

# **Assessment for beginners: Learning from current experience**



***Leading the Way Compact Planning Forum***

Monday, March 31, 2014

# Develop an Institutional Baseline

- ***Small Group Activity:***
  - Describe assessment activities already in place at your institution
  - List the types of data already available at your institution
  - Describe how your division, department or area currently uses data to guide decisions
  - Discuss the meaning of the following sentence: “Our college is data rich but information poor.”

# What is a Culture of Evidence?

- The commitment of everyone at the institution to assess the effectiveness of programs and services, to make data-based decisions and to demonstrate that the programs, practices and services their area offers
  - Are effective
  - Support the college's missions and goals
  - Contribute to student development, student success, student learning and/or student completion rates

# Why Create a Culture of Evidence?

- Accountability
- Accreditation
- Political climate
- Research
- Theories
- It's the right thing to do

# Key Assessment Questions

- What should our students be learning and in what ways should they be growing?
- What are our students actually learning and in what ways are they actually growing?
- What should we do to improve student learning and growth?

# Why Assessment?

- Makes our expectations explicit and public
- Sharpens focus
- Sets appropriate criteria and high standards for learning quality
- Creates an environment that is outcomes-oriented and data-driven
- Creates opportunities for partnerships across the college

# Why Assessment?

- Makes it easier to arrive at and support decisions—and answer questions—about:
  - Program creation, expansion, redirection or elimination
  - Budget requests
  - Allocation (and reallocation) of resources
  - The value of services, programs, etc.

# General Guidelines for Creating a Culture of Evidence

- Overall goal is to demonstrate that programs and services
  - Are effective
  - Assist the college to achieve its mission and meet its goals
  - Contribute to student development, success, learning and/or program completion



# General Guidelines, Cont.

- There is no one-size-fits all approach
  - Questions being asked and the culture within the college dictate the approach and the tools
  - Always weigh costs in relation to benefits, staff skill sets, and the institution's culture
- Start small. Select projects that
  - Fit skills, time available, and resources
  - Have fairly basic designs and goals
  - Focus initially on strong programs

# General Guidelines, Cont.

- View as action research
  - Four steps: plan, act, observe and reflect (Upcraft & Schuh, 2002)
  - Goal is to inform and improve practices, programs, services and individual performance (Upcraft & Schuh, 2002)
  - Use to make decisions about teaching and learning (Suskie, 2009)

# General Guidelines, Cont.

- Use existing data bases, multiple assessment strategies, and sampling techniques
- Help staff members borrow then grow missing skill sets
- Use results to *support* the decision-making process

# What Does a Culture of Evidence Look Like?

- No two cultures of evidence look the same. However, most are built around these core elements:
  - An annual or bi-annual assessment calendar for major areas, programs and services
  - Programs, services, and activities with clearly defined outcomes (learning, developmental or program) and outcome measures (authentic and/or traditional)

# What Does a Culture of Evidence Look Like, Cont.

- Budgeting, planning (strategic and operational), staff evaluation and staff development procedures that are data-based, action-oriented and tied to institutional goals
- Formal evaluations of programs and services conducted annually or bi-annually (faculty and students)
- Needs analysis (faculty, students and alumni) conducted every 2-3 years

# What Does a Culture of Evidence Look Like, Cont.

- Point of service evaluations conducted periodically throughout the year
- Research studies to demonstrate the effectiveness of major initiatives (a Life/Career Planning course or a College Success course, for example)
- Time specifically set aside to analyze data, identify appropriate actions to take based on the data, etc.

# What Does a Culture of Evidence Look Like, Cont.

- An annual report to the college community that demonstrates using hard data how the programs and services offered by your division/dept. contribute to the college's mission and bottom line: student access and student success (student learning)

Handout: *Creating a Culture of Evidence: A Snapshot of Best Processes and Practices*

# How Do I Build the Skill Set

- Borrow or rent expertise
- Attend on-campus professional development activities
- Attend state & national conferences with a specific agenda—and a commitment to share what you learn w/others
- Start or participate in an existing study group



# How Do I Assist My Area at the College to move Toward a Culture of Evidence?

- Address major knowledge gaps
- Build capacity within the area
- Build partnerships/support across the college
- Collaborate with your colleagues to develop an implementation plan
- Begin with aligning goals and learning outcomes

# Goals vs. Learning Outcomes

- **Goals:** General statements about what students should learn or how they should develop. **Example:** Students will develop strong critical thinking skills.
- **Learning outcomes:** More detailed and specific statements derived from goals. Indicates what your unit wants students to be able to do or know rather than what you will provide.

# Attributes of Outcomes

- Can be measured.
- Are meaningful, manageable, and realistic.
- Focus on aspects of learning that will develop and endure but can be assessed in some form now.
- Are in alignment at the individual service or workshop level, entire cluster of services or programs within a unit, and the overall division.

# Articulating Different Levels of Cognitive Skills (Bloom, 1956)

- **Knowledge** (Sample verbs: identify, define, describe)
- **Comprehension** (Sample verbs: explain, summarize, discuss)
- **Application** (Sample verbs: construct, apply, demonstrate)
- **Analysis** (Sample verbs: compare, analyze, differentiate)
- **Synthesis** (Sample verbs: create, design, revise)
- **Evaluation** (Sample verbs: judge, evaluate, defend)

# Examples of Cognitive Outcomes

- Students will assess their career interests and utilize this information to identify potential career opportunities.
- Students will be able to locate, understand, and use career information effectively.
- Students will evaluate various financial aid options and determine which options are viable given their financial circumstance.

# Cognitive Gains Result From:

- Student-faculty interaction
- Involvement in a learning community
- Balanced academic and social involvement
- Involvement with peers in course-related and non-course –related activities
- Living on campus
- Social leadership roles

# Articulating Different Levels of Affective Dimensions (Bloom, 1956)

- **Receiving** (Sample verbs: interest, open, willing to engage. Sample outcome: Students will listen to others with respect.)
- **Responding** (Sample verbs: reflect upon, interact, participate. Sample outcome: Students will question new ideas and concepts in order to understand them.)
- **Valuing** (Sample verbs: value, justify, demonstrate. Sample outcome: Students will propose a plan for social improvement and follow through with commitment.)

# Articulating Different Levels of Affective Dimensions Cont.

- **Organization** (Sample verbs: Contrast/compare, defend, formulate. Sample outcome: Students will prioritize time effectively to meet the needs of the university, family, and self.)
- **Internalizing Values/Characterization** (Sample verbs: Modify, act, verify. Sample outcome: Students will revise judgment and change behavior in light of new evidence.)



# Affective Gains Result From:

- Leadership roles
- Paraprofessional experiences
- Interaction with faculty outside of class
- Study abroad
- Involvement in the co-curricular

# Measuring Outcomes

- Choose assessment methods based upon what you are trying to assess, not what method is the most appealing to you.
- Consider what method will be most meaningful to your unit, students, and other constituencies.
- Consider what method will provide you with the information to make decision.
- Be able to justify your choice of multiple assessment methods.
- Interpret data so that it informs decision making.

# What to Consider When Choosing Methods

- Budget
- Who will conduct assessment?
- What is the timeline?
- What are my analysis capabilities?
- How will this fit into daily/annual professional duties?

# Direct Evidence vs. Indirect

- Methods that provide direct evidence:
  - Student work samples; rubrics; collections of student work over time; observations of behavior; student actual academic performance; pre- and post-tests; writing samples.
- Methods that provide indirect evidence:
  - Alumni, employee, and student surveys; focus groups, interviews; job placement statistics

# Session Activity

<b>What is the student-learning outcome?</b>	<b>What learning experiences do you provide that allow students to achieve stated outcome?</b>	<b>What assessment methods may you use to measure whether or not the outcome is being achieved?</b>	<b>What are your data sources?</b>	<b>Who will be in charge of analyzing the data?</b>
1.				
2.				

# Final Thoughts

- Regularly evaluate your assessment practices utilizing formative and summative approaches.

# E-Resources

- <http://jfmueeller.faculty.noctrl.edu/toolbox/>
  - Easy to read, follow and apply. Lots of examples
  - Definitions of authentic & traditional assessment
  - Guidelines for using authentic assessment
  - Guidelines for designing and implementing authentic learning tasks and assessing these tasks
  - Guidelines for developing rubrics

# E-Resources

- <http://www2.acs.ncsu.edu/UPA/archives/assmt/resource.htm>
- Comprehensive site that offers links to outcomes assessment sites of national organizations as well as 46 colleges and universities
  - Provides information on writing student learning outcomes, developing rubrics, and assessing outcomes



# E-Resources

- <http://www.sa.psu.edu/SARA/pulse.shtml>
  - Penn State Pulse – data on SA programs and services since 1995
  - 2-4 page reports that are easy to read
- <http://www.naspa.org/constituent-groups/kcs/assessment-evaluation-and-research/resources>
  - NASPA's Student Affairs Assessment Websites
  - Links to over 50 institutions SA assessment websites

# E-Resources

- <http://www.learningoutcomeassessment.org/> National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA)
  - Connects to a variety of data sources, reports, and articles
  - Contains some downloads from AIR (Association for Institutional Research)

# Print Resources

- *Assessment Clear and Simple* – Walvoord, 2004 (Jossey-Bass)
- *Assessment Methods for Student Affairs* – Schuh and Associates, 2009 (Jossey-Bass)
- *Assessment Practices in SA* – Schuh, Upcraft and Associates, 2001 (Jossey-Bass)
- *Assessment Reconsidered* – NASPA, 2008

# Print Resources

- *Assessing Student Learning* – Suskie, 2009 (Jossey-Bass)
- *Classroom Assessment Techniques* – Angelo and Cross, 1993 (Jossey-Bass)
- *How College Affects Students* (Vol. 1 & Vol. 2) – Pascarella & Terenzini (Jossey-Bass, 1991 and 2005)

# Print Resources

- *Learning Reconsidered* (Vol. 1 & Vol. 2– ACPA & NASPA, 2004 and 2006)
- Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Practitioners – ACPA & NASPA, 2010
- *Student Success in College: Creating Conditions that Matter* – Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt & Associates, 2005 (Jossey-Bass)
- *Building A Culture of Evidence in Student Affairs: A Guide for Leaders and Practitioners*-Culp & Dungy, 2012 (NASPA)

# References

- Bloom, Benjamin S. (1956). Taxonomy of Education Objectives, The Classification of Educational Goals. Handbook I: Cognitive Development. New York: Longman Press.

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