Achieving Assessment Nirvana by Closing the Loop

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Student Affairs Assessment and Research Conference
Ohio State University - Center for the Study of Student Life
June 19, 2015
Some Assessment Nirvana!
“Notably, the authors acknowledge the importance of assessing student learning and program effectiveness in student affairs and have added a new chapter to address this expansion in assessment work.”
The need for the new role of student affairs assessment coordinator has emerged in response to the increasing demand for outcomes information, the proliferation of data, and the recognition that coordinating this work within divisions is of paramount importance.

Coming November 2015
Denison students are highly engaged in the co-curriculum, and 75% of Denison seniors report having held a formal leadership role in a student organization, which is significantly higher than students at similar institutions.
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

2015 Student Affairs Assessment Institute

STUDENT AFFAIRS ASSESSMENT INSTITUTE

JUNE 17, 2015 TO JUNE 19, 2015

Location: Embassy Suites Downtown, Louisville, Kentucky USA Featuring ...Campus Labs/ACPA Platinum Partnership Overview of Institute Fill your professional toolkit: Do you wonder how much students are really gaining from the educational experiences you create for them? Are you being asked to present data on the effectiveness of your programs? Do you struggle to find points of data that demonstrate the impact of your work on student success? Is your Division searching for ways to create a coordinated system for assessment? Are you searching for an opportunity to develop your skills related to...
Student Affairs Assessment & Research Conference

Presented by the Office of Student Life at The Ohio State University

The 2015 Student Affairs Assessment and Research Conference (SAARC) will be held at The Ohio State University’s Ohio Union on Friday, June 19, 2015.

SAARC is a one-day drive-in conference that is ideal for student affairs practitioners, graduate students, and other higher education professionals looking to increase their assessment skills.

More information to come!

Questions about the conference? Please contact Christina Athas at athas.1@osu.edu, or call our office at 614.247.6220.
SAARC Sessions!

• Small Wins: Quick & Easy Assessment for Programs and Services
• 2 sessions on KPIs!!
• Meta-Assessment
• Communicating data through story-telling
• Removing Roadblocks to Co-curricular Learning Outcomes Assessment
“Student affairs excelled in the challenge of assessment for accreditation....results affirmed that student activities and residence life were accomplishing what they intended.... The next review is in 10 years...now let’s get back to our real work.”
“Assessment is done! We conducted a survey, compiled program participant data and outcomes, completed a report that was reviewed by a committee, discovered strengths and a few areas for improvement!”

Nirvana, right?

Well, maybe.

What’s missing?
Achieving Assessment Nirvana

Closing the Loop

Assessment Cycle:
- Plan & Identify Outcomes
- Collect Data
- Analyze Data
- Share Results
- Identify & Implement Changes
- Assess Impact of Change

Hardest

Easy

Harder
We are not so good at drawing clear lessons from results, or formulating concrete improvement plans, taking action on results, and then assessing to see if this made a difference.
Assessment has little to no value if results are not shared and used in meaningful ways.

Taking action and closing the loop is assessment nirvana.
Getting to Improvement
What % of institutions “have adopted or developed an explicit set of student learning outcomes common to all undergraduates, across all majors?”

84%

Stated learning outcomes are now the norm.
More student learning outcomes assessment is underway now than a few years ago, and the range of tools & measures to assess has expanded.
Assessment Tools Used

- National Student Surveys: 85%
- Rubrics: 75%
- Classroom-based: 70%
- Alumni surveys: 65%
- Placement exams: 55%
- Locally developed surveys: 50%
- Capstones: 45%
- Locally developed tests: 40%
- General knowledge/skills: 35%
- Employer surveys: 30%
- Portfolios: 25%
- External: 20%
- Other: 5%
Advantaging Technology for Assessment
1. More assessment activity.
2. Greater focus on student learning.
3. Persistent appetite in higher education for information about using assessment to improve.

(Kuh, Ikenberry et al., 2015)
Some Essential Principles to Enhance Assessment and Improvement
“Doing” Assessment vs. “Using” Results
What’s the difference?

Using Results = “Harnessing evidence to inform educational improvements”

– Gathering data is less risky and complicated than acting on the evidence in the data
Pause. Some reflection...

1. Where would you place most of your assessment activity?
   a. Heavy in the planning & collecting phase
   b. Attending to planning, collecting, & analyzing
   c. Attending to collecting & sharing
   d. Getting better at sharing & taking action
   e. Thru the cycle... even, closing the loop
Doing vs. Using

“You are not trying to achieve the perfect research design; you are trying to gather enough data to provide a reasonable basis for action” -- Barbara Woolvaard

- Make space & create structures for action
- Suspend data collection, only support action
- Approaches: “Assessment Champions” at TAMU
Begin with Use in Mind

Influences:

– Utilization focused evaluation (UF-E) model – what will effect and ensure usefulness?

– Backward design from classroom instruction
  – identify intended learning outcomes and then align instruction, practice, assignments that support them and the evidence to demonstrate

Assessment results are a means to an end, rather than an end in themselves
To add to your assessment protocol...

Who are the likely users of the evidence we want to gather and how will they use it?
Link Assessment to Internal Processes

• “Normalize” assessment processes
• Make using assessment results part of routine, reinforcing processes,
Assessment of students' co-curricular experience is a priority of the Division of Student Affairs at Marquette and is one of the five goals outlined in our Strategic Plan. There are several purposes for the robust system of assessment that Student Affairs has put in place:

- to collect and report data about students, their success, and their needs/interests
- to measure the effectiveness of Student Affairs programs and interventions in meeting our intended outcomes for student learning and growth, and
- to determine student satisfaction with their Marquette experience and their interactions with our departments and programs.

This site contains a wealth of information about students, their experiences, and
Maintain the Quest to Close the Assessment Loop

• Take time to reflect on assessment results, document changes made, examine whether implemented changes have been successful

• Weave reflection on evidence into assessment processes
Pause. More reflection...

- Think of your assessment activities.
  - What have you done with results?
  - How do you quest to close the loop?
7 Practices to Help Close the Loop
1. Increase Accountability for Acting on Results

• Do assessment plans and report templates emphasize...
  – How do results provide evidence for your outcomes?
  – What do results say about your program and impact on students?
  – Based on results, what decisions will you make, what action will you take regarding programs, policies, services?
  – What is the timeline for acting on results?

>> When you have results, ask: What now? What else? What next?
2. Follow Up to Close the Loop

• Ensure follow-ups (reports, meetings, committees) focus on reporting action and assessing the impact of change:
  – What action was taken on results?
  – What evidence do you have that change made a positive difference?
  – What will you do next?

Corollary: Suspend data collection, analysis...
3. Document Action Taken on Results

4. Showcase Closing the Loop

Use of Student Learning Evidence

At McKendree University we are committed to gathering assessment data and using the data, what we call "Closing the Loop." Our Closing the Loop logo is a spiral because we view the assessment process as an ongoing cycle that keeps refining, growing, and changing.
Craig Robertson, Director of Campus Activities, hosted events to prepare university peer mentors and first year students on acceptance and appreciation of others. The Campus Activities Board also hosted films, presentations, and events on diversity.

McKendree University was highlighted in the 30+ Promising Places to Work in Student Affairs. The work survey focused on “workplace diversity, staffing practices and work environment, … family friendliness, salary/benefits and professional development opportunities.”
5. Assess Closing the Loop

>> Survey to learn more about assessment across the division and understand how results are being used

Closing the Assessment Loop

- Survey respondents were asked how they “closed the assessment loop”, specifically asking how they used the results of their assessment project as actionable insights to inform their practice. More than half indicated they changed or created a program (55%). Half conducted or planned additional work (50%) and changed or created a new process (50%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Changes Made to “Close the Assessment Loop”</th>
<th>Fall 2013 N=31</th>
<th>Fall 2014 N=27</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Changed/Created Program</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conducted/Planned Additional Assessment</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changed/Created Process</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changed/Created Service</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identified a new target group</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reallocated Staff/Funding/Resources</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changed/Created a New Policy</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changed/Created Product</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Celebrate & Reward Closing the Loop

Closing the Loop Award

The Vice President for Student Affairs supports monetary awards for departments in the Division of Student Affairs. The Closing the Loop Award recognizes outstanding assessment practice.
7. Assessment is Change Management.
Be Change Agents.
Take Advantage of Partnerships

Change based on assessment results is facilitated by an intentional partnership between academic & student affairs, institutional research, centers for teaching & learning
Final Thoughts for **Closing the Loop**

1. Stop collecting data.
   -- *Really.*

2. Focus **explicit attention** on action taken and accountability for assessing change.
   -- What action was taken? What is your evidence of impact of change?

3. Celebrate action taken, reward closing the loop.

4. Get a cool mask & be a change agent.