MADISON COLLABORATIVE ANNUAL ASSESSMENT REPORT #2
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

for

2014-2015

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Madison Collaborative (MC) Annual Report summary reflects students' ethical reasoning skills, attitudes toward ethical reasoning, and the effect of the Madison Collaborative on these skills and attitudes, thus far. Note that the 2014-2015 academic year is "Year 2" of the Madison Collaborative intervention plan (i.e., Annual Technical Report #2), reflecting the first phase of longitudinal data collect. Throughout the report, the Annual Technical Report #1 is referenced and several analyses are repeated from the previous academic year (i.e., 2013-2014). Full technical reports may be requested from mc@jmu.edu.

Several assessment results suggest gains regarding students' ethical reasoning skills and attitudes; however, many of these gains were not practically significant. These findings might be expected given only one mandatory ethical reasoning intervention is in place, thus far (i.e., *It's Complicated*), and this intervention occurs only once during the very beginning of students' first-year experience. Encouragingly, in Annual Technical Reports #1 and #2, we were able to demonstrate initial validity evidence for all four Madison Collaborative assessment instruments. Moreover, for three of the four Madison Collaborative assessment instruments, scores continue to demonstrate adequate reliability across multiple cohorts of students.

In subsequent years, more interventions should be in place and a greater number of faculty should be integrating the Madison Collaborative 8 KQ framework into their curricula. Thus, students should experience a greater number of MC interventions, several of which are expected be more impactful than those implemented thus far. We expect to see larger gains in cognitive and affective ethical reasoning student learning outcomes, given more ER interventions are infused into courses, Residence Halls, etc. Empirically demonstrating this will be contingent upon our ability to capture students' differing degrees of "dosage" or "exposure" to "non-mandatory" ethical reasoning interventions.

1.1 How did students perform on the Ethical Reasoning Recall Test (ERRT) post *It's Complicated*?

On average, incoming first-year students were able to recall about 5 of the 8 key question words. The easiest key question to recall was *Fairness* and the most difficult *Liberty*. On average, incoming first-year students were able to correctly explain 3 of the 8 key questions. On average, second-year students were able to recall about 1 of the 8 key question words. *Liberty* and *Character* were the most difficult KQ words to recall, while *Responsibilities* was the easiest. On average, second-year students were able to correctly explain 1 of the 8 key questions.

1.2 How are students Ethical Reasoning Identification Test (ERIT) scores changing over time?

Spring 2015 represented our first **longitudinal** data collection point *for students that received the It's Complicated training prior to completing the ERIT*. Thus, we were able to compare students' ERIT scores as entering first-year students in fall 2013 to their ERIT scores as second-year students in spring 2015. On average, students ERIT total scores were not statistically significantly different from fall 2013 to spring 2015.

This finding was somewhat expected given there were no *required* interventions between the time students completed the ERIT in fall 2013 and when these same students completed the ERIT again in spring 2015. We might not expect to see large improvements in ERIT scores given the absence of additional required exposure to the Madison Collaborative and the 8 KQ framework. Yet, it is encouraging that students' ethical reasoning skills, as measured by the ERIT, are not decreasing over time from the beginning of their first year to the middle of their second year.

1.3 How well were first- and second-year students able to apply the ethical reasoning process?

Overall, first- and second-year students scored a little above "Marginal" on the Ethical Reasoning Writing Essay Rubric (ER-WR). Similar to other cohort years, the easiest rubric element for students was A (*Identify ethical issue in its context*).

First-year students who entered JMU in fall 2014 earned higher ER-WR rubric scores than second-year students assessed during spring 2015; however, the magnitude of these differences was small. The first-year fall 2014 student cohort and second-year spring 2015 student cohort both experienced the *It's Complicated* intervention.

1.4 How are students' abilities to apply the ethical reasoning process changing over time?

Students who completed the ER-WR essay during fall 2013 were the same students who completed the ER-WR essay in spring 2015. On average, students tended to score statistically significantly *higher* when they were assessed as first-year students in fall 2013 than they did when they were assessed as second-year students in spring 2015; the magnitude of this difference was "medium" or moderate. This suggests that students' abilities to apply the ethical reasoning process may be declining over time, on average – based on their performance on the ER-WR rubric essay.

1.5 What are first- and second-year students' attitudes and behaviors regarding ethical reasoning?

On average, first- and second-year students rated ethical reasoning skills relatively high (compared to other skills), and similarly to: critical thinking, oral communication, and time-management skills. First- and second-year students tended to "Somewhat Agree" or "Strongly Agree" that ethical reasoning skills were important. Additionally, on average, students also "Somewhat" or "Strongly" agreed that they had confidence in their abilities to apply ethical reasoning skills.

In general, students self-reported thinking about ethical issues, applying ethical reasoning to make a decision, engaging in ethical reasoning to give advice to others, and discussing real-life ethical dilemmas on either a monthly or weekly basis.

1.6 How and to what extent are students experiencing the 8 KQs? And is this exposure positively related to achievement of the MC Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)?

Approximately 14% of second-year students reported receiving "heavy" exposure to the 8 KQ framework in general education classes. Similarly, about 15% of students reported experiencing "heavy" exposure to the 8 KQs in Major courses. It is encouraging that at least 25% of students self-reported experiencing some or "minor" exposure to the 8 KQs via residence hall activities, general education classes, and Major classes. Correlation analyses suggested that exposure to the 8 KQs *may* be influencing student achievement of the attitudinal and cognitive ER SLOs in a positive way.

ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS

During the fall 2014-Spring 2015 academic year, all four MC assessment instruments were administered. These instruments include:

- Ethical Reasoning Recall Test (ERRT)
- Ethical Reasoning Identification Test (ERIT)
- Survey of Ethical Reasoning (SER)
- Ethical Reasoning – Writing (ER-WR)

The chart below shows the alignment between ER assessments and abbreviated SLOs. It is important to note that the four locally developed MC assessments provide full coverage of the SLOs.

ERRT	• SLO 1: Memorization of the 8KQs
ERIT	• SLOs 2 & 3: Identifying the relationship of specific KQs to a decision/rationale scenario
SER	• SLOs 1-5 as well as SLOs 6 & 7: attitudes toward ER
ER-WR	• SLO 5: Applying KQs to one's own personal, professional, and civic life

For the full technical report for 2014-2015, please email mc@jmu.edu.