Assessment in Student Affairs

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Research vs. Assessment

Research
- Contributes to a larger body of knowledge
- Is linear (if this, then that)
- Research conducted => Results reported => Policy Created => Change Occurs

Assessment
- Meant to give feedback/effect practice and policy
- Practitioners draw on many sources for information and then construct knowledge that they put into action
- Practitioners view of change process:
  - Plan ← Reflect
  - Act → Observe
- Practitioners make sense through: experience, assumptions and personal senses
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Assessment</strong></th>
<th><strong>Formal Research</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conducted by practitioners in the field or IR professionals</td>
<td>Conducted by researchers and practitioners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results in improving/changing practice or effects policy</td>
<td>Results in adding to a body of knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involved in day-to-day here and now</td>
<td>Long-range, less action oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grounded in sense making</td>
<td>Generalizable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not meant to be generalizable</td>
<td>Formalized Methodology needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Loose” methodology ok</td>
<td>Conducted in formal settings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conducted in work environment</td>
<td>Narrowly focused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context driven</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Why assessment in student affairs?

- Accountability movement in higher education (national)
- Accreditation more focused on student learning
- Student Affairs focus on student learning (Student Learning Imperative, Learning Reconsidered, etc.)
- “Tough Times Call for Good Measures”
- **Professionals and programs learn and grow**
- Proof or Perish
Challenges and Strengths

- Traditional skill sets
- Complex learning
- Direct vs. indirect measures
- Different standards for academic/student affairs
- Diverse components of student affairs

- More education at masters and doc levels
- National conversations through conferences and publications
- Time and talent being recruited
- Fluid and flexible
- Clear idea of what you need to know
ACPA - ASK Standards

- #1: Assessment Design
- #2: Articulating Learning Outcomes
- #3: Selection of Data Collection and Management Methods
- #4: Assessment Instruments
- #5: Surveys
- #6: Interviews and Focus Groups
- #7: Analysis
- #8: Benchmarking
- #9: Program Review and Evaluation
- #10: Assessment Ethics
- #11: Reporting and Using Results
- #12: Politics
- #13: Assessment Education
NASPA – Assessment Framework

• 18 “courses” or topic areas that cover every aspect of assessment

• Overlap with ASK plus...
  o Beginning Concepts
  o Cultivating a culture of assessment
  o Methods other than survey, FG and interviews
  o Using National assessments

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Examples of student affairs assessment programs:

- [http://www.iusb.edu/~saassess/](http://www.iusb.edu/~saassess/)
- [http://www.uga.edu/studentaffairs/assess/](http://www.uga.edu/studentaffairs/assess/)
- [http://www.uncc.edu/stuaffairs/sarlinks.htm](http://www.uncc.edu/stuaffairs/sarlinks.htm)
Step 2: Different Types of Designs

- Different types of assessment:
  - Usage Numbers (Learning Center Usage)
  - Student needs (Commuter Student Needs Survey)
  - Student satisfaction/Perceptions (SSI, CSEQ, Reality Show and MLK Week Evaluations)
  - Environments (Campus Climate Study, Alcohol Focus Groups)
  - Learning Outcomes (Service-Learning Pre-Post Test, Applications for Orientation Leaders)
  - Comparable (Benchmarking) (EBI, NSSE, CSEQ)
  - Using National Standards (i.e. CAS)
Assessment Cycle
Or Making an Assessment Plan

- Data collection methods/plan project
- Learning or Operational Outcome
- Report and Use Results
- Collecting Data
- Mission Goals
- Learning Objectives
- Analyze Data

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My favorite example....

WE STARTED WITH ONE WAY

GOT STUCK

ENDED WITH FOLLOWING THE CYCLE AND USABLE RESULTS
Groups Process – Let’s Try It Now

- Let’s Try It Now
- Data collection

- Learning or Operational Outcome
- Data collection methods/plan project
- Collecting Data
- Mission Goals Learning Objectives
- Analyze Data
- Report and Use Results

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Step One: Outcomes

• This is the *WHY*
• Start with the burning questions
• Turn those questions into objectives or leave them as questions
• Spend time on this, strong foundations lead to strong assessment projects

Note: Don’t ask questions you do not want to hear the answers to or do not need the answers to
Step 2: Assessment Design/Planning

- **Who** – intended audience for results, who will participate
- **What** – will you do (type and method)
- **How** – what tools will you use (methods)
- **Where/When** – logistics of timing, locations, etc.
Step 2: Tools for Your Tool Box

- Surveys (fatigue/response rate)
- Focus Groups
- Interviews
- Document Analysis
- Unobtrusive measures
- Visual Methods

- Existing Measures
- Historical research
- Case Studies
- Observations
- Rubrics
- Portfolios
Steps 3 and 4: Data Collection and Analysis

- Inform practice NOT writing a dissertation
- KISS
- Too much data can slow things down
- Ongoing process that is reflected on, learned about, and improved in time
- Don’t know how to do it – find someone who can
- Excel will most likely be the most powerful tool you will need – SurveyMonkey and StudentVoice will do it all for you
Step 5: USE and Share What You Find

- You use first, then show others
- Audience – report accordingly
- Report the:
  - And what – what you found (concisely)
  - So what – why is that important
  - Now what - actions are key, what are you doing next or what resources do you need
Questions?
References

More References