

# Supporting What Faculty Do Best: Teachers, Scholars, Researchers, and Critics Take on Assessment

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FORDHAM UNIVERSITY

THE JESUIT UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

# Objectives



- You will learn:
  - How engaging **faculty** in assessment, **as teachers, scholars, and researchers**, has contributed to the sustainability of the assessment efforts at Fordham.
  - How our university has been **integrating** assessment **into annual reporting/planning** process.
  - Some of the costs and benefits to **flexible management** of program assessment.



# **INSTITUTIONAL BACKGROUND & CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**



“We refuse to be stamped into following the pseudo-educational vagaries of experimentalists, ...[they] advise the introduction of some whimsical fad. We refuse to fore-go our time-proven...unassailable principles...because of the formalistic, purely extrinsic requirements of so-called standardizing agencies which are cramping and maiming our educational activity in America today.”

Reverend Aloysius Hogan, Faculty Convocation, 1934



# Teachers, Scholars, Researchers



- Deeply involved in teaching
- Concerned about learning
- Responsible for course and program curricula
- Possess research and reasoning skills
- Creative
- Experts in their fields
- **Intellectually active and engaged**

# Obstacles & Loss of (Intellectual) Power



- Language of assessment is unfamiliar
- Intellect & expertise ignored
- Purpose of assessment is disconnected from teaching and learning

Photo credit: Lillian Whitney-Morley, Nov. 2012



# Administrative Flexibility is Essential



- Diverse agenda: Program faculty select focus to suit needs of program
- Use of their language: Minimize use of assessment jargon
- Requirements for content, not form



- Monitor progress annually, permit longer-term work





# **ENGAGING FACULTY**

# Scholars & Researchers



- Faculty reading group to reconnect assessment to research, teaching and learning
  - First reading: *Academically Adrift*
- Support scholarship of assessment
  - Including dissenting perspective
- Integrate assessment into professional development

# Department Chairs & Program Directors



- Annual reporting by programs includes assessment reports
  - Assessment reports are loosely standardized
- Annual planning documents prompt for assessment results as related to planning
- Deans provide feedback on assessment projects
- Internally-funded projects require assessment plans and reports

# Outcomes



- Most programs choose assessment-for-improvement
- Programs that chose assessment-for-improvement sustain commitment to assessment
- Leadership promoting “curricular conversation” and faculty development

# Graduate Assessment in a School of Arts and Sciences



# Graduate Assessment in a School of Arts and Sciences



Different from undergraduate and professional programs

- Deeper and broader
- Professional development
- Emerging scholar not assessed through coursework
- Inherent in mentoring
- Using end products

# Use of Flexibility: 3 Examples



- Programs chose their assessment focus
  - Meaningful and valuable
- 3 programs, 3 different approaches
  - Professional needs of graduate students
  - Academic outcomes, intellectual development
  - Capturing outcomes of program learning objectives across courses
- Flexibility led to sustainability





# Example: Philosophy Department

- Alumni Survey – Feedback from graduates
  - Reveals
    - What department is doing well
    - Where it could use improvement
- Informed by experience in job market and employment



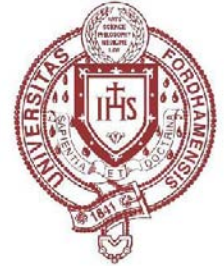
## Program Evaluation

Complete the sentence to best describe your experience:

I felt Fordham's PhD. program could have prepared me better by [select any that apply]...

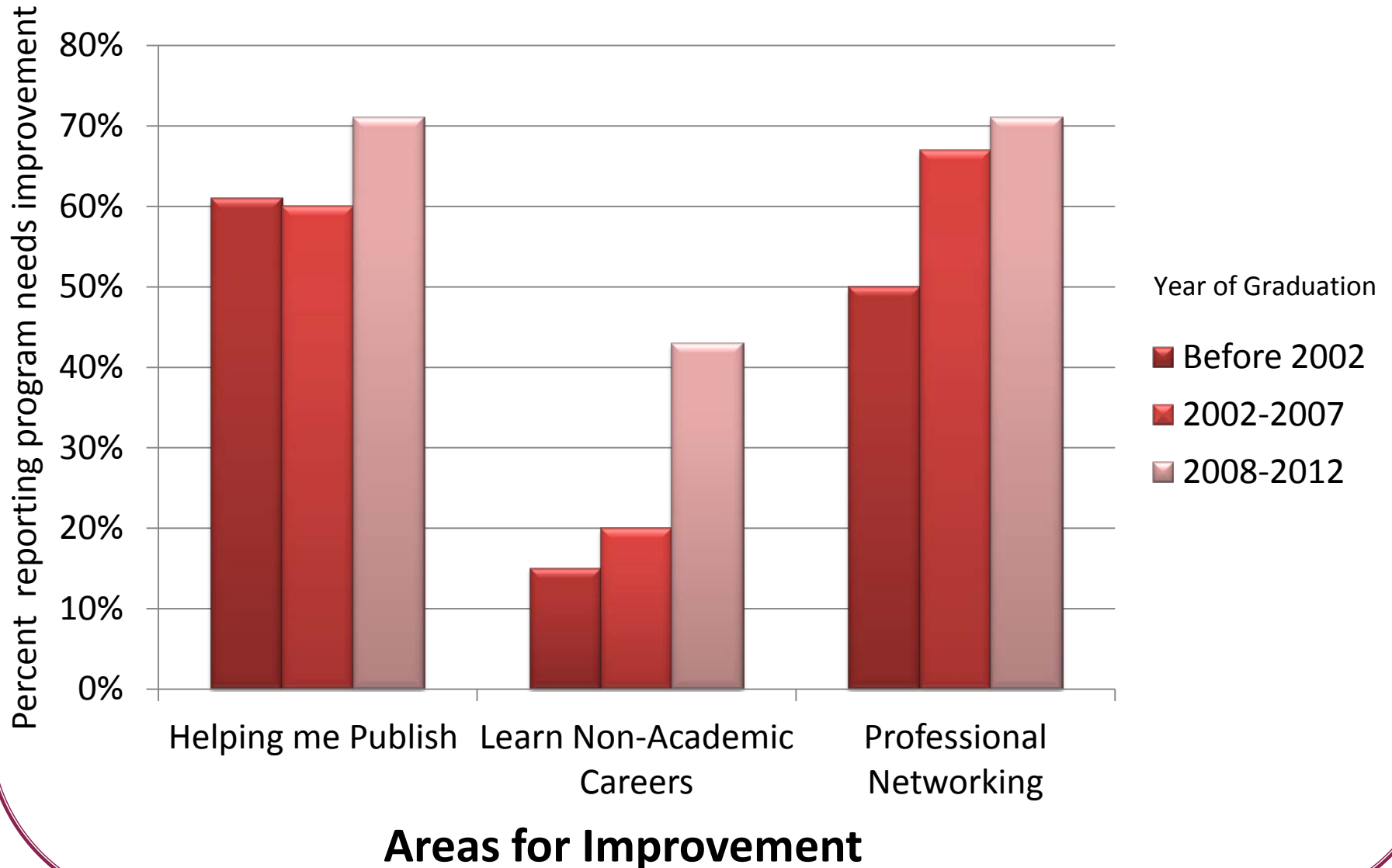
- Offering more history of philosophy courses
- Offering more contemporary philosophy courses
- Helping me publish my work
- Offering more training in teaching
- Offering more opportunities to learn about non-academic careers
- Helping me build a professional network
- Preparing me for job interviews
- Other

# Results from Philosophy Department Survey of PhDs

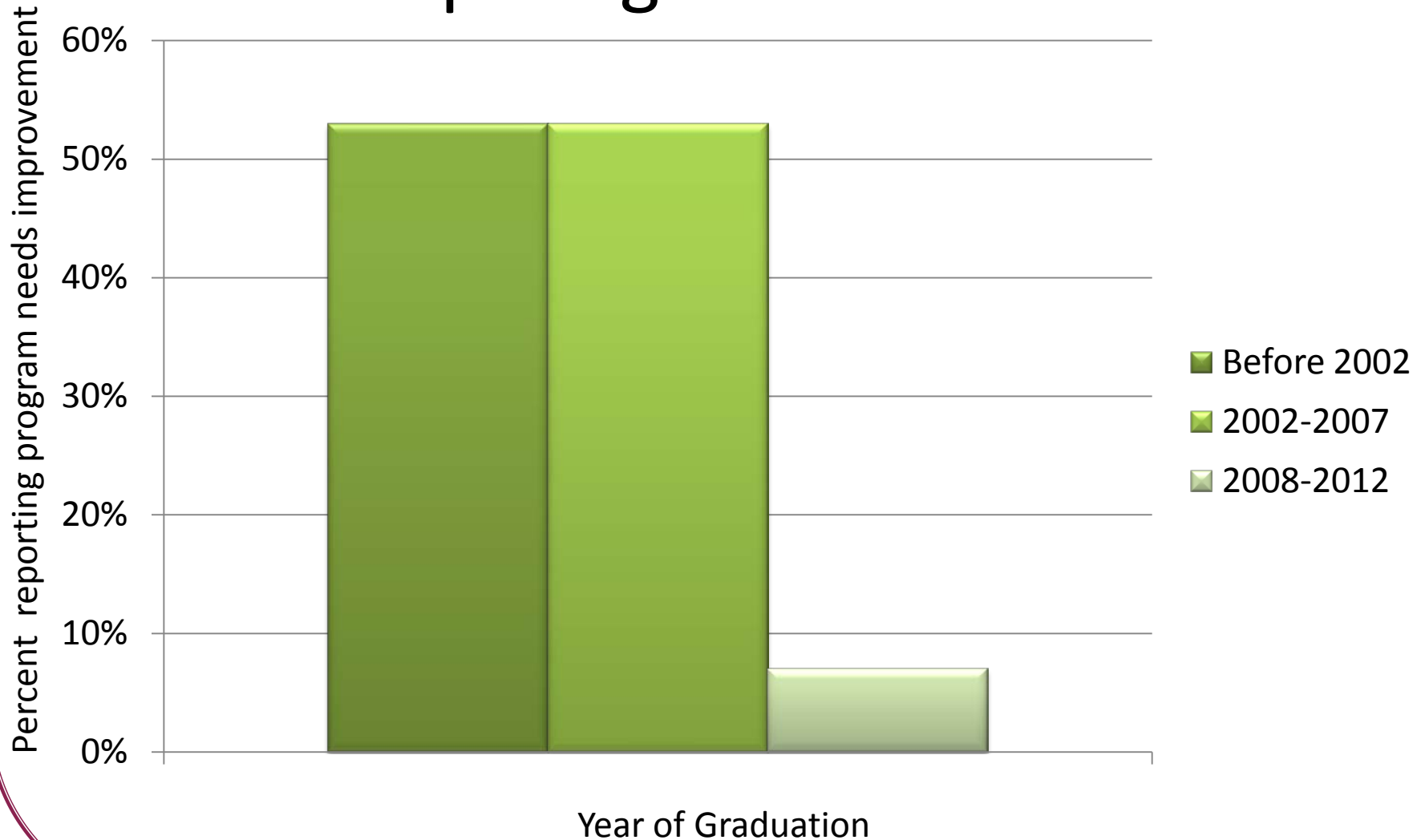


- Current Employment
  - 71% of those working in academia hold tenure or tenure-track jobs
  - 57% work for Catholic institutions

# Survey Revealed Student Needs



# Survey Revealed Success of Changes: Preparing for Interviews





# Example: Theology Department

Theology

- Focus on dissertation quality
- Rubric generated using Barbara Lovitts' *Making the Implicit Explicit* and *Developing Quality Dissertations* examples
- Assesses knowledge accumulated throughout graduate career

# Theology Department

## Program goal and student-learning objectives

Excellent dissertations should clearly *define a compelling problem*

<b>Outstanding (4)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- well written</li><li>- succinct, interesting, and compelling</li><li>- provides a clear statement of the problem</li><li>- shows independent thinking about the problem</li><li>- explains why the problem is important and significant</li><li>- places the problem in scholarly and intellectual context so as to illuminate its importance</li></ul>	<b>Very Good (3)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- competently written but not eloquent</li><li>- interesting; has breadth, depth, and insight</li><li>- poses a good question or problem</li><li>- explains why the problem is important and significant</li><li>- makes some attempt to situate the problem—albeit in a less interesting or compelling way</li></ul>	<b>Acceptable (2)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- is not well written or well organized</li><li>- makes a standard case for a narrow or pedestrian problem</li><li>- does not do a good job of explaining why it is important</li><li>- provides minimum of poor context for the problem</li><li>- has a routine introduction of the problem</li><li>- lacks a careful and thorough attempt to situate the problem in its intellectual context</li></ul>	<b>Unacceptable (1)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- poorly written and organized</li><li>- not clear or succinct</li><li>- provides no motivation or justification for the problem</li><li>- does not state the problem (or it is wrong or trivial)</li><li>- does not make the case for the importance of the topic</li><li>- does not provide or does not put the problem in a clear context</li></ul>
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Example:  
International Humanitarian Action

- Master's Program assessment **coordinated among courses**
- Complex rubric generated with TEAGLE grant for undergraduate courses and modified for graduate courses
- See session immediately following:  
**Men and Women For and With Others:  
Collaborative Learning and Innovative Assessment  
in Humanitarian Studies  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Room 407-409**

# Hurdles to Assessment & How We Reduce Them



- Documentation
  - Incorporate in routine reporting documents and planning
- Language
  - Minimize jargon, permit faculty to use any terms
- Timing
  - Allow multiple ongoing projects; assume no project is going to fit exactly into one year; pathways may be circuitous

# Costs of Flexibility



- More work for administrators
  - Reduces standardization
  - Requires thought and judgment



# Benefits of Flexibility in Management of Assessment



- Engages faculty in research/scholarship rather than bureaucratic exercise
  - Taps faculty expertise
- Supports diverse foci and methods
- Yields information faculty value and use
- Minimizes obstacles
- Makes assessment sustainable and meaningful

# Acknowledgements & Further Information



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The full text of this presentation is available at:

[http://www.fordham.edu/academics/office\\_of\\_the\\_provos/office\\_of\\_institutio/assessment/presentations\\_89543.asp](http://www.fordham.edu/academics/office_of_the_provos/office_of_institutio/assessment/presentations_89543.asp)





Annual Assessment Report for \_\_\_\_\_ Academic Year \_\_\_\_\_  
 Assessment coordinator: \_\_\_\_\_ Report date: \_\_\_\_\_

For each program goal and student-learning objective you assessed in AY 2011-2012, provide the following information:

- 1) **Program goal and student-learning objective:**
  
- 2) **How do you know students are learning this?**
  - a) How did you measure student performance?
  
  - b) Where, when and from whom did you collect assessment evidence?
  
  - c) What is the result? Provide a summary of the evidence.
  
- 3) **When & by whom were the results interpreted?**
  
- 4) **Outcome of analysis; follow up: What the objectives are, who will carry them out, and when actions are planned.**



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**ANNUAL STUDENT OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT REPORT GUIDELINES**  
 (Updated February, 2012)

Your annual assessment report will be a part of the annual planning documents. The report serves two purposes:

- (a) To document your program- and course-level assessment activities from the academic year, and
- (b) To summarize results that contribute to your planning.

Your assessment report should address each of the fundamental elements below:

- Which program goals and student outcomes were assessed?
- How you measured student performance or outcomes, including
  - A description of the evidence (e.g., papers, performances, surveys)
  - A description of the students from whom this evidence was obtained (e.g., course and term information, survey administration information)
  - Copies of materials, as appropriate (e.g., surveys, rubrics)
- A summary of the evidence (in sufficient detail that the reader can appreciate the basis of any conclusions you reach).
- Summarize any discussion of the findings, including who participated in the discussion and when it took place.
- Decisions arising from the results.
- A plan for follow up, as needed, including the persons who are responsible for follow up and target dates for their work.

Your assessment report SHOULD NOT include:

- Students' names, id numbers or other identifying information
- Faculty names or other identifying information in connection with courses or student performance, to the extent that it is possible. (Though do include the names of faculty who worked on assessment.)

For your convenience, forms are available for your use in constructing your report. The forms are available by email from the Assessment Officer (jpinto3@fordham.edu). To suit the varying needs and desires of Fordham's programs, two versions of the forms are available, a grid and a narrative. You may use one of those forms or you may organize your report to best represent your assessment as you see fit.

Brief summaries of your assessment results should be incorporated into your planning documents wherever they inform your decision-making and planning. Bear in mind that assessment results may be pertinent to both past decisions (providing evidence about the effect of those decisions) or future decisions (providing information needed to make choices).



Annual Assessment Report for \_\_\_\_\_  
 Assessment coordinator: \_\_\_\_\_

Academic Year \_\_\_\_\_  
 Report date: \_\_\_\_\_

Program goal and student-learning objective	How do you know students are learning this?			When & by whom were the results interpreted?	Outcome of analysis; follow-up
	How did you measure student performance?	Where, when and from whom did you collect assessment evidence?	What is the result? Provide a summary of the evidence.		
					<input type="checkbox"/> Objective wholly satisfied. No follow up required. <input type="checkbox"/> Objective not wholly satisfied. Follow up planned, responsible persons, timeline:
					<input type="checkbox"/> Objective wholly satisfied. No follow up required. <input type="checkbox"/> Objective not wholly satisfied. Follow up planned, responsible persons, timeline:

## Administrative Flexibility: Assessment Reporting Guidelines and Optional Templates





ARTS AND SCIENCES  
ANNUAL REPORT AND STRATEGIC PLAN 2012

[DEPARTMENT]

[Replace bracketed in  
[Planning meetings are in May, starting at the  
before meeting; final plan]

**Mission:**

[Identity of division in reference to disciplines]

**Goals and Strategies to Achieve Them:**

[Immediate and longer term, related to recent]

**Recent Achievements of Note:**

[Division accomplishments other than the included  
from the Faculty Activity Reports and reports]

**Strengths to Maintain:**

[Priorities and strategies to sustain them, with]

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**New and Changing Initiatives:**

[New areas for growth and reallocations to support them, with projected data.]

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**Existing and Potential Internal and External Partnerships:**

[Joint program/department initiatives; links with regional institutions.]

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**Assessment Plan for Continuing and New Initiatives:**

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**Resources Needs Including both Immediate (detailed FY12 proposals) and longer term (General Proposals Projected for up to Five Years):**

**Faculty and Other Instructional Staff:**

[Include tenure-track, non-tenure track full time such as PostDocs or Lecturers, and Graduate Teaching Fellows for undergraduate and graduate programs on both campuses.]

**Other Personnel:**

[Continuing assignments, reorganizations, and new needs.]

**Operating Expenses (reallocations and requests):**

[Ongoing, new, and redirected operating funds.]

**Capital Equipment and Space:**

[Immediate needs and longer-term proposals.]



Assessment  
integrated into  
planning  
documents.