

**Advancing Assessment in Student Affairs:
Emphasizing Learning, Creating
Partnerships, and Using Evidence to Improve**
Assessment Institute 2013 – Indianapolis



Jillian Kinzie, Indiana University
Bloomington Center for Postsecondary
Research, NSSE

Current Context: Age of Accountability
More Attention to Price, Value and
Student Outcomes

“get the most bang for your educational buck”



Raise the college graduation rate to 60%



President Obama’s plan to **measure colleges’ values** and tie public money to **university performance** – the latest gust in the winds of change surrounding higher education.



Agenda for Higher Education

- Increase postsecondary access
- Enhance educational quality
- Ensure student success



Current Context in Higher Education

The fact that half of all college students in the US will not complete their degree within 6 years, suggests that much remains to be done to improve student success (Tinto, 2012).



So, How is YOUR Institution Doing?

- **What is your...**
 - 1st year retention rate?
 - Persistence from 1st to 2nd term?
 - Grad rate... 4yr, 6yr
 - Are rates equal by race-ethnicity? First-gen students? adults?
- **What courses have high D,F,W rates and how is this being addressed?**
- **What proportion of students take advantage of learning support services? are involved in leadership experiences? How much does the campus environment foster student success?**



Assessment & Accountability:
What's Happening at Colleges & Universities?



- Increased assessment activity; greater attention to demands of accreditation
- Greater emphasis on assessing student learning outcomes
- More emphasis on engaged learning practices: first year experience programs that support transition, service-learning, internships, and undergraduate research – *things that work!*

(Ewell, 2008, 2011; Maki, 2004; Trends in Learning Outcomes, General Education, and Assessment, AAC&U, 2009)

What Factors/Forces Are Influencing Assessment...

- **At your institution?**
- **In your student affairs division?**

How aligned are these forces?

Provosts 2013: Ranked Factors Prompting Assessment

1. Regional accreditation (high to low)
2. Program accreditation
3. Institutional commitment to improve
4. Faculty/staff interest in improving student learning
5. President and/or Gov. board direction or mandate
6. Concerns about effectiveness & value of HE
7. National calls for accountability/transparency
8. Statewide governing or coordinating board mandate
9. External funding (federal, state, or foundation grants)
10. State mandate
11. Participation in consortium/multi-institution collab.
12. Institutional member initiatives (e.g., VSA, U-CAN, Transparency by Design, AAUDE, VFA)
13. Other

National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment
 Making Learning Outcomes Visible & Transparent

Current Accountability and Assessment Agenda at Colleges & Universities



- Heightened demands for accountability
- Evidence of student learning
- All campus educators accountable “for identifying and achieving essential student learning outcomes and for making transformative education possible and accessible for all students.” (Learning Reconsidered, 2004)

Accountability and Assessment: Status in Student Affairs

- **Assessment** has gained prominence; growing list of student affairs publications on topic; creation of full-time assessment specialist positions.
- **Accountability** and **student learning outcomes** have less standing in the field.
- Accountability afforded little attention - seems external to colleges and universities.
- Student affairs educators value outcomes, but have not fully connected work, instead surrendering learning to faculty.

The Challenge for Student Affairs:

To create energy in our campus systems to create and sustain processes of regular and systematic assessment of student outcomes for continuous improvement.

- Susan Komives, 2006, Reflections on Outcomes and Assessment: Applying the CAS Process



Purpose and Goals of Assessment

- **Why Assess?**
- **What is the most compelling reason for you to do assessment?**



Purpose and Goals of Assessment

- How are we doing?
- Are we meeting our goals?
- Where might we improve?
- Are the conditions the same for all?
- Does evidence demonstrate effectiveness? Accountability?
- How are we doing compared to others like us?
- Are we making a difference?
- Are we getting better?
- Where should we invest?



Two Core Purposes of Assessment

- **Accountability**
- **Improvement**

There is an inherent tension between these goals.



Two Paradigms of Assessment

Ewell, P.T. (2007). Assessment and Accountability in America Today: Background and Context. In *Assessing and Accounting for Student Learning*.

	Assessment for Accountability
<i>Strategic dimensions</i>	
Purpose	Summative (judgment)
Stance	External
Predominant ethos	Compliance
<i>Application choices</i>	
Instrumentation	Standardized
Nature of evidence	Quantitative
Reference points	Comparative or fixed standard
Communication of results	Public communication
Uses of results	Reporting

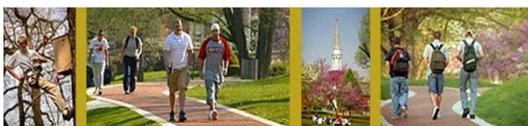
Why Assessment in Student Affairs?

- **Matter of Survival:** Questions of accountability, cost, quality, access, equity, and accreditation are fundamental
- **Quality:** Do we have high-quality programs, services, and facilities?
- **Affordability:** Does cost-benefit justify service offering?
- **Strategic Planning:** How do we achieve our goals?
- **Decision Making:** Using data for making decisions?
- **Learning:** Do we contribute to student learning?
- **Political Evaluation:** Should programs be funded?



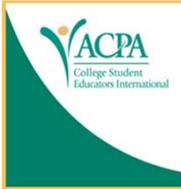
Assessment Named Professional Competency Area for Student Affairs Practitioners

- Assess teaching and learning
- Effectively interpret results
- Incorporate results into practice



ACPA, & NASPA. (2010). *Professional competency areas for student affairs practitioners*. Washington, D.C.: Authors.

ACPA ASK Standards

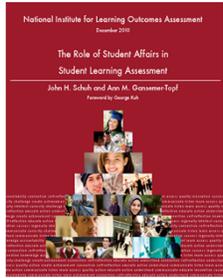


- Need more assessment in SA to demonstrate contributions & address accountability demands
- To promote “a culture of inquiry”
- Foundational Issues, Tools & Techniques, and Advanced Issues

Henning, G. W., Mitchell, A. A., & Maki, P. L. (2008, September-October). The Assessment Skills and Knowledge Standards: Professionalizing the work of assessing student learning and development. *About Campus*, 11-17.

Student Affairs Practice and Assessment

- SA well-positioned to assess student learning
- Greater interest in how programs & experiences contribute to student learning
- Importance of collaborating on campus assessment activities



DOWNLOAD www.learningoutcomesassessment.org

Schuh, J. H., & Gansemer-Topf, A. M. (2010, December). *The role of student affairs in student learning assessment* (Occasional Paper #7). Champaign, IL: National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment.

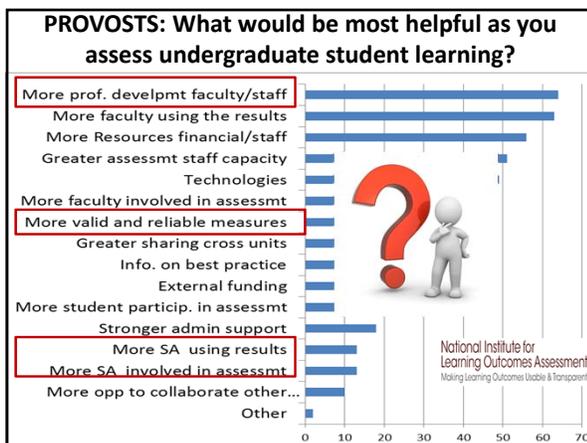
Comprehensive Approach to Assessment in Student Affairs

- Tracking use of programs, services, and facilities
- Assessing student needs
- Assessing student importance and satisfaction
- Assessing environments and student cultures
- Assessing program and service outcomes (costs & benefits)
- Assessing student learning
- Benchmarking
- Measuring effectiveness against professional standards

Schuh & Upcraft, 2001

Asked Provosts 2013: What Would Be Most Helpful to Assess Undergrad Student Learning?

1. More prof. developmt faculty/staff	9. Greater sharing cross units
2. Greater assessmt staff capacity	10. More opp to collaborate other instit.
3. More SA involved in assessmt	11. More valid and reliable measures
4. More SA using results	12. More faculty involved in assessmt
5. Stronger admin support	13. More faculty using the results
6. More student particip. in assessmt	14. Technologies
7. External funding	15. More resources \$/staff
8. Info. on best practice	

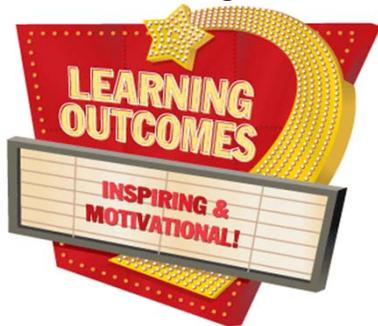


In this Age of Accountability, Student Affairs must...

- Emphasize Student Learning and Provide Greater Evidence of Contribution to Student Learning and Success

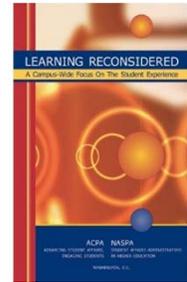


Today's Agenda in Higher Education: Student Learning Outcomes



Vision for Higher Education

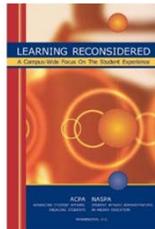
Learning as a comprehensive, holistic, transformative activity that integrates academic learning and student development, processes that have often been considered separate, and even independent of each other.



Learning Reconsidered (2004)

Student Life Practitioners in the 21st Century Must...

- **Emphasize Student Learning**
 - Insufficient to focus only on general value of programs and to assess satisfaction, use of student services/programs
- **Demonstrate how functions, programs, services contribute to student learning and wider institutional learning goals**



Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education

Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS)

CAS promotes standards to enhance opportunities for student learning and development from higher education programs and services.

"CAS provides a powerful framework for us to assess our efforts and to make changes based on a national model of effective programming and services." -- Bonita Jacobs, President North Georgia College and State University

28



Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education

- CAS standards articulate desirable outcomes, specifies indicators across functional areas, and provides self-assessment guides and frameworks.
- To follow CAS, functional areas identify the outcomes to develop in students touched by programs/services, develops approaches to assess outcomes, and uses assessment information in cycle of program improvement.

29



Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education

16 CAS Learning Domains

- | | |
|--|---|
| • intellectual growth | • healthy behaviors |
| • effective communication | • independence |
| • realistic self-appraisal | • collaboration |
| • enhanced self-esteem | • social responsibility |
| • clarified values | • satisfying & productive lifestyles |
| • career choices | • appreciation of diversity |
| • leadership development | • spiritual awareness |
| • meaningful interpersonal relationships | • achievement of personal & educational goals |

Which outcome domains do your programs develop?

Learning Outcomes

- **Learning outcomes - *What students accomplish by participating in your program - are explicit***
- **Should be able to answer: *“What is the educative value of this program or policy?”***



Student Affairs and SLO Assessment - 1

- **California State University Fullerton** assessed the extent to which students who participated in **student activities programs** made gains in 3 areas of communication: teamwork, event planning, & working with students from diverse backgrounds.



- **Assessed via a variety of measures** including: reflection papers following programs, portfolios, and evaluation of student performance in teams and event management

Student Affairs and SLO Assessment - 2

- **Student Affairs at College of St. Scholastica (MN)**
 - All units & programs identified how they addressed **learning outcomes important to institution**: holistic growth, such as critical thinking, problem solving and conflict resolution; intercultural competence; and responsibility to community
 - **EXAMPLE**: residential life educators specified how through resolving issues of community living such as, roommate conflicts, students in res life develop critical thinking that allows them to understand the complexities of a situation rather than perceive difficulties in simplistic terms

Student Affairs and SLO Assessment - 3

- **California State University Chico**: student affairs units described learning resulting from participation in programs 
- Units posted statements to respond to:
 1. **What are the learning objectives that your program has (explicit or implicit) for students using your services?**
 2. **What are the indicators by which you estimate the extent to which students are learning each of those things your program intends for them to learn?**(see www.csuchico.edu/sa/assessment/index.shtml)

Move to deep levels of assessment...

- **Satisfaction is of limited value if it does not lead to outcomes**
- **Beyond use statistics and satisfaction**
- **To measuring changes in attitudes, values, and behaviors of participants, and ultimately, to assess performance and outcomes**



What is Needed in Student Affairs?

- **Make explicit the role of student affairs in the intentional promotion of student learning.**
- **SA collects assessment data on student learning outcomes, and uses results to evaluate quality of, and improve, programs and units.**
- **Assessment, accountability and outcomes viewed as ethical practice.**



Kinzie, J. (2011). Student Affairs in the Age of Accountability. *Contested Issues in Student Affairs*. Stylus

In this Age of Accountability, Student Affairs must...

- Emphasize Student Learning and Provide Greater Evidence of Contribution to Student Learning and Success
- Create Assessment Partnerships Across Campus

Student Life Practitioners in the 21st Century Must...

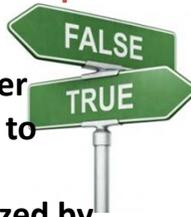
• Create Partnerships for Assessment Across Campus

- Connect to larger, institution initiatives (HIPs, strategic plans ,etc)
- Academic Affairs
- General Education Assessment
- Center for Teaching & Learning
- Institutional Assessment Committees
- Institutional Research
- Accreditation Committees



The Value of Partnerships

Student Success, as a desired outcome of higher education, is more likely to result from institutional environments characterized by *strong partnerships* that link academic and student affairs professionals, faculty and students.



Conditions that Fostered Institutional Improvement in Student Success

1. Grants, Pilots, External Initiatives
2. Stability & Trust in Leadership
3. Physical space/creation of new learning spaces
4. Comprehensive & Targeted strategic planning
5. Data Informed & Culture of continuous improvement
6. Strong role of faculty
7. Intentional partnerships in administrative areas – Student and Academic Affairs

Opportunities for Assessment Partnerships: Be on the Same Page...Link to Institution Wide Learning Goals & Planning

- 85% of Colleges & Universities have Institution Wide Learning Outcomes
 - Are student affairs learning outcomes aligned?
- How are student affairs and co-curricular learning outcomes specified in institutions strategic planning?

Ramapo's Four-Year Model of Student Engagement: Collaboration between Academic & Student Affairs

- Motivators: HE research, institution data, and Ramapo objectives for engagement, High-Impact Practices, and higher retention
- Involved SA, AA, Enrollment, Pres. Office, Institutional Assessment, to develop student engagement plan
 - 4 overarching goals, span the 4 year college experience
 - Inventories and assessed activities to produce desired outcomes or, Key Points of Engagement (KPEs)



Ramapo: Mapped KPEs

- Review agreed upon KPEs and how they map to goals and outcomes for particular year
- Identify gaps or weaknesses in map



KPE	Academic				Social			Personal			Campus/Civic	
	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	2.1	2.2	2.3	3.1	3.2	3.3	4.1	4.2
Orientation					x	x		x				
Summer Reading/Convocation	x		x				x				x	
AlcoholEdu										x		
Arching and First Year Assembly							x					
Maroon Madness					x	x	x	x	x			
Choices and Consequences		x						x			x	
Green Dot		x						x	x		x	
LollaNoBoozza					x	x						
Club Fair					x							
FYS/Peers	x		x	x			x	x	x		x	
Advising	x							x	x			

Opportunities for Assessment Partnerships: Accreditation

- WASC Core Commitment to Student Learning and Success – clear learning outcomes, collect evidence on effectiveness
 - What are co-curricular learning outcomes?
 - How is student success demonstrated in the co-curriculum?
 - Is there evidence that all units contribute to student learning and success?

WASC Standard 2 - 2.13 Achieving Educational Objectives Through Core Functions: The institution provides academic and other student support services... to meet the needs of the specific types of students that the institution serves and the programs it offers.

44

Opportunities for Assessment Partnerships: Be at the Table with Academic Affairs & Faculty

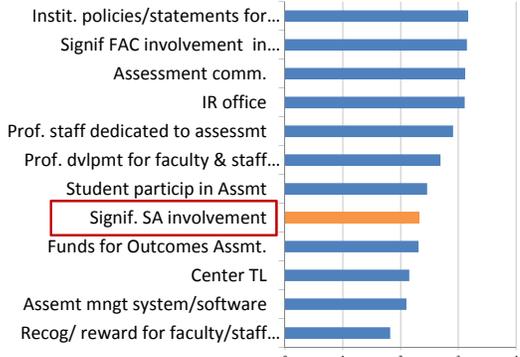
- Centers for Teaching & Learning and Institutional Research are partners in identifying student learning topics to explore and assess
 - How connected are you to Teaching & Learning (faculty development activities) and to IR?

Take Your Place



Provosts 2013: How Much Do the Following Support Assessment?

National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment
Making Learning Outcomes Usable & Transparent



Support Category	Score (0-4)
Instit. policies/statements for...	3.5
Signif FAC involvement in...	3.5
Assessment comm.	3.5
IR office	3.5
Prof. staff dedicated to assessmt	3.0
Prof. dvlpmt for faculty & staff...	2.5
Student particip in Assmt	2.5
Signif. SA involvement	2.0
Funds for Outcomes Assmt.	2.0
Center TL	2.0
Assent mngt system/software	2.0
Recog/ reward for faculty/staff...	1.5

Provost 2013 Perspective of Student Affairs Involvement in Assessment

- Doctoral institutions significantly more likely than Baccalaureate and Associate institutions to indicate student affairs staff involvement **supports assessment activities**
- WASC significantly more likely than SACS, HLC, NEASC, and Middle States to have institutions indicate involvement of student affairs staff in assessment; NEASC is the least likely.

National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment
Making Learning Outcomes Usable & Transparent

How Can Partnerships Be Fostered?

- Identify and connect student affairs work to institution-wide learning goals, and initiatives
- Know what is of interest to the Provost, Academic Affairs, General Education, & faculty - how can you connect?
- Develop relationships with institutional research, centers for teaching & learning
- When is the status of accreditation work?

Take Your Place



In this Age of Accountability, Student Affairs must...

- Emphasize Student Learning and Provide Greater Evidence of Contribution to Student Learning and Success
- Create Assessment Partnerships Across Campus
- Commit to Using Evidence to Improve

Insider's Critique: More Assessment Activity, Plenty of Data...



"Awash in Data" but Little Data Utilization



Ramapo: Assessment & Action

- **Assessed the Plan** – identified gaps, measured results
- **Act on Results**
 - Improve KPE (Choices and Consequences)
 - Abandon Program as KPE (Maroon Mayhem)
 - Establish new KPE (World Expo)
 - Redesign KPE (Orientation)
 - Leave It Alone (Arching Ceremony)
- **Report on Outcomes**
 - Modest increases in student engagement and student retention
 - Inclusion into new iteration of Strategic Plan



Acting on Evidence: Cal Lutheran University (CLU)

- CLU's Assessment Committee (Office of Student Life staff are members) reviews outcome & assessment results associated with the First-Year Experience program.
- NSSE results revealed a gap in co-curricular engagement of transfer and commuter students.
- Results prompted increase in programs focused on needs of commuter students & creation of peer mentor program for transfer students



Develop an Ethos of Continuous Improvement

- Appreciation for evidence-based practice
- Self-critical
- Data aid decision making
- Drive for richer improvements & deeper outcomes
- Experiment, take risks to assess & change
- Systematically collect information about student & institutional performance to validate anecdotes and personal experiences.



Four Principles For Assessment & Accountability in Student Affairs

1. Make SA role in promotion of student learning plain – *be explicit about learning outcomes you seek to foster*
2. Assess extent to which students are experiencing practices associated with and making gains on specific learning outcomes
3. Motivation for assessment should come from desire to fully understand strengths & shortcomings of student experience, and then to make changes where necessary
4. It's right to commit to evidence-based practice, to be accountable, and to improve

Enacting a Commitment to Student Learning Outcomes in Student Affairs

- Complementary alignment between the student affairs and institution's mission.
- Resources allocated to programs that demonstrate contributions to student learning.
- Collaborate to foster student learning and personal development.
- Student affairs policies and practices are based in research on student learning and informed by institution-specific assessment data.

Discussion and Comments

Jillian Kinzie

Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research, NSSE

jikinzie@indiana.edu



nsse.iub.edu

