DEVELOPING A COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT PLAN

DePaul Assessment Workshop Series 2014

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WORKSHOP GOALS

• Review why planning is important to our work
• Review what to consider before developing a plan
• Review elements of a comprehensive assessment project plan
Why Create A Plan
SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY

• Each group has 8 cards representing 8 different courses in the Undergraduate Basket Weaving Program

• Your objective is to place the 8 courses in the order that you think students should take them
  • #1 = first course taken, #8 = last course taken

• Keep track of your rationale for how you order the courses

• After 10-15 minutes, designate a representative to report your course sequence and a brief rationale
WHAT IF YOU KNEW THIS?

• **Purpose of Course Sequencing:** To provide students a logical path through the underwater basket weaving program that is in alignment with the goals of the program.

• **Program Goals:**
  
  • Students should take all basket weaving and underwater arts courses before moving onto the integration of the two fields by taking their underwater basket weaving courses.

  • Students should learn all contextual information (theory, history, sociocultural and temporal factors) prior to developing skills.
WHAT IS AN ASSESSMENT PLAN?

• A **framework** to guide your assessment processes
• “Getting your ducks in a row”
• A dynamic **map**
  • There’s the path…and then there’s the bear…
• A conversation starter
• Continuity
ASSESSMENT AS AN INQUIRY PROCESS

- Asking questions
- Collecting evidence
- Suggesting explanations based on the evidence
- Evaluating explanations
- Communicating explanations
- Reflection
ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Assessment Loop

Mission/Purposes

Educational Objectives

How well do we Achieve our educational objectives?

Gather Evidence

Interpret Evidence

Enhance teaching/learning; inform institutional decision-making, planning, budgeting

Source: AAHE/NCA Higher Education Learning Commission
EVIDENCE OF ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Assessment Loop

Mission/Purposes

How well do we achieve our educational objectives?

Gather Evidence

- Assessment Reports indicating one or more outcomes selected for assessment

Interpret Evidence

- Assessment Reports describing assessment methods

- Assessment Reports describing how data analyzed

Enhance teaching/learning, inform institutional decision-making, planning, budgeting

Assessment Reports collected over time

Assessment Reports that include both recommendations based on current project’s results and information about actions taken based on previous projects’ results

Source: AAHE/NCA Higher Education Learning Commission
ASSESSMENT VS. RESEARCH/EVALUATION

- Broadly speaking, assessment is:
  - More formative (improvement of learning or processes)
  - A continuous process
  - Not intended for broad generalization
  - More focused on practice than theory

ASSESSMENT VS. RESEARCH/EVALUATION

- Broadly speaking, assessment is:
  - More impacted by time and resource limitations
  - Less precise in terms of design (and that’s ok!)
  - More susceptible to politics (and Politics) and institutional change
  - Meant to answer “what has been done” and “what needs to be done”

Laying the Foundation
HOW TO DETERMINE WHAT TO ASSESS

• Guiding documents
  • Mission and Vision statements
  • Institutional, College/Division, Departmental or Program Initiatives
  • Professional Standards

• Other Documents
  • Previous Assessment Projects
  • Most Recent Academic Program Review or Department Review
  • Meeting Minutes or Notes
LINKING ASSESSMENT TO STUDENT LEARNING

University Learning Goals

College/School/Divisional Learning Outcomes

Departmental Learning Outcomes

Program Learning Outcomes

Course/Activity-Based Learning Outcomes
WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED WITH THE PROJECT

• Who is responsible for delivering learning related to the project?
• Who will organize and lead the project?
• What other faculty or staff would benefit from being part of the project?
• Who else might have an interest in the project?
STAKEHOLDERS AND AUDIENCES: SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY

• In small groups, discuss who your department’s stakeholders and audience are. What is the benefit of sharing your report with these particular groups?

• If you have been involved with previous assessment projects, with whom did you share the report and for what purpose?

• After 10 minutes, designate someone to report out your list of stakeholders and audiences, and either why it would be beneficial to share the report with these groups, or how it was beneficial to share in the past?
Project Planning
PROJECT PLANNING

It is important to think about all elements of the plan

- Developing the question
- Choosing an appropriate methodology
- Communicating your results
- Being realistic about your timeline
REVIEW THE PROJECT PLAN

• Are there questions that surprised you or questions you don’t normally consider when developing an assessment project plan?

• Which questions are more challenging to answer and why?
Developing the Question
# LEARNING OUTCOMES VS. PERFORMANCE METRICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Performance Metrics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Derived from mission and purpose</td>
<td>Derived from description of the work of department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measures contributions to student learning (was the experience transformative?)</td>
<td>Measure performance of the work (did students complete a task?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement = Effectiveness</td>
<td>Achievement = Productivity, Satisfaction or Accomplishment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Require criteria to define levels of effectiveness</td>
<td>Require criteria to define levels of performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual and collective feedback to shape department programs and services</td>
<td>Individual feedback to shape department systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment: how effective were we?</td>
<td>Assessment: how well did we perform our tasks?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the train headed in the right direction?</td>
<td>Is the train on time?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are students learning something?</td>
<td>Are students satisfied with our programs and services?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LAYERS OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

University Learning Goals

College/School/Divisional Learning Outcomes

Departmental Learning Outcomes

Program Learning Outcomes

Course/Activity-Based Learning Outcomes
LEVELS OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

- **College/School/Divisional Learning Outcomes**
  
  *allows for integration, shared responsibility for student learning across departments*

- **Departmental Learning Outcomes**
  
  *students can learn through multiple programs and services offered within the department*

- **Program Learning Outcomes**
  
  *students can achieve through participating in one or more activities or services within one program area of a department*

- **Course/Activity-Based Learning Outcomes**
  
  *students can achieve through participation in a singular activity or service at one point in time*
RESIDENTIAL EDUCATION

• **Divisional LO:** Students who participate in Student Affairs programs and services will develop a strong sense of personal identity and form mature, respectful relationships with others.

• **Departmental LO:** Students who engage in Residential Education programs will demonstrate personal responsibility and respect for others.

• **Programmatic LO:** Students who are involved in the residence hall judicial process will be able to describe student rights and responsibilities in the judicial process. (Personal Responsibility/Respect for Others)

• **Activity LO:** Students who participate in a judicial meeting with their residence director will be able to identify the specific policy in the Code of Conduct which was violated.
Methodology
DATA AND YOU

• Data do **NOT** make decisions

• Data must be restructured into information

• Provide a balanced view of the situation

• Identify issues and establish progress

• Sufficient and relevant to key issues
COLLECTING DATA

• Driven by the outcome (purpose)

• Remember to explore existing data

• Remember to consider direct and indirect methods

• Align method with your outcome and the type of information you need
SCOPE

• What specific population of students will you assess?
• Of the total population what percentage will be invited to participate?
• Will the potential set of data adequately answer the assessment question?

Other considerations:

How will you gain consent from students participating in the project?

Do you plan to present or publish the results externally?
EXAMPLES OF QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT

• Surveys (institutional and national)

• Institutional data (student information systems, ipeds, enrollment data)
EXAMPLES OF QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT

- Papers/Essays/Reflections
- Portfolios
- Focus Groups
- Structured Interviews
- Observation
- Document Analysis
- Photo Elicitation
QUALITATIVE METHODS

• Ask different types of questions that surveys alone might not be appropriate for.

• This data is just as good as quantitative data, it is just another kind of information.

• Allow for your offices to expand their thinking to more deeply explore student needs.
QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT

A survey question might present a statement such as:

• Attending [event] increased my understanding of diversity. Then the respondent would fill in their answer on a scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree).

A qualitative question might ask:

• How, if at all, was your understanding of diversity affected by attending [event]?
MIXED METHODS

- Sequential Explanatory
- Sequential Exploratory
- Concurrent Triangulation
COMMUNICATING RESULTS
“The bad (less good?) news for higher education is that (a) colleges and universities sit on huge amounts of untapped…data about student learning and campus operations; and (b) academic organizations do not have a great history of using data to aid and inform decision-making.”

COMMUNICATING RESULTS: WHY

Main Question: Why is communicating data so important?

- Increases commitment to assessment
- Increases value of assessment
- Helps celebrate your successes
- Gives more evidence than anecdotes
COMMUNICATING RESULTS: WHO

Main Question: Who are your audiences and stakeholders?

Internal:
• The Department and Department Head
• Associate Dean / Associate Vice President
• Students
• Your supervisor (if different than the department head)
• The broader institution, Board of Trustees

External:
• Accrediting bodies
• Employers
• Other peer institutions
• Alumni
• Conference
• Media (local newspaper, school newspaper)
It’s not just what you communicate, but how you communicate it.
COMMUNICATING RESULTS: WHAT

Main Question: What is your message? How will your data be used to enhance your message?

What specifically do you want each to know?

What are the main message points you want to get across?

- Successes
- Improvements
- Neutral information
COMMUNICATING RESULTS: **HOW**

Main Question: *What avenues can we use to communicate our results?*

- **Assessment Report** (primary)
- Briefs
- Audio/Visual
- Handout or poster
- Newsletter
- Assessment Conference
- *Assessment corner* of a director’s meeting
Timelines
DEVELOPING A REALISTIC TIMELINE

• Consider the best time to collect the data you need
• Start with your deadline and work backwards
• Allow enough time to develop and execute methodology
• Allow enough time to develop assessment tools
• Allow enough time for analysis and report writing
• If working with partners, consider their time parameters
PROJECT PLANNING

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UPCOMING ASSESSMENT WORKSHOPS

Sign-up for future assessment workshops on the Teaching Commons Website:

http://teachingcommons.depaul.edu/Workshops_Events

April 11 – Writing Effective Reports
May 9 – Introduction to Assessment at DePaul
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