Assessment 101: A Guide for Student Affairs
Definitions

- Assessment
- Evaluation
- Research
- Qualitative
- Quantitative
- Correlation
- Significance
- Student Learning Outcomes
Assessment

• “Any effort to gather, analyze, and interpret evidence which describes institutional, divisional, or agency effectiveness.” (Upcraft & Schuh, 1996, p. 18)

• A systematic process which includes research, data gathering, data analysis, and evaluation in an effort to guide good practice and improve student learning and development. (Erwin, 2002; Palomba & Banta, 1999)
Evaluation

- The process of analyzing results in a manner that makes the results usable. 
  (*Upcraft, 2003; Upcraft & Schuh, 1996*)

- It is part of the assessment process. (*Upcraft & Schuh, 1996*).
Evaluation

• FORMATIVE EVALUATION
  – Provide feedback
  – Modify and/or shape a program or service
  – Improve a program or service

• SUMMATIVE EVALUATION
  – Judge a current program or service for quality and/or worth
  – Based on previously established standards

(Palomba & Banta, 1999)
Research

• The method of gathering information to support and/or guide the assessment process.

• MEASUREMENT
  – Methods used to gather information
  – Qualitative or Quantitative or combination of the two

(Upcraft, 2003)
Qualitative

• Researcher(s) gathers information from the world around them. *(Bogdan & Biklen, 2003)*

• Researcher(s) make multiple constructions and interpretations of the world they are studying. *(Merriam & Associates, 2002)*
Qualitative Methods

- Basic Interpretive
- Phenomenology
- Grounded Theory
- Case Study
- Ethnography
- Narrative Analysis
- Critical Qualitative Research

(Merriam & Associates, 2002)
Qualitative Standards

- Standards of rigor are different from, but no less mandatory than, those used to judge quantitative research. (adapted from Whitt, 2005)

- Trustworthiness: (1) standards for acceptable and competent practice; (2) standards for ethical conduct. (Rossman and Rallis, 1998)
Qualitative Standards

• Trustworthiness
  – Credibility
    • Are the researcher’s interpretations credible to the participants?
  – Transferability
    • To what extent are the findings applicable to other settings, situations, etc.?
  – Dependability
    • To what extent were the methods decisions made consistently and appropriately throughout the research process?
  – Confirmability
    • Do the results of the study make sense?
    • Can they be confirmed by others?
Quantitative

- Research designed to gather information and test a particular hypothesis or theory.
- Uses simple to complex statistics.

*(Erwin, 1991)*
Quantitative Methods

- Surveys
- Pre-post tests
- Benchmarking Studies
- Knowledge & Placement exams
Quantitative

• Validity
  – Various instruments used to measure – find the one that will help you understand the information you are assessing.
  – Looking for accuracy.

• Reliability
  – To what degree are the findings consistent.
  – Looking for consistency to the findings.

(Huck, 2004)
Validity and Reliability

The Questions on the Test or Instrument

The “thing” we are trying to measure
Results are reliable. ☺
Results are valid. ☻

Results are reliable. ☺
Results are NOT valid. ☹
*We’re consistently measuring something, but what is it?*

Results are NOT reliable. ☹
Results are NOT valid. ☹

*Can have reliability without validity!*
Correlation & Significance

- **Correlation**
  - a relation existing between selected items
  - Measures the strength and direction of the linear association between two quantitative variables.

- **Statistical Significance**
  - An observed effect so large that it would rarely occur by chance.

(Moore, 2004)
Student Learning Outcomes

• Objectives which help define in clear and simple terms how student affairs programs and services contribute to student learning and fit institution mission. (Bloland, Stamatokos, & Rogers, 1996)

• Objectives or goals that can be measured to show student learning through student affairs programs and services. (Bresciani, Zelna, & Anderson, 2004)
Student Learning Outcomes

- Cognitive Learning Outcome
  - General skills, intelligence, higher order cognitive development

- Affective Learning Outcome
  - Attitudes, values, and self-concept

(Alexander & Stark, 2003)
Assessment Cycles

• How you organize your assessments
• Assessment systems vs. ad hoc systems
• Adaptable to different institutions and goals
Example #1: Comprehensive Assessment Model

- Usage Numbers
- Student needs
- Student satisfaction
- Environments
- Learning Outcomes
- Comparable (Benchmarking)
- Using National Standards (i.e. CAS)

(Upcraft & Schuh, p. 27)
Example #2: Questions to Guide Process

- What’s the problem?
- What’s the purpose?
- Who will be studied?
- What’s the best assessment method?
- How do we decide who to study?
- How should the data be collected?
- What instrument(s) should we use?
- Who should collect the data?
- How should we record the data?
- How do we analyze the data?
- How do we report the results?
- How do we use the results?

(Upcraft & Schuh, p. 316)
Example #3: Assessment Cycle

- Identify Outcomes
- Gather evidence
- Interpret Evidence
- Implement Change

(all centered around Mission/Purpose, Educational Objectives)

(Peggy Maki)
Example #4: Practical Inquiry

Approach

• What topic are you interested in?
• What would you like to know about your topic? (Question)
• How can you answer your questions? (Method, data collection)
• What did your data tell you? (analysis)
• How does that inform practice? (implications/report)
• What is the next question? (feedback loop)

(Yousey)
Example #5: George Washington University Office of Academic Planning and Assessment

- Setting goals
- Develop strategies for collecting information
- Implementing your plan
- Using the data
Comprehensive Model for Student Affairs Practice

Evaluate:
- Use assessment information to examine programs and services

Assess:
- Determine if you have achieved goals/outcomes

Intentionally structure programs and services to address goals/outcomes

Establish goals/outcomes

Service
Learning
Development

- The Three Strategic Goals for the University of Georgia
- Division of Student Affairs Mission Statement
- Division of Student Affairs Strategic Plan
- Professional Standards and Guidelines

Example #6: University of Georgia
Example #7: California Lutheran University Office of Assessment and Educational Effectiveness

- Gather Evidence
- Communicate and reflect
- Decision Making/Planning/Policy Development
A Comprehensive Model:

Mission
Goals
Learning Objectives

Purpose or Question
Planning/Methods
Collect Data
Analyze Data
Report/Use
Assessment Cycle in Action

• A brief example
Quick Assessment....

- Need a stretching break??
- Take 15
- But before you go we have some homework: think of an issue/topic your office is facing that you would like to assess
Putting the Cycle Into Action:

• Step #1: Assessment Questions
  – Focus on a single topic/concept
  – Use active verbs: discover, seek to understand, explore, describe, report, affect, influence, impact, determine, cause, relate, compare
  – Expect the questions to evolve and change, especially during literature review process
  – Use open-ended questions, should not be related to a specific piece of literature or theory
Have a topic but having a hard time finding your question?

• Some things to think about:
  – What causes it?
  – Who is especially involved in it?
  – When does it occur?
  – What effects does it have?
  – What types are there?
  – How do various groups perceive it?
  – In what stages does it occur?
  – What will make it better?
  – What makes it effective?
  – What relationship does it have to other phenomena?
Group Exercise

• Think about your topic and question and write your question(s) on a piece of post-it paper
• Post it on the wall
• Group feedback exercise
Step #2: Planning Methods

Things to Consider:

• How best to answer your question? (Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods)
• What’s in your toolbelt?
• Timeline
• Resources ($$$, time, human)
• Sampling
• KISS
Group Exercise

• Look at your questions and discuss some ways (or methods) you can answer the question

• What other factors do you need to consider?
Step #4: Report and **Use**

- Know your audience
- Short is better
- Focus on results AND implications
- Use non-technical language
- Check for content, grammar, etc. before distributing
- Follow-up with those implementing results
Guides to help you along the way:

- Recommended reading
- Choosing your methods guide
References


