



Fall 2020 Report on Assessment

September 2020

Full Report

The report that follows represents a departure from the standard format of the Fall assessment report to the Board of Regents. Typically, the Assessment Committee uses the Fall report to communicate results from institution-wide assessment surveys or instruments administered to students during the prior academic year. These instruments follow a three-year rotation. For 2019-20, the scheduled instrument was the HEDS (Higher Education Data Sharing) Consortium Research Practices Survey (RPS). However, in consulting with library staff, who were originally involved in the creation of the HEDS RPS and are the primary users of the data, we made the decision to discontinue this survey instrument. The consensus was that the survey is somewhat outdated and no longer directly relevant for understanding students' informational literacy skills. There is interest among college librarians in identifying a replacement instrument that will be consistent with the newly developed ILOs specifically tailored to the library's engagement with first-year courses. However, the excess demands placed on library staff due to COVID-19 and the resulting shift away from regular in-person teaching has delayed these conversations.

Although there were not any scheduled institutional instruments administered last year, the Assessment Committee presents this report to update the Board on the wealth of other assessment-related activities that took place in 2019-20 and the many changes to assessment occurring at St. Olaf in the coming year.

HEDS COVID-19 Institutional Response Student Survey

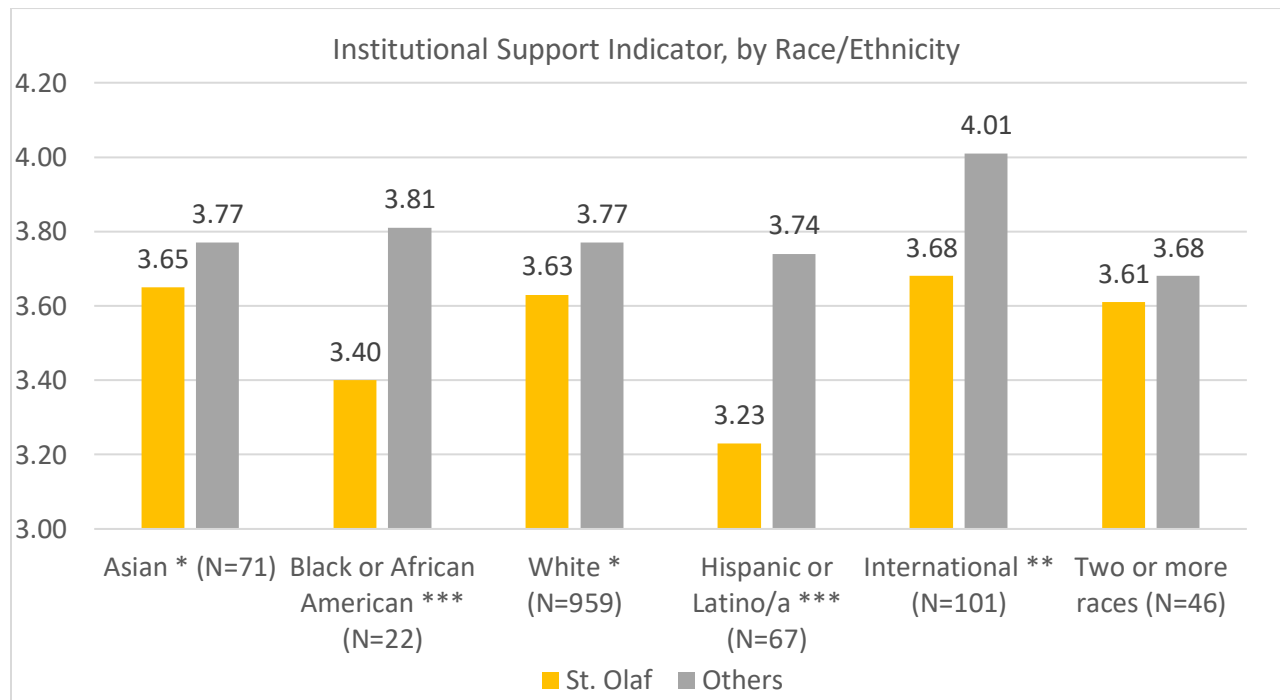
In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the abrupt shift to remote teaching made by many institutions, the Higher Education Data Sharing (HEDS) Consortium developed a COVID-19 Institutional Response Student Survey that institutions could use to gain feedback from students on the institution's response to the pandemic, students' worries and concerns, and their experiences with remote learning. St. Olaf administered this survey from April 24th to May 4th and received 1,465 responses (50% response rate). Appendix A contains the survey instrument and respondent demographics. As student responses came in, the Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment (IE&A) office provided frequent updates to the PLT so that they could respond to student concerns and use the survey results to plan for Fall. IE&A also alerted the Dean of Students office to students with serious concerns (mental health concerns, food/housing insecurity, etc.) so the Deans could follow up with these students directly and

refer them to other offices (e.g., Financial Aid, the Counseling Center, the Center for Advising and Academic Support) as needed.

St. Olaf Student Responses Compared to Other Institutions

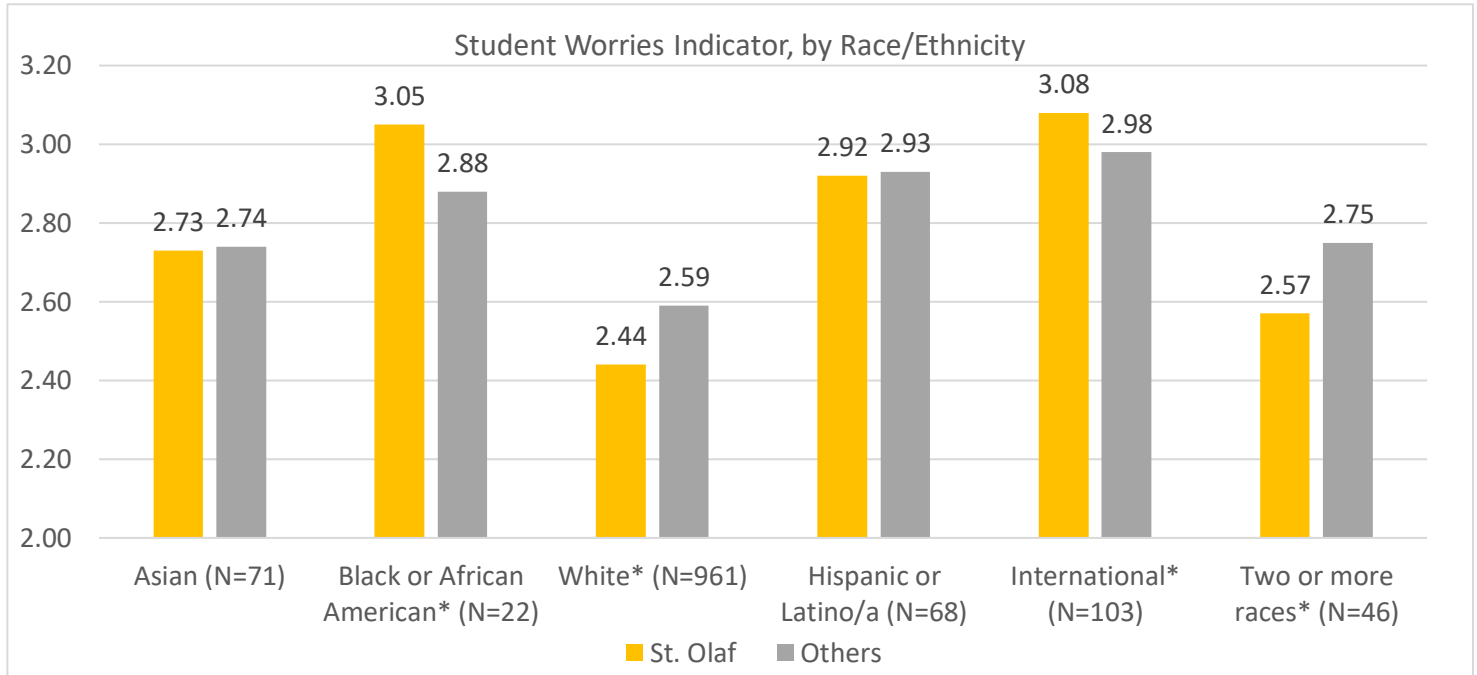
In addition to St. Olaf, HEDS received responses from 33,097 students at 48 institutions. Compared to the average student responses from these institutions, St. Olaf students differed in the following ways¹:

- St. Olaf students reported less satisfaction with the school’s response to the COVID-19 crisis than students at other schools.
 - Black/African American and Hispanic/Latinx students were even less satisfied with St. Olaf’s support than other St. Olaf students, a pattern not seen in the overall results from other schools.
 - Although our international students gave the highest ratings of St. Olaf’s support, a pattern similar to that of other schools, there was still a sizeable gap between our international students’ average rating and that of other international students.



¹ These differences are ones determined by HEDS to have at least a small effect size (difference in means divided by overall standard deviation, or Cohen’s *d*, indicated by asterisks in the graphs and tables: small effects are noted with one star, medium effects with two stars, and large effects with three stars). All N’s in graphs and tables refer to St. Olaf respondents only. This summary is drawn from the document prepared by Lauren Feiler in IE&A (replicated in full in Appendix B).

- Additionally, men and women had similar ratings of St. Olaf’s response while non-binary students were less satisfied with the institution’s response, both at St. Olaf and at other schools.
- Overall, St. Olaf students scored lower on the Student Worries Indicator scale than students at other schools, but this effect was driven primarily by white students. Black or African American students and international students at St. Olaf were more worried than Black or African American and international students at other schools (both small effects).



- In addition, though students were less worried on the overall scale, St. Olaf students were *more* worried in two specific areas than students at other schools: doing well in college and losing friendships and social connections.
- Despite worrying less often overall, St. Olaf students reported feeling greater stress about the potential consequences of the spread of COVID-19 than other students did.
- Domestic students of color, men, and seniors felt less connected to St. Olaf than these students did at other schools, as shown in the table below.

Demographic	% Reporting Very Strong Connection		Means (1 = No connection, 2= Very little, 3 = Some, 4 = Very Strong)	
	St. Olaf	Others	St. Olaf	Others
Overall (N=1,310)	15%	19%	2.80	2.85
Asian (N=71)	8%	17%	2.63**	2.86**
Hispanic or Latino/a (N=69)	9%	19%	2.43***	2.83***
Black or African American (N=23)	9%	21%	2.52**	2.86**
White (N=968)	15%	19%	2.81	2.85
Two or more races (N=46)	20%	17%	2.76	2.79
International (N=104)	28%	26%	3.06	3.05
Non-binary (N=28)	11%	12%	2.57	2.65
Women (N=820)	15%	19%	2.83	2.86
Men (N=439)	17%	21%	2.76*	2.85*

- The overall frequencies of St. Olaf students intending to return in the fall were similar to those seen at other schools, but there were some nuanced differences.
 - Though students at other schools who were unsure or did not plan to return in the fall also had higher overall levels of concern than students who expected to return, this was not the case at St. Olaf. This goes along with evidence from open-ended student comments on the survey indicating that, at the time of the survey, students' reasons for potentially not returning were more linked to their distaste for online courses than financial or other constraints.
 - Students who felt very little or no connection to St. Olaf were more likely to say they would "definitely return" than those students elsewhere.
 - Black or African American students were less likely to say they would definitely return to St. Olaf than were their counterparts at other schools. All other racial/ethnic groups had similar responses to their counterparts or were more likely to say they would definitely return to St. Olaf.

St. Olaf Students' Experiences with Remote Learning

Students were also asked to describe the online instructional methods used after the switch to remote teaching that worked best/didn't work well and why. Below is a summary of these open-ended responses, with a more detailed description of these results along with representative student quotes in Appendix C.

- Students mentioned a wide variety of both synchronous and asynchronous² teaching methods that they found effective.
 - Specifically, a third of respondents mentioned effective methods from both of these categories.
- Students tended to prefer synchronous methods because they provided contact with faculty (particularly for help understanding course content) and other students and because they found these methods provided greater structure and engagement.
 - Students tended to struggle with these methods primarily when they experienced technology issues (e.g., poor WiFi) or scheduling constraints (e.g., time zone differences, balancing with other course scheduling demands, or new demands from their home life).
- Students tended to prefer asynchronous methods because they could complete the work on their own schedule and at their own pace, and because these methods were much less impacted by time zone or WiFi connection issues.
 - Students tended to struggle with these methods when there was too much independent learning and little interaction with faculty.
 - Specific asynchronous methods more frequently mentioned as ineffective rather than effective were Moodle discussion forums and timed online exams.
- Thus, what works best is not necessarily a particular method or set of methods, but rather those that are best suited to the course structure and the particular students in that course.
 - This suggests that designing effective online learning experiences requires a balance between providing opportunities for students to achieve essential course learning outcomes and frequent check-ins with students about what is and isn't working well.

This brief summary was sent to faculty by the director of CILA (Mary Titus) and the full summary in Appendix C was posted on CILA's [Hybrid Teaching and Learning](#) resource page.

Assessment Committee Response

In reviewing the data from the HEDS COVID-19 survey, the Assessment Committee reached two general conclusions. First, students' feelings of connection to the college and satisfaction with the school's response to the COVID-19 crisis raise concerns. Although we are concerned that all St. Olaf students reported less satisfaction with the college's response than did students at

² "Synchronous" generally meant that students were meeting as a class or in small groups at a scheduled time to listen to a lecture, participate in discussion, or do other work together with the faculty instructor and other students. "Asynchronous" generally meant that students were completing work independently, such as watching recorded lectures, posting on discussion boards, or completing online assignments, readings, quizzes, and exams.

other schools, we found most troubling the discrepancies between students of different racial/ethnic identities. The differences in satisfaction and connectedness during emergency remote courses that were experienced by our students who identify as Black/African American or Hispanic/Latinx fit within a larger pattern of general feelings of distrust and alienation expressed by students from these identity groups in recent years. These data do not allow us to disentangle the impact of the COVID-19 emergency response from experiences prior to the pandemic; however, it strikes us as more likely that the pandemic exacerbated rather than caused the discrepancies identified in this survey.

Second, the Assessment Committee concluded the student experience of online coursework does not indicate a clear superiority for either synchronous or asynchronous classrooms. We believe this data supports the current prevailing consensus on campus that each mode of class delivery is likely better suited to some circumstances and less well suited to others. There are likely a number of concerns specific to both the individual class and the individual student which influence these findings.

Regarding both conclusions, the Assessment Committee believes additional data is needed to better gauge student experiences on campus and in the classroom. The COVID-19 pandemic has required the college to respond by implementing community policies and practices and delivering classroom experiences in a manner likely not envisioned by any student when they first imagined themselves attending St. Olaf College. These changes may have exacerbated barriers to feeling understood, valued, and a sense of belonging that are experienced by Black/African American and Hispanic/Latinx students. In order to get a better sense of how all of our students are currently experiencing St. Olaf, the Assessment Committee recommends participation in the HEDS Fall 2020 COVID-19 Student Survey.

Assessment in Program Review and Department/Program Annual Reports

Program Review

The four departments and programs that underwent external program reviews in 2019-20 described their use of assessment data in their self-studies. Their findings and responses are summarized below.

Biology

The Biology department redesigned their curriculum in response to their previous program review. To assess the impact of the new curriculum on student learning, they administered the Biology Major Field Test in 2013 to graduates of the “old” major and again in 2017 to graduates of the “new” major. Their particular focus on redesigning and redistributing course content on Cell Biology was reflected in the Major Field Test results – students scored lowest in this area in 2013 but highest in this area in 2017. Overall performance remained above the national average for both years. Though this inspired confidence in students’ content knowledge development, the department intends to increase their focus on students’ skill development,

particularly quantitation, information literacy, written and oral communication, and the ethical practice of scientific inquiry. These areas were incorporated into the new ILOs the department targeted for their 2019-20 assessment project.

The department also looked at survey data from alumni and current students to identify additional areas for improvement. These include finding ways to offer early research experience for all students; offering courses that intentionally connect science to society and real-world issues; and increasing the number of students who are able to study abroad without the barrier of financial constraints.

Computer Science

As the result of prior assessment of their algorithms ILO using student final exams, the program introduced a new prerequisite for the Algorithms course and found that student performance and mastery of the ILO increased significantly on subsequent final exams. The program's most recent assessment activity involved an extensive mapping of their course content to the ACM/IEEE 2013 curricular recommendations for undergraduate computer science programs. This allowed for greater understanding of where the St. Olaf CS curriculum meets the current recommendations and where it falls short. They are currently evaluating whether and how missing components might be inserted into the current course offerings, replace content in certain courses that is covered repeatedly elsewhere, or be incorporated into a relevant mathematics courses instead, if those faculty are willing to make minor adjustments to their course.

In the summer leading up to their external program review, the Computer Science program surveyed alumni and current students. The alumni responses revealed areas where students felt the program offerings were strong, particularly algorithms and software design, as well as areas of study they felt needed greater attention, particularly content related to software engineering. Alumni and current students also commented on their sense of belonging and community in the program. Program faculty are actively working to address inclusivity issues raised in these responses and make introductory courses more accessible to invite broader participation.

Psychology

Past assessment results led the department to discontinue an experimental course and instead modify an existing course to better support students' development of scientific reasoning skills. These course modifications were the focus of assessment in 2016-17 with a common set of content-related questions across all course sections indicating that students were performing well in fulfilling the ILO related to scientific reasoning. Survey data asking students to self-report on their learning corroborated these findings.

In the year leading up to their program review, the department examined patterns of student enrollment in research-intensive courses and trajectories through the major. They found no

clear discrepancies in traditionally underrepresented students' access to the major or advanced research courses. The trajectory data also revealed that students performed better in other lab courses if they'd taken the department's Research Methods course first. Students who took Research Methods earlier were also more likely to enroll in advanced research courses, giving them greater exposure to and practice with empirical research. The department raised the specific question of requiring Research Methods as a prerequisite to other lab courses with their reviewers.

Women's and Gender Studies

The Women's and Gender Studies program has primarily utilized transcript analysis to determine how to better support students' completion of the program. For instance, findings that many majors and concentrators were taking the "intro" 121 course later in their college careers prompted the program to implement enrollment limits to prioritize registration of first-years and sophomores as well as offer the course during interim. A later analysis showed that recent cohorts of students were more likely to take the course at an earlier, more appropriate time. Additionally, they found that many students petition for one or more courses to count towards the major or concentration during their time at St. Olaf, indicating the importance of this process for the interdisciplinary program. Finally, the program found that Women's and Gender Studies majors' coursework tends to be concentrated in the humanities and social sciences, and particularly within five departments/programs – English, Family Studies, Sociology/Anthropology, History, and Religion. Program faculty planned to share these findings with these departments and programs to encourage continued support of the Women's and Gender Studies program.

Department/Program Annual Reports

For the 2019-20 department and program annual reports, chairs and directors were asked to "describe any activities your department or program has undertaken this past year in assessment of student learning." A summary of the types of activities described in response to this question can be found in the table on the following page.

The most common assessment activity reported was indirect assessment of student learning (25% of departments/programs), followed by direct assessment of student learning (17%); 13% engaged in both. As 2018-19 was an assessment action year, where departments and programs were prompted to implement some change in response to past assessment evidence, it is not surprising that many continued to focus on implementing these changes during 2019-20. For the seven departments and programs whose assessment plans were altered by COVID-19 (commonly, these were direct assessments or exit interviews for seniors planned for the spring), three were still able to implement some type of assessment activity.

Type of Assessment Activity	Number of Departments/ Programs	% of Departments/ Programs ³
Assessment of Student Learning		
Indirect assessment of student learning (e.g., reflection papers, surveys, focus groups)	12	25%
Direct assessment of student learning (e.g., outcome-focused grading of assignments or exams, oral presentations, externally validated exams or competency assessments)	8	17%
Both direct and indirect assessment	6	13%
Response to Assessment Evidence		
Implementation of changes in response to past assessment results (e.g., new course(s) or major requirements, changes to current course curricula)	7	15%
Other		
Assessment altered or postponed due to COVID-19	7	15%
No assessment activity reported	11	23%

Overall, these responses indicate that many departments and programs remained focused on assessing student learning and responding to their assessment findings, even in the absence of a college-wide academic assessment activity in 2019-20 due to the restructuring of our assessment cycle (described in more detail below).

Changes to the St. Olaf Academic Assessment Program

The sections below review and expand upon the changes to the assessment cycle for departments and programs and general education assessment detailed in the Spring 2020 Assessment Report.

New Decennial Assessment Cycle for Departments and Programs

In 2019-20 the Assessment Committee finalized plans for rolling out the new decennial assessment cycle. This new assessment cycle will follow individual departments' and programs' 10-year external program review cycle, as diagramed in Appendix D. This will better allow assessment to serve a meaningful role, as departments and programs will be able to use their external reviewers' recommendations in a more intentional way to plan their assessment activities for the next decennial cycle, creating an assessment plan tied to the questions and goals that have emerged as a result of the program review process. The Assessment Committee

³ This is based on the total number of departments/programs that submitted annual reports (48). Note that some departments/programs fell into more than one category.

worked to divide departments and programs into three groups based on the timing of their next external program review (see Appendix D). The assessment of general education, originally part of the four-year assessment cycle used previously, will now be developed and executed separately (see next section), though departments and programs will be encouraged to incorporate assessment of GE courses specific to their programmatic learning outcomes.

While we initially hoped to introduce the new plan to chairs and directors at the March Academic Leadership meeting, the disruptions associated with COVID-19 necessitated rescheduling of that meeting for Fall. Instead, the launch of the decennial assessment cycle happened at the September 17th Academic Leadership meeting. The Assessment Committee provided initial support to departments and programs during this meeting as they began to think about their decennial assessment plans and will continue to support development of these plans over the coming year.

Although there will not be a request for an additional assessment activity this year, the Assessment Committee does not believe this represents a lack of attention to assessment. Rather, providing ample time for departments and programs to develop meaningful, detailed decennial assessment plans will better-position them to collect actionable assessment data to improve student learning. Asking for an assessment activity in addition to the decennial plan development would, we believe, be interpreted as an unnecessary add-on solely for the sake of collecting assessment reports from departments and programs. We seek to actively discourage this view, which several faculty already held with regards to the old assessment cycle, by allowing for greater faculty control of assessment (including timing of assessment report submissions) and better tailoring of assessment to department and program needs through the new decennial assessment cycle.

General Education Assessment

In total, 25 faculty and relevant staff members along with GE Task Force and Assessment Committee members participated in ILO (Intended Learning Outcome) Writing Teams from the end of December to early February. Several additional faculty were consulted as key stakeholders and domain experts by the ILO teams and the Assessment Committee as the ILO writing and revision process progressed. Additionally, all faculty and relevant staff were invited to a public forum at the end of February to review and comment on the ILOs. Finally, *To Include is To Excel* leadership identified a group of students to provide valuable feedback on the clarity and inclusivity of the language used in the ILO statements. This broad involvement across the St. Olaf community not only ensured that we created ILOs that were meaningful and aligned with the goals of the OLE Core curriculum, but also kept many engaged in important assessment work even in the absence of a campus-wide call for classroom-based assessment. Furthermore, this process was highly successful, with ILOs for fourteen of the sixteen OLE Core requirements passing by faculty vote in the Spring, despite the interruptions brought on by COVID-19. The remaining two passed a faculty vote at the September 3rd faculty meeting.

While the OLE Core ILO development process replaced the typical GE course assessment data collection scheduled for 2019-20 under the old assessment cycle, the Assessment Committee believes that ILO development is an equally important part of the assessment process. Without clear, well-defined learning outcomes for general education, it would be impossible to develop a meaningful assessment plan for the OLE Core that provides useful, actionable data about student learning and ensures a process for continuous improvement of the general education curriculum. In addition, ILOs form the basis for good course design and will serve as a guide for faculty reimagining or developing new courses for the OLE Core curriculum. Thus, it was important to the Committee that faculty felt a sense of ownership over the ILOs of the OLE Core. The significant time the Committee dedicated to the development and finessing of the ILO documents last year reflects this conviction.

Another important, though not as broad, initiative involved a January workshop on direct assessment of student work, specifically research essays from first-year writing courses. The motivation behind this workshop was to pilot a method of direct assessment using student work samples as a potential new model for general education assessment. While not all outcomes lend themselves well to this type of assessment, analyzing student work products (as opposed to students' self-reported knowledge on a survey, for example) when possible allows for greater insight into students' knowledge and skills. Faculty participants (2 Assessment Committee members along with 6 other faculty) found the experience to be a valuable professional development opportunity and appreciated the chance to discuss the benefits and challenges of scoring with a rubric and how this impacts equitable assessment of "good" writing.

For the Assessment Committee, the workshop emphasized the importance of a clear, common rubric for assessment of a particular learning outcome (or set of outcomes) across courses and provided good insight into the feasibility of utilizing such an assessment method for GE. Though the OLE Core ILOs for the first-year Writing & Rhetoric requirement had not been drafted at the time of the January workshop, the lessons learned from the experience will certainly inform the Assessment Committee as we continue conversations about assessment of not just Writing & Rhetoric but the OLE Core as a whole.

This work relates closely to the engagement St. Olaf has had with the AAC&U VALUE (Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education) project, which also emphasizes the importance of direct assessment of student work through their [essential learning outcomes rubrics](#). During the 2019-20 academic year four faculty members participated in a multi-institutional project on assignment design, funded through a Sherman Fairchild grant led by AAC&U. As part of the grant-related activities, these faculty participated in an assignment design workshop led by an expert in the field (Bonnie Orcutt of Worcester State University). Similar to the January workshop led by the Assessment Committee, faculty participants in the assignment design workshop appreciated the opportunity to discuss good pedagogy and

assessment practices with colleagues in other disciplines, specifically the elements of good assignment design and how faculty can incorporate these into their own assignments.

This AAC&U-Sherman Fairchild grant also funded training on using the VALUE rubrics to score student work for two members of the Assessment Committee as well as the Assistant Director of Assessment. The training was directly relevant to the planning of the January scoring workshop described above, as we considered the importance of designing a good rubric and the best process for collecting scoring information from workshop participants. Together, all of the initiatives described in this section have increased direct assessment expertise on campus.

Future Assessment Activities

The Assessment Committee will focus on the following priorities in the coming academic year:

- 1. Designing a system for continual and (where feasible) direct assessment of student learning in the new OLE Core GE.** This will likely include additional pilot testing of various approaches similar to the first-year writing scoring workshop last January. We plan to move forward with designing an assessment strategy for the OLE Core even if the implementation of this new curriculum is delayed by COVID-19. The implementation of the actual assessment activities will coincide with the launching of the OLE Core, whenever this occurs.
- 2. Carefully monitoring the launch of the new decennial cycle by providing support and feedback for departments and programs as they begin drafting and implementing their decennial assessment plans.** It will be important to give particular attention to departments and programs with upcoming external reviews to ensure they have the assessment data they need to support their self-study. It will also be important to support programs with several years to go before their scheduled external reviews, to make sure they are paying attention to assessment activities while there is still time to respond to findings before their external review. The Committee will begin focusing on how the new decennial cycle is working; this work will be supported more fully in future years by utilizing responses to the new prompt for department/program annual reports: “Describe any activities your department or program has undertaken this past year in assessment of student learning. Please describe how these activities fit into your current Assessment Plan. If appropriate, describe any plans to revise your department’s/program’s Assessment Plan.”
- 3. Ensuring all student-facing programs within the academic division are carefully and regularly assessed.** The Committee will identify programs that are not regularly subjected to external review and develop an assessment mechanism appropriate to their activities. This is likely to involve coordination with the [Co-curricular Assessment Committee](#).

Appendix A: HEDS COVID-19 Institutional Response Student Survey and Respondent Demographics

Survey Questions (excluding demographic questions)

1. Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements about St. Olaf.

Response options: Strongly agree – Agree – Neither agree nor disagree – Disagree – Strongly disagree

- a. Overall, the staff and administration at St. Olaf have done a good job protecting students from the negative health consequences of COVID-19.
- b. Overall, the staff and administration at St. Olaf have done a good job helping students adapt to the changes at the institution brought on by the spread of COVID-19.
- c. Overall, staff and administration at St. Olaf have shown care and concern for me as they respond to the spread of COVID-19.
- d. Overall, faculty at St. Olaf have shown care and concern for me as they make changes in their courses in response to COVID-19.
- e. I know whom to contact if I have questions about how changes at St. Olaf in response to COVID-19 will affect my educational plans.

2. Please indicate your level of satisfaction with St. Olaf about the following:

Response options: Very satisfied – Generally satisfied – Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied – Generally dissatisfied – Very dissatisfied

- a. The support you are getting from St. Olaf to help you transition to taking your classes online
- b. The communication you are getting from St. Olaf about its ongoing responses to COVID-19
- c. The information you are getting about how changes at St. Olaf in response to COVID-19 will impact your ability to pay for college (e.g., financial aid, student loans, campus jobs)

3. Given the changes at St. Olaf caused by the spread of COVID-19, how often do you worry about the following?

Response options: Very often – Often – Sometimes – Never

- a. Doing well in college now that many or all of your classes are online
- b. Losing friendships and social connections now that classes are online
- c. Accessing and successfully using the technology needed for your online classes
- d. Having access to health care
- e. Paying your bills (e.g., tuition, loans, rent, internet access, medical)
- f. Having a safe and secure place to sleep every night
- g. Having enough to eat day-to-day

4. For your current term online courses, please list which instructional methods have been used. *(open-ended)*
5. Which of these online instructional methods have worked best for you? *(open-ended)*
6. Thinking about the online instructional methods that worked best, why do you think they were effective? *(open-ended)*
7. Of the online instructional methods that you have experienced, which ones have not worked well for you? *(open-ended)*
8. Thinking about the online instructional methods that didn't work well, why do you think they weren't effective? *(open-ended)*
9. Overall, how much stress are you feeling about the potential consequences of the spread of COVID-19?
Response options: Little or none – Some – A great deal
10. How connected do you feel to St. Olaf?
Response options: Very strong connection – Some connection – Very little connection – No connection
11. Do you intend to return to St. Olaf next fall to continue and/or complete your education?
Response options: Definitely yes – Probably yes – Probably no – Definitely no – Unsure – Not applicable because I am graduating
12. (If “Probably no,” “Definitely no,” or “Unsure” were selected above) What factor is having the biggest influence on your thoughts about whether or not to return to St. Olaf next fall? *(open-ended)*
13. What have you appreciated most about St. Olaf's response to COVID-19? *(open-ended)*
14. What are your biggest worries or concerns as you think about what's coming up in the next few months? *(open-ended)*
15. Is there anything else you'd like to tell St. Olaf about the way we've responded to COVID-19 and your experience this spring? *(open-ended)*

Respondent Demographics *

	Survey Respondents	Student Body
	1,465	2,959
Sex **		
Female	937 (64%)	1,737 (59%)
Male	528 (36%)	1,222 (41%)
Aggregate Race/Ethnicity		
Domestic Multicultural	250 (17%)	602 (20%)
Domestic White, non-Hispanic	1,082 (74%)	2,021 (68%)
Domestic Unknown	8 (1%)	15 (1%)
International	125 (9%)	321 (11%)
Low-Income (LI)/First-Generation (FG) Status		
Domestic, LI only	195 (13%)	390 (13%)
Domestic, FG only	65 (4%)	148 (5%)
Domestic, LI & FG	109 (7%)	296 (10%)
Domestic, Not LI or FG	971 (66%)	1,804 (61%)
Int'l, FG ***	33 (2%)	84 (3%)
Int'l, not FG ***	92 (6%)	237 (8%)
Class Year		
First-Year (Class of 2023)	427 (29%)	795 (27%)
Sophomore (Class of 2022)	348 (24%)	748 (25%)
Junior (Class of 2021)	303 (21%)	697 (24%)
Senior (Class of 2020)	380 (26%)	708 (24%)
Other	7 (<1%)	11 (<1%)

* Demographic data obtained from the Student Information System

** The survey instrument asked for gender identity and this was used where available in reporting the survey data, but we are only beginning to record gender identity in the Student Information System

*** Low income status not collected for international students, as it is based on the [federal TRIO definition](#)

Appendix B: COVID-19 Institutional Response Student Survey: St. Olaf compared to other institutions (Prepared by Lauren Feiler, IE&A)

The Higher Education Data Sharing (HEDS) Consortium recently released information comparing St. Olaf to other schools that administered the COVID-19 Institutional Response Student Survey. At St. Olaf, 1,465 students responded to the survey between April 24 and May 4, a 50% response rate. In total, there are 33,097 responses from 48 institutions using the survey between April 1 and May 31. (See Appendix for list of schools.)

The summary below is a quick overview of the comparisons. Any differences mentioned are ones that were determined by HEDS to have at least a small effect size based on a comparison of means. After this summary page, there are more detailed explanations of each finding, with comparison tables and charts.

Findings

- St. Olaf students report less satisfaction with the school's response to the COVID-19 crisis than students at other schools. Black/African American, Hispanic/Latinx, and International students had particularly low ratings compared to their counterparts at other schools.
- Overall, St. Olaf students report less concern about specific fears than students at other schools, but this effect is driven primarily by white students. Black or African American students and International students are more worried than Black or African American and International students at other schools.
 - Though students were less worried on the overall scale, St. Olaf students were *more* worried about doing well in college and losing friendships and social connections than students at other schools.
- Despite worrying less often about specific concerns, St. Olaf students report feeling greater stress about the potential consequences of the spread of COVID-19 than other students do.
- Domestic students of color, men, and seniors feel less connected to St. Olaf than these students do at other schools.
- The overall frequencies of St. Olaf students intending to return in the fall were similar to those seen at other schools, but there are some nuanced differences.
 - Students who felt very little or no connection to St. Olaf were more likely to say they would "definitely return" than those students elsewhere.

- Black or African American students were less likely to say they would definitely return to St. Olaf than were their counterparts at other schools. All other groups had similar responses as their counterparts or were more likely to say they would definitely return to St. Olaf.

Summary

These findings, along with those already shared on our website (<https://wp.stolaf.edu/ir-e/2020/05/19/st-olaf-college-students-covid-19-institutional-response-survey/>), show that the COVID-19 crisis and St. Olaf's response to it do not affect all students in the same way. Although averages from a number of other schools can smooth out demographic effects on different campuses, St. Olaf's students of color and international students consistently responded differently than their counterparts at other schools.

Detailed Analysis

In all charts and tables below, small effects are noted with one star, medium effects with two stars, and large effects with three stars.⁴ Any subgroups described have at least 15 respondents. All N's in graphs and tables refer to St. Olaf respondents only.

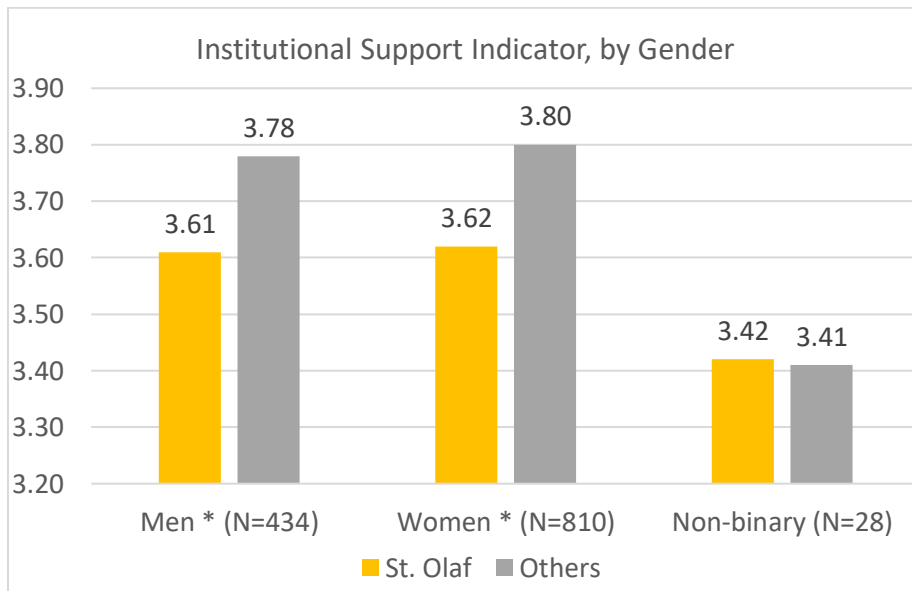
Institutional Support

St. Olaf students report less satisfaction with the school's response to the COVID-19 crisis than students at other schools. Black/African American, Hispanic/Latinx, and International students had particularly low ratings compared to their counterparts at other schools. HEDS created an overall institutional support indicator based on questions about how well the school has done in protecting students, showing care, and communicating with students. The indicator is the average response on a 5-point scale for students who answered all 8 questions in this category. (See Appendix for details.) A 5 on this indicator would mean a student responded with high satisfaction or strong agreement with a positive statement for all 8 questions, while a 1 would mean the student responded to all questions with strong dissatisfaction or disagreement. Overall, St. Olaf's mean is 3.61 compared to 3.78 for other students.⁵ This is considered a small difference.

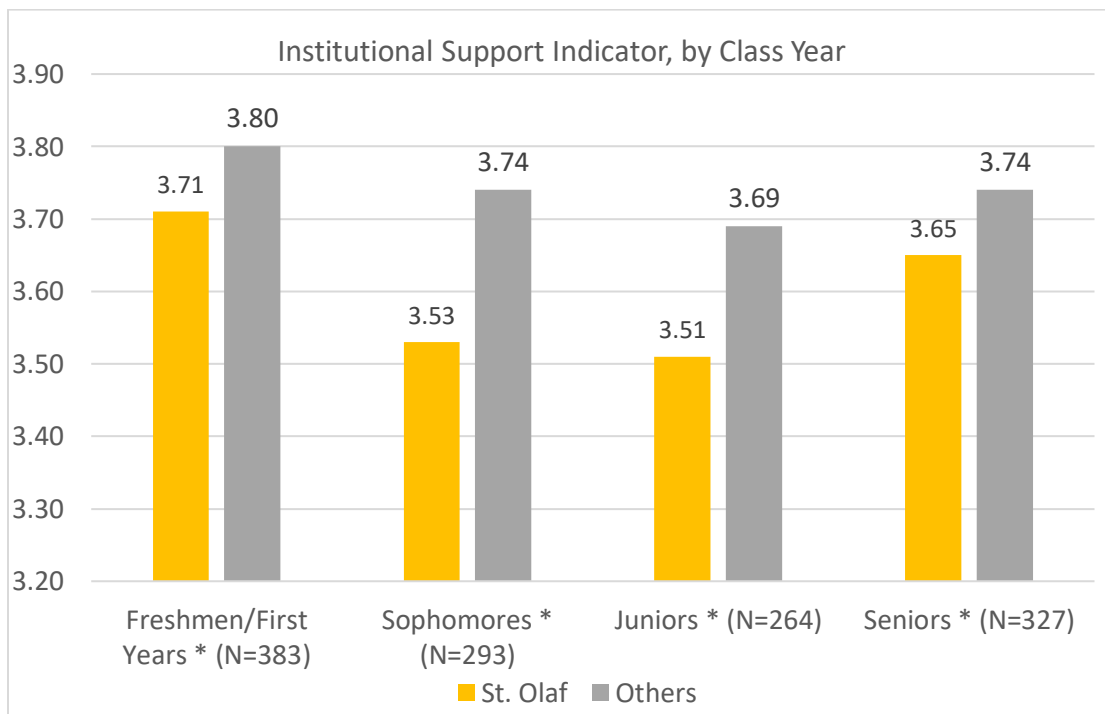
⁴ Effect size is calculated by taking our mean minus the mean of other schools and dividing by the overall standard deviation. (Cohen's d) The threshold is 0.1 for small, 0.3 for medium, and 0.5 for a large effect.

⁵ This comparison is to students responding in April. The mean was 3.90 for students responding in May. HEDS found that students were more satisfied in May than in April. Since the bulk of our responses came in during April, this report will only compare to April students.

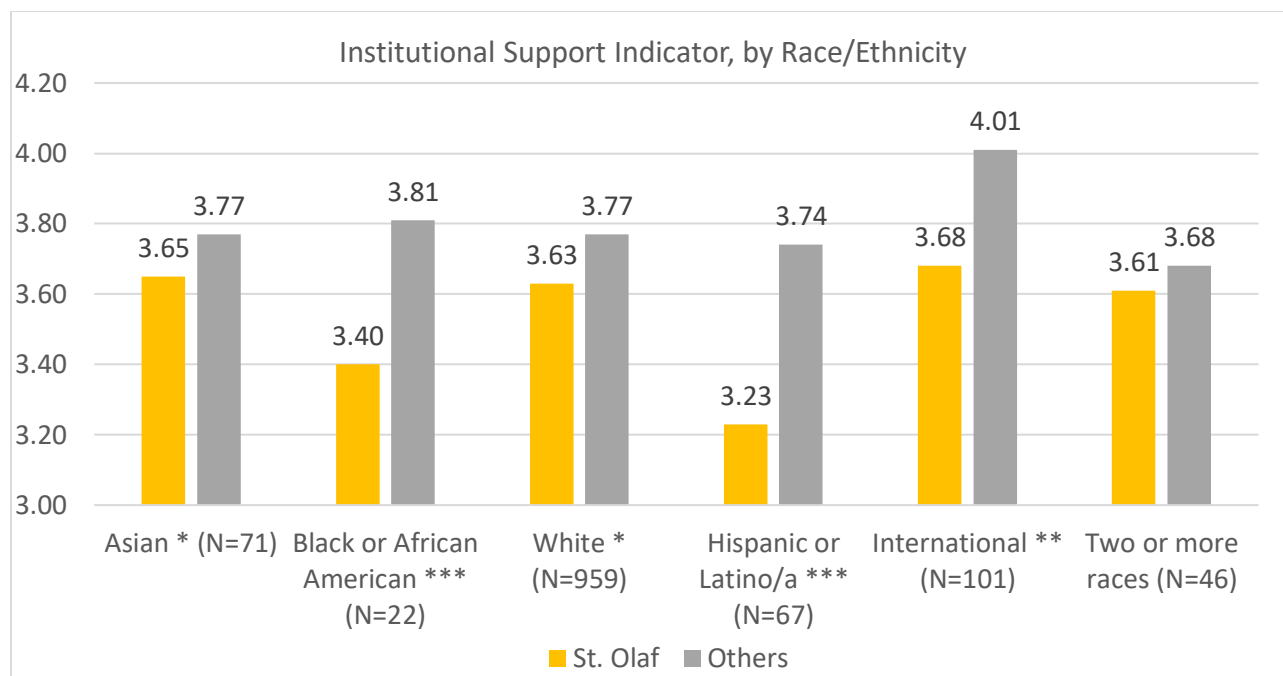
32% of our students gave “high scores” compared to 44% of students at other schools. High scores are a total of 32 points or more, the equivalent of answering “Agree/Strongly Agree” or “Satisfied/Very Satisfied” to all questions.



Men and women had similar responses, while non-binary students were less satisfied with the institutional response both here and at other schools.



All class years had lower averages for the institutional support indicator than at other schools, but St. Olaf also seems to have a pattern of lower satisfaction for Sophomores and Juniors not seen in overall averages for other schools.



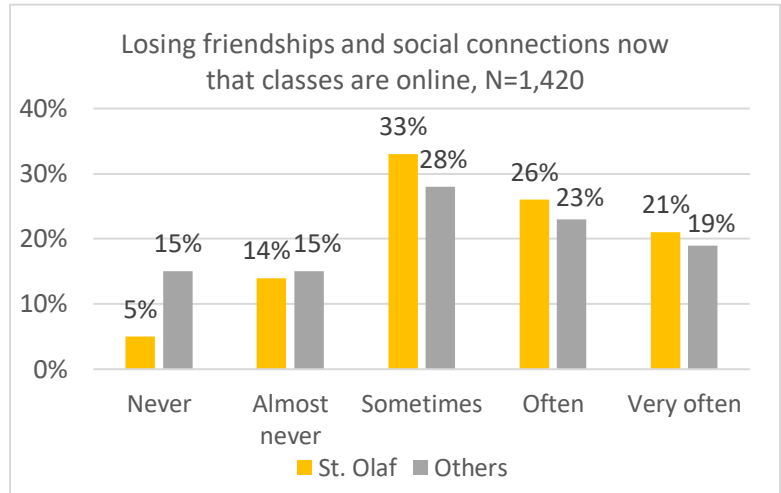
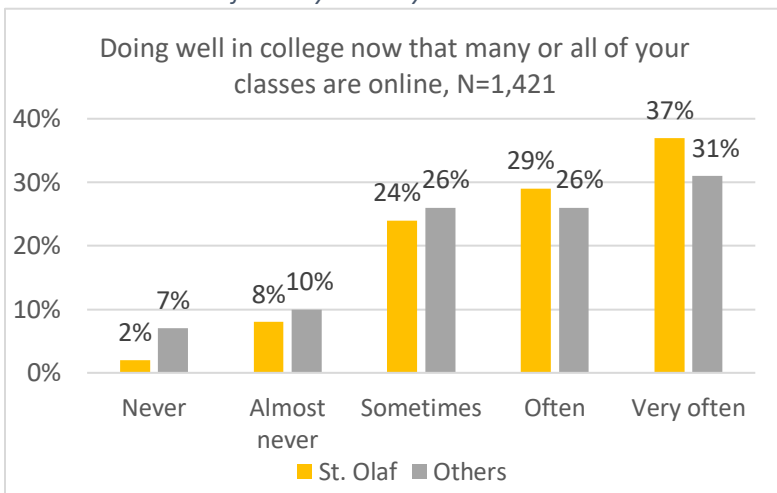
Black or African American students and Hispanic or Latinx students are less satisfied with St. Olaf's institutional support than other groups. This is a pattern not seen on the whole – there are large differences between the average ratings of these groups at St. Olaf and other schools. Although our international students give the highest ratings of support within St. Olaf, there is still a medium-sized difference between our average and the positive response of international students at other schools.

Student Concerns

Overall, St. Olaf students are less worried than students at other schools, but this effect is driven primarily by white students. On an indicator for questions about how often students worry about aspects of taking classes online and more general concerns, St. Olaf's average is 2.54 compared to 2.69 at other schools, a small difference. A 5 would indicate that a student worried often about all 7 items in this scale, while a 1 would indicate never worrying about any of the items.

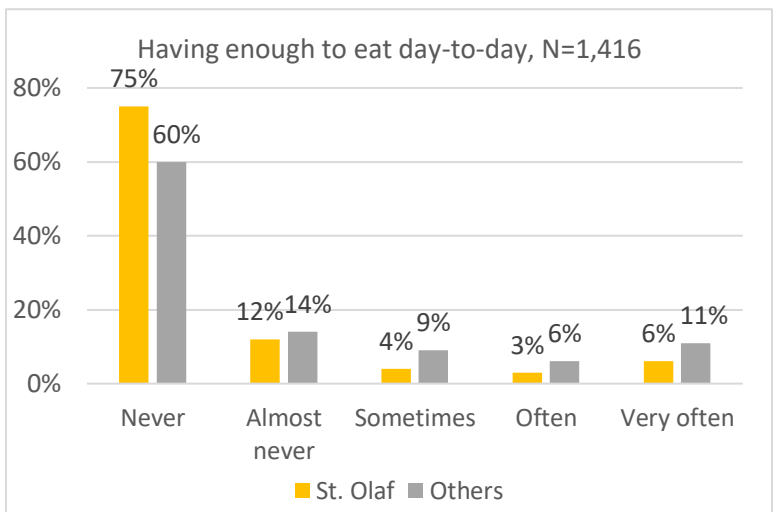
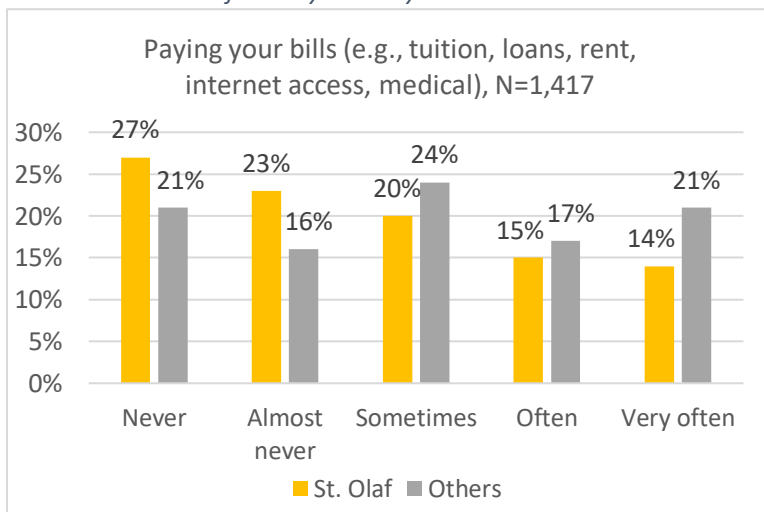
- A demographic breakdown reveals that Black/African American students (N=22, mean = 3.05) and International students (N=103, m=3.08) at St. Olaf are more worried than Black/African American (mean = 2.88) and International students (2.98) at other schools (both small effects). Asian students (N=71, m=2.73) and Hispanic/Latinx students (N=68, m=2.92) have the same averages as their counterparts at other schools. Only students with two or more races (N=46, m=2.57) and white students (N=961, m=2.44) were less worried than their counterparts at other schools.
- Though students were less worried on the overall scale, St. Olaf students were *more* worried about doing well in college and losing friendships and social connections than students at other schools.

How often do you worry about:



- The biggest difference in concerns were about paying bills and having enough to eat each day; St. Olaf students are fortunate to be less worried about these items than students at other schools.

How often do you worry about:



- Students at other schools who were unsure or planned not to return in the fall had higher overall levels of concern than students who expected to return. At St. Olaf, this was not the case. Students unsure about returning had an average of 2.66 on the indicator, slightly lower than the average of 2.69 for the students who said they probably would return. This goes along with other evidence IE&A has shared that students' reasons for potentially not returning are more linked to their distaste for online courses rather than financial or other physical constraints.

Stress

St. Olaf students report feeling greater stress about the potential consequences of the spread of COVID-19.

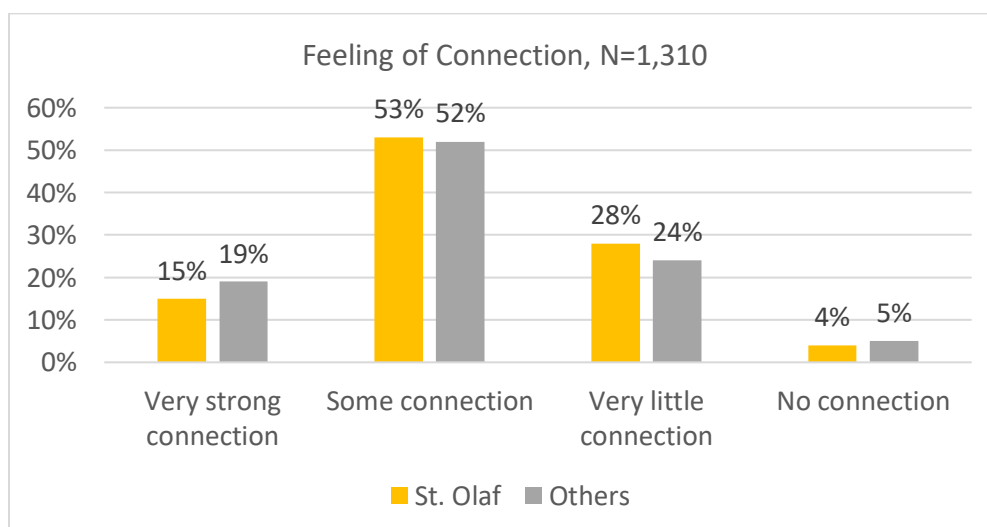
Overall, how much stress are you feeling about the potential consequences of the spread of COVID-19?

Demographic	% Reporting great deal of stress		Means (1 = little or none, 2 = some, 3 = a great deal)	
	St. Olaf	Others	St. Olaf	Others
Overall (N=1,310)	56%	45%	2.51*	2.42*
Hispanic or Latino/a (N=69)	65%	58%	2.59*	2.51*
International (N=104)	58%	47%	2.50*	2.38 *
Asian (N=71)	55%	54%	2.46	2.48
White (N=968)	55%	50%	2.51*	2.41*
Two or more races (N=46)	52%	52%	2.46	2.44
Black or African American (N=23)	48%	49%	2.39	2.39
Non-binary (N=28)	64%	72%	2.61*	2.69*
Women (N=820)	61%	55%	2.59*	2.49*
Men (N=439)	45%	40%	2.36*	2.26*

Demographics are sorted by the percentage reporting a great deal of stress. (at St. Olaf; Other choices were “Some” and “Little or none.”)

Connection

Overall, students at St. Olaf feel a similar level of connection as at other schools. Domestic students of color feel less connected to St. Olaf than their counterparts at other schools. Men and seniors also feel less connected than their counterparts, though the effect size is small.

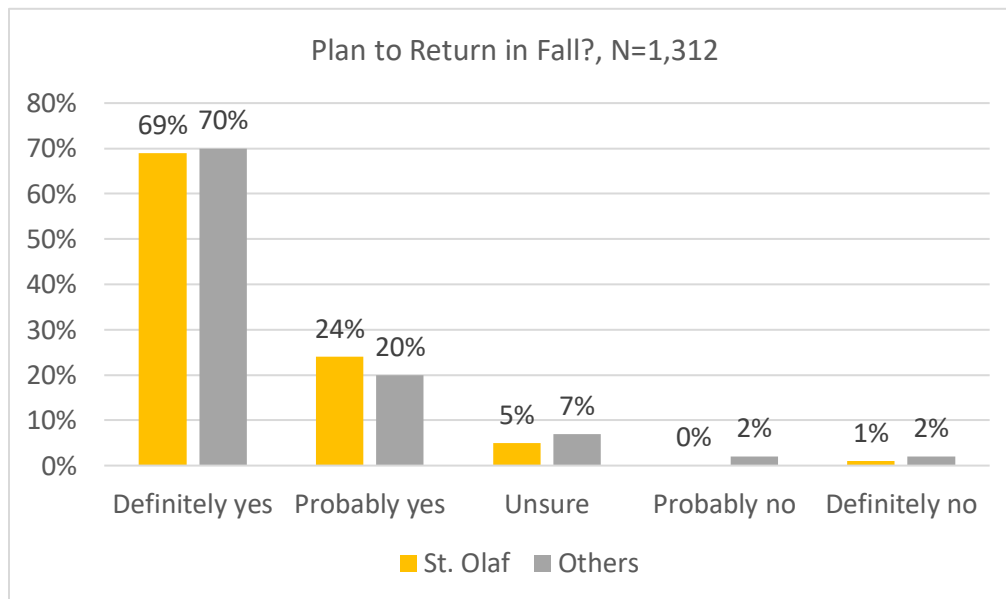


How connected do you feel to [your school]? Sorted by percentage reporting a very strong connection.

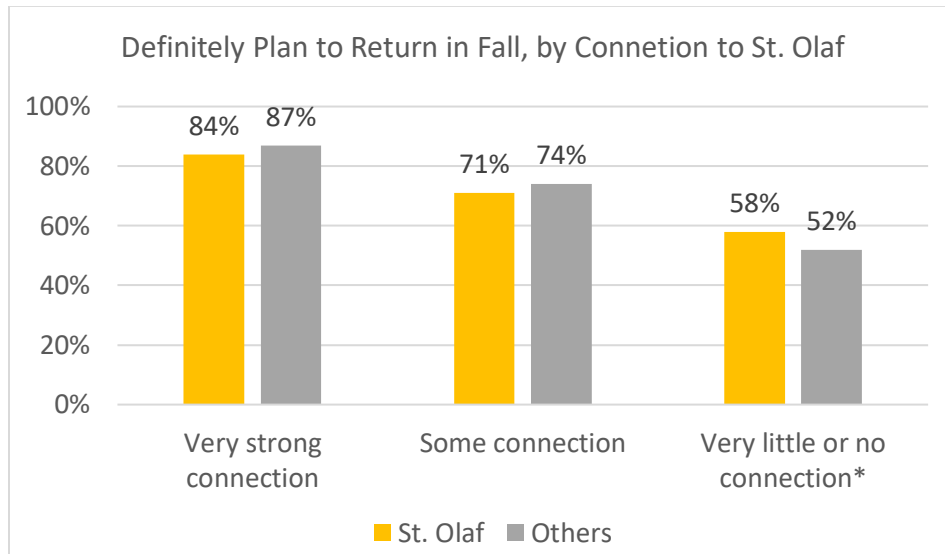
Demographic	% Reporting Very Strong Connection		Means (1 = No connection, 2= Very little, 3 = Some, 4 = Very Strong)	
	St. Olaf	Others	St. Olaf	Others
Overall (N=1,310)	15%	19%	2.80	2.85
Asian (N=71)	8%	17%	2.63**	2.86**
Hispanic or Latino/a (N=69)	9%	19%	2.43***	2.83***
Black or African American (N=23)	9%	21%	2.52**	2.86**
White (N=968)	15%	19%	2.81	2.85
Two or more races (N=46)	20%	17%	2.76	2.79
International (N=104)	28%	26%	3.06	3.05
Non-binary (N=28)	11%	12%	2.57	2.65
Women (N=820)	15%	19%	2.83	2.86
Men (N=439)	17%	21%	2.76*	2.85*

Intent to Return

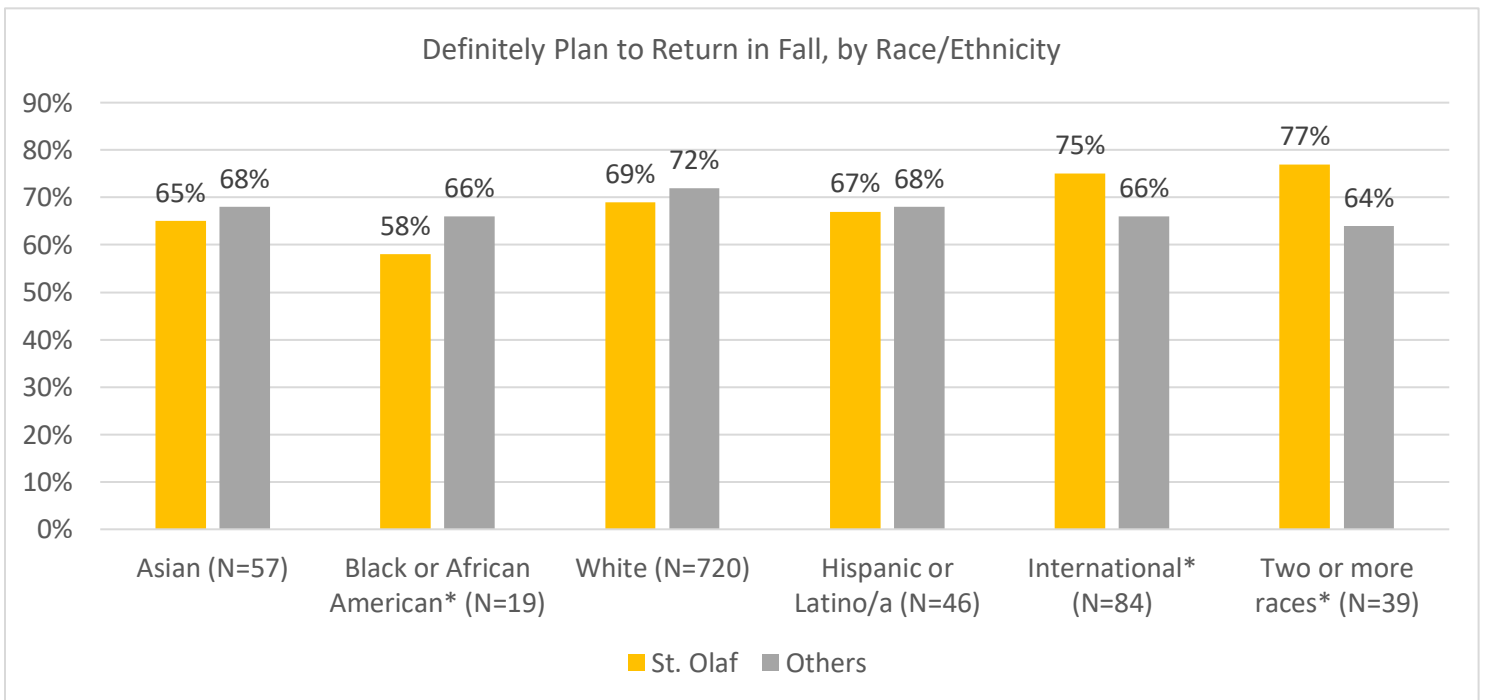
The overall frequencies of St. Olaf students intending to return in the fall were similar to those seen at other schools.



- Students who felt very little or no connection to St. Olaf were more likely to say they would “definitely return” than those students elsewhere.



- Black or African American students were less likely to say they would definitely return than Black or African American students at other schools (58% vs. 66%), while all other groups had similar responses or were more likely to say they would definitely return to St. Olaf.



APPENDIX

Institutional Support Indicator

HEDS created an overall Institutional Support Indicator by taking the average response for students who answered the following 8 questions:

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements about St. Olaf. (Q1)

1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neither agree nor disagree, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly agree

- Overall, the staff and administration at St. Olaf have done a good job protecting students from the negative health consequences of COVID-19.
- Overall, the staff and administration at St. Olaf have done a good job helping students adapt to the changes at the institution brought on by the spread of COVID-19.
- Overall, staff and administration at St. Olaf have shown care and concern for me as they respond to the spread of COVID-19.
- Overall, faculty at St. Olaf have shown care and concern for me as they make changes in their courses in response to COVID-19.
- I know whom to contact if I have questions about how changes at St. Olaf in response to COVID-19 will affect my educational plans.

Please indicate your level of satisfaction with St. Olaf about the following: (Q2)

1=Very dissatisfied, 2=Dissatisfied, 3=Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 4=Satisfied, 5=Very satisfied

- The support you are getting from St. Olaf to help you transition to taking your classes online
- The communication you are getting from St. Olaf about its ongoing responses to COVID-19
- The information you are getting about how changes at St. Olaf in response to COVID-19 will impact your ability to pay for college (e.g., financial aid, student loans, campus jobs)

Student Worries Indicator

The Student Worries Indicator is the average response for students who answered all 7 sub-parts of a question about concerns:

Given the changes at St. Olaf caused by the spread of COVID-19, how often do you worry about the following? (Q3)

1=Never, 2=Almost never, 3=Sometimes, 4=Often, 5=Very often

- Doing well in college now that many or all of your classes are online
- Losing friendships and social connections now that classes are online
- Accessing and successfully using the technology needed for your online classes
- Having access to health care
- Paying your bills (e.g., tuition, loans, rent, internet access, medical)
- Having a safe and secure place to sleep every night
- Having enough to eat day-to-day

Participating Institutions	# of Respondents
Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College	803
Austin Peay State University	1,261
Baldwin Wallace University	751
Beloit College	302
Bethany College	157
Carroll Community College	575
Claremont McKenna College	621
Concordia Texas	443
Dickinson College	349
Earlham College	275
Eckerd College	733
Emerson College	1,699
Florida Institute of Technology	1,564
Goshen College	355
Gustavus Adolphus College	710
Hanover College	277
High Point University	1,174
Juniata College	57
Kenyon College	1,049
Lawrence University	526
Lewis & Clark College	2,087
Manhattan College	986
Mary Baldwin University	356
Muhlenberg College	916
Ohio Wesleyan University	359
Pacific Lutheran University	591
Point Park University	808
Prarie State College	718
Principia College	182
Rhodes College	408
Roanoke College	486
Saint Martin's University	244
Simmons University	1,070
Southwestern Illinois College	790
St. Olaf College	1,465
SUNY Adirondack	335
Susquehanna University	430
The University of the South	657
Thiel College	223
University of Baltimore	954
University of Puget Sound	872
University of Wisconsin - Green Bay	824
Wabash College	207
Washington & Jefferson College	547
Wentworth Institute of Technology	60
Whitman College	438
Whitworth University	1,224
Wilkes University	718
Woodbury University	461

Appendix C: COVID-19 Institutional Response Student Survey: Summary of Student Responses to Online Instructional Methods (Prepared by Kelsey Thompson & Juliana Goldman, IE&A)

The Higher Education Data Sharing (HEDS) Consortium COVID-19 Institutional Response Student Survey was sent to all current students on Friday, April 24th. The survey closed at the end of the day Monday, May 4th. Overall, 1,465 students responded to the survey, for a 50% response rate. The summary below describes student responses to the following questions about instructional methods:

1. For your current term online courses, please list which instructional methods have been used.⁶
2. Which of these online instructional methods have worked best for you?
3. Thinking about the online instructional methods that worked best, why do you think they were effective?
4. Of the online instructional methods that you have experienced, which ones have not worked well for you?
5. Thinking about the online instructional methods that didn't work well, why do you think they weren't effective?

Effective Methods

To summarize the methods that worked well, we looked at the 1,145 responses to the question listed in number 2 above (this excludes the 32 students who responded “none” to this question). Note that student responses commonly fell into more than one category. Students' responses were categorized broadly as:

- Those who indicated synchronous or “in-person” methods worked best (71% of responses)
 - These included lectures or class discussions (including small group discussions or group work) via Zoom, Google Meet or other video conferencing software, as well as online office hours
- Those who indicated asynchronous methods worked best (61% of responses)
 - These included:

⁶ The survey text introducing this set of questions gave examples of possible methods, including: “viewing videos online, using online discussion boards, doing quizzes and tests online, live group discussions on Zoom or other conferencing software, online narrated PowerPoint lectures, interactive simulations, virtual office hours, collaborative group project tools, virtual tutoring centers, online library materials, etc.” This summary doesn't focus explicitly on responses to this question, but rather which of these methods students found most/least effective and why.

- Recorded lectures/powerpoints via Panopto or other tools, or other online content such as YouTube videos, online labs/simulations, podcasts, etc. (49%)
 - Online discussion boards (such as Moodle forums, Slack, Perusall, etc.) or other asynchronous group work (11%)
 - Readings, online assignments, quizzes/exams, etc. (10%)
 - Moodle (nothing further specified; 5%)
- Those who described other instructional methods (11% of responses)
 - These also likely represent a mix of synchronous and asynchronous tools, though responses categorized here did not specify how such tools were used. They included:
 - Other collaborative tools, such as other Google Suite tools (chat, drive, docs, sheets, forms, etc.), Jamboard, Peardeck, Nearpod, LINE, email (7%)
 - Other resources or strategies, such as online library tools, posted powerpoint slides or instructor lecture/reading notes, Supplemental Instruction (SI) or tutoring, flexible due dates or exam times, slower pace/reduced number of assignments, printed exams (5%)

As the distribution of responses above make clear, there is no single definitive method of instruction that works best for all, or even the majority, of students. Indeed, a third (33%) of students who responded to this question listed both synchronous and asynchronous methods as optimal, whether these were blended within a course or distributed across courses (e.g., one synchronous, another asynchronous). Thus, the best method or set of methods depends heavily on what will work best for the structure of an individual course and the particular students in that course. Understanding why students preferred particular methods (question #3 above), detailed below⁷, may help instructors identify the right method for their course, given the likely need to incorporate or plan for remote learning elements this fall.

Why Synchronous Methods Worked Well⁸

Students who indicated that synchronous learning worked well for them listed the following reasons (814 responses to this question):

- Similarities to the classroom environment:
 - Several students felt it was the easiest way to interact with and get help from faculty (24% of responses)
 - Others indicated more generally that it was the most similar to in-person classes (17%)

⁷ Given the variety of “other” methods, typically endorsed by small clusters of students, we did not attempt to synthesize subsequent responses for why these methods worked well.

⁸ For this and similar sections below, note that students did not always address all instructional methods they listed in the previous question. Additionally, reasons given by only a handful of students (e.g., fewer than 10) are not included.

- Some appreciated the ability to have small group classes and meetings (8%)
- Opportunities for social interaction:
 - Students appreciated having the face-to-face connection with classmates and professors (20%) and/or the opportunity for active conversation/discussion (12%)
- The sense of structure (9%) or motivation/engagement (9%) synchronous methods provided
- Support for learning:
 - Some thought that synchronous classes provided the best support for understanding course concepts (4%), with several specifically mentioning audio-visual learning styles
 - Other students mentioned that it provided them with a clearer understanding of faculty expectations (3%)
- Ease of use (4%)
 - Here, some students discussed specific features of Zoom (e.g., breakout rooms, chat feature, screen sharing) or Google Meet (e.g., integration with Google calendar), with students showing a slight preference for Zoom

A select set of student quotes (emphases added) are shared below to further illustrate the points made above:

- “Seeing their face and hearing their voice (virtually) seems to be **as close as we can get to the community-oriented education of St. Olaf.**”
- “Being able to interface with the class once and a while really **breaks up the monotony** of asynchronous online classes. It **provides some structure** to my day, as I have something to look forward to, and gives a little extra **human connection**. Coupled with recorded lectures that utilize PowerPoints, this has been a positive part of online learning.”
- “The live classes are really nice because it **keeps me connected** to friends and professors by allowing me to **talk in real time and react** to people. It also keeps me on task and **motivates me**. Also, **dynamic use of technology** during live lectures (screen sharing slideshows, showing videos, polleverywhere.com surveys) **really keeps me engaged**. Having recorded videos is also nice because I can go back and watch them again if I struggled with the material, but it is less engaging and easier for me to zone out during because there isn't the pressure of only hearing it once.”
- “Firstly **for my mental health**. I have had a **consistent, daily time** when I will see people even if I am not feeling emotionally put together enough to reach out and schedule additional FaceTime meetings with friends. In terms of academics, they are **excellent at keeping me accountable**, allow opportunities to **share opinions in discussions**, and in lectures are the easiest ways to **express when something is confusing**. I believe this is because asking questions is easier, but also because professors are all far better at lecturing in person and part of the reason for this is they can see faces and **react to confusion**, whereas recorded lectures are impossible for this to happen.”

- “The best class I have right now is doing **Zoom lectures in small groups**. In other words, the professor has divided the class into groups **based on what time works best for students**. The professor then meets with each group once per week to go over lecture materials (additional materials are to be read or viewed prior to the lecture to supplement) and answer questions. Each Zoom call has about 8 to 10 students, so it is a **manageable size to ask questions and feel like you are actually having a conversation** about the material with the professor.”

Why Asynchronous Methods Worked Well

Students who indicated that asynchronous learning worked well for them listed the following reasons (694 responses to this question):

- Many students appreciated the ability to complete work on their own schedule (29% of responses) and at their own pace (7%)
- Some students found asynchronous methods to be more accessible (9%), particularly when they were dealing with time zone differences (4%) or WiFi connections were poor (3%)
- Several students listed specific reasons they preferred recorded lectures (and many found these same benefits for recorded Zoom/Google Meet live lectures as well):
 - Ability to pause and rewatch the lecture (15%)
 - Similarity to in-person lectures (7%)
 - Ease of note-taking (4%)
 - For Panopto in particular, students discussed the ability to see the professor and presentation simultaneously (4%) and the option for multiple playback speeds (2%), among other features
- Some students specifically discussed Moodle forums (5%) working well, given the familiar platform and its ability to simulate in-class discussions while also allowing flexibility and more time to formulate a response

A select set of student quotes (emphases added) are shared below to further illustrate the points made above:

- “The Panopto Lectures are effective because I can **watch them on my time** and fit them in where I am able to. Also, **I can pause the lecture in order to jot notes or rewind** to understand something again. However, I enjoy it the most because **it isn't as stressful.**”
- “I think they were effective because they offered **flexibility in terms of deadlines**, watching lectures etc. It is **hard to coordinate a personal schedule during this time** for me personally. I have a third shift job, athletics I am still attending to as if we are in-season, my four classes, a lab, and I am the designated person for my entire family (mom and dad's side) for going shopping for groceries, and running other errands at this time.”

- “The information is usually **presented in a concise manner** in a presentation with **elaboration by the narrator**, if I have questions after that, I can reach out to the professor and meet during office hours.”
- “As for the online lectures- obviously not all classes are as discussion based as others, and I have found that the pre recorded lectures of some of my professors have been **just as effective for me** and work well in terms of allowing for the more **flexible time schedule** that I need while at home and trying to balance my family and school time tables/lives.”
- “As much as I thought I appreciated a schedule, **without being at school I have trouble keeping to a schedule** so I'm appreciating the assignments that let me work at my own availability within a set time frame. I also **prefer forum communication than video conferencing, as the latter is far more awkward and time consuming for less meaningful interaction.**”

Ineffective Methods

We used a similar approach to analyze the 910 responses to the question regarding instructional methods that did not work well for students (#4 above). Again, student responses often fell into more than one category. These included:

- Those who felt synchronous or “in-person” methods were ineffective (35% of responses)
 - This category was defined similarly to above
- Those who felt asynchronous methods were ineffective (57% of responses)
 - These included:
 - Recorded lectures/powerpoints via Panopto or other tools, or other online content such as YouTube videos, online labs/simulations, podcasts, etc. (19%)
 - Online discussion boards (such as Moodle forums, Slack, Perusall, etc.) or other asynchronous group work (19%)
 - Posted PowerPoints, lecture notes, or transcripts with no accompanying lecture; readings, online assignments, quizzes/exams, etc. (19%)
 - Students were particularly frustrated when independent learning was the sole method of instruction, and by timed online exams/quizzes
 - Asynchronous methods in general (4%)
 - Moodle (nothing further specified; 2%)
- Those who described other instructional methods as ineffective (21% of responses)
 - These included:
 - Other collaborative tools similar to those mentioned above (7%)
 - Students who mentioned email often specified dissatisfaction with this method of sending assignments given that it was easy to lose track of them this way.

- Additional workload or unadjusted expectations after the move to online, unclear or continually changing due dates, difficulty locating class materials (7%)
- Other general issues (9%):
 - Use of multiple online methods, either within a course or across courses, as this could be overwhelming
 - Optional meetings or assignments, as there was no motivation to attend/complete them
 - Lack of office hours
 - General technology issues, including inability to print exams/ assignments if required
 - General dissatisfaction with online learning

Why Synchronous Methods Did Not Work Well

Students who indicated that synchronous learning did not work well for them listed the following reasons (315 responses to this question):

- Time or technology constraints:
 - Students with poorer internet connections found it difficult to participate (14% of responses)
 - Other students found synchronous meetings difficult to balance with the rest of their schedule or personal circumstances (13%)
 - Some students struggled to coordinate meeting times with smaller groups (11%)
 - Others were unable to attend synchronous class meetings due to time zone differences (10%)
 - Students also mentioned particular technical difficulties with Google Meet (9%), particularly low audio/video quality or the inability to see everyone in larger classes; or Zoom (7%), particularly difficulty navigating the platform
- Ineffective for learning:
 - Students discussed difficulties concentrating during video conferencing calls (11%)
 - Some specifically mentioned the mental drain of too much screen time (4%)
 - Some found synchronous methods to be a generally unproductive mode of learning (6%)
- Poor group dynamics:
 - Some students found video calls disorderly with large groups (6%)
 - Some felt that these methods discouraged participation (5%) as students were conscious of talking over each other or kept their cameras and microphones turned off

A select set of student quotes (emphases added) are shared below to further illustrate the points made above:

- “Because they're live! Many of our lives as students have changed drastically over the last month and **we can no longer meet during the same times** anymore **due to work** or other circumstances. Making students participate at a specific time **puts some students at a disadvantage**”
- “[**Synchronous video calls**] are **too chaotic**. My most preferred method thus far has been one of my classes, which spends the first half with online video lecture, and then the second half in **SMALL** group video discussion (and the professor can join).”
- “Google Meets does not work for me because **my computer is not new enough to support the program**. Live calls are difficult for me in general because I can't always make it to a lecture at a specific time- I have **more household/ family responsibilities** when I am at home and I don't like to miss out on material because of a live class. **It would be great if there was a policy/ recommendation that all live sessions are recorded and posted for people who can not make it to them.**”
- “I have been really struggling with video calls because **the wifi in my house is really overburdened**, and **I have to be in class before 8 am with the time change**. The stress of these video calls and being unable to tell whether I'll be able to get into class or stay in class has taken **a serious toll on my mental and physical health** as well as my ability to participate in class and learn anything meaningful. I spend hours a day **worrying about or trying to deal with tech issues** which is a **huge burden** on my already busy and stressful schedule.”
- “Having class for the same amount of time on zoom as in person is not effective because it's **hard to stare at a screen for that long**. I personally have a **3-hour night class once a week**, and my professor has decided to keep things status quo and continue to hold 3-hour classes once a week over zoom. This has been the worst of my problems with zoom, as I cannot look at a screen for so long.”
- “I am in a **completely different timezone, with almost 14 hours in between**, and **every Zoom call happened at 3am** for me. I couldn't make it to any of them and sitting afterwards and watching a 1-2 hour recorded video of the call was not helpful at all. There wasn't much offered to me to find that classwork anywhere else especially since it was mostly based on group projects that I had to miss. **I dropped the class** that relied on zoom calls, it was not very asynchronous.”

Why Asynchronous Methods Did Not Work Well

Students who indicated that asynchronous learning did not work well for them listed the following reasons (522 responses to this question):

- Several students felt there was insufficient interaction with professors or classmates (13% of responses)
 - Some found it difficult to ask or get answers to questions (7%)

- Others felt that professors' expectations were unclear (3%) or not sufficiently altered (2%) under asynchronous learning conditions
- Students found it difficult to stay motivated (13%) or engaged (9%) with asynchronous learning
 - Some specifically mentioned frustrations with too much self-learning, which could be overwhelming (8%)
- Several students specifically expressed dissatisfaction with Moodle forums and timed quizzes/exams:
 - Students thought that discussion posts did not simulate in-person discussion (11%), felt like busy-work (7%) and/or were difficult to track (5%)
 - Students found timed assessments extremely stressful to finish in the allotted time (5%), thought that they were too different from in-person exams (3%) and/or expressed particular difficulties in completing them due to poor WiFi connections (3%)
- Students who specifically mentioned recorded lectures disliked them because they were not engaging enough (8%) or too long (4%), sometimes longer than an in-person class session

A select set of student quotes (emphases added) are shared below to further illustrate the points made above:

- “A lot of these methods have been **making classes more difficult**, and **more time consuming**. And, a lot of these methods without given study guides, videos, or powerpoints **doubled or tripled my work load** to both **teach myself material** and do normal homework with no grading adjustment. I also think these methods have been **ineffective without a change in course load or amount of material** originally planned”
- “You **feel really lonely** in your learning experience, and **everyone comes to Olaf to learn in a community**. It is one of the best parts of the campus.”
- “I have also **had difficulties with the time limits on quizzes and tests** because Moodle is running somewhat slowly due to the **server being overloaded**. This has made it so I lose time on exams because the moodle page takes forever to load and **professors have not accounted for those sort of issues when assigning time limits to the exams.**”
- “I think **posting to Moodle is fine**, but **trying to have a discussion is very difficult** and it **involves constantly checking which is disruptive to my productivity** elsewhere. It is also **not a very good substitute for talking in class** and is much more work.”
- “**The hardest thing for me has been taking online exams**. It is hard to "get in the zone" and have the same concentration and focus that I would during an in-class exam. Also, **having a time limit has become really stressful**, especially when I can't always control distractions in my current environment (dogs barking, family members, etc.). Also, all of my exams have been made open-note, which I find makes it even more stressful as you're frantically trying to find stuff in your notes, and **the exams tend to be much harder when they're open note.**”

- **“It's much harder to hold myself accountable and manage my time** at home with many more distractions, so having to watch the lectures posted by my professors and do the extra assignments is **overwhelming**. I understand that for accessibility reasons not all students can attend regular zoom meetings, however **the obvious solution to this is to record and post every meeting after the fact so every student may watch/review it on their own time** or when it's best for them.”

Concluding Remarks

We would again like to emphasize the nuance in students' responses, which were not always easy to categorize and capture in the summary above. Some additional examples of this are given below:

- “The methods that were the most effective are the ones [that] have been adjusted to fit the current circumstances.”
- “It's clearer when I have multiple ways of online instruction, especially since reading everything gets exhausting on a screen.”
- “I am fortunate enough that my professors have been empathetic to every individual's situation and have allowed for learning to happen synchronously or asynchronously . . . Each professors method catered to what would meet the ILOs of their course and then catered to specific cases”
- “The methods work for me because of the type of classes that I am taking not necessarily the online methods that are available.”
- “[Weekly small group meetings and online reading responses] are more flexible than having a large group discussion. They're also only a weekly commitment. If there is more than one reading reflection a week, it can get overwhelming.”
- “The best methods have allowed for flexibility while also providing an opportunity for live interaction with profs and other students, which I think is essential to a productive learning environment.”
- “Zoom classes are good if not done everyday we had the class at Olaf -- they can be overwhelming and unproductive if we are required to be in class everyday. I find classes 1-2 times per week to be manageable.”

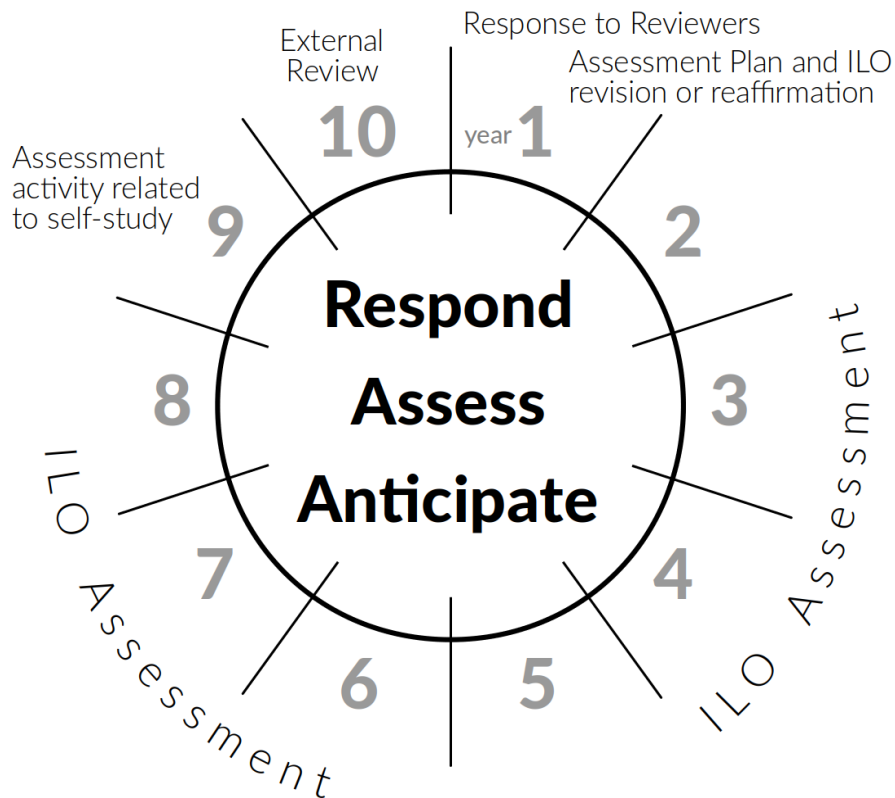
In light of these types of responses, as well as the lack of a clear preference among students for either synchronous or asynchronous learning, we believe flexibility and communication are key in designing effective online learning experiences. This requires a balance between providing opportunities for students to achieve essential course learning outcomes and frequent check-ins with students about what is and isn't working well. These priorities become especially important in hybrid courses to ensure that both the in-person and remote elements of a course support student success equitably.

Appendix D: Program/Department Decennial Assessment Cycle Description

The new Assessment Plan and Decennial Cycle is designed to make assessment relevant to your department/program’s long-term goals, to directly link short-term assessment activities with the full cycle leading up to and following your program review, and to ease your workload by allowing your department/program to craft a long-term assessment plan that is most appropriate for your needs. Assessment activities, and a department or program’s response to assessment, is one important aspect of every self-study. Under this new plan, *your department/program* is the primary relevant audience for your assessment data.

The new Assessment Plan works on a Decennial Cycle linked directly to your department/program’s external review cycle. In brief, your department/program will develop a ten-year Assessment Plan following your external review, integrating assessment activities with department/program goals and recommendations from the program review. In turn, assessment work done during the years leading up to the next program review will directly support your next self-study and help your department/program prepare for that review.

The Assessment Plan will be designed by members of your department/program with your students’ learning in mind. Plans will differ significantly among departments/programs and will ideally reflect each program’s specific concerns and aspirations as they develop in the period following the program review.



Overview

Respond (to External Review)

The Decennial Cycle will begin with the external review. The department/program will consider how the external review and the broader response connects with its goals for student learning and therefore its intended learning outcomes (ILOs). This may lead to a process of revising ILOs. The department/program may wish to consider the following:

- What are the department/program's broader goals for student learning over the next ten years? How will these goals be met through curriculum, pedagogy, hiring decisions, etc.?
- How might current or revised ILOs reflect these broader goals, and how can student learning be effectively assessed?

The next step will be devising a specific Assessment Plan for assessing ILOs over a ten-year period. This plan will involve at least three assessment activities during the decennial cycle that incorporate reflection on assessment findings. The plan should be designed to produce useful information that will be incorporated into the next self-study.

Assess (at least three assessment activities)

Ideally, assessment activities will together assess all department/program ILOs over the course of ten years. (Keep in mind that a single assessment activity might be used to assess more than one ILO.) A department/program may wish to continue a current trajectory of assessment, or create a new plan. Learning outcomes may be assessed directly (looking directly at student work) and/or indirectly (surveys, etc.); in general, indirect assessment gathers student self-reported data and direct assessment collects actual examples of student performance.

Anticipate (the next review)

This phase of the decennial cycle is designed to incorporate a final assessment activity in preparation for writing the department/program's self-study. The final step is writing the self-study for the next external review. Among the questions you may consider:

- What assessment activities has the department/program already done? Is there a significant missing piece? How might the final assessment activity create a more comprehensive picture of student learning overall?
- Are there specific questions the department/program is asking in anticipation of the self-study that might be answered by a specific assessment activity?

Examples of different ways departments/programs may approach the Decennial Assessment Plan

- Some departments/programs may initiate significant curricular changes in response to their external review. Such changes may involve revising ILOs as a first step. Another strategy may involve assessing a given ILO prior to, and again after, curricular changes are made.
- Some departments/programs may have grown or changed in relation to recent hires. Such departments should consider how these changes might intersect with student learning and consider ways to assess that learning.
- Some departments/programs may decide that one or more of their ILOs are not easily assessable, or more like “goals” than learning outcomes. This may also involve revising ILOs as a first step.
- Departments/programs that already use external assessment instruments or credentialing activities may consider how best to incorporate these into their Decennial Assessment Plan.
- Departments/programs that anticipate contributing to the General Education curriculum in new ways may consider the value of assessing an ILO meant specifically for General Education.
- Departments/programs might look back at past assessment activities and consider the success or appropriateness of continuing those activities, and ask what might have been overlooked in past assessments.

Getting Started

As noted above, the Decennial Cycle will begin with the external review, move to the creation of a Decennial Assessment Plan, and typically involve three assessment activities that will provide information for the next program review. However, in our initial rollout of the new system, your entry point will depend on where your department/program sits in relation to its next scheduled external review. Based on this, the first assessment plan will be larger or smaller depending on the period of time remaining until the next review and the number of anticipated activities.

- **GROUP 1:** Departments/programs that have just completed (or are completing) their external review will undergo the full decennial assessment cycle, as described above.
 - Art/Art History
 - English
 - Philosophy
 - FLAC
 - Film Studies
 - Great Con
 - Women's and Gender Studies
 - Biology
 - Computer Science
 - Psychology
 - Science Con
 - Economics
 - International Relations
 - Engineering Studies

- **GROUP 2:** Departments/programs that underwent an external review within the past 2-3 years should aim to complete a variation of the full Decennial Assessment Cycle in the 7-8 years that remain until their next external review. Assessment plans should include 2-3 assessment activities and 1-2 reports.

- German
- Russian & Russian Area Studies
- Africa and the African Diaspora
- Race and Ethnic Studies
- Latin American Studies
- Biomolecular Science
- Family Studies
- Environmental Con
- Exercise Science
- Public Affairs Con

- **GROUP 3:** Departments/programs that are 4-7 years removed from their most recent external review should devise a plan that includes 1-2 assessment activities and 1 report in preparation for their program review.

- Religion
- Classics
- Ancient Studies
- Medieval Studies
- Spanish
- History
- Environmental Studies
- Linguistic Studies
- Asian Studies/ Asian Con
- American Con
- Media Studies
- Chemistry
- Neuroscience
- Mathematical Biology
- Statistics
- Social Work
- Education/Social Studies Education
- Nursing (5-yr review)

- **GROUP 4:** Departments/programs whose next external review is scheduled within the next 3 years should devise a plan that may include 1 assessment activity (depending on when the program review will take place) that will inform the self-study.

- Dance
- Political Science
- Norwegian
- Integrative Studies
- Nordic Studies
- Physics
- Management Studies
- Middle East Studies
- Music
- Theater
- French
- IOS
- Mathematics
- Sociology/ Anthropology

Decennial Assessment Plan Details

A full Decennial Assessment Plan should:

- Incorporate assessment of each of the department/program ILOs.
- Schedule conversations around potential changes to the set of ILOs, if appropriate.
- Create specific action plans to address items raised during the external review process or in the final years of the previous decennial cycle.
- Schedule reassessment of student learning in areas in which actions have been taken during the cycle, thus closing the loop on prior assessment work.
- Identify two years within the decennial cycle in which Assessment Reports will be submitted to the Assessment Committee. In these years, report deadlines can be scheduled for October 1 or February 15.

A Program/Department Decennial Assessment Plan will be submitted to the Assessment Committee for feedback. The deadlines for these reports will also be October 1 or February 15.

Assessment Reports will be reviewed by the Assessment Committee, with comments and concerns returned to departments/programs.

In addition to these two Assessment Reports, program directors and department chairs will be asked to respond briefly to the following prompt as part of their Annual Report to the provost:

Describe any activities your department or program has undertaken this past year in assessment of student learning. Please describe how these activities fit into your current Assessment Plan. If appropriate, describe any plans to revise your department's/program's Assessment Plan.