The Academy of Student Affairs Professionals

Assessment in Student Affairs
Presented May 22, 2008
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Introduction to Today’s Session

- Introductions
- Today’s agenda
  - Landscape of assessment – overview
  - Learning and Program Outcomes
  - Developing a Survey
  - Conducting a Focus Group/Interviews
  - Developing Assessment Plans
  - Lessons Learned
  - Open Forum
Today’s Learning Outcomes

Participants will be able to:

- Define and identify the basic components and articulate the importance of assessment in Student Affairs and its relationship to planning and institutional effectiveness.
- Identify opportunities for assessment within their department/service area based on basic assessment types, including needs assessment, satisfaction surveys, and outcomes assessment.
Learning Outcomes (cont.)

Participants will be able to:

- Determine appropriate methods and methodologies (qualitative and quantitative) when creating an assessment instrument.
- Comprehend the meaning of basic data generated through assessment and the implication of results.
Assessment Cycle/Environment

Mission/Purpose
Goals
Outcomes
Make decisions to improve programs; enhance student learning and development; inform institutional decision-making, planning, budgeting, policy, public accountability

Implement Methods to Deliver Outcomes and Methods to Gather Data

Gather and Analyze Data

Interpret Evidence

Politics

Ethics

Scholarship

Campus culture

Accreditation

(Adapted from Bresciani, 2004)
What is Assessment?

“What Assessment is any effort to *gather, analyze, and interpret* evidence which describes institutional, departmental, divisional or agency effectiveness.”

What is Evaluation?

“Evaluation is any effort to use assessment evidence to improve institutional, departmental, divisional, or agency effectiveness.”

Assessment

- Describes
  - What we do
  - Why we do it
  - How well we do it
  - How we improve or change and why
  - How well the improvements work
- Is a process not a product
- What assessment is not
- Best practice in assessment in student affairs
- Best practice for regional accrediting agencies
Writing Learning and Program Outcomes

The Heart of the Assessment Enterprise
Advantages of Using Outcomes Language

- Make it clear to students who participate in your programs and activities what they can expect to gain
- Make it clear to others what the program will accomplish and, where appropriate, what students will learn
- Help staff select appropriate strategies to reach the outcomes
Advantages of Using Outcomes Language (cont.)

- Move beyond student satisfaction and the use of services as the sole means of describing student affairs effectiveness
- Assist in developing and using appropriate assessment methods
- Apply the results of your assessment to improvement and/or change
- Comply with regional accrediting bodies
What are Learning Outcomes?

What *students* are expected to *demonstrate* in terms of *knowledge*, *skills*, and *attitudes* upon *completion* of a program, course, or activity.
Learning Outcomes?

- Students will like the meal.
- Students will rate the speaker positively.
- Students will create their own personal leadership philosophy based on three models taught in Lead 101 the fall semester.
- After the service project, students will be able to articulate the root causes of homelessness in Bryan/College Station.
Bloom’s Taxonomy (1956)

A structure for developing learning outcomes
What are Program Outcomes?

Program outcomes are what a *program* is to do, achieve or accomplish.

Can also be applied to process and performance outcomes.
Program/Process Outcomes?

- Students will like the conference banquet.
- The professional development sub-committee will offer two dining etiquette programs in the fall semester for the graduating seniors in Alpha Beta Gamma.
- Develop and expand the Student Health Services web page in order to increase student access to health information, patient services and educational programming.
Examples

- **Learning outcome**
  - Students will articulate the root causes of homelessness in the Bryan/College Station area

- **Assessment method**
  - Pre-test/Post-test

- **Criteria for success**
  - Students post-test scores will improve over pre-test
Examples

Program outcome

- Develop and expand the SHS webpage in order to increase student access to health information, patient services, educational programming

- Assessment method(s)
  - Data retrieval from webpage interactions
  - Annual patient survey to determine student utilization of the web page
  - Survey instruments by Health Education program to determine student utilization of web page

- Criteria for success
  - Increase in the utilization of the SHS webpage regarding health information, patient services, and educational programming
Outcomes Activity

- Refer to Writing Outcomes handout
- Take the program or workshop you developed for an academic integration initiative yesterday and fully develop program and/or learning outcomes
- Identify multiple methods you could use to determine that outcomes have been met
When to Use a Survey

Assessment Option Examples:

- Focus groups/interviews—provide deep and narrow information from a small number of people
- Portfolios—demonstrate a skill or knowledge area
- Surveys—provide wide and shallow information from a large number of people
When to Use a Survey (cont.)

Questions to Ask:

- What do you really need to know? (not just what is nice to know)
- How do you plan to use the information you gain from the assessment?
- Is a national instrument available (and cost effective) or does a local survey need to be developed?
- Is there a sense of ownership in the project?
Constructing Surveys

- **Introduction** (may be in cover letter)
  - Purpose, use of information, deadline, sponsor, contact information, importance of their participation, time required, instructions

- **Content**
  - Start with easy but interesting questions first, demographics last

- **Conclusion**
  - Thanks, when/if results available, contact information, resources
Question Types

- Yes/No Questions
  - Typically, these are questions with only two possible responses.
  - Determine if there are other possible responses such as “don’t know” or “maybe” that need to be included.
  - Example:
    
    Are you currently enrolled in 12 or more hours at this university?
    
    Yes  No
Checklists

- Questions consist of a question followed by a list of choices.
- The stem should ask a complete sentence.
- Choices should be mutually exclusive.
- Order responses logically, numerically if the answers are numbers.
- Example:
  What was your primary reason for living on campus? (choose one)
  ___Convenient location
  ___Low cost
  ___Proximity to dining hall
  ___My parents wanted me to
  ___Safety and security
  ___etc…
  ___Other__________________

- This example could also be phrased as:
  - What were your reasons for choosing to live on campus? (check all that apply)
  - Check the top THREE reasons you chose to live on campus.
Rankings

- The respondent is asked to number a series of responses according to some criteria.
- Make sure the directions are complete and the ranking criteria is specified.
- Keep the list no longer than ten items.
- Specify if you want all, or just some, of the items ranked (i.e., the top three).
- Responses do not tell you the relative distance between items.
- Example:

  Please rank each item below to indicate the importance of each service to you, with “1” as the most important and “5” as the least important.
  
  ___Career Services
  ___Health Services
  ___Counseling Center
  ___Recreational Sports
  ___Volunteer Services Center
Question Types (cont.)

- **Likert-type Rating Scales**
  - The responses to these questions range from one end of a spectrum to the other.
    - Determine whether you want a “neutral” middle response or a forced choice.
    - Determine whether you want/need “don’t know”, “undecided”, or “not applicable” responses.
  - **Example:**
    I was satisfied with the number of different sports offered through the intramurals program.
    Strongly Agree/Agree/Neutral/Disagree/Strongly Disagree
Question Types (cont.)

- Ecosystem Rating Scale
  - This question asks for two different ratings about one concept.
  - Example:
    Please rate the importance of and your satisfaction with the amenities of your residence hall room.
    Importance scale: 4=very important, 3=somewhat important, 2=somewhat not important, 1=not at all important
    Satisfaction scale: 4=very satisfied, 3=somewhat satisfied, 2=somewhat dissatisfied, 1=very dissatisfied

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Satisfaction</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Closet space</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wall color</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathroom size</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet connection</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question Types (cont.)

Open Ended Questions

- These allow respondents to answer in their own words.
- The amount of space allotted for the answer should provide an indication of the expected response length.
- Example:

  What did you learn from today’s workshop?
Conducting Focus Groups

Definition: “...Carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, nonthreatening environment. It is conducted with approximately seven to ten people by a skilled interviewer. The discussion is relaxed, comfortable, and often enjoyable for participants as they share their ideas and perceptions. Group members influence each other by responding to ideas and comments in the discussion.” (Krueger, 1988).
Ethical Issues

- Institutional Review Board
  - Sensitive topics (alcohol, drugs, sex, illegal activity, etc.)
  - Do no harm—provide resources

- Anonymity vs. Confidentiality
  - Data security (electronic, audio tapes, etc.)
  - Collection of IP addresses or other imbedded data

- Required vs. Optional Participation

- Required vs. Optional Responses
Practical Issues

- Response rates—multiple contacts, length, salience
- Incentives—pre/post, lottery/all, administration
- Survey fatigue/timing—random sampling, campus calendar, day of the week
- Self report data—accuracy, truthfulness, validity, reliability
- Expertise—survey design, data collection, data analysis
- Using the data—plan ahead, involve stakeholders
Conclusions

- Use multiple methods (local and national surveys, focus groups, interviews, self assessments, observation, portfolios) to gather information.
- Plan/prepare—begin with the end in mind
- Pilot test before giving it to larger audience
- Practice—few surveys are perfect!
Survey or Focus Group Development Activity

- Individually write a five question survey or focus group interview protocol for the outcomes you developed for the academic integration initiative
Assessment Plans: Putting It All Together

- Mission/Purpose
- Goals
- Objectives
- Outcomes
- Delivery methods
- Evaluation methods
- Implementation of the Assessment Process
- Results
- Decisions and Recommendations
Wise Rules of Engagement

- Refer to “Everything You Wanted to Know About Assessment on One Page”
- Time and resources
- Expertise
- Division Assessment Team
  - Share, collaborate, celebrate
- Department Assessment Plan
- Caution: Over surveying
- Advertise what you have learned and decisions you have made
- Students – first and last
Contact Information

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