

# Cornerstone University Annual Assessment Report

2006-07



Mishqelet Project

Traditional Age Undergraduate

Professional & Graduate Studies

Grand Rapids Theological Seminary

Asia Baptist Theological Seminary

## *Objectives of Assessment*

1. To clearly articulate a set of curricular and co-curricular objectives to inform a student's
  - knowledge level of a given content area
  - skill level as appropriately defined
  - worldview formation leading to a set of values
2. To develop a well-defined strategy to achieve those objectives, including identifying and monitoring
  - trends in student profiles
  - trends in student learning
  - the instruments and methods used in assessing student learning
3. To offer verifiable evidence of the achievement of those goals by
  - the use of direct methods of assessment
  - the use of indirect methods of assessment
4. To provide a means of accountability to insure ongoing assessment
  - through appropriate organizational accountability processes
  - through meeting the guidelines of the Higher Learning Commission
  - through the development of campus ethos of assessment
5. To gather, interpret and use the evidence of assessment in the institutional decision-making processes of instructional program improvement, strategic planning and resource allocation
  - by implementing the University's strategic planning process
  - as guided by Chief Academic Officer, the Dean of Assessment and the divisional chairs
  - used widely across all units of the campus community
6. To provide yearly and other regular reports to the campus community to
  - report the work of assessment
  - provide feedback for curricular and co-curricular development
  - inform logistic and strategic decision making
  - develop a campus ethos of assessment

# Cornerstone University Annual Assessment Report 2006-07

**Administrative leadership and institutional support for assessment must extend across many cycles of use and over an extended period of time, rather than consisting mainly of a single experience or a short-series of events.**

(Gray, The Campus Level Impact of Assessment, p. 58)

Greetings, all.

In light of the above quotation, this Annual Assessment Report summarizes the fifth yearly “cycle” of the university’s Mishqelet Project. The work of assessment continues on the campus as we seek to understand better the organizational climate in which student learning takes place and to measure effectively the actual student learning occurring in our developing seamless learning environment. The literature states clearly that it generally takes eight to twelve years for the work of assessment to develop into a patterned set of campus behaviors. We are on track as a campus community.

I continue to proclaim that assessment is ultimately not about a Higher Learning Commission accreditation requirement. At the heart of assessment are the questions about us and who we are as people and professionals engaged together in a faith community of scholarship. Please keep that in mind as you read about the work of assessment for the 2006-07 academic year and as we plan for our future.

Yours for the work of assessment,

Tim Detwiler, Ph.D.  
Dean of Assessment/General Studies

## Community Celebration

The Office of Assessment annually presents awards to individuals and groups of people who have exhibited assessment work which models best practice efforts to the rest of the campus. The division and individual mentioned below each won an “Eagle Assessment Award” for 2006-07.



### Kinesiology - Mathematics - Sciences Division

Ron Meyers (chair), Peter Atwood, Nigel Crompton, James Fryling, Ray Gates, Ned Keller, Rob Keys, Dionne Klingensmith, Marty Marra, Julie Sanford, Thomas Sprague, Alan Twietmeyer, Kim Zainea.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Eagle Assessment Award is presented to the Kinesiology – Mathematics - Science Division for the following reasons:

- sustained participation in the campus wide assessment project
- divisional attitude enhancing the campus ethos of assessment
- demonstration of the ability to run the full cycle of assessment (student learning objectives, assessment tools, data-guided decision-making)

### REL 101 Christian Foundations II

Douglass Mohrmann (course coordinator), BRM Division

The 7<sup>th</sup> Eagle Assessment Award is presented to the course coordinator of REL 101 for the following work in the assessment of student learning:

- incorporating the work of assessment into a core course
- utilizing both quantitative and qualitative assessment measures
- demonstrating the ability to run the full cycle of assessment (student learning objectives, assessment tools, data-guided decision-making)

**The Eagle Assessment Award was created to recognize divisions who are working diligently in the area of assessment. Every division is working through a variety of assessment issues and this award recognizes those divisions which are making unique or outstanding contributions to the campus assessment effort and in so doing are leading by showing excellence.**

## **Mishqelet Assessment Project 2006-07**

In summarizing the work of several dozen reports (divisional, program and course yearly reviews), a few *best practice examples* are provided in the following pages. The full sweep of reports is available on the Odyssey assessment website (<http://odyssey.cornerstone.edu>) and you are invited there to enjoy the yearly update regarding the progress being made on the campus in regard to the assessment of student learning.

Specifically, the best practices focus upon the following areas:

- course level assessment – core curriculum (REL 101)
- course level assessment – core curriculum (IDS 100/200)
- course level assessment – program specific (ECN 232)
- university planning form (Humanities Division)
- large division report (History/Social Science Division)

The above items provide just a sample of the full range of assessment activities taking place on campus. For a more complete understanding of the work of assessment of student learning, please consult all of the institutional, divisional, program and course reports available on the Odyssey assessment website.

**Best Practice—Course Level Assessment (core curriculum)**

*This best practice is from one of the core courses in the BRM Division. The example represents the “full cycle of assessment.”*

Course Level Assessment (2007)

Course under review: Christian Foundations 2

Project	Assessment Tool	Assessment Results	Recommendations
I. To assess the improvement of student knowledge from beginning to end	Pre-/Post-test	-the rate of improvement in REL 101 was modest (8.0% in 2007; 9.2% in 2006) -the rate of improvement in REL 131 was higher (12.6% in 2007; 18.1% in 2006). The drop from 2006 to 2007 paralleled a drop in the quality of students (as observed by professors) -particular questions seemed ineffective in assessing some outcomes	-Monitor the downward trend of performance -Continue the separate track to enable motivated students opportunity to learn more -Revise the instrument to better assess certain ideas and objectives; objective 9 will be eliminated (as it is embedded in other objectives)
II. To revise the outcomes of the class, particularly REL 130/131 to coordinate with REL 230	Corresponding assignments in REL 130, 131, and 230	Full cycle not yet complete; Results will be available in 2007-08	Follow-up interview with Bible Studies professors at the end of 2007-08.
III. To assess the contribution of CF2 to the preparation of BRM students for upper division ministry classes	Interview with ministry professors	see attachment	-encourage all departmental instructors to use the same language used in CF1 & 2 to promote learning and connections between previous and new knowledge -Add an assignment to CF2 that encourages students to begin observing those in ministry for hermeneutical methods and philosophy of ministry

## **Best Practice—Course Level Assessment (core curriculum)**

*The following report represents the best practice of collecting, analyzing, and using data over time.*

### **Assessment Report of IDS 100 and IDS 200 2005-06 and 2006-07 School Years Evaluating Worldview Engagement**

**Approach:** Since IDS 100 and IDS 200 have a unique relationship, being related in theme, and yet discrete courses, I've tried a two-pronged assessment that recognizes both the similarity and the difference. For IDS 100, I've taken the opening worldview response essay (before anything but introductory course material had been presented) and the final response essay of the course (after all course material). For the ten sample sets, I've rated on a scale from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest) the "advance in understanding of Christian worldview, as captured in the creation/fall/redemption narrative of human purpose." I'm seeking to measure how much the course helped bring the students forward in their understanding and articulation of the Christian worldview as articulated in our university's worldview statement.

For IDS 200, I've taken ten different random samples and sought to measure two different notions (also using the 1-5 scale): a) Student perception of having learned worldview and Biblical narrative well in IDS sequence b) ability to apply worldview to cultural issues in a meaningful fashion. I'm seeking to measure whether the language of worldview has become part of the 'vocabulary' of the students, and whether it has clearly aided them in wrestling with cultural difficulties.

#### **Data:**

Overall avg. for IDS 100, Fall '05    2.85    (range from 2.0 to 4.0)  
Overall avg. for IDS 100, Fall '06    3.53    (range from 2.25 to 4.75)

Overall avg. for IDS 200, Spring '06  
a. Self-perception of worldview inculcation    2.85 (range from 1.0 to 4.5)  
b. Applying worldview to cultural issues    3.45 (range from 2.0 to 4.75)

Overall avg. for IDS 200, Spring '07  
a. Self-perception of worldview inculcation    3.1 (range from 2.0 to 4.25)  
b. Applying worldview to cultural issues    3.53 (range from 3.0 to 4.0)

#### **Trends/Observations:**

There was a large variation in the IDS 100 scores from one year to the next, with the Fall '05 group scoring below average in their 'gaining and articulating Christian worldview,' while the Fall '06 group was well above average. The second year's group seemed to have found the texts more engaging and germane to their lives, and there was also an increase in awareness of how far they had come in knowing the Scriptures in that first semester. Several students in both years mentioned Christian Foundations class in combination with IDS 100, and the thought strikes me

again about how we need to do a better job of explicitly connecting our Biblical studies courses with our Worldview/ Philosophy courses.

As for the IDS 200 scores, in both years our students tracked way ahead in terms of eagerness and willingness to engage culturally, while their understanding of the worldview moorings of such engagement was still a bit cloudy. I think we need to keep encouraging action and response, but we need to also be more vigilant in defining motives and root ideas behind such responses, and tying them into the Biblical story and worldview discourse. Incidentally, I think the higher scores from the Spring '07 set can be attributed to the fact that the response essay had to do with the visit of Soulforce, a 'gay/lesbian/bisexual people of faith' advocacy group, to our campus—the topic was very much on the minds of the students and their responses were more personal, more searching than the year before, when the topics for response were a bit more detached. If we could create meaningful conversations like this on our campus each semester, it's likely we'd have a ready workshop for worldview engagement for our students.

### **Concerns/Recommendations:**

The IDS 100 scores were uneven, and especially in the Fall '06 group many essays were lackluster, but I think the stability of the texts over the last few years, and the more stable sense of purpose for the course, has created a good dynamic. Many students who have been raised with the Scriptures their whole lives showed a renewed vigor when looking at the narrative approach to the Bible, and when learning the parlance of creation/fall/redemption and our roles as redemptive agents in the world.

Somehow in our new core curriculum, we need to find a place to preserve the dynamic that IDS 200 has afforded, for stretching our worldview conversation into historical and cultural directions, and allowing conversation in an academic (as opposed to informal or maybe chapel) setting on substantive cultural issues, both enduring and novel. Perhaps we've tried to do too much with the class, and lost a bit of the continued focus on worldview language and narrative hermeneutics, but the essays surveyed indicate that the students have certainly felt called to act upon their convictions, even if somewhat ambiguously.

Indeed, as both IDS 100 and 200 enter their lameduck year in '07-'08, with both courses disappearing as such in the new core curriculum coming in the Fall of '08, we need to think long and hard about where our explicit conversation about Biblical worldview, the narrative of Scripture and the place of engagement in culture will be fitting into our new offerings.

## **Best Practice—Course Level Assessment (program-specific)**

*This best practice illustrates the collection and use of data in improving a particular course.*

### **Narrative for TUCE results ECN232 Spring 2007**

For the Spring 2007 Microeconomics ECN232 course, students improved by 25.38% over the pretest compared to an improvement of 57.71% for the nationally normed group. The total average raw score for Cornerstone University students was 12.2 while the nationally normed group was 16.67. Students did improve their performance by 27% in the EA category which is the “Explicit Application of Basic Terms, Concepts, and Principles.” Given the diverse nature of the students and majors, this perhaps, is encouraging. The RU score improved by 25% over the pretest which measures the “recognition and understanding of basic terms, concepts, and principles” while the IA score, “implicit application of basic terms, concepts, and principles,” increased by 25% from the pretest.

These were considerable improvements over Spring 2006 posttest in the EA (+3.2%) and IA (+3.9%) and RU (+3.6%) areas along with the overall increase of 12.04%. Thus, changes in pedagogy from last year’s assessment have improved all scores from 2006.

More detailed analysis reveals considerable correlation between the pre and post test (53.3% of the variation in the dependent variable post-test can be explained by the dependent variable pre-test). In addition, the post-test was highly correlated (Multiple R-squared of .47) with students’ final grades, and the regression was significant (t-value of 4.16 and F=17.32) while the pre-test and final grade points had a multiple r-squared of .419 and was significant. There also was little collinearity between the variables, which means that the variables weren’t noticeably related to each other in that they go hand in hand or merely reflect the same thing. The r-squared figure is not large, and the t values not that low to suggest collinearity, which even if present may not be a problem.

There was considerable improvement in both IA ,EA, and RU from pre to post-test.

Possible courses of action:

1. continue creating situations or assignments so that students are weekly applying the concepts and principles.  
--For both macro and micro I know have “additional reading” assignments which are books that are popular and pragmatic such as “A Beautiful Mind” and “Freakonomics.”
2. test in ways that would require students connect the theoretical with the abstract  
--I have reduced some of the abstract and or highly analytical work from the exams
3. develop daily or weekly 1 minute papers to be sure students are grasping the theory along with the ability to make applications  
--this was done a few times with considerable success
4. continue to include additional current topics which apply economic principles and tie in the economic theory.  
--I have attempted to weekly if not for each class period bring in relevant economic news items and data

## **Best Practice—Use of University Planning Form**

*The University's assessment plan is coordinating divisional activities and the Humanities Division work exemplifies the use of an assessment planning document.*

### Humanities Division Annual Assessment Report 2006-2007

The Humanities Division had the following assessment goals for 2006-2007:

- 1) Complete review of TESL and Spanish programs by December 31, 2006 for Michigan Department of Education Review scheduled for February, 2007.
- 2) Complete Foreign Lang. Requirement proposal for divisional and UAC meetings.
- 3) Bring forth any divisional proposals to UAC (e.g., TESL to TESOL change, curricular changes, etc.)
- 4) Discuss timeliness of faculty feedback and grading in courses. Based on data presented in the SSI, we will discuss as a division what steps, if any, should be taken in our courses in the area of faculty grading and feedback.
- 5) Discuss adjuncts and their role in the assessment process. Based on the data presented in the IPS we will discuss strengths and areas for improvement as we work with the adjunct faculty teaching in our division.
- 6) IDEA form consultations with faculty during fall and spring semesters.
- 7) Review SSI and IPS during Spring 2007 and identify topics of further discussion.
- 8) Lay ground work for 2007-2008 review of English programs by getting the necessary information (e.g., MFAT scores, MTTC scores, etc.).

Report on the progress made with these goals:

- 1) ***Complete review of TESL and Spanish programs by December 31, 2006 for Michigan Department of Education Review scheduled for February, 2007.***

**COMPLETED:** The TESL and Spanish programs were reviewed and curricular changes made before December 31, 2006. The proper documentation was sent to the Michigan Department of Education and the programs were reviewed on February 17, 2007 in Lansing, Michigan (We await final word from the state.)

- 2) ***Complete Foreign Language Requirement (FLR) proposal for Fall divisional and UAC meetings.***

**IN PROCESS:** A proposal for revising the FLR was passed by the Humanities Division in September 2006 and sent to UAC. It was tabled at UAC at the October 2006 meeting.

The division is in the process of revising the proposal. A new revised proposal may be brought to UAC in the fall of 2007.

- 3) ***Bring forth any divisional proposals to UAC (e.g., TESL to TESOL change, curricular changes, etc.).***

**COMPLETED:** The division sent proposals to UAC to revise the TESL, Spanish, and Linguistics programs. For example, the TESL program was changed to TESOL. Course requirements were revised for the Spanish and Linguistics programs. These were passed, and changes are reflected in the 2007-2008 catalog.

- 4) ***Discuss timeliness of faculty feedback and grading in courses. Based on data presented in the SSI we will discuss as a division what steps, if any, should be taken in our courses in the area of faculty grading and feedback.***

**COMPLETED:** During the October 2006 divisional meeting we discussed ways in which faculty could be timely in feedback to students. It was suggested that faculty tell students on the first day of class (and include in syllabus) a general time frame for grading expectations. Some felt students had an unrealistic expectation of feedback (unrealistic with written/creative writing projects).

- 5) ***Discuss adjuncts and their role in the assessment process. Based on the data presented in the IPS we will discuss strengths and areas for improvement as we work with the adjunct faculty teaching in our division.***

**IN PROCESS:** In courses with large numbers of adjuncts (e.g., ENG 113 and IDS 100) the course coordinator will work with adjuncts on the assessment process. This has already been started over the last few years, but work continues to be done. Adjuncts for SPA 101/102 work with the Spanish faculty members to coordinate assessment efforts.

- 6) ***IDEA form consultations with faculty during fall and spring semesters.***

**COMPLETED:** Division chair met with each faculty member at least briefly to hand back IDEA form evaluations and to address any areas of concern. Course coordinators were given IDEA forms for adjuncts in their areas. Two adjuncts with particularly low evaluations were met with and will not be rehired.

- 7) ***Review SSI and IPS (Spring 2007) and identify further topics of discussion.***

**COMPLETED:** The main topic that will be discussed next year is the role of advising and how best we can lead students through the advising process.

- 8) ***Lay ground work for 2007-2008 review of English programs by getting the necessary information (e.g., MFAT scores, MTTC scores, etc.).***

**IN PROCESS:** MFAT and MTTC scores were requested and gathered in preparation for next years evaluation. English faculty were also told to think about this topic so that they will be ready to work on this process next year.

## **Best Practice—Large Division Report**

*This best practice demonstrates how an entire division is participating in assessment work.*

### **History and Social Science Division Assessment Report 2006-07**

While Social Work is a part of the History and Social Sciences Division, a separate report will be submitted by Dr. Scott Sanders, Director of Social Work.

Each faculty member (except Dr. Carroll who was on sabbatical during Spring 2007) indicated the courses that would be assessed. They are listed below:

Dr. Erik Benson – American Studies

Dr. Daniel Ehnis – Theories of Personality

Dr. Brenda King – Social Problems

Dr. Nicole McDonald – Developmental Psychology

Mr. Rick Railsback - History 113

The following is a summary of the assessment activity by major.

#### **History**

*Dr. Erik Benson* assessed student learning in HIS 115 using a pretest and then embedding those pretest items in later tests and quizzes. He notes that “in general, the scores were much improved, which demonstrates effective student learning.” As a result of this assessment, Dr. Benson recognized the need to clarify certain information. However, radical changes in the course don’t appear to be necessary.

*Mr. Rick Railsback* utilized performance on assignments and tests to get some barometer of student learning in his two sections of World Civilization I (HIS 113). Three specific areas were addressed—knowledge of physical geography, World Civilization content, and independent reading assignments. Geography quizzes were used to assess that knowledge. Students scores ranged from 6% to 100%; the average score was 80.2 in section I and 75.1 in section II. Quizzes used to assess comprehension of the reading ranged from 18% to 100%, with the average scores being 61 in both sections. Exams (midterm and final) covered the lecture material and were used to measure students’ grasp of keys aspects of World Civilization. Scores on these exams ranged from 30% to 94%; the average scores were 57.8 and 59.9 in sections I and II respectively. Several systemic changes were suggested.

#### **Family Studies**

With the exception of Senior Seminar (the same as the Psychology Senior Seminar), no systematic assessment of the Family Studies major has been conducted. This will need to be addressed in the future.

#### **Psychology**

*Dr. Daniel Ehnis* assessed General Psychology and Theories of Personality using course embedded assessment. General Psychology was assessed by means of a pre-test posttest design. The posttest results for Fall 2006 ( $M = 57.9$ ,  $SD = 9.2$ ) showed a significant, though small, increase in knowledge over the pretest ( $M = 47.9$ ;  $SD = 16.8$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Spring posttests showed an average gain of 19 points. The average pretest score was 38.9 ( $SD = 10.05$ ); the mean posttest score was 53.1 ( $SD = 12.5$ ).

Course embedded assessment consisted of exercises, assignments, and tests. As a whole, student performance was above average. One exception was an exercise requiring student to apply conditioning techniques; over 50% of the students failed that exercise. It will be replaced due to the level of complexity and high failure rate. Student scores on exams/quizzes was very consistent, ranging from 73.44 ( $SD = 16.46$ ) to 75.92 ( $SD = 13.42$ ), overall average- 73.52.

The first assessment of Theories of Personality occurred Spring 2007. Dr. Ehnis used course embedded assessment to evaluate and measure each objective. (See Appendix III). Four exams were given in multiple choice format and the average grades ranged from 73.4 ( $SD = 14.01$ ) on Exam 1 to 81.2 ( $SD = 11.42$ ) on Exam 3. Students' grades were above average on assignments (experiential assignments, integration and application paper and case studies) and no changes to the curriculum are indicated.

*Dr. Nicole McDonald* assessed Senior Seminar and Developmental Psychology. Course objectives were assessed by means of embedded assessment and a portfolio. Results suggest that objectives were successfully met. Suggestions for closing the loop have been delineated.

Spring 2007 was the first time Dr. McDonald formally assessed Developmental Psychology. Both a pretest-posttest assessment and course embedded assessment were used. Post-test scores were significantly better than pre-test scores, suggesting that students learned the content. Mean scores for each of the test (74 – 78) suggested an adequate grasp of the material for the typical students. Dr. McDonald intends to continue her work on developing an assessment instrument; she also plans to use mid-semester and post-course student feedback to strengthen her assessments.

### **Social Studies Group Major**

Test results for education students in the Social Studies group major were not available for this report.

### **Sociology**

While *Introduction to Sociology* has previously been assessed using a pretest posttest and student feedback surveys, this was the first time Social Problems was assessed with a pretest-posttest design. Student survey feedback is a regular practice.

Results of the Introduction to Sociology assessment suggests an increase of 53 percentage points from pretest ( $M = 11.9$ ) to posttest ( $M = 64.5$ ), a statistically significant difference ( $p < .001$ ). An examination of different subareas also demonstrates a statistically significant increase in knowledge. However, the average is less than desired (75%). An examination of specific items in which students did poorly was conducted to determine whether certain areas need to be addressed in the curriculum.

Student surveys indicate that students, as a whole, felt objectives were achieved. On a scale of 1 (not achieved) to 5 (very well achieved), at least 71% of students rated the extent to which each objective was achieved as a 3 or higher. The other comments solicited provided areas that will be considered as changes are made to the course.

The Social Problems pre-test post-test showed significant gains, indicating that learning did occur. However, the mean for the post-test was 64 ( $SD = 1.41$ ), lower than 70% which would suggest average learning for the typical student. An examination of different subareas will yield additional information regarding those areas in which students performed poorly. This information can serve as a baseline for future assessment efforts. In addition to the pretest posttest, students completed surveys.

Student Feedback was also collected for the Human Diversity course.

## Next Steps

The following list of items represent the “next 12 steps” which the university should consider taking as the campus community continues to mature its assessment project:

1. The need to embrace the assessment learning as one of the tasks of a professional educator.
2. The development of an Office of Institutional Research underneath which the work of assessment occurs.
3. The maturation of the organizational systems already in place across the campus in a variety of offices, committees and individuals.
4. A review of all campus programs to place them in alignment with the stated institutional objectives of worldview, leadership, civitas and information literacy.
5. The completion of learning objectives for each program.
6. The design of an assessment plan for all campus programming efforts both academic and student development in nature.
7. The purposive use of “closing-the-loop” decision making practices across the campus including curriculum, policy and organizational changes.
8. The progressive implementation of a faculty development program focusing on assessment and related training needs.
9. Additional accountability for those people charged with developing and implementing campus assessment efforts.
10. A more thorough assessment of the general education core curriculum.
11. A continued use of macro-assessment instruments which will allow campus leaders to monitor the health of the university.
12. A never ending practice of “assessing toward quality” on campus as the evaluation activity becomes layered into the fabric of the culture of this faith community of scholarship.

Finally, as the work of assessment continues to move forward on the university campus, please allow this university annual report to:

- a. develop a framework for other conversations
- b. bring about organizational cohesion and purpose
- c. guide the university toward improvement
- d. validate organizational processes
- e. help mold a university self image of quality
- f. set a common course for the future

## Campus Assessment Information

For more information regarding the work of assessment for the 2006-07 academic year, please consult the following Odyssey website for:

- specific divisional reports and filings
- specific course reports and filings
- results of campus-wide macro- assessment data
- the reporting forms used to guide the yearly activity
- minutes and activities of the Assessment Committee

To access the Odyssey website:

1. Go to <http://odyssey.cornerstone.edu> or follow the link on the Eaglesnest
2. Upon entering the Odyssey site, look through the courses you are teaching and find CU Assessment
3. Under the general CU Assessment course, you will find materials on many areas of assessment at Cornerstone University. The Annual Assessment Reports from each division may be found under the Assessment Reports tab in the Divisional Assessment Reports folder

In addition, the following website is useful in seeing how the university posts its work to the world via the internet.

[www.cornerstone.edu/assessment](http://www.cornerstone.edu/assessment)

# Cornerstone University



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## Assessing Towards Quality