Introduction

This report summarizes the implementation of the University’s outcome assessment activity for the past two years. This report provides measures and indicators that can be used as initial performance benchmarks to guide future analysis of OLLU’s continuous improvement process.

As part of the Title V funding to enhance institutional effectiveness, OLLU has conducted academic program and administrative unit outcome planning and assessment since 2005. The process has two fundamental purposes. Our first purpose is to identify objectives and expected outcomes for the academic year. Our second purpose is to measure the performance of OLLU’s educational programs, student services, and administrative offices in the furtherance of the University’s mission and strategic objectives.

The University’s effectiveness depends on a series of steps by each of our educational programs, student services, and administrative offices. First, each unit must establish objectives and expected outcomes directly related to OLLU’s mission and strategic objectives.
Second, each unit must develop appropriate means to fulfill each objective, as well as specific criteria for measuring the unit’s progress. Third, all units must have substantially evaluated their performances by the end of the year.

In evaluating whether OLLU has accomplished its mission and strategic objectives, three dimensions are measured based on outcomes assessment by programs and divisions: planning and development, learning outcomes assessment, and effectiveness of OLLU services. The accomplishments in these three dimensions determine the effectiveness of OLLU, and so the findings of the outcomes assessment process are presented in these three sections.

Planning and Development

The first dimension of institutional effectiveness measured was planning and development. This encompassed how well OLLU planned and accomplished its mission and strategic objectives set for the University’s advancement. The OLLU strategic plan has been in place since 2005 and the University’s mission and goals are clearly stated on the University’s website and in its catalog. Both the mission and the strategic objectives direct the University’s efforts to offer quality education and
services to OLLU students and help them achieve their educational goals. The foundational premise is that if all the University’s administrative offices, student services, and educational programs have established goals directly related to OLLU’s mission and strategic objectives, developed proper ways to fulfill these goals, used specific criteria for measurement, and come close to achieving each goal at end of the year, then the University could be considered effective.

A. Link to University Goals

Our findings, as illustrated in Table 1, show that approximately 90% of the assessment plans were tied to the second University goal of enhancing and promoting academic excellence. It bears notice that 100% of the academic program plans were linked to that goal compared to 78% of the administrative units. The findings also show that only 15% of the academic program and administrative unit assessment plans were tied to the fourth goal of significantly enhancing the fiscal strength of the University.
Table 1.

Summary of assessment plans’ linkages to University goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University Goals</th>
<th>University Overall</th>
<th>Academic Program</th>
<th>Administrative Unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strengthen the University as a Community in the Spirit of its Catholic Roots and CDP Heritage</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhance and Promote Academic Excellence</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build the University's Enrollment Through Strategic Recruitment and Retention</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significantly Enhance the Fiscal Strength of the University</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expand and Improve the University's Facilities and Infrastructure</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Completion of Assessment plans, Objectives, and Expected Outcomes

The University’s assessment plans were classified into three categories: (1) no assessment plans or incomplete assessment plans; (2) a completed plan without assessment activities; and (3) a completed plan with at least one assessment completed. The findings indicated that for the University overall 88% of the programs or units had planned their outcome assessments as required, with proper evaluation methods, specific assessment criteria, activities to be implemented, and instruments (or ways) to be used for assessment. Among those assessment plans, 44% of the programs or units carried out at least one
assessment activity. The results and follow-up actions were reported.

To ensure that the objectives and outcomes would be achieved, most of the academic programs offered courses and developed course syllabi on the basis of the expected outcomes established for the programs and developed specific criteria for determining whether students had met the specific course requirements. For example, most programs in the College of Arts and Sciences offered specific courses for completing specific expected outcomes and set up clear assessment criteria to measure students’
learning outcomes. The School of Business aimed high and used the national norms as the benchmark for evaluating the effectiveness of student learning. The Education Department used the percentage of students obtaining teaching certification and other professional licenses, which could be a strong indicator of the University’s educational quality.

The administrative units had also developed specific criteria and ways to measure and determine the effectiveness of the services they provided to students. Most often those units determined their effectiveness by evaluating work performance, project completion, goal achievement, and student satisfaction data which were collected through the University effectiveness assessments or in-house surveys.

Learning Outcomes Assessment

Student achievement is one of the most important indicators of institutional effectiveness. Student learning outcomes in college include, inter alia, their level of academic achievement and personal satisfaction. Student achievement is defined as how much students learn and develop while they are attending college, whereas student satisfaction is related to their subjective
reactions to their educational experience. If OLLU students have achieved or are achieving appropriate levels of intellectual and social growth and are satisfied with their collegiate experiences, then it could be determined that the University is effectively accomplishing its mission and goals. In addition, student achievement can be further verified by their future employers’ satisfaction with their employment preparation and work performance.

The outcome assessment findings showed that OLLU’s academic programs used various outcome indicators to measure student learning outcomes or academic achievements. These consisted primarily of grade distributions, comparisons with national norms, attainment of teaching certificates and professional licenses, and grade point averages.

In the fall of 2007, the Collegiate Learning Assessment was administered to a random sample of eighty-five freshman students. This same test will also be used to test a random sample of seniors in the spring of 2008. This study will help answer several important questions:

- First, how well do the learning outcomes of our University’s students compare to those students from other institutions?
Second, do OLLU students, relative to students from other institutions, perform above, equal to, or below “expected” levels based on their entering admission test scores?

Third, has OLLU added value as indicated by seniors achieving learning outcomes higher than expected when they were freshmen?

During the 2005–06 and 2006–07 academic years, OLLU conducted several student satisfaction surveys. These included the Graduate Follow-up Survey (Alumni Satisfaction Survey), the Graduating Student Survey administered twice a year), and the First-Year Student Survey. In addition, a few academic programs also conducted employer satisfaction surveys. Taken as a whole, these surveys sought students’ perceptions and levels of satisfaction with their experiences at OLLU, evaluated their preparation for the job market, and assessed their work performance. Such data help the University analyze and improve means of enhancing educational effectiveness.

A. OLLU Graduate Follow-up Survey (Alumni Satisfaction Survey)

This survey’s essential purposes were to assess OLLU’s success in meeting alumni’s expectations and in preparing them for the workforce or graduate studies. Two significant
findings were observed. First, more than two-thirds of the alumni respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with their educational experiences at OLLU. Second, most of these respondents were satisfied with the skills, abilities, and knowledge they had gained during their education here.

B. The OLLU Graduating Student Survey

This survey was administered to students immediately prior to their graduation. More than 80% of the respondents expressed either satisfaction or strong satisfaction with their academic programs and academic support. Even more encouraging, over 85% of the respondents rated the overall quality of their educational experience here as either good or very good.

C. The First-Year Student Survey

This survey resulted in one finding that was quite positive and another that indicates a possible need for improvement. More than 80% of responding first-year students were satisfied or very satisfied with their educational experiences at OLLU. Indeed in some areas, such as “OLLU faculty’s knowledge” and “quality of instruction,” over 90% of the respondents expressed satisfaction or strong satisfaction. In contrast, the survey revealed significant concerns regarding four (15%)
of the 27 areas measured. On these items, more than 20 percent of the respondents voiced dissatisfaction or strong dissatisfaction. For that reason, the University should consider making appropriate improvements or modifications in those categories.

**Effectiveness of OLLU Services**

The third dimension measured in the outcome assessment was how effectively OLLU has been serving its students and the community. Our analytical premise is that if OLLU is performing well, then the services it provides should be effective and efficient in meeting the students’ needs and helping them achieve their personal and professional goals. In that case, the students could be considered satisfied with the services provided by OLLU. We must therefore assess the students’ perceptions and levels of satisfaction with the services they received here. In conducting this evaluation, both division self-evaluation reports and institutional findings were taken into consideration.

Based on the unit self-evaluation and institutional data, the findings indicated that most students are satisfied with our University’s services. Nearly a quarter of our students reported dissatisfaction with a few services areas. These areas are in need of immediate improvement.
Conclusion

This report evaluates whether OLLU’s academic programs and administrative units have met the requirements established to implement their outcome assessment plans. In summary, the findings of the assessment process have demonstrated the following:

1. A majority of the plans were tied to University goals. In addition, most plans included assessment criteria, methods of measurement, and activities to be used for the implementation of the assessment plan. Assessment instruments were mainly developed in house.

2. Half of the program and unit objectives and expected outcomes were achieved or close to completion. In contrast, some expected outcomes were found to require modification to reach a higher standard and a few were found to be irrelevant or inconclusive regarding requirements of the programs and divisions.

3. There was a fully articulated process for formulating expected outcomes and unit objectives and for reviewing assessment data for program and unit improvement. This process helped identify both strengths and weaknesses, suggesting areas for future improvement. Certain changes have already been observed in the use of the assessment
results. Furthermore, even greater changes and improvements are expected to take place in the years to come.

**Recommendations**

This outcome assessment is the first of its kind that has been conducted at OLLU. The assessment findings convey a clear understanding of the University’s goals and effectiveness in attempting to accomplish its mission. There is still much room for improvement, so the assessments should continue and be conducted every academic year. A systematic and on-going assessment process will bring us better and deeper insights into our work and make it easier to see both our progress and areas in need of improvement.

Objectives and expected outcomes should be more clearly stated and specifically developed for each program and unit. Furthermore, assessment criteria should be more quantitative than qualitative so that the outcomes achieved can be more objectively evaluated and defined.

The outcome assessment process is a primary and integral part of the University’s assessment of institutional effectiveness. Throughout the process, faculty and staff should have the opportunity to get
involved in the development and implementation of the assessment plans. The assessment should be implemented strictly as scheduled.

Finally, it is recommended that the University continue to use some standardized tests for measuring student learning outcomes.