool that will provide summative evaluation data on Writing Center sessions held with students. For example, results from fall 2013 reveal that students felt that the quality of workshops was “high” to “very high” (4.38 on 5 point scale) and that the materials and knowledge gained were very useful.

The above findings resulted in the following changes:

- Increased regular consultation from 30 minutes to 50 minutes to ensure rigorous feedback. These changes were based on information from literature and from feedback from faculty and Writing Center Fellows.
- Revised and increased Writing Center Fellows’ training to two-full days
  - Fellows rated the overall quality of the training at “high” to “very high” (4.5 on 5 point scale).
  - This is important feedback, because five of the fellows were returning tutors and still found the training valuable.

## **F. The Academic Planning Committee**

This committee now has sole oversight of program reviews. The following charge was added to the Academic Planning Committee description in the Faculty Handbook (Handbook IV.F.1.3.d):

This Committee will provide oversight for the assessment of the college’s educational objectives, as they pertain to academic planning, PR, and external accreditation (i.e., WASC). In addition, this committee will provide oversight for the assessment of student learning outcomes among programs/FGs (e.g., intercollegiate programs, Community Engagement Center, and International Programs), and academic activities (e.g., advising and first year seminars), as they pertain to academic planning, PR, and external accreditation (i.e., WASC). Based on the assessment of the college’s educational objectives and student learning outcomes, this Committee will make recommendations to FEC, CC, and Budget Implementation Committee as appropriate.

## **Summary**

Each of the above offices and committees has a strong understanding of the importance of assessment. The changes presented above were implemented to support the assessment work of the College both through the Offices Institutional Research and Academic Assessment and the individual programs. This combined effort has led to improved student learning and assessment processes.

## Section 7. Use of Data to Learn from Pitzer's Successes

The Commission wrote in its Action Letter, "The lack of adequate data impacts all areas of the campus. As one example, the team found that Pitzer has not collected and analyzed disaggregated retention and graduation data, which would help it to better understand the remarkable increase in graduation rates, from 52 percent in 1995 to 75 percent in 2005, and to use this evidence to continue improvement." It also wrote, "Another example is that the impressive percentage of Pitzer graduates receiving Fulbright Fellowships (11 percent for the Class of 2010) has never been analyzed."

The College has moved to address these concerns by:

- Establishing the Offices of Academic Assessment and Institutional Research and charging them with establishing infrastructure to collect and analyze data (see Section 6)
- Charging the Office of Institutional Research with retention and graduation data analysis
- Charging the Office of Information Technology and the Office of the Registrar with building the information database to conduct disaggregated retention and graduation data analysis back to 1995
- Charging the Office of Academic Assessment and Institute for Global-Local Action and Study with conducting an assessment of our Fulbright program as a possible template for other programs and areas

**A. Assessment of Retention and Graduation Rates.** In response to our efforts in building our institutional capacity for assessment and evaluation, the Office of Institutional Research has begun the process of examining graduation and retention rates and sharing findings with the Pitzer community (visit <http://pitweb.pitzer.edu/institutional-research/wp-content/uploads/sites/33/2014/02/2013-Public-Dashboard.pdf>). In the process of developing the structures necessary, we began to work backwards from current years to examine aggregate retention and graduation rates. We found that aggregate retention rates from sophomore to junior year were low. Using the findings, we closed the loop by developing the Sophomore Year Experience program, created jointly between Student Affairs and Co-Curricular and Academic Affairs to:

- Guide student major declaration
- Build connections between students, Pitzer College, and alumni
- Build connections among students
- Share Pitzer opportunities awaiting them in the junior year

**B. Assessment of Fulbright applications.** As of 2014, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* has ranked Pitzer College as the top producer of Fulbright students among all U.S. colleges in the "bachelor's institution" category for four consecutive years. Pitzer College has been the national leader in Fulbright Fellowships per 1,000 students for 10 of the last 11 years. Approximately 41% of our 2012-2013 Fulbright applicants were accepted as Fulbright winners. These are amazing accomplishments. But what makes Pitzer College's program so successful? In response to this question, we assessed Teaching Fulbright Fellowships.

## Atmosphere

Pitzer College has created an atmosphere that encourages students to study abroad through its various programs through constant workshops, informational sessions, and application assistance by the Study Abroad Office. As a result, approximately 78% of students study abroad as part of their educational experience. The Office of Institutional Research will continue to analyze data to monitor the long-term growth of study abroad participation and relate findings to Study Abroad Outreach.

## Quality of applications

- 1) *Teaching, Mentoring, or Tutoring*: Fulbright winners present considerable evidence of teaching, mentoring, or tutoring in their Grant Purpose Essay (Figure 13) and their Personal Statement (Figure 14), and they are able to articulate how previous experience will inform their teaching practices.
- 2) *Pedagogy*: Fulbright winners are able to describe their teaching approach within a contextual framework that emphasizes the importance of cultural sensitivity and language acquisition, as well as how that approach will be effective (Figure 13).
- 3) *Empathy and Open-mindedness*: Winners provide concrete examples of compassion and open-mindedness towards others, as well as the potential impact this will have on their Fulbright experience (Figure 14).

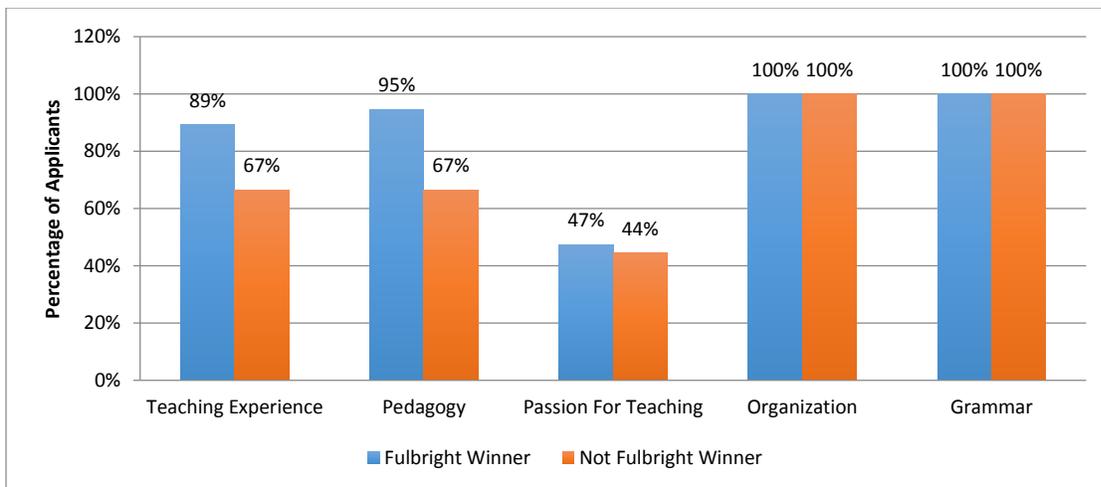


Figure 13. Grant Purpose Essay Rubric Scores at Developed and Highly Developed

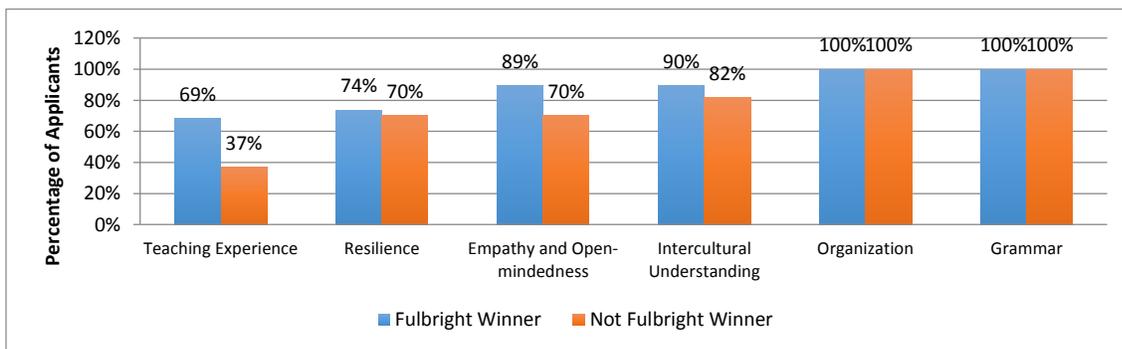


Figure 14. Personal Statement Rubric Scores at Developed and Highly Developed

- 4) *Observed Communication Skills*: Fulbright winners had letters of recommendation that provided greater insight into the high quality of students' communication skills (Figure 15).

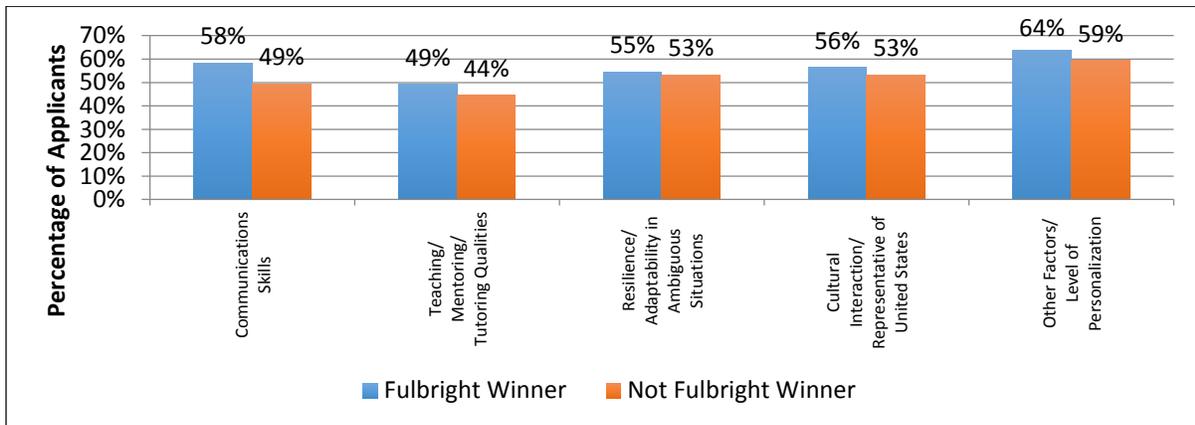


Figure 15. Letter of Recommendation Scores at High

- 5) *Prior Study Abroad Experience*: Fulbright winners had prior personal travel abroad experience and prior study abroad experience through Pitzer (Figure 16). Only 22% of those who won a fellowship experienced only study abroad or personal travel experience (Figure 16).

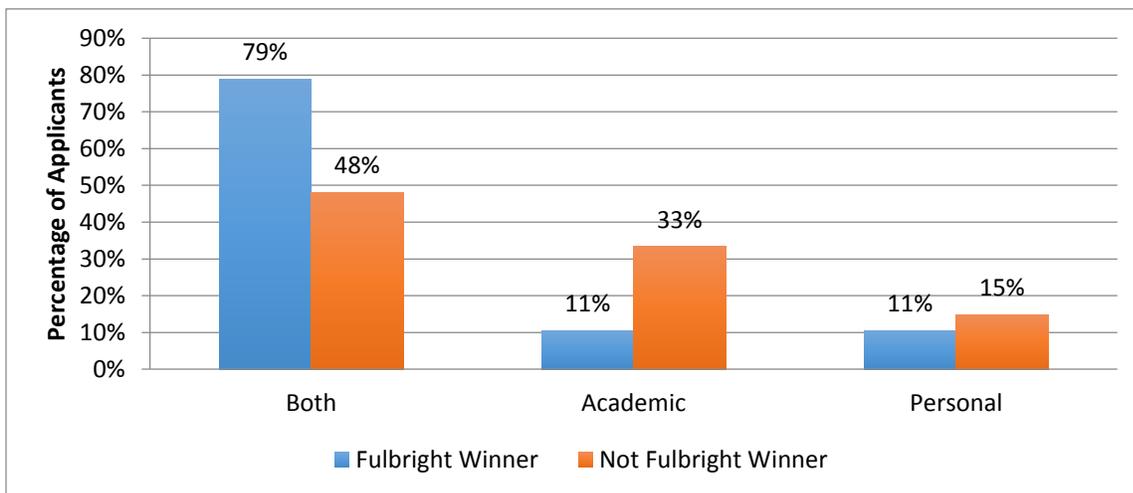


Figure 16. Prior Study Abroad Experience

### The applicants

- 1) *Gender*: Approximately 70% of all Fulbright Fellowship applicants are female, and 79% of the winners were female. This varies from the Pitzer College student population. (Figure 17).
- 2) *Ethnicity*: As Figure 14 below demonstrates, distribution of ethnicity for Fulbright applicants and winners largely reflects Pitzer's population composition, with some exceptions. In particular, white and Hispanic/Latino students were overrepresented in both the application and winner pools (Figure 18).

We therefore need to examine recruitment and marketing practices to determine the disparity between Pitzer’s general population, applicants, and award winners.

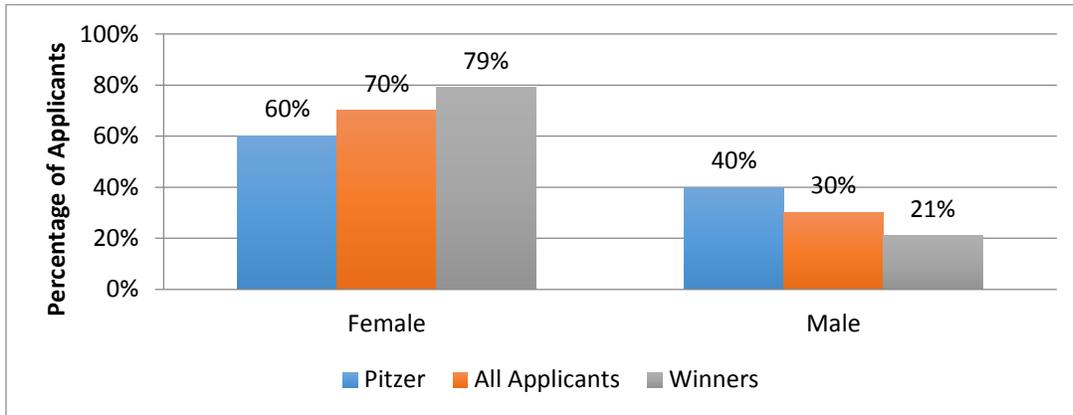


Figure 17. Gender Distribution of Fulbright Applicants and Winners

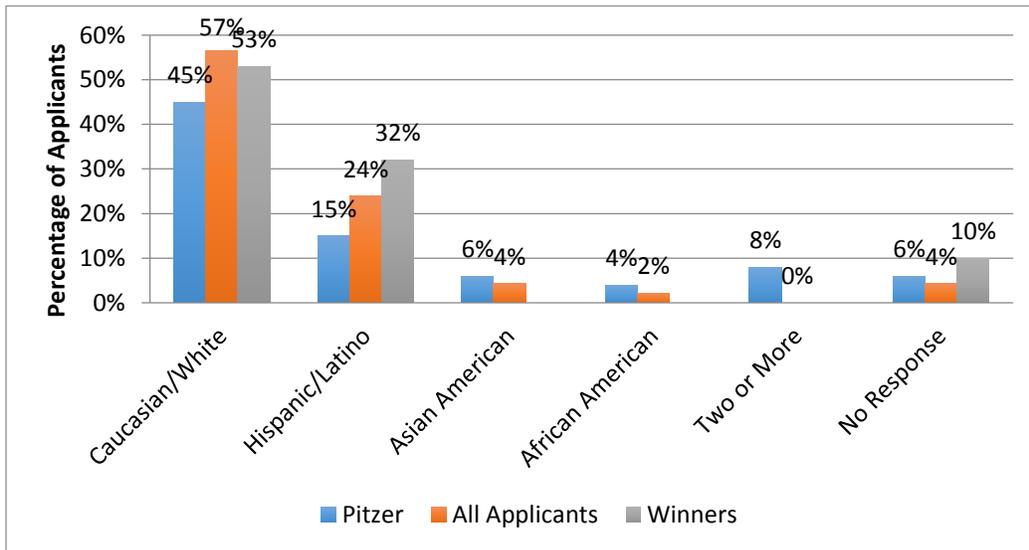


Figure 18. Ethnicity Distribution of Fulbright Applicants and Winners

**Looking Forward.** Although the program has performed remarkably well in the past, it is always important to identify areas of potential improvement. We will continue to move forward by focusing on the following areas for improvement:

1) *Future Assessment:*

- By assessing applications going back two years, we can implement complex regression analyses on a larger sample size to determine direct relationships between multiple factors and Fulbright winners.
- Implement in-depth methodologies to assess impact of varying prior study abroad experiences on student intercultural understanding and worldviews.
- In addition to Educational/Teaching fellowship applications, we will assess Research Fulbright applications.

- Develop a program map to match the application pieces to specific training or courses that addresses them.
- 2) *Program Development*: The Director of Institute for Global-Local Action and Study and the Fulbright program will share the recommendations below with the 2014 application pool (we will determine the impact of these by examining the number of winners from this year's applicant pool). In each case the Director will provide suggestions to students on how to connect previous experience to their Fulbright plans. The Director will also encourage internal application reviewers to use rubric criteria to support this effort. In their applications, students will be encouraged to:
- Express their teaching, mentoring, and/or tutoring experience and how it relates to their own personal growth.
  - Relate their personal pedagogical approach to the Fulbright program.
  - Relate their ability to be empathetic and open-minded in intercultural situations.
- 3) *Letters of Recommendation*: Since Fulbright winners had letters of recommendation that provided greater insight into students' communication skills, the Director of Institute for Global-Local Action and Study and the Fulbright program will develop strategies to relay the necessary information to potential letter writers in order to create excellent letters of recommendation.

## Section 8. Campus Life Outcomes

In its Action Letter, the Commission wrote, “The institution's third theme for this comprehensive review was connecting academic life with campus life.” During the Comprehensive Program Review visit, Pitzer asserted that the construction of new Gold Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design-rated residence halls was going to provide a major new source for co-curricular development. Given the importance of this theme and the emphasis on the new residence halls, the team had hoped that during the Educational Effectiveness Review, “residential life programs, along with other campus life programs, would be systematically examined in an effort to demonstrate the extent to which ‘integrative (co-curricular/ academic) learning’ actually occurs.” However, the team found that “it is not clear that a culture of assessment exists” and that assessment of these important areas of campus life is only in the “infancy or initial stage.”

By the time of the next interaction with WASC, the Commission expects that the recommendations in the team report will have been addressed. These include: the development of student learning outcomes for co-curricular areas; the impact of co-curricular learning on student success; and a fuller demonstration of how learning is integrated into campus life (CFRs 2.3, 2.11, 2.13, 4.6).

This section addresses these concerns by highlighting the development of assessment for training Residential Advisors and Mentors and for linking academic and student affairs. For information on developments in Student Affairs and Co-Curricular program assessment, see Section 4 where we discuss the development of the Strategic Plan and learning objectives.

**A. Assessment of Resident Advisor and Mentor Training.** As an example of the work that is currently underway, we will present a brief overview of the AY 2014-2015 assessment of Residence Advisors and New Student Mentors (this effort began at the end of AY 2013-2014). Although the assessment is still underway, it provides a strong example of Student Affairs and Co-Curricular assessment that emphasizes learning.

Residence Advisors and New Student Mentors were assessed on many fronts:

- Critical thinking skills (educational objective): applied an observational critical thinking rubric to role playing demonstration
- Interpersonal communication abilities (educational objective): applied an observational oral communication rubric to role playing activities, and a written communication rubric to duty logs/incident reports
- Knowledge of specific resources and techniques: conducted survey assessment at the end of training; this will be assessed using coding methodology
- Training implementation: applied survey assessment at the end of training to examine the efficacy of the training
- Findings will be analyzed jointly between Student Affairs and Co-Curricular program area leader and the Office of Academic Assessment, and applied to revise the training for the AY 2015-2016 RAs and Mentors.

The Residence Advisors and New Student Mentor assessment is just one example of the assessment that is already underway in Student Affairs and Co-Curricular programs specifically aligned to Student Affairs and Co-Curricular learning objectives and/or Pitzer educational objectives. However, this is not the only example of assessment occurring. Another area we have focused on is assessing linked educational effectiveness involving both student affairs and academic affairs.

**B. Example of Linked Academic and Student Affairs Assessment: New Resource Student Pilot Assessment.** The Dean of Faculty wanted to study the benefits of a new method of group advising versus the previous one-on-one model for Pitzer's non-traditional student population, known as New Resources students. This was a joint assessment that Academic and Student Affairs implemented in AY 2013-2014. The goal of this assessment was to gain a general understanding of the academic and co-curricular concerns that are important to New Resources students, as well as their perceptions of the impact of group versus one-on-one advising. As such, we were primarily interested in gauging student experiences and hearing their suggestions for improving their time at Pitzer and to assist future cohorts. This exploratory study focused on three areas:

- Student assessment of academic advising (group versus individual advising)
- Student involvement on campus and outside of the classroom
- Student use of campus resources

After conducting focus groups with New Resources students we found that they greatly benefit from the group advising model, but are in need of additional guidance and support that will help them to be more involved on campus, to access needed resources, and to feel a part of the community. In general, it appears that New Resources students are involved on campus and do use the resources available to them. However, many New Resources students interviewed did not know what many of the resources listed were. A list of activities currently being vetted for implementation during AY 2014-2015 to close the loop on this indirect assessment of New Resources student success include providing:

- Information about resources and opportunities in multiple formats (email, website, pamphlets, etc.), specifically targeting New Resources students
- Opportunities for involvement that are aligned to the New Resources student population
- Resources/services that are tailored to New Resources students' specific needs, especially in Career Services and advising in course selection and major declarations

In addition to the suggestions for improving New Resources students' involvement on campus, there are also some institutional level suggestions that may help New Resources students with their integration into the Pitzer College community:

- Increased collaboration with centers (eg. Monsour Counseling Center), offices (eg. financial aid), and other colleges (eg. Claremont Graduate University), which may be able to complement New Resources student resources here at Pitzer College
- Greater interaction with faculty both before and during orientation, perhaps a meet-and-greet with New Resources students and faculty that match their interests and/or desired major
- Provide faculty with a primer on New Resources students so that they can provide more targeted support

- Provide more information on majors and more time before selection of majors so that New Resources students can make a well-planned decision on their major
- Provide a full-time New Resources student institutional advocate

### **Summary**

Student Affairs and Co-Curricular assessment has recently made great strides in building its capacity for assessment. It has progressed to the point where it occurs annually and through both Student Affairs and Co-Curricular and Academic Affairs. The assessment process had to be modified to account for the creation of the Student Affairs and Co-Curricular Strategic Plan, but it has continued, gained a new focus, and has demonstrated improvement. The process will continue with greater focus on learning outcomes across Student Affairs and Co-Curricular program areas and alignment to Student Affairs and Co-Curricular learning objectives and Pitzer educational objectives where possible.

## Section 9. Sustainability of Educational Effectiveness Initiatives

In its Action Letter, the Commission wrote, “The Commission commends Pitzer for developing so many new educational effectiveness initiatives. However, the Commission shares the team’s concern that ‘the community’s current level of engagement will not be sustained.’ There is no evidence that these new initiatives are now so deeply embedded in the systems and culture of Pitzer that they will be refined and sustained following this review. The Commission was encouraged to hear your update on what Pitzer has already done since the visit and to read Pitzer’s response to the team report, which shows progress on these initiatives and follow-up on many recommendations in the team report. At the time of the College’s next interaction with WASC, the Commission expects to see continued evidence that resources, personnel, and training at a high level have been provided to support the sustainability of this important work” (CFR 3.5, 4.1, 4.4-4.7).

Assessment has occurred on a consistent and continued basis at the institutional and program levels. We will briefly reiterate what has been accomplished on the assessment front:

- Institutional assessment of Social Responsibility, Intercultural Understanding and Interdisciplinary, and Writing educational objectives
- Program assessment through program reviews of Field Groups and programs
- Student Learning Outcome assessment through annual assessment reports in both Student Affairs and Co-Curricular programs and Academic programs
- Institutional effectiveness and data analysis through Dashboards

These assessment efforts have been a challenge that the administration has sought to meet by supporting staff and faculty in the following ways, thereby ensuring continued success:

- **Hiring new personnel**
  - *New Writing Director*: to support writing and writing assessment efforts; as a result, First Year Seminar training workshops have been provided every year for the last three years to guide faculty in First Year Seminar writing related to Student Learning Outcomes and assessment.
  - *New Information Technology Director*: Currently tailoring Information Technology services to better meet the assessment needs of the college
  - *Director and Coordinator of Academic Assessment*: Establishing and guiding assessment processes in Student Affairs and Co-Curricular and Academic Affairs
- **Professional development**
  - WASC ARC participation by an Academic Planning Committee faculty member in 2013, the Academic Assessment Coordinator in 2013 & 2014, and the Dean of Faculty/Vice President of Academic Affairs in 2014. Academic Assessment Coordinator has already committed to participation in 2015 WASC ARC.
  - WASC Assessment 101 training participation in 2014 by Dean of Faculty/Vice President of Academic Affairs and Academic Assessment Coordinator
  - WASC Assessment in the Major participation in 2014 by Academic Assessment Coordinator and Director of Institutional Research. Academic Assessment Coordinator and quantitative reasoning faculty are being recruited to participate in WASC Quantitative Reasoning training in October 2014.

- Academic Assessment Coordinator and Director of Institutional Research have participated in the Claremont Colleges Assessment collaborative group since 2013 and will continue to do so
  - WASC Assessment Leadership Academy participation in 2014 to 2015 by Academic Assessment Coordinator
  - Academic Assessment Coordinator will be participating on a WASC Visiting Committee in March 2015 for the purpose of gaining insight to share with Pitzer
  - Academic Assessment Coordinator will be conducting two campus visits to institutions outside of Claremont in fall 2014 to gain insight on effective assessment practices that can be translated over to Pitzer
  - Assessment workshops provided by the Academic Assessment Coordinator provided in 2013 and 2014 to interested faculty
- **Purchasing new software**
    - Office of the Registrar software to provide for better collection/reporting of data
    - Office of Institutional Research purchase of Qualtrics to facilitate direct and indirect survey assessments

All of this administrative support has led to completing least one round of program review for nearly all academic programs. A few Field Groups are starting work on their second program review. In addition, the quality of assessment being implemented in program reviews has improved in a short a period of time. For example, the program review for our Intercollegiate Media Studies major had very little assessment included, but the most recently completed self-study for the Pitzer in Ontario program review did involve assessment of student learning.

More programs are recognizing the value of assessment in teaching/learning practices and taking the time to complete annual reports. The College has invested a considerable amount of time and resources to better understanding itself and will continue to do so, thanks in no small part to the recommendations made by the Commission in 2011. In short, assessment of institutional effectiveness and its practice have continued to occur on an ongoing basis. We strongly believe that we have the foundation in terms of personnel, support from the administration, timelines and processes in place to fully embed our institutional effectiveness practices in the future.

## **Identification of Other Changes and Issues Currently Facing the Institution**

In the previous section, we detailed many of our new and continued initiatives for assessing our programs, goals, and student learning outcomes. Several of these involved new offices (e.g., Office of Academic Assessment) or positions (e.g., Director of Academic Assessment, Writing Center Director, Research Analysts for the offices of Institutional Research and Academic Assessment, etc.). However, we only briefly touched on our two greatest, unanticipated challenges, which as it turns out, have also become our two greatest opportunities in the area of assessment. These are the appointment of a new Dean of Faculty/Vice President for Academic Affairs in 2012 and a new Vice President for Student Affairs in 2013. Both positions replaced long-time administrators here at the College. The close proximity of their appointments to our most recent reaccreditation efforts allowed us to maintain our focus on assessment. This is particularly evident in the initiatives involving Academic Affairs, such as the educational objectives task force.

This infusion of renewed focus in both academic affairs and student affairs has given us the opportunity to discuss and plan future assessment efforts. Fortunately, we have a team of offices working together to continue the assessment efforts we have already put into place and to find ways to expand them. Our administrative changes have helped to keep assessment moving forward, as academic and student affairs continue to collaborate with and receive support from the Offices of Academic Assessment and Institutional Research.

## **Concluding Statement**

The Educational Effectiveness Review Visit of 2011, its resulting report, and the subsequent Commission Action Letter had a profound and positive effect on Pitzer's assessment efforts to date. What was a nascent collection of individual initiatives has blossomed into a collaborative and college-wide effort to better understand the Institution through data driven analyses and reflection. Of course, we have more work to do before we will be content with the status of our assessment efforts in achieving the Commission's directives. But we are confident that the programs and policies currently in place will allow Pitzer to realize these expectations by the time of its next reaccreditation. We look forward to sharing our results and progress with WASC at our next point of interaction.