Welcome to Inaugural Edition of Assessment News Brief

Welcome to our first edition of News Brief, another component of the Spotlight on Assessment initiative.

Last summer, the Neag School's Office of Assessment, in conjunction with the Teachers for a New Era, began a multi-faceted effort to spread the word on assessment-related topics. The other elements of this initiative include: a statewide conference on assessment (March 19 on No Child Left Behind), a series of assessment colloquia, department meetings covering assessment agenda items, and the involvement of constituents through assessment committees for both Teachers for a New Era and the Neag School.

News Brief will be produced six or more times each year and shared with faculty. We encourage you to share it with others who might benefit from the information.

Appreciation is extended to the graduate students who assisted with this News Brief.

If you would like to contribute to the News Brief, please contact:
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On March 19, 2008, we are sponsoring our first statewide conference as part of our Spotlight on Assessment initiative. The conference will focus on No Child Left Behind.

For a federal perspective from the U.S. Department of Education, Dr. Zollie Stevenson, Jr., will be presenting. He is the acting director of the Student Achievement and School Accountability Programs in the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. This office is responsible for the administration of over $1.4 billion annually in formula and discretionary grants to promote improved achievement in schools that serve children in poverty.

Also scheduled to speak is Dr. Gene Wilhoit, executive director of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). From 1994-2006, he served as director of the Arkansas Department of Education and as deputy commissioner and commissioner of the Kentucky Department of Education. In those positions, he shepherded finance reform, led equity initiatives, designed and implemented assessment and accountability systems, and advanced nationally recognized preschool and technology programs.

Individuals from CSDE and others from Connecticut will also join us.

Plans are now being finalized for this conference. Please be sure to hold the date, March 19, for this session at UConn.
Fall Colloquia Series Considered a Success

This fall we initiated a successful series of colloquia. PowerPoint presentations for each colloquium presentation are now available at: https://www.education.umn.edu/events/soa.

The series was kicked off with a presentation by UConn's Assistant Vice Provost, Dr. Eric Soulsby, entitled: Feeling Your OATS: A Look at Assessment at the University Level. In October, Dr. Michael Coyne from the Neag School, presented: Weighting Cows Won't Make 'Em Fatter: How Assessment Can Inform Instructional Decision Making in Beginning Reading, and Dr. Steve Martin from the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) gave a presentation on the Connecticut Mastery Test - Fourth Generation.

The fall series ended on a high note in November with three wonderful presentations. Dr. Peter Bohunyik from the Neag School spoke about high stakes testing with his presentation entitled, High Stakes Achievement Testing in Public Schools: Who Wins, Who Loses? Dr. Phillip Streffer, Superintendent of Bristol Public Schools and Yvel Crevecoeur, Neag School Ph.D. student, presented: Fast Track Program Evaluation Using Achievement Data. Dr. Manju Banerjee from the Neag School wrapped up the fall semester with her presentation: Creating Innovative Tests: Applying Universal Design to Assessment Practices.

The spring colloquia series began on Friday, January 25 with CSDE’s Dr. Gail Tomalia’s presentation: The BEST Teaching Portfolio: Is it Really a Professional Development Experience...? For a complete listing of upcoming colloquia please visit: https://www.education.umn.edu/events/soa.

Feeling Your OATS: A University Look at Assessment

By Vanessa Every

Presenter: Dr. Eric Soulsby

Assessment is a major concern for higher education institutions across the nation. It is important that these institutions demonstrate that their students are learning in an atmosphere that is both effective and learner-centered. Further, these institutions are held accountable through the re-accreditation process that evaluates each program in its entirety. As the Assistant Vice Provost, Dr. Soulsby stated the University of Connecticut recognizes the importance of assessment, and therefore, adheres to the accrediting association’s guidelines. The New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) is the regional accrediting association that handles the University of Connecticut, and ultimately, decides if UConn is meeting the specified standards. NEASC standards involve a focus on program assessment rather than on specific student or course assessment. NEASC is also becoming more explicit in looking at student success. Therefore, UConn’s response to the most recent standard changes was to implement the Online Assessment Tracking System (OATS). This software will allow the University to show it has a system in place that assesses at the program level. This software will document the following: faculty expectations for students’ learning; how these expectations are defined in practice; how these expectations are assessed; what results are gained, and based on the results, what actions are being taken. The goal for OATS is that every program at the University will participate, and as a result, annual assessment reporting systems will be implemented that can provide valuable data to NEASC for re-accreditation.
Connecticut Mastery Test: What’s New to Embrace and Look For in 2014
By Vanessa Every
Presenter: Dr. Steve Martin
This colloquia on the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) - Fourth Generation, including state legislation, history, item-types, reporting results, current goals for NCLB accountability, and assessment data. The CMT was initially administered to grades 4, 6, and 8, and then expanded to include grades 3-8. As the CSDE CMT Project Manager, Dr. Martin said results from the initial CMT test provided early intervention information, identifying students who were below the 'intervention level' and in need of assistance. Students were tested in areas of mathematics, reading, and writing. As of 2008, students in grades 5 and 8 will be additionally tested in science.

The CMT test includes four item types including: multiple choice, grid-in, short-answer, and extended-response. Results are reported at five performance levels including, advanced, proficient, basic, and below basic. However, with the current No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law, all states must test students in grades 3-8, as well as one grade in high school. As part of this new law, all students must produce scores in the 'proficient' range by the year 2014. If schools fail to meet these requirements, a school improvement plan will take effect. If a school fails in the same content area for two consecutive years they are automatically considered a 'needs improvement' school and must implement a school improvement plan, as well as give students the opportunity to attend schools in the district that have not been labeled as 'needs improvement.' If the school continues to remain on the 'needs improvement' list, additional changes will be made within that school, leading up to a possible restructuring of staff. If legislation continues on as is, more schools will inevitably be identified as 'needs improvement,' and Connecticut may see dramatic changes in schools across the state.

High Stakes Achievement Testing in Public Schools: Now What?
By Sheela Reddy
Presenter: Dr. Peter Behuniak
Dr. Behuniak gave a presentation on high stakes achievement testing in public schools as part of the series of colloquia. Before coming to the Neag School, he was the person who had been responsible for state-wide assessment at the CSDE. What he presented at his session was both educational and insightful.

The presentation commenced by sharing that current legislation has, for the most part, helped the academically low-performing groups of students. The presentation then moved on to cover how the aspects of high stakes testing relate to various states across the country.

Next, he spoke about how in NCLB early years there were very limited options for testing individuals with special needs, but the situation has improved since then. He then mentioned how a variety of students are now being accommodated when it comes to the administration of these tests. These accommodations could include checklists, scribes, or Braille. The government had played a role in ensuring that students with disabilities were included in school-wide testing.

Dr. Behuniak also mentioned that schools are now prioritizing to assist students who are not meeting proficiency levels on test, get over that hurdle.

He concluded by illustrating that an important aspect of assessment is the role it plays in preparing students for success after graduation and life in a global economy.
Teacher Preparation Program’s Fall 2007 Common Entry Survey Results
By Mary E. Yakimowski & Katherine Picho

Each year TNE administers a survey to those who are entering either of the Neag School teacher preparation programs, the Integrated Bachelor’s/Master’s (IB/M) or the Teacher Certification Program for College Graduates (TCPG). The following results summarize the data for our 2007 students.

Background information on entering junior IB/M students indicates that they are female (90.7%), white (87.9%), 21 years old (93.8%), and native English speakers (93.8%). The majority of the TCPG students are male (58.3%), white (89.6%), about 25 years old (25.0-29.2%), and native English speakers. Almost all individuals were from “average” and “high achieving” high schools. Generally, both their mothers and fathers generally had a college education (IB/M: 51.4% and 61.6%, respectively; TCPG: 54.2% and 58.4%, respectively).

The goals and intentions of both IB/M and TCPG participants are similar to those in the 2006 cohort. Most of those in the IB/M program will focus on elementary education, and most in the TCPG will focus on secondary education.

For the first time, dispositions were listed on the survey. Dispositions include specific characteristics teachers possess, as well as content knowledge, theory, and pedagogy fostered throughout for Neag School teacher preparation. Students were asked to select the most appropriate response by selecting a number on a scale between 1 (strongly agree) and 5 (strongly disagree). Results ranged from 2.15-3.92 for the IB/M students and 2.02-3.72 for the TCPG students. (We will be able to examine gains on the Common Exit Survey taken immediately prior to graduation.)

For self-efficacy of classroom teaching, both of the IB/M and the TCPG groups are moderately confident with their teaching ability. On a “1-5” scale, with five indicating “very strong” the average score on the self-efficacy scale was 3.4 for IB/M and 3.0 for TCPG students.

For future goals, 95.3% of IB/M students plan to have a subject area specialty, with English being the area of choice. Some plan to earn another major or minor degree outside of education. A total of 94.3% in the TCPG program has a subject area specialty, with 22.9% selecting social studies as the most preferred area.

When asked what type of district they would like to teach in, the majority of both IB/M and TCPG student plan to teach in a suburban school with middle socioeconomic pupils and a mixture of students of color. Although the majority believe they will end up teaching in an average achieving school, they prefer to be in a high achieving school.

When asked how long they intend to teach, 50% of the IB/M students expect to teach 20 to 30 years and 33% expect to teach 30 to 50 years. For the TCPG students, 40% wish to teach 20 to 30 years and 40% plan on teaching 30 to 50 years.

Save the Date:
March 19
for the
No Child Left Behind Conference.

"If you don't know where you are going, you might wind up someplace else.”
-Yogi Berra

How many faculty are in the Neag School of Education?

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How many students are in the Neag School of Education?

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