Summary of Institutional Student Learning Outcomes Assessment 2007-2008

During 2007-2008, the written communication and problem-solving core competencies were assessed among Walsh College undergraduate and graduate students.

The Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) was selected to measure undergraduate student skills in critical thinking, analytic reasoning, problem solving and written communication. The CLA was administered to 88 new undergraduate students and 55 graduating undergraduate students.

Graduating undergraduate students obtained an average score of 1178 on the CLA, indicating that Walsh students performed in the 95th percentile, “well above expected.” The Walsh mean score exceeded the national mean score of 1173. The value added as a Walsh undergraduate was calculated as “above expected” or in the 79th percentile.

Ten randomly selected undergraduate and graduate students in 46 classes across degree programs were evaluated by their instructors using course embedded assignments from the course syllabus. Instructors used a standard rubric to evaluate student performance on a scale of Excels, Acceptable, or Needs Improvement.

The resulting data show that 82% of Walsh undergraduate students and 86% of Walsh graduate students were assessed as “excelling or performing acceptably” in written communication. Seventy-nine percent of Walsh undergraduate students and 88% of Walsh graduate students were assessed as “excelling or performing acceptably” in problem solving.

Undergraduate students evaluated themselves more favorably than did graduate students on winter and spring 2008 instructor/course evaluation forms and graduating student surveys. Questions pertaining to written communication and problem solving were added to these forms to capture student perceptions of each competency.

Similar questions were added to the alumni survey in the spring 2008 term. Seventy-nine percent of surveyed alumni reported that Walsh enhanced their written communication skills and 87% percent reported that Walsh enhanced their problem-solving skills.

Faculty Committees created to review and act on the results began to meet in winter 2009 to determine improvement actions. Improvement actions included a revision of the core competency definitions and student learning outcomes, development of rubrics and standardized assignments, and a plan to hire external evaluators to assess outcomes assessment assignments.

Student learning outcomes assessment is a cyclical process. New initiatives to improve student learning in written communication and problem solving will be implemented during the 2009-2010 academic year. The 2010-2011 academic year will be dedicated to collecting and evaluating data related to student skills in written communication and problem solving.