Executive Summary:

Every university should understand the need to assess their actions and programs to ensure the most effective use of resources and to ensure student needs are being addressed effectively and successfully. Although many universities do a good job of assessing individual programs, Mount St. Mary’s University took on a much larger macro approach to assessment and benchmarking. By not just looking at one program to assess, and through the effective use of data from multiple sources, Mount St. Mary’s was able to have a much more global understanding of the effectiveness of their programs and efforts.

This approach could not have been successful without the buy-in from multiple departments from both within student affairs and across campus as a whole. The bringing together of representatives from all aspects of the university, combined with the plethora of data led to a comprehensive, campus wide understanding of the effectiveness of efforts to serve the university constituents.

Once the data was collected and an approach to complete analysis decided on, it was important to ensure that this information was not just organized for the sake of internal knowledge. Although all departments involved benefitted from the collection and analysis of the comprehensive data, Mount St. Mary’s University realized the need for this data to be shared outside of the individual offices.

As a University focused on putting their mission and strategic plan central to all of their efforts, and understanding the importance of the Board of Trustees in setting the direction and goals of the institution from a long term perspective, it was decided to share the data collected with the Board of Trustees. This began with a presentation to the Student Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees. Following this presentation, there was a full presentation to the entire Board to ensure that the owners of the institution were well informed of not just the efforts being made to serve the university constituents, but the detailed data from different assessment sources. This helped to reinforce the benefits of the work being done and identifying the areas that further improvement could be made.

This information sharing helped the board to make very well informed and educated decisions on the new directions to take the University based on data of effective action and areas of need. Through collaboration, an organized assessment plan and detailed research information was gathered and shared that made an actual and concrete positive effect on the direction of the University for the betterment of the students and all other university constituents.

Program Description:
In order to continue to enhance Mount St. Mary’s University’s programs of excellence, it was deemed a priority to implement an intentional and elaborate approach to benchmarking and assessment of all Student Affairs offices and programs. These efforts stemmed from the clear mandate for action set forth by our consultant’s visits which include benchmarking our effectiveness through numerous national surveys as well as doing internal depth analysis through Mount specific surveys.

We are aware of our excellence through the regional and national recognition we have received over the past years, and conducting assessment helps us to measure more specifically what areas we most excel at and allows us to identify areas we can enhance to ensure continued success and excellence.

The data gained from our assessment and benchmarking efforts shows a Division of Student Affairs that excels in many areas and that is aware of areas of improvement. The information allows for strategic and real changes that will both enhance all programs on campus as well as ensure all offerings remain in line with both our University mission and our strategic plan.

Through the use of these assessment tools, we have been able to develop a proactive and intentional approach to our benchmarking and assessment. This approach is cyclical in nature and allows for quantitative data that can be benchmarked against peers and national statistics as well as qualitative data that is specific to Mount St. Mary’s. By using a three-fold cycle of assessment on a 3 year rotating basis, we are able to obtain valuable information regarding the needs and concerns of our students by assessing these areas in a timely and effective manner.

This three-fold approach consists of using national surveys, home grown surveys, and focus groups together to gain both overarching and more specific data on the areas of excellence and the areas of improvement. The National Surveys give us good information on how we are doing as an institution in comparison to comparative schools and national numbers. Using the data gathered from the national surveys allows us to then create internal assessments to gain more detailed information on those areas that are identified as needing enhancement. Finally, the focus groups allow us to get very specific responses from individual students to more clearly understand the specifics of what they are most pleased with and what they feel can be done to enhance the areas in need of improvement.

By continuously cycling these three stages of assessment and benchmarking the data is fresh and the effectiveness of intentional changes can be measured. By approaching different needs of the students from multiple levels we are able to enact change based on real information and data and not just based on gut feeling or inference. The key to effective assessment is accurate data gathered in a way that allows for real change to occur and an opportunity to then assess the effectiveness of those changes.

By doing this intentional and well structured approach to assessment we have been able to clearly identify the areas in which we are excelling and the areas in which we can continue to enhance and improve. Also, when this program of assessment and benchmarking was begun, it was done from a divisional and institutional perspective, so it consisted of collaboration between multiple offices including: Academic Affairs, Business and Finance, Campus Activities, Campus Ministry, Career Center, Counseling
Along with this institution wide collaboration on developing the assessment approach and summary, this is also unique in the extensive level of communication, input and assistance from the Board of Trustees in the development of this plan as well. From constant communication with the Student Affairs Committee of the Board of trustees, to being able to present initial findings to the entire Board over a year ago, the board has been actively involved in the development of this assessment and benchmarking plan.

It is because of the intentional structure, the cross institutional support and feedback, and the acknowledgement of the Board of the importance of assessment and supporting the efforts of this assessment that this has been so effective. We continue to enhance our programs of excellence through detailed through knowledge that leads to change that can then be assessed for its effectiveness.

When President Thomas Powell began his work at Mt. St. Mary’s University, one of his first goals was to dramatically improve the quality of the student affairs experience. A consultant was engaged to assess the current status, and this initial report served both as the baseline metric and a general plan for improvement.

In the hands of the dedicated and skilled staff of The Mount’s Division of Student Affairs, many changes were quickly implemented. Satisfaction rates increased, according to myriad assessment tools.

But it was the development of the Benchmarking and Qualitative Analysis that codified the assessment results, and provided a dashboard and leadership compass for the entire MSM community. The coordinated metrics of this report help the Division of Student Affairs measure the successes and identify the remaining challenges, and thus manage the programs more effectively. In addition, the report transparently communicates the relevant data to the Student Affairs Committee and the Board of Trustees, and enables us to confidently maintain our focus on setting policy.

As chair of the Student Affairs Committee, I salute the Division of Student Affairs for this innovative and excellence-oriented reporting tool.

Sincerely,

Sheila K. Vertino
Chair, Student Affairs Committee
Member, Executive Committee, Board of Trustees
Mt. St. Mary’s University

Vice President for Information and Research
NAIOP, The Association for Commercial Real Estate
BENCHMARKING AND QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

REPORT FOR THE STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

JUNE 2008
SUMMARY

All information enclosed was derived from data acquired from multiple surveys and the consultant’s review conducted since 2001 to the present.

The data obtained from these surveys and the consultant’s review, were analyzed and shared with the on-campus offices and groups listed below. These offices and groups have received, processed, and made use of the data to identify areas that required improvement and to develop new programs and approaches that would bring those areas to the level of improvement and excellence. Many offices have used this information as a tool to formulate their goals and objectives for upcoming years. This information has also been disseminated through the shared governance structure of the university to ensure openness and clarity and to receive feedback on new proposed changes and projects.

University Offices and groups that have been participants in conversations about this data:

Academic Affairs
Business and Finance
Campus Activities
Campus Ministry
Career Center
Counseling Services
Dean of Students
Dining Services
Executive Vice President
Health Services
Institutional Research
Intercultural Development
President
Public Safety
Recreational Services and Operations
Residence Life
Student Government Association
University Bookstore
University Council
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Page 6 – Executive Summary (updated 2008)

A one page summary of the report, the rationale behind all of the assessment and benchmarking efforts and a general overview of the results of our efforts.


In 2003, 2004, and 2006, President Powell invited an outside consultant to campus to audit the Division of Student Affairs. The consultant conducted interviews with staff and students who helped to form his analysis and suggestions. The information in the initial report was a catalyst for the implementation of a strategic and intentional approach towards benchmarking and assessment. The improvements noted in the final report are a testament to the energy and efforts that have occurred in this area.

Page 8-9 - National Survey of Student Engagement (2007)

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is designed to obtain information from scores of colleges and universities nationwide about student participation in programs and activities that institutions provide for their learning and personal development. The results provide an estimate of how undergraduates spend their time and what they gain from attending college. Survey items on The National Survey of Student Engagement represent empirically confirmed "good practices" in undergraduate education. That is, they reflect behaviors by students and institutions that are associated with desired outcomes of college.

(Reference: http://nsse.iub.edu/html/quick_facts.cfm)

This survey was conducted in 2003 and 2006. Results were reviewed in many venues and are currently being discussed in a Faculty Committee and by the co-chairs of the benchmarking initiative for the Division of Student Affairs. The survey will be administered again in Spring 2009.


The Association of College and University Housing Officers International (ACUHO-I) is the preeminent professional association dedicated to supporting and promoting the collegiate residential experience. The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) has been the pre-eminent force for promoting standards in student affairs, student services, and student development programs since its inception in 1979.

The Resident Assessment is based on ACUHO-I/CAS Professional Standards. ACUHO-I's Benchmarking Services Team, made up of experienced residence hall professionals, guides survey development. This assessment provides insight into resident perceptions about on-campus housing while demonstrating to the residents that their perceptions are important. This survey was administered for the first time in the Fall of 2006. ACUHO-I final results will arrive in August 2007.


The Student Affairs staff developed the Mount Resident Satisfaction Survey in 2008. It measures the satisfaction of student’s residential experience across a number of different factors. Some of these factors were meant to fall in line with some of the general themes of the Fall 2006 EBI Survey.

Page 13 – ACUHO-I/EBI Core Alcohol Summary (updated 2008)
Drinking is typically measured in two ways: frequency – how often a person drinks – and quantity – how much is consumed when a person drinks.

**Page 14-15 – Mount Alcohol and Other Drug Survey Spring 2008 (updated 2008)**

The Mount Alcohol and Other Drug Survey was developed by the Student Affairs staff. It measures alcohol and other drug use by students and the perception students have in regard to the alcohol and drug use in the campus environment. Several of the factors fall in line with the questions posed to students in the Fall 2006 EBI Survey.

**Page 16 – Public Safety Annual Data (2007)**

The 1999 Clery Law requires all colleges and universities to distribute and/or make available an Annual Security Report to all members of their community. One very informative aspect of the Annual Security Report is a listing of statistics of specific crimes that have occurred on or near each campus. The enclosed data compares 2005 data.

**Page 17 – Mount Judicial Survey 2007 (updated 2008)**

Mount St. Mary’s University’s 2007 Judicial Survey was developed by Student Affairs staff to measure the Office of Residence Life ability to accurately, fairly, and reasonably respond to the judicial needs of the institution.

**Page 18 – Residence Hall Damage 02-07 (updated 2008)**

Mount St. Mary’s University believes that students should be held accountable for their actions and as such have continued to charge students for damage done to their residence hall. However, there has been a downward trend in damage in recent years due to our increased efforts on education and student acknowledgment that there will be consistent consequences for their actions.

**Page 19 – General Programming Overview (updated 2008)**

Mount St. Mary’s understands the importance of offering a diverse and extensive programming calendar to ensure students have a lively and educational out-of-class experience on campus. This overview gives a summary of those efforts.

**Page 20-21 – Campus Activities Benchmarking Summary (updated 2008)**

Mount St. Mary’s University’s Office of Campus Activities compared itself to our aspirational and cross-admit schools in Fall 2007 to see how well we are performing in specific areas of campus activities offerings. This summary shows the areas we excel and suggest ways in which we can continue to improve.

**Page 22-23 – NACA/EBI Student Activities Assessment (updated 2008)**

The National Association for Campus Activities (NACA) is the preeminent professional association dedicated to supporting and promoting campus activities. The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) has been the pre-eminent force for promoting standards in student affairs, student services, and student development programs since its inception in 1979.

The Student Activities Assessment is based on NACA/CAS professional standards. NACA’s Benchmarking Assessment Team, made up of experienced campus activities professionals, guides survey development. This assessment provides insight into resident perceptions about student activities while demonstrating to the residents that their perceptions are important. This survey was administered for the first time in the Spring of 2008. NACA final results will arrive in August 2008.
Page 24 – Programming Summary (updated 2008)

Mount St. Mary’s University’s believes that its programmatic offerings are above its peers and that it matches the wants and needs of the student body. This summary reinforces these beliefs.


The Exit Survey is distributed to all students who voluntarily leave the University without graduating. It is used to better understand the reasons behind students’ decision to depart the university.

Page 26 – Senior Survey (2007)

The Senior Survey was developed by the office of Institutional Research to measure satisfaction with various campus services and offerings among college seniors enrolled in the traditional program. The survey is administered approximately one month before graduation. The survey covered several aspects about specific campus offices, students' demographic and background characteristics, perception of the campus community, and the quality of their educational experience.

This survey was conducted in 2004 and 2006. Results were reviewed in many venues and are currently being discussed by the co-chairs of the benchmarking initiative for the Division of Student Affairs. As data is acquired it has been disseminated through the appropriate offices within Student Affairs and shared with other institutional offices.

Page 27 – College Senior Survey (2007)

The new CSS is designed for administration to senior students or for use as an 'exit' survey. It focuses on a broad range of college outcomes and post-college goals and plans including academic achievement and engagement, satisfaction with the college experience, cognitive and affective development, student values, attitudes, goals, degree aspirations, and career plans and post college plans.
(Reference: http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/heri/css_po.html)

This survey was administered in 2001, 2003, 2005 and 2007 and the data is compared to the mean score of all Catholic Colleges and Universities participating in the survey.

Page 28 - 57 – Survey Instruments

Page 29-32 – National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)
Page 33-35 - ACUHO-I/EBI Resident Assessment National Benchmark Survey
Page 36-45 – NACA/EBI Student Activities Assessment (added 2008)
Page 46-48 – Exit Survey
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Page 53-57 – College Senior Survey


Page 59-70 – National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)
Page 71-72 – Exit Survey

Page 73 – Aspirational Peers
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE BENCHMARKING AND QUANTATIVE ANALYSIS

In order to continue to enhance our programs of excellence, it was deemed a priority to implement an intentional and elaborate approach to benchmarking and assessment all Student Affairs offices and programs. These efforts stemmed from the clear mandate for action set forth by our consultant’s visits which include benchmarking our effectiveness through numerous national surveys as well as doing internal depth analysis through Mount specific surveys.

We are aware of our excellence through the regional and national recognition we have received over the past years, and conducting assessment helps us to measure more specifically what areas we most excel at and allows us to identify areas we can enhance to ensure continued success and excellence.

The data gained from our assessment and benchmarking efforts shows a Division of Student Affairs that excels in many areas and that is aware of areas of improvement. The information allows for strategic and real changes that will both enhance all programs on campus as well as ensure all offerings remain in line with both our University mission and our strategic plan.

A broad look reveals that we are above average, and in many cases, clearly excel in many aspects of our programs and administrative approaches. These national benchmarking surveys also allowed Student Affairs to identify areas where more qualitative information would assist us in our efforts to serve our students.

Through the use of these assessment tools, we have been able to develop a proactive and intentional approach to our benchmarking and assessment. This approach is cyclical in nature and allow for both quantitative data that can be benchmarked against peers and national statistics as well as qualitative data that is specific to Mount St. Mary’s. The next step in the cycle will be to use focus groups to aid us in acquiring the more specific data that surveys alone cannot acquire. By using this three-fold cycle of assessment on a 3 year rotating basis, we will be able to obtain valuable information regarding the needs and concerns of our students by assessing these areas in a timely and effective manner.

For the 2008 report we have included 7 new assessment tools and updated information on others. Also, in order to make the report more efficient and effective, we have included summaries of each report at the beginning of each document.