The Many Faces of Assessment: Strategies for Effective Assessment of Co-curricular Programs

AALHE Webinar
September, 2015

Jeremy Penn, Ph.D.
Director of Student Affairs Assessment
NDSU
Only 22 minutes left til I can pay tuition.

Madelynn Rose I. HATE. THAT. LADY.
October 15 at 1:34pm via mobile · 3

Nikki Naas You can pay for tuition at the office in old main
October 15 at 2:01pm via mobile · Edited · 5

Maria Dawn Pitner Or online with no charge if you use your savings or checking account. 😊
October 15 at 4:04pm · 4

Aaron Yaggie some of us are old fashion maria..
October 15 at 4:06pm · 7

Maria Dawn Pitner and some of us like efficiency, aaron
October 15 at 4:10pm · 10

Tyler Severance 😐 😐 I got charged when I used my checking
Increasing pressure for student affairs professionals to evaluate and articulate “the contributions of the profession and those in it...not simply through their own eyes, but through **objective measures and through the eyes of their colleagues** within the colleges and universities in which they work and the eyes of the external constituencies they ultimately serve” (Bresciani, p. 3, 2012, *Learning is not a Sprint*, bold added).
If your friends had been forcing this down only to humor you, wouldn’t you want to know?
Assessment: I have the power!
• Defining co-curricular programs
• Selecting an assessment approach that’s meaningful and manageable
• Structures to support assessment
• Developing staff members’ expertise
A surefire way for your assessment study to fail

Be strategic about your approach to co-curricular assessment!
strategic
/strəˈtɛdʒik/

adjective

relating to the identification of long-term or overall aims and interests and the means of achieving them.
"the company should take strategic actions to cope with fundamental changes in the environment"
synonyms: planned, calculated, tactical, politic, judicious, prudent, shrewd
"his lawyers were known for their strategic defense methods"

• carefully designed or planned to serve a particular purpose or advantage.
  "alarms are positioned at strategic points around the prison"

• relating to the gaining of overall or long-term military advantage.
  "New Orleans was of strategic importance"
1. Strategies for defining co-curricular programs and knowing what you “have” to assess
2. Being strategic about selecting your assessment approach
3. Creating institutional structures to strategically support co-curricular assessment
4. Strategically developing staff members’ expertise
I. Strategies for Defining Co-curricular Programs: What do I “have” to assess?
"That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet"
3.C.6. “Co-curricular programs are suited to the institution’s mission and contribute to the educational experience of its students.”
Asking a program that has very little or no role in student learning to assess student learning leads to frustration and results in a very poor cost / benefit ratio.

Should be assessing operational effectiveness, but not student learning assessment.
Negative view because “unconnected to the academic curriculum.”

Extracurricular
Third curriculum
Informal curriculum
Co-curricular
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
II. Being Strategic About Selecting your Assessment Approach
Too many choices!
Man-E-Faces
Choosing the right assessment method is a critical part of being strategic with assessment!
Type of Assessment Project

- Gets at the reason or purpose for the project
- E.g., Needs Assessment

Method

- Strategy or way assessment will be conducted
- E.g., Survey Methods

Instrument

- Tool used in the method
- E.g., Survey Instrument
## Assessment Project Types

See Schuh, *Assessment Methods for Student Affairs*, chapter 1

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| Retention and persistence studies         |
### Participation Assessment

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| ● Goal is to determine how many and who is participating in program or service or how much usage is seen by a website, facility, program, etc.  
● The most basic of assessment studies, but not without value               | ● How many people attended? What are the demographic characteristics of participants?  
● How many hours per day is facility used? Who are the primary users?        | ● Number of visitors to the library by category (student / faculty / staff / community member) and time of day (morning, noon, afternoon, evening, weekend)  
● Number of hours Adobe Illustrator used in campus computer labs             |
# Cost Effectiveness

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<td>• Goal is to get the most benefit for the resources provided</td>
<td>• How does the cost of this service compare to the cost at other campuses? By private vendors?</td>
<td>• Cost benchmarking study between campuses</td>
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<td>• Seek to identify efficiencies or way to decrease costs</td>
<td>• Are additional services worth the cost?</td>
<td>• Vendor comparison for services offered at various price points</td>
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<td>• Compare various vendors and services offered</td>
<td>• What would be lost if we reduced cost and services?</td>
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*Examples*:

- Cost benchmarking study between campuses
- Vendor comparison for services offered at various price points
# Instrument Development

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| ● Goal is to create a new rubric, survey, observation protocol, etc. to use in future assessment study  
● No existing instrument or current instrument inadequate  
● Can be combined with other types of assessment studies (e.g., instrument development, then use instrument for SLDO assessment) | ● How do we best gather information on ______  
● How would we measure _______  
● We need an instrument that ___________ | ● Focus groups with international students to identify key questions to include in a needs assessment survey for international students  
● Creation of quiz items to see if students learned key points of presentation on the health risks of tobacco use |
# Needs Assessment

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| ● Goal is to better understand a group of individuals and their desires, wants, needs  
● Demographic changes  
● Turnover of 50% or more in the group | ● Seeking to better understand needs of a group  
● Changes in beliefs, attitudes, needs, desires, over time  
● Environmental, experiences, perceptions | ● Technology supports needed for faculty research  
● Perceived accessibility of campus buildings for students in wheelchairs  
● Special dietary needs of students who live in residence halls |
# Satisfaction Assessment

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<td>● Goal is to understand level of clients’ satisfaction with service, facilities, programs offered, cost, etc.</td>
<td>● Perceptions from clients on quality of facilities, products, timeliness, etc.</td>
<td>● Taste of new healthy-choice menu in dining hall</td>
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<td>● SLDO assessment better choice if desire to see effectiveness of program / service in achieving learning / development goal</td>
<td>● Major changes in a department or deciding to make major change</td>
<td>● Determine whether to update bathrooms or repaint parking lot</td>
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<td>● Perceived value of service provided</td>
<td>● Satisfaction with friendliness of advisors and front-line staff</td>
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# Implementation Fidelity

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<td>● Goal is to determine if programming is implemented as it was designed</td>
<td>● How much time was spent on topic X?</td>
<td>● Secret shopper visits front-line staff to see if questions are answered accurately</td>
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<td>● Understanding if program is implemented as designed is interim step between program design and determining if program is successful</td>
<td>● Was the program implemented as planned?</td>
<td>● Self-report on amount of time spent on various aspects of planned program</td>
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<td>● What is the experience of the program / service from a user’s perspective?</td>
<td>● Observer notes the amount of time, depth, and repetition of topics at Orientation</td>
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# Student Learning / Development Outcomes

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| ● Goal is to determine if program / service brings about desired learning / development in participants | ● Amount of learning or development resulting from participation in program, service, experience, etc.  
● What knowledge, skills, abilities, dispositions do students have now that they did not prior to this program? | ● Quiz on risky behaviors for sexually transmitted infections  
● Scoring of portfolio with rubrics for participants in leadership program  
● Standardized inclusiveness instrument administered every 4 weeks to multicultural program participants |
# Retention and Persistence

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| ● Goal is to identify factors that relate to students persisting to graduation and being retained at NDSU | ● Why do students not persist to graduation at NDSU?  
● What programs or services could be offered to support student retention and success to a degree  
● Is program X effective and supporting student persistence? | ● Phone calls to students who did not return for subsequent semester  
● Analysis of institutional data on predictors of attrition  
● Focus group with students identified as at-risk for attrition |
Assessment Method Choices

- Standardized or professional instruments (tests or surveys)
- Locally developed surveys
- Existing institutional data
- Papers, projects, portfolios evaluated with rubrics
- Presentations evaluated with rubrics
- Observation or performances
• Focus groups
• Self-assessment
• Case studies or narratives
• External reviews
• Employee evaluation (performance reviews)
• Other!

Be strategic about selecting your assessment type, method, and instrument!
III. Creating Institutional Structures to Strategically Support Co-curricular Assessment
You can’t do this work all by yourself!
Need a sustainable, long-term process
“the good-to-great transformations never happened in one fell swoop. There was no single beginning action, no grand program, no one killer innovation, no solitary lucky break, no miracle moment.”

Right Environment + Staff Commitment = Successfully improved program/service
Indicators of insufficient structures and supports
Assessment work hangs in the balance and is reliant all on the work of one person.
Assessment work is done in a vacuum – no one else is involved or knows what is going on!
No resources (human, financial, technological) are available to support assessment.
Structures to strategically support co-curricular assessment
Give assessment a home!
-A committee, point person, regular discussion, etc.
“build[ing] a collective commitment to and advance[ing] understanding about the process of assessment”
- Rotate membership on assessment committee and assessment responsibility
- Include assessment as a formal job responsibility on job descriptions
• Staff development workshops
• Technology tools and licenses (e.g., Campus Labs)
• Consulting from an on-campus assessment leader
• Collaborate on projects (e.g., joint survey across the Division)
• Link assessment and planning so assessment is not just an add-on
• Have processes for feedback and coaching
What if the origin of the commitment for assessing student learning were to come from the staff themselves, based on their intellectual curiosity about how students learn and how programs develop students?

-Paraphrased from Maki, 2002
IV. Strategically Developing Staff Members’ Expertise in Co-curricular Assessment
Identify staff development needs – not everyone will be in the same place!
• Offer a range of opportunities
  – Short, 1-time events
  – Multi-session, multi-semester project-based academies
  – Online materials
• 1-on-1 consulting, collaboration, and mentoring
• Conferences, such as AALHE
• Webinars (such as this one and others through AALHE)
• Listservs (ASSESS – hosted by AALHE)
Examples from NDSU
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 resources page. Visit the reports page for access to a variety of assessment resources, including notes aiding in writing high-quality learning outcomes, staff development.
Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Example

Department of Residence Life

• Used rubrics to assess each floor’s development over the year in three areas: community, academic skills, and wellness

• In response to rubric data and other existing assessment data (including Campus Labs benchmarking survey), completely re-worked the curriculum for 2014-2015
Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Example

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
Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Example

Athletic Academics

• Interviewed at-risk student athletes to identify learning outcomes most critical to their success

• Created rubrics based on these learning outcomes

• Students and staff evaluate progress using these rubrics and use to inform academic support programming decisions for athletes
Operational Effectiveness Assessment Example

Student Health Service

• In response to survey feedback from users and non-users and analysis of usage data
• Opened more same-day, walk-in appointments
• Online portal to allow self-scheduling for appointments and secure electronic communication
Assessment as Celebrating Successes Example

I can be just as important to celebrate successes and encourage staff in the great work they are doing!

Results from a student survey, we shared positive comments with staff about how they were impacting students.
“Certainly the dining centers show that they care, like when they always say hello and are very friendly every single day.”

“The bookstore employees always seem like they go out of their way to make sure you are finding everything ok, so that makes me feel like they care about me.”

“At the Memorial Union there is always someone there to help you and answer questions you have.”
Strategically: Define co-curricular programs
Select your assessment approach
Provide structures to support assessment
Develop staff members’ expertise