Eureka! Strategies for Assessing Co-curricular Programs Across Three Different Institutions

Higher Learning Commission’s Annual Conference, 2016
EUREKA!
Today’s Session:
• One definition of co-curricular assessment
• Brief examination of the HLC criteria related to co-curricular assessment
• Presentations from 3 institutions on how they approach co-curricular assessment
• Discussion of similarities and differences from the panelists
• Open questions and discussion
• The answer to today’s puzzler!
Defining Co-curricular Assessment

“That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet”
3.E.1. “Co-curricular programs are suited to the institution’s mission and contribute to the educational experience of its students.”
4.B.2. “The institution assesses achievement of the learning outcomes that it claims for its curricular and co-curricular programs.”
Should the operations of the Bursar’s Office be considered a co-curricular program?
Disclaimer: The following statements represent the views of the presenter and may not necessarily represent the views of the HLC.
Intentionality: Is the program designed to promote student learning?
Claims: Do you make claims that your program results in learning or contributes to an enriched educational environment?
Outside the classroom: Is the program outside the formal classroom?
Defining Characteristics

• **Intentionality**
  – Is your program designed to promote student learning / development or give students the opportunity to apply their learning in new situations?

• **Claims**
  – Do you (or your institution) make claims that your program does these things (promote learning / development) or contributes to the enriched educational environment?

• **Outside the classroom**
  – Is the program outside the formal classroom (i.e., it’s not a class activity)?

• If you meet these, you are running a “co-curricular” program
• You should be assessing student learning / development
If my program / department doesn’t meet these criteria, then do I get a “free pass”? **NO!**
5.D. “The institution works systematically to improve its performance.”
(Other criteria apply as well)
Co-Curricular Assessment

• Assessment of student learning and development that occurs in co-curricular programs

• Can look very different in different types of institutions!
“Students Juggle Priorities - Most students attend classes and study while working; caring for dependents; and struggling to balance personal, academic, and financial challenges”

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Community College Environments

Working more than 30 hours per week

- Full-time students: 19% Yes
- Part-time students: 41%

Source: 2012 CCSSE Cohort data

Caring for dependents 11 or more hours per week

- Full-time students: 30% Yes
- Part-time students: 37%

Source: 2012 CCSSE Cohort data
Testing Indicates Many Students Are Underprepared

CCSSE respondents who report that they took a placement test and the test indicated that they needed developmental education in at least one area (N=69,767)

75% Yes

Source: 2012 CCSSE Promising Practices data

SENSE respondents who report that their placement tests indicated they needed developmental coursework in at least one area (N=49,942)

67% Yes

Source: 2012 SENSE Cohort data (entering students)

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When do you plan to take classes at this college again? (N=434,944)

- I have no current plan to return: 5%
- Uncertain: 16%
- I will accomplish my goal(s) during this term and will not be returning: 12%
- Within the next 12 months: 67%

Source: 2012 CCSSE Cohort data

Taking evening and/or weekend classes

- Full-time students (N=311,464): 13% Yes
- Part-time students (N=119,301): 38% Yes

Source: 2012 CCSSE Cohort data

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Community College Environments

Student and Faculty Views: What Stands Between Students and Their Aspirations

CCSSE and CCFSSSE data indicate that many faculty members are more likely than students to believe that various circumstances, including working full time, caring for dependents, or being academically underprepared, would be likely causes for students to withdraw from classes or college.

- It is likely or very likely that working full time would cause you (students at this college) to withdraw from class or college: 39% (students) vs. 81% (faculty, N=435,389 vs. 33,813).
- It is likely or very likely that caring for dependents would cause you (students at this college) to withdraw from class or college: 29% (students) vs. 73% (faculty, N=434,143 vs. 33,521).
- It is likely or very likely that being academically unprepared would cause you (students at this college) to withdraw from class or college: 19% (students) vs. 78% (faculty, N=432,568 vs. 33,576).
- It is likely or very likely that lacking finances would cause you (students at this college) to withdraw from class or college: 49% (students) vs. 72% (faculty, N=434,025 vs. 33,497).

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Co-curricular Survey

VP/Dean = 3
Assessment Committee = 26
Depart. Chairs = 11
N = 40
Co-curricular Survey

- **30%**
  - This is happening, it’s active and ongoing.

- **27%**
  - This is happening, but I’m not familiar with the process.

- **18%**
  - This is definitely not happening.

- **25%**
  - I’m not sure this is happening.
Co-curricular Survey

How is co-curricular assessment being accomplished?

- Surveys
- As a part of the AQIP process
- Through conversations with administrators
- CCSSE
- Course SLOs
- Data collection across the college
- Multidisciplinary collaboration
- Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC)
- Assessment Committee
Co-curricular Survey

Obstacles

* Closing the loop
* Lack of participation in the process
* Lack of time for data analysis
* Strategic response planning based on findings
* It’s difficult to understand
* Multiple people are involved
* Funding and approvals
* Mishandling of data
* Employee turnover leads to inconsistent results
* No culture embracing effort
* Lack of motivation / no understanding of benefit
* It’s new, therefore unfamiliar
* Knowing what’s next after collecting data
* Resistance to change
* Fear of judgment
Co-curricular Survey

Advice

* “Based on my limited knowledge, I would say, Be prepared to find out results you don't like. And I would say, Fixing a lot of the co-curricular issues requires a significant budgetary commitment.”

* “I think we all need to be trained on what co-curricular assessment is and what our roles are in this type of assessment. I have to admit that I do not truly understand what it entails.”

* “Reading other institutions' AQIP systems portfolios, provided online by the Higher Learning Commission, is where we have gone to see how it is done.”

* “We need alignment between the assessment of student learning and co-curricular assessment or at least some connection between the two processes.”

* “Begin by having co-curricular areas identify their mission goals and objectives. We found that this helped craft the learning outcomes.”
## Co-curricular Operational Effectiveness Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Services Department with Missions and Outcomes</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Support Services</strong></td>
<td>Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Admissions &amp; Registrar Office</strong></td>
<td>MSEIP Minorities in Science and Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Advising</strong></td>
<td>Student Activities</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Athletics</strong></td>
<td>Testing Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Business &amp; Operational Services</strong></td>
<td>Transfer Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Career Planning and Placement Center</strong></td>
<td>Educational Talent Search - TRiO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disability Access Center</strong></td>
<td>Veteran Services</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Office of Financial Aid</strong></td>
<td>Wellness Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Office of Information Technology</strong></td>
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Traditional wisdom: Learning outcomes need to be aligned at course, program, and institutional levels.

But where are many general education goals, like “tolerance” and “teamwork” and “the ability to function in an increasingly diverse world” taught and assessed?

Or is “taught” the right word???
Shifting Perspectives

- What happens if we substitute the word “learned” for the word “taught”?

- What are the implications of “Where are learning outcomes learned and assessed”?
  
  - Emphasis on student demonstration of knowledge and skills, not the topics covered
  - Ability to do or apply supersedes knowing
  - Responsibility for learning is shared
  - Site of learning becomes less specific, and boundaries become more fungible
“Learning” is not exclusively classroom-based

Many valued outcomes are the result of processes outside the classroom

“Learning” is a process based on three interdependent student experiences:
- Understanding academic content and processes
- Student development
- Identity formation

Meaning is constructed from inquiry, interaction, conversation, and life experience
Learning Reconsidered 2

* Responsibility for “learning” exists outside the classroom

* Responsibility for “learning” doesn’t always take the same form; some entities on campus produce it, some facilitate it, some support it

* Responsibility for assessing learning exists outside the classroom as well
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### Some Core Areas Where Learning Can Occur in Non-classroom Settings

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<th>Developmental Outcomes</th>
<th>Requirements</th>
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<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
<td>✔ Need to be intentional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with Others</td>
<td>✔ Need to be planned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Competence</td>
<td>✔ Need to be part of the structure of a student’s experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic Engagement</td>
<td>✔ Need to be assessed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical Behavior</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Adaptability</td>
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SMALL SCHOOL EXAMPLE

Presented by Marie Baehr, Vice President for Academic Affairs
What does Coe consider Co-curricular?

Coe provides students “an education that aims at preparing them for life following graduation. Our reason to exist ...is to ready students intellectually, professionally, and socially to lead productive and satisfying lives...” [mission]
What is Coe co-curricular?

Students are required to live on campus for all four years with few exceptions, thus setting up expectations for out-of-class learning—for both Coe and its students.

What is Co-curricular? Pretty much everything that is not curricular!
Some examples

• Tutoring
• Residence hall programming
• Athletics
• Clubs
• Orientation
• Inclusion Office
• Student government
Some Examples Evidence

- Focus group input
- Satisfaction AND attitude surveys
- Feedback from faculty
- Feedback from community
Staff engagement/development
Structure and resources

• Mostly seamless work between VP for Academics and VP for Student development
• Comparable professional support for staff and for faculty
• Keeping it simple
Implementation for Accreditation

Create a process that gives Coe useful information to know how processes are working and where improvements need to be made, and accreditation does not then need to be the driver.
Co-curricular Assessment at NDSU
• About 12,000 undergraduate students and 2,000 graduate students
• Engineering, Agriculture, Nursing, Business
• Pharmacy, Architecture, Ph.D. programs
Major Activity / Program / Service

Operational Effectiveness

Are we doing things right?

Student Learning / Development Outcomes

Are we doing the right things?
Operational Effectiveness

• Facility usage
• Satisfaction
• Cost efficiencies
• Level of participation

Student Learning and Development

• What students are expected to know, be able to do, or dispositions as a result of the program / activity / service
Operational Effectiveness

- Institutional data (visits, participation, card swipes, etc.)
- Surveys
- Secret shopper
- Self-report
- Observer feedback
- Fidelity studies

Student Learning and Development

- Rubrics
- Minute papers
- Performance assessment
- Surveys
- Portfolios
- Reflection papers
- Interviews
Service Outcomes
• Describe what the student will know / be able to do as a result of the service provided and
• Clearly communicate an important aspect of the work of the Division

Learning Outcomes
• Reflect the knowledge, skills, abilities, or attitudes students should develop in response to the program / event
Assessment Structures:

• Assessment linked with annual strategic planning process

• Each strategic plan strategy includes assessment – operational or student learning / development
• Reports due June 1st
• Plans due September 1st
• Reports are reviewed during the summer by the Student Affairs Assessment Council
  – SAAC is a group of volunteers who provide direction and guidance to assessment
• All departments have assessment coordinator
• Most discuss assessment at meetings in the spring and have a summer retreat for planning the next year
• Staff development:
  – Assessment handbook for new participants
  – Assessment Academy (3-semester workshop series)
  – Periodic events (e.g., “Survey Ninja”)
  – Online resources
Committed to Improving Student Learning and the Student Experience

The Office of Assessment:

- promotes student learning and development through a systematic process of gathering and using assessment evidence to improve programs and services, and
- communicates evidence of student learning and development to a variety of stakeholders, building recognition for the work of the Division and supporting accountability and accreditation.

The Office of Assessment can assist your department or program in many ways, including data analysis, consulting on assessment projects, developing reports, and staff development.

For information on how departments are taking action to improve student learning and the student experience, view the reports page. Visit the resources page for access to a variety of assessment resources, including:

https://www.ndsu.edu/vpsa/assessment
• Reporting and communicating results to different audiences
• Traditional reports
• Monthly Student Affairs Insight 1-page report
• Brief bullet-point summaries
• Infographics
• Twitter and social media
Want to graduate in 4 years? Use the Wellness Center!

- 27% Used Wellness Center in first semester
- 18% Did not use Wellness Center in first semester

- Membership included in your student fees.
- Basketball, cardio, weights, classes, and more!

www.ndsu.edu/wellness
Resources for assessment

- Office of Student Affairs Assessment
  - 1-person office opened in 2013

- Campus Labs Baseline license

- Qualtrics license

- Larger departments have portion of staff member assigned to work on assessment / planning
Does this always work?
Counseling Center

- CCAPS periodically administered to clients (learning outcomes / development)
- Mental health consortium project (learning outcomes and needs assessment)
- Tracking no-show rate and adding text-messaging reminders to reduce no-show rate (service outcomes: operational effectiveness)
Disability Services

• Identified students’ self-advocacy as targeted learning outcome
• Plan on asking for self-assessment from students (at intake), evaluation by the assigned DS coordinator, annual check points
• Client satisfaction and tracking usage rates (operational / service outcomes)
Department of Residence Life

- Used rubrics to assess each floor’s development over the year in three areas: community, academic skills, and wellness (student learning outcomes)
- In response to rubric data and other existing assessment data (including Campus Labs benchmarking survey), completely re-worked the curriculum for 2014-2015
- Track satisfaction with housing and vacancy rates (service outcomes: operational)
Wellness Center

- Student employees self-assessed using rubrics on growth over time on critical learning outcomes (e.g., time management, ability to handle difficult customers, etc.)
- Modified training program and events during the year for student employees
- Track center usage, demographics of users, client satisfaction (operational / service outcome)
Student Health Service

• Survey feedback from users and non-users and analysis of usage data, decided to open more same-day, walk-in appointments (operational)
• Accreditor requires multiple Quality Improvement efforts (operational)
• Smaller student learning outcomes mission, but have looked at tobacco cessation education, individual patient knowledge
Some Conclusions
Some Key Similarities

• Distinction between student learning outcomes assessment and operational measures

• Intentionality about assessment – not trying to assess everything that moves
Some Key Differences

- Students’ expectations for co-curricular experiences
- Scale and capacity
- Value co-curricular experiences differently and approach them differently
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