INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW OF TROY UNIVERSITY
WINTER 2007 - 2008

At the half-way mark of TROY's current five year strategic planning cycle, and with work ramping up for TROY's SACS re-affirmation, the winter of 2007 - 2008 is a good time to take stock, from a macro level, of institutional effectiveness at Troy University.

Troy University is a complex institution serving several different communities of learners including the traditional college-age students who live in the academic village on the Troy campus, international students (a mix of some 650 undergraduate and graduate students) who study on the Troy campus, graduate students studying full time on the Troy campus, adult students who are working on undergraduate and graduate classes (primarily at night and on weekends) in Dothan, Phenix City, and Montgomery, adult students primarily working on graduate degrees at University College locations across the country and in some foreign countries, and students who are working on undergraduate and graduate degree programs online through eCampus who live inside and outside of Alabama.

The complex nature of Troy University's students creates some challenges in assessing institutional effectiveness. It is necessary to be able to cross-tabulate survey data by college as well as by geographic location and to be able to distinguish the responses of adult learners (the majority of TROY's students) from the traditional college-age students we also serve. It is necessary to be able to isolate trends in retention rates by location and college and to support a wide variety of assessment activities using major field tests and the Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress (MAPP) exam to assess student performance.

TROY maintains a robust approach to direct assessment of student learning outcomes through the use of major field tests, the application of the MAPP, and through well defined "expected outcomes" for each academic program that are tracked online through the Dashboard system and summarized in the Performance Evaluation Reports. Quality Assurance of the assessment process is provided by the Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Effectiveness, which issues a Red-Yellow-Green status report to the senior executives on the health of the institution's assessment process.

Indirect assessment of student learning and their opinions regarding support services and overall educational experience are captured routinely through a network of surveys. Information regarding incoming students is obtained through the CIRP. Freshmen and Seniors are surveyed using the *National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)*. Current students provide feedback on an annual survey regarding advising and international students provide annual feedback on a survey tailored to them. Graduating students participate in an online survey that is administered several times each year. Students who have graduated within the past five years are surveyed using an Alumni Survey and Employers are likewise surveyed on an annual basis.

One opportunity for long-term improvement of Troy's institutional effectiveness process will be the introduction of additional surveys that will provide even more comparative data regarding student views, such as the *ACT Alumni Outcomes Survey* and the *Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory*.

What do we know about TROY students?

Only 20% of TROY students fit the definition of the traditional-age full time college student and these are concentrated on the campus in Troy, with some in Dothan, Phenix City, and Montgomery. First year students on the Troy campus come primarily from small towns and rural communities in southeast Alabama. Data from the CIRP Freshman Profile indicates that TROY's first year students are more diverse in their ethnicity and more conservative in their social outlook than college students nationally. They are much more likely to be affiliated with a Baptist or Methodist religious denomination and much more likely to identify themselves as a Born-Again Christian than the average college student. They are less likely to come from a family with a total income of over $75,000 per year, but are as likely to be a first generation college student as the typical college student. Almost all of TROY's traditional-age students (97.6%) begin their college work in the fall, just after their spring graduation from high school. TROY's first-time (full time) first year students have an average ACT composite score of 20.4.

In addition to meeting the needs of the traditional college-age student in its region, TROY is very successful in making its academic programs available to adults (61.5% of our undergraduates and 92.7% of our graduate students are 25 or older) and available to minority students and women. Some 35% of TROY's degrees are earned by African-American students and 62% of TROY's degrees are earned by women. While 49% of TROY's degrees are awarded to students in Alabama, 51% are awarded to students located at one of TROY's 56 locations outside of Alabama. As adult learners, the majority of TROY students differ significantly from the typical college student at typical higher education institutions in many ways.

From the *NSSE* data we know that TROY students, who are mostly adult learners, are more likely to ask questions and participate in class, less likely to spend time watching television and partying, much less likely to come to class without completing readings or assignments, and much less likely to participate in a fraternity, sorority, or intramural sports. They shoulder much greater responsibility than the typical college student, being much more likely to be holding down a job full time while going to school (61% of Troy's seniors compared to a 19% *NSSE* national average), and much more likely to be providing care for dependents (33% of TROY seniors spend more than 30 hours each week caring for dependents compared to the *NSSE* average of 11%).

The *NSSE* survey reveals that, as adult learners, our students are primarily focused on the direct interaction with their faculty. They are more likely to use the internet to communicate with their faculty and more likely to communicate with their fellow

students via the internet and chat rooms. These adult learners are less likely to engage in group activities and projects, and less likely to attend events, performances, and athletic events. However, our traditional college-age students on the Troy campus approach their learning and social lives in much the same way that other students do across the country in regional colleges and universities.

<u>What do TROY students think about their educational experience?</u>

In terms of satisfaction with their education, the *NSSE* data shows that TROY students are more likely to indicate they would select their institution if starting all over, are much more satisfied with academic advising, much more likely to report positive experiences in dealing with administrators, and give a higher evaluation of their entire education experience than their peers at other institutions.

The internal *Graduating Student Surveys* provides another robust source of information regarding student perceptions about their experiences at TROY.

First and foremost, students are very positive about their academic experience at TROY. Students give excellent and good ratings ranging from 87 to 90 percent regarding the overall quality of academic programs, the development of their critical thinking skills, the development of their ability to plan and complete projects, the development of their problem solving skills, the development of their management and organizational skills, the development of their ability to work collaboratively in groups, and the development of their writing skills, research skills, and time management skills. Although these are indirect measures of student learning, the data are consistent with the direct measures of student learning obtained through major field tests and standardized examinations.

Students respond very well to questions regarding overall quality of academic programs, quality of instruction, communication with faculty, faculty accessibility, and course availability in their major. Feedback regarding academic support systems, such as libraries, computer labs, the writing center, the reading center, and testing centers are also positive.

However, the data suggests that there are further opportunities for process re-engineering and modification with information technology to streamline administrative processes in areas such as admissions, records, and business office services that would improve student satisfaction. This has led to a decision to organize an evaluation of administrative processes and an emerging interest in making TROY a paper-less institution where no one stands in line for any service.

Additionally, results from the *Troy University Alumni Survey* have been cross-tabulated to provide feedback by College, by geographic location, and by the three major types of students – traditional college-age undergraduates, adult undergraduates, and graduate students.

The traditional-age undergraduates, who have mostly had a residential college experience (on a campus where 10% of the students are international students), provide higher scores compared to the adult students in response to the manner in which their educational experiences at TROY enhanced their ability to work with others, enhanced their planning and project management and leadership skills, developed their listening and oral communication skills, and allowed them to encounter people of different cultures.

The traditional-age students and the adult undergraduate students provide similar feedback in terms of developing problem solving skills, multimedia presentation skills, writing competency, reading comprehension, information technology, mathematical skills and concepts, scientific principles and methods, understanding and appreciating the arts, and critical and creative thinking.

Overall, the adult students give TROY slightly higher marks on academic and educational experience, while the traditional college-age students give higher marks to the institution for career services, personal counseling services, and recreational and intramural activities.   There is no significant difference between the traditional college-age students and the adult students regarding quality of instruction, availability of classes, professors, class size, advising, grading, library services, computer services, and instructional support services.

OUTCOMES

How successful are TROY students in completing their academic programs?

The traditional measure of success in completing academic programs is based on the percentage of first-time full-time students that complete their degree within six years – the six year graduation rate. Troy University's more recent six year graduation rate compares favorably to the six year graduation rates among Masters degree institutions in Alabama as reported in the 2007 rankings in *U.S. News and World Report*.

Institution	6 Yr Graduation Rate
Alabama A&M	34%
Auburn University – Montgomery	29%
Jacksonville State University	36%
Troy University	51%
University of Mobile	44%
University of Montevallo	43%
University of North Alabama	38%
University of South Alabama	35%
University of West Alabama	31%

How well do TROY students perform on standardized examinations?

TROY uses the Measures of Academic Proficiency and Progress (MAPP) examination to assess the effectiveness of its general education program for undergraduate students. In comparison with students from 112 other Master degree granting institutions, Troy University students score very close to the overall average scores of all students from other Master degree granting institutions in writing, reading, and mathematics.

Student performance on state licensing examinations is strong. TROY's nursing students perform above both the state average and the national average in the National Council Licensure Examination. The first-time pass rates for TROY students on the National Athletic Training Association Board of Certification averages 87% over the past four years. The student pass rate on the most recent Praxis II for teacher education was 76%.

Student performance on nine different Major Field Tests and with discipline-specific standardized exams are assessed by the faculty and administrators in each College and are assessed through the Performance Evaluation Reporting system which is posted online as part of TROY's Planning and Evaluation Dashboard System.

What impact does the TROY educational experience have on employment?

The *Alumni Surveys* provide clear evidence that the educational experience at TROY contributes significantly to employment opportunities for graduates.

Among traditional college-age students at TROY, 87.4% have full-time positions within one year of graduation. Among adult undergraduates at TROY, 67.1% are already working full-time while in school, but within one year of graduation, 93.9% have full time employment. Over 80% of those enrolled in graduate courses are working full-time while enrolled in courses, and the number employed full-time jumps to 98.2% within one year of graduation.

TROY graduates mostly find that their educational experience has prepared them well for their current type of employment. Among traditional college-age graduates of TROY, 93% report this to be the case, along with over 95% of the adult undergraduates. Some 97.5% of the graduate students consider their TROY education to have prepared them well for their current employment.

Furthermore, 75% of the traditional college-age graduates, 70% of the adult undergraduate alumni, and 72% of the graduate student alumni have reported that their degree has helped increase their job security. The alumni in this survey have all graduated within the past five years, and 51% of the college-age graduates, 58% of the adult undergraduates, and 73% of the graduate level alumni report that their degree has already helped advance their careers.

What impact does the TROY educational experience have on quality of life?

TROY's *Alumni Surveys* show that within five years of completing their degrees, a significant majority of TROY graduates report that their educational experience has already improved the quality of their lives, with 87% of the traditional college-age graduates, 82% of the adult undergraduate alumni, and 88.7% of the graduate level alumni all answering in the affirmative.

What impact is Troy University having on Alabama and the world?

Troy University is a national leader in providing accessible and affordable education to working men and women. Troy University's annual tuition of $4,264 is considerably less than the national average annual tuition for public universities of $5,351 and $19,292 for private universities. Similarly, TROY makes access to graduate education affordable and achievable for thousands of working adults by extensively offering courses on weekends, in the evenings, and online.

In its most recent academic year, at the undergraduate level, TROY produced over 1,000 graduates in business, over 300 graduates in criminal justice, over 280 graduates in education, and over 55 graduates in nursing.. That same year, at the Master's degree level, TROY produced over 1,400 graduates in education, over 1,000 graduates in business, over 300 graduates in public administration, over 200 graduates in counseling, and over 160 graduates in international relations.

Each year, Troy University produces more graduates at the Masters degree level than any other public university in Alabama.

Conclusions

Troy University plays an effective role, both in Alabama and in the nation, in providing accessible and affordable education, primarily to working adult students, as well as a rich educational experience with an important international component for the undergraduate residential students on the Troy campus, who come primarily from the rural communities and small towns of southeast Alabama.

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