Seekers of Truth

The Ethics and Politics of Student Affairs
Assessment and Research

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Outcomes

• Deepen ethical and political thinking by exploring views and attitudes inherent in assessment and research in higher education
• Deepen ethical and political thinking by exploring views and attitudes inherent in student affairs
• Identify potential decision points in order to anticipate political and ethical decisions
• Demonstrate use of an ethical/political thinking framework to define campus culture
Framework for Decision Making with Ethics and Politics in Mind

Prior to a Decision Making Moment
- Know and reflect on personal values in your professional setting/institutional context
- Anticipate
  - Listen and observe
  - Acknowledge the interconnectedness of the context
  - Established collegial relationships to develop advanced understanding of the institutional context
- Collaborate and communicate widely

When a Decision Making Moment Arises
- Identify the potential problems or conflicts
- Consider multiple courses of action
- Review ethical standards and framework, literature and seek consultation from peers and/or supervisor as appropriate
- Make a plan, gather support and engage colleagues in implementation
- Monitor plans, adjust and continue communication (positives and negatives)
What does it mean to be a “truth seeker?”

“Social researchers can never guarantee that they have arrived at a ‘true’ statement.”

Kakabadse, Kakabadse, & Kouzmin, 2002
Ethics and Politics

• Ethics
  • Ethical principles or standards that explain what ought to be done; consistent guidelines for individual decision making
  • Ethics means we are doing as less harm as possible based on a set moral code.

• Politics
  • "...frames the linkages between societal interests, governance systems, organizational actions, and production processes." Mitchell & Boyd, 1998, p. 135
Ethics and Politics of What?

Student Affairs
Research
Assessment
Higher Education
Education
Counseling
Assessment and research professionals must “explicitly understand their own values, have increasing capacity for reflexivity and anticipate various ethical dilemmas that emerge from the research endeavor.”

Kakabadse, Kakabadse, & Kouzmin, 2002
Framework for Ethical Decisions

- What would the greater good/benevolence/compassion look like in this situation?
- What thoughts, ideas, behaviors and relationships will be expanded or reduced from what is created by my decision?
- Does the decision respect my individual values and the integrity of all people being affected by it?

NASPA Ethics Statement, 2012
Ethical Considerations in Student Affairs Assessment

- Confidentiality
- Honesty
- Coercion
- Bias in design, analysis, interpretation and decision making
  - Over-generalization, comparing non-like samples
  - Bias language
- Intellectual property
- Responsible publishing
- Non-discrimination
- Legality
- Human subjects protection
“Assessment studies must be conceived, planned, conducted, and reported in ways that take into account the political contexts from which they derive.”

Schuh & Upcraft, 2000
Politics in Student Affairs

Linkages between environmental factors influencing higher education:

- Globalization
- Demand for higher education
- Gaps in educational attainment and achievement
- Expanding technologies
- Economic fluctuations and higher education funding

Envisioning the Future of Student Affairs, 2010

- State and Board Governance
- Accreditation
- Public opinion of results of higher education
What are expectations for the study?
What are the political risks associated with conducting the assessment?
How can findings be reported with an eye to political context?
Will results be tied to personnel or budget decisions?
Does the study encroach upon someone else’s territory?
Are you expected to report to supervisor on behind the scenes behaviors of colleagues?
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What does it mean to be a “truth seeker?”

Truth- sincerity in action, the state of being the case, a judgment or idea that is true or accepted

Seek- to go in search of, to ask for, to try to acquire or gain

Merriam Webster Dictionary
References


