Chapter Five Appendix

Enclosure 5.03
Faculty Senate Assessment Committee (FSAC) report on the NSSE/FSSE Survey results

Task
The Faculty Senate Assessment Committee analyzed the results from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) given the students and faculty in the fall semesters of 2005 and 2008. The results of the NSSE are compared to all participating institutions nationally as well as peer institutions which included USMA for the 2008 survey.

General Observations

1. The NSSE does not provide actionable items because it provides general information about the midshipmen. We may wish to formulate some items that are more relevant to USNA to be included in the next survey.
2. The items in NSSE and FSSE are not directly comparable. The general conclusion was that, for a majority of those questions, the differences could be accounted for by realizing that the question to the faculty and the question to the students were NOT similar enough for such a direct comparison. A follow-up action item is contact the survey administrators and ask them about this issue if we decide to conduct the FSSE in the future.
3. We should continue to participate in the NSSE every three years so that we can track changes in Midshipmen's perceptions over time.
4. While there is little practical difference between USNA and the Military Academy Consortium institutions, we should continue to participate in the Consortium so that we have an appropriate benchmark group.
5. The NSSE results should be presented to the Academy Effectiveness Board for its consideration relative to overall institutional assessment.

Specific Issues

1. Are midshipmen writing two or more drafts of a paper before submission?
2. Are midshipmen being asked to write enough short (5-19 pages) or long (> 20 pages) papers?
3. Are midshipmen prepared for class?
4. Are midshipmen focusing more on the low-level (on Bloom's taxonomy) skills such as memorization of information and simple comprehension and application in contrast to high-level skills such as analysis, synthesis and making judgments about the value of information and potential solutions? For example, do midshipmen learn by memorization as opposed to using critical thinking skills? Does the faculty expect too much memorization?
    a. While 88% of plebes report their coursework emphasized memorizing facts, ideas, or methods; only 22-24% of faculty report placing quite a bit or very much emphasis on memorization.
    b. On the other hand, 89% of Plebes reported their coursework emphasized basic elements of an idea or theory; 78% - synthesizing and organizing ideas: 78% - making judgments about value of information: 78% - applying theories or concepts.
    c. This issue was discussed at the faculty colloquium in Dec 2007 and comments from that time explained the discrepancy as due to plebe training, faculty vice student frames of reference, and pedagogical approaches.