

Aligning Co-Curricular Initiatives with Learning Outcomes
Key Challenges Facing Student Affairs Leaders



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Student Affairs Leadership Council

Aligning Co-Curricular Initiatives with Learning Outcomes (22140)
Key Challenges Facing Student Affairs Leaders

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Essay

Essay

When the Student Affairs Leadership Council set its 2010 research agenda, the topic of co-curricular student learning outcomes stood out as a top priority for members. As illustrated in the Wordle below, Council research identified many factors driving member urgency around this issue including accreditation, budget constraints, and the need to demonstrate impact.

Key Themes Driving Student Affairs Urgency



Source: <http://www.wordle.net>; Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Council research demonstrated how co-curricular learning outcomes are increasingly playing a bigger role in accreditation. Whereas in the past the focus was mainly on academic programs, accreditors now want to see that Student Affairs organizations have defined learning outcomes and are developing plans to assess them.

Accreditation Can Be Opportunity to Shine

Student Affairs Recognized for Outcomes Work



Ahead of the Curve

“Our division received nice accolades in our last WASC review because we already had established divisional learning outcomes. We were ahead of the curve in that area and WASC noted it.”

*Linda McMurdock
Loyola Marymount University*

Middle States Evaluation Team Report (2010) University at Albany

“Student Services (Student Success) assessment activities are very robust, with a five-year history... These assessment tools and the information they collect are used to improve programs and services.”

Source: Christakis, Michael and Dustin Abshire, “Developing a Culture of Assessment in Student Affairs,” (Conference Presentation, 2010); Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Essay

For Student Affairs divisions not yet immersed in learning outcomes, the accreditation process provides a much needed jolt. Several interviewees noted how upcoming accreditation visits gave the division a powerful incentive to focus on or revitalize learning outcomes initiatives.

Jumpstarting the Process

Accreditation Provides Incentive to Redouble Efforts

A Unique Opportunity

“We are up for reaccreditation in 2012-2013. This means that I now have a once-in-ten-years opportunity with my colleagues...letting me really push on what is this program doing for the students who are participating.”

*Ted Elling
University of North Carolina at Charlotte*

Accreditation Provides a Jolt

“Learning outcomes are not as high on my agenda right now as they should be...they will move up due to [our upcoming] accreditation but they get lost in the day-to-day...without someone nudging you it is easy for them to get pushed down....”

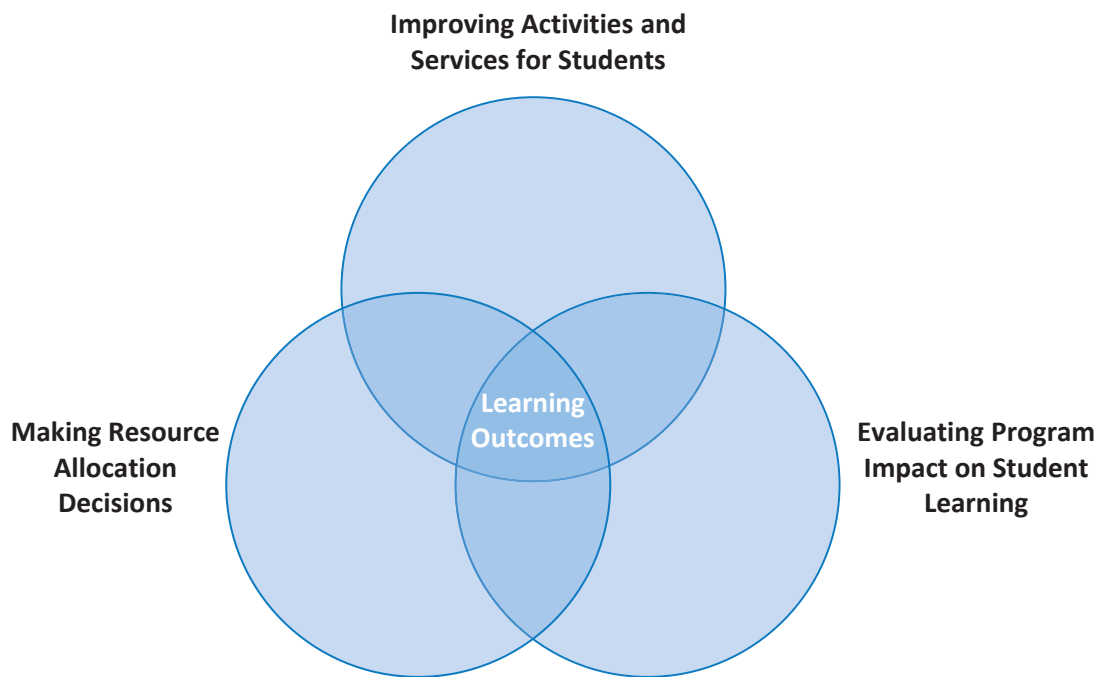
*Vice President for Student Affairs
Private University*

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

The second trend driving urgency for Student Affairs leaders around co-curricular learning outcomes is the current fiscal environment. At many institutions, budgetary constraints mean that divisions are under greater pressure than ever to demonstrate that they are investing funds in programs and services that effectively support student learning and development.

Demonstrating Careful Resource Stewardship

Fiscal Pressures Driving Interest in Learning Outcomes



Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Essay

At a time when additional funds are scarce, co-curricular outcomes can be a factor in resource allocation decisions. Data and assessment results can also play a role in helping Student Affairs executives think about the return on investment across their entire portfolio. At the unit-level, results can also be used to improve programs and services.

“We Need Assessment Now More Than Ever”

Units Have to Make the Case for Resources



Maintaining Assessment Momentum

“There’s [likely] going to be another round of budget cuts for Student Affairs. This is not the time to stop assessment. This is the time to keep doing it.”

*Sandi Osters
Texas A&M University*

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

The third issue driving urgency around student learning outcomes is the need to provide tangible evidence of learning outside the classroom. Council work illustrates how Student Affairs practitioners observe student learning on a daily basis in co-curricular activities, programs, and experiences. Traditionally, however, divisions have not focused time and resources on systematically documenting these examples.

Facilitating Learning Outside the Classroom

The Daily Work of Student Affairs

But How To Measure Student Learning?

“I believe that we teach students, and that they learn from what they do outside the classroom, but we were having a hard time as a division trying to figure out how to measure that, how to get at the learning piece.”

Laura Whitaker-Lea

North Georgia College and State University

Our Professional Responsibility

“Student Affairs talks about growth and maturation outside the classroom and how important that is to the students. But where is the proof? It is our professional obligation to do student learning outcomes.”

Steve Tyrell

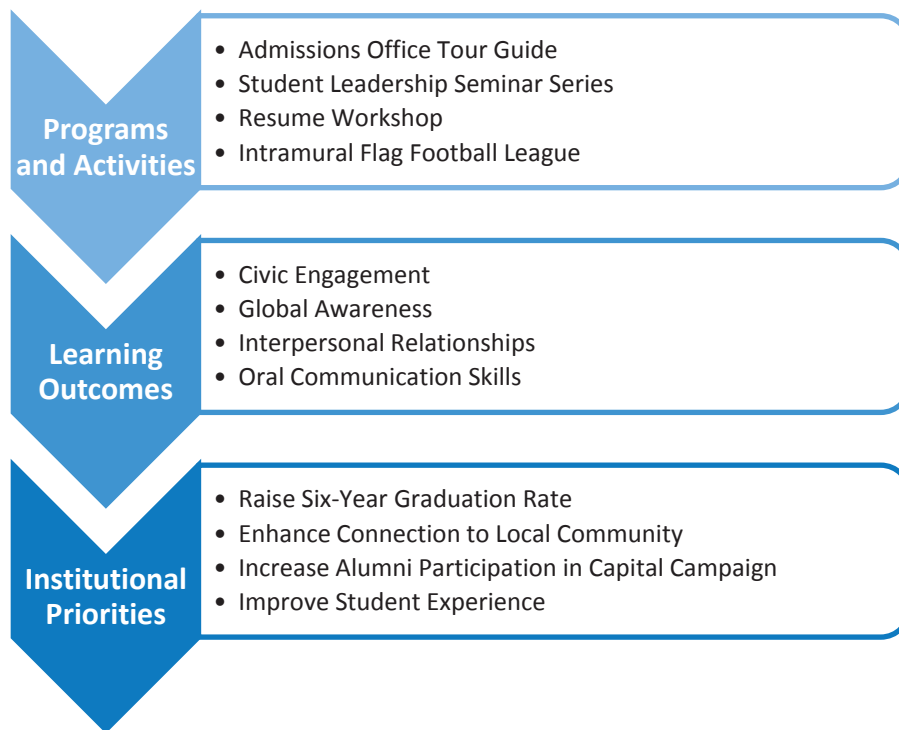
Alfred State College-SUNY College of Technology

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Essay

Program assessment at the unit-level provides data to demonstrate how Student Affairs is contributing to institutional goals. For example, outcomes data from the student leadership seminar series can help illuminate the connections between that program and the university's desire to increase interactions with the local community.

Providing Evidence of Student Learning *Aligning Co-Curricular Achievements with Learning Outcomes*



Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Council interviewees stressed how learning outcomes assessment helps practitioners to evaluate the impact of their programs and services. For example, results data allows staff members to determine whether a leadership retreat targeted at first-year students is really expanding their communication and conflict negotiation skills.

Outcomes Ultimately Benefit Students

Using Results to Improve Programs and Services



Outcomes Help Us Better Serve Our Students

“Learning outcomes assessment is about improvement, continuing to improve what students get from us....It is about finding out if students are getting from the program or activity what we want them to get, how well are they getting it, and what can we do to make it better.”

*Rebecca Sanderson
Oregon State University*


Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.


Essay


Across the past decade, Student Affairs professional organizations have increasingly stressed the importance of assessing student learning and development. However, recent data from a 2009 NASPA survey suggests that divisions have been slow to develop co-curricular learning outcomes. In fact, Council research showed there is considerable work to be done at the unit and divisional levels.

Understanding the Current State *Learning Outcomes in Student Affairs Organizations*

National Organizations Emphasize Importance of Learning Outcomes...

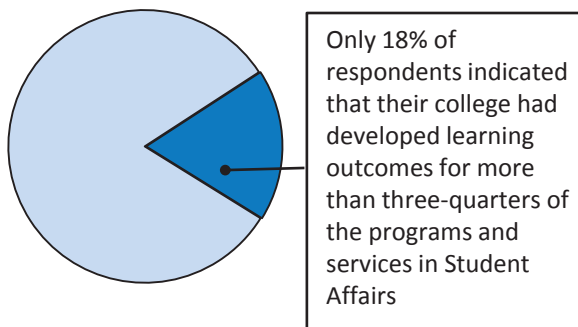
 ACPA, *The Student Learning Imperative* (1996)

 ACPA and NASPA, *Learning Reconsidered* (2004)

 ACPA, NASPA, et al., *Learning Reconsidered 2* (2006)

...Yet Divisions Continue to Lag Behind

*Student Learning Outcomes
NASPA Survey, 2009*

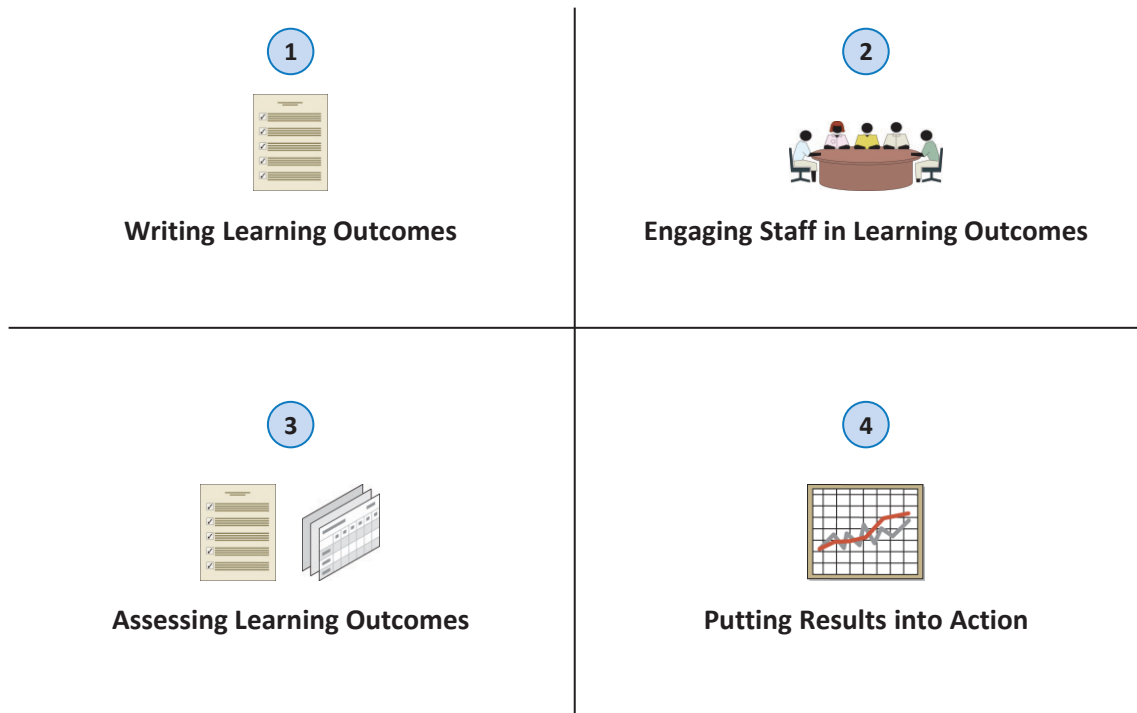


Source: NASPA, Retention and Assessment Conference (2010) at <http://www.naspa.org/programs/arc/slotrack.cfm>; Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Over the course of this research, the Council uncovered four main areas where Student Affairs organizations are struggling in terms of implementing co-curricular learning outcomes: developing and writing outcomes, engaging staff in learning outcomes initiatives, assessing outcomes, and putting the results into action.

The Challenges of Working with Learning Outcomes

Four Main Areas



Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Essay

The ideas and practices profiled in this publication are the result of extensive work with Student Affairs practitioners, assessment directors, and experts at colleges and universities throughout the country. The Council also conducted an independent analysis of divisional and unit-level outcomes as part of this research.

The Anatomy of a Study *Council Research Overview*



Comprehensive Literature Search



150+ Interviews

- Student Affairs Executives
- Assessment Experts
- Student Affairs Practitioners



Analysis of Divisional and Unit-Level Outcomes



Key Organizations

- NASPA's Assessment, Evaluation, and Research Knowledge Community
- Student Affairs Assessment Leaders (SAAL)
- ACPA's Commission for Assessment and Evaluation

Aligning Co-Curricular Initiatives with Learning Outcomes

Key Challenges for Student Affairs Organizations

I.

Designing Learning Outcomes

Key Challenge #1:

How Are Student Divisions Developing Learning Outcomes?

Key Challenge #2:

What Are Student Affairs Organizations Choosing for Divisional Outcomes?

Profiles

- Portland State University
- Bowling Green State University
- University of Toronto

Profiles

- University of Minnesota
- Education Advisory Board Divisional Outcomes Analysis

II.

Embedding Outcomes in Daily Work

Key Challenge #3:

How Are Leaders Shifting the Divisional Mindset from Satisfaction to Learning Outcomes?

Profiles

- Brigham Young University
- University of Toronto
- Education Advisory Board Unit Outcomes Analysis

Key Challenge #4:

What Practices Increase Assessment Skills and Knowledge Among Divisional Staff?

Profiles

- Queen's University
- Program Enhancement Institute
- Oregon State University
- University at Albany
- Northern Arizona University

III.

Measuring Learning Outcomes

Key Challenge #5:

What Methods Are Available to Gather Data on Learning Outcomes?

Key Challenge #6:

What Strategies Help Units Engage in Systematic Learning Outcomes Assessment?

Profiles

- Texas A&M University
- California State University-Fullerton

Profile

- Buena Vista University

IV.

Putting Results into Action

Key Challenge #7:

How Can Leaders Help Units Leverage Results Data for Program Improvement?

Profile

- Northern Arizona University

Key Challenge #8:

How Can Student Affairs Better Communicate Results Data to Institutional Stakeholders?

Profiles

- Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology
- Weber State University
- University at Albany
- William Paterson University

Coda

General Education Reform Efforts

Profile

- Southern Methodist University



I. Designing Learning Outcomes

- ☞ *Key Challenge #1:*
How Are Student Affairs Divisions Developing Learning Outcomes?
- ☞ *Key Challenge #2:*
What Are Student Affairs Organizations Choosing for Divisional Outcomes?

I. Designing Learning Outcomes

The questions below are designed to help evaluate your current strategies for developing learning outcomes. Answering “no” to several questions suggests that the practices covered in challenges #1 and #2 might be well-suited to your institution.

Diagnostic Questions

	Key Questions	Yes	No
1	Does your institution have campus-wide learning outcomes for students?		
2	Do Academic Affairs and Student Affairs currently share results data regarding student learning outcomes?		
3	Does your division have co-curricular learning outcomes?		
4	Are the division’s co-curricular learning outcomes published online where they can be easily accessed by students, parents, and university stakeholders?		
5	Do practitioners frequently refer to the division’s learning outcomes in their conversations with students?		

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.



I. Designing Learning Outcomes

Key Challenge #1:

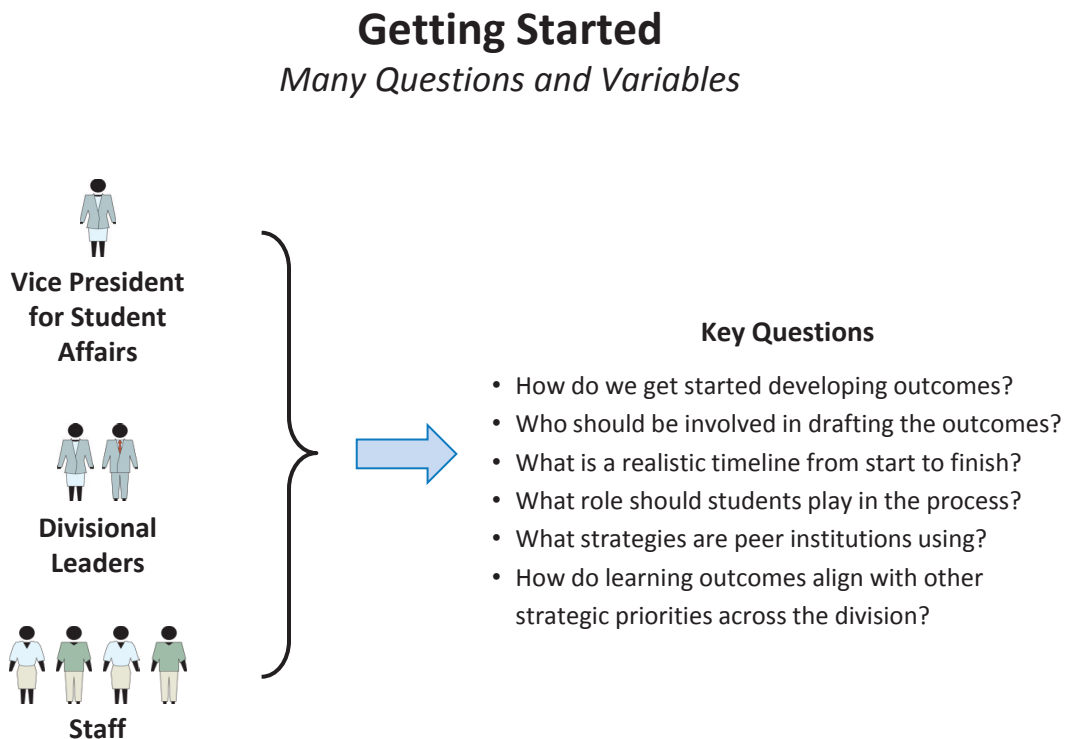
How are Student Affairs Divisions Developing Learning Outcomes?

Profiles

- ∞ Portland State University
- ∞ Bowling Green State University
- ∞ University of Toronto

Challenge #1

The first challenge for Student Affairs leaders is creating a process for developing co-curricular learning outcomes. Key issues that must be addressed at the outset include the scale, timeline, and participants.



Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Council research identified three main approaches used to develop co-curricular outcomes at institutions across the country. These approaches range from a centralized campus-wide process to more decentralized efforts at the unit level.

Strategies for Developing Learning Outcomes

Three Primary Models



Model #1

**Campus-Wide
Learning Outcomes**



Model #2

**Divisional Learning
Outcomes**



Model #3

**Decentralized
Learning Outcomes**

One Size Doesn't Fit All

“There isn’t necessarily one model for developing learning outcomes. In many cases, it depends on a bunch of factors, such as your institution, where you are with accreditation, the Vice President’s priorities, the campus climate, and the relationship with Academic Affairs. At some schools, it is impossible to create campus-wide outcomes because Academic Affairs sees themselves as the sole owners of learning.”

*Student Affairs Assessment Director
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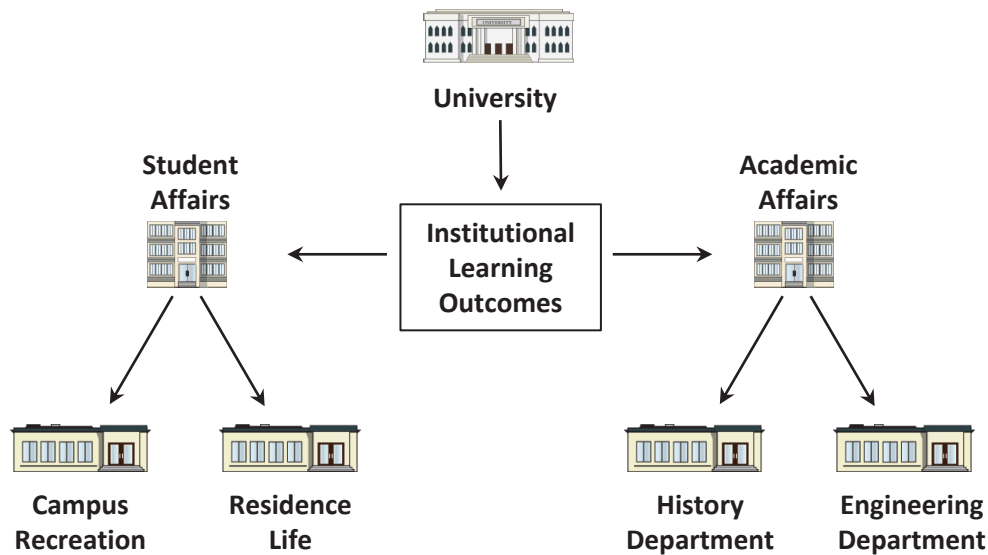
Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Challenge #1

Model #1 is a university-wide process where Academic Affairs and Student Affairs partner to develop broad institutional learning outcomes. The Council identified Model #1 as the best practice approach because it establishes a common framework, enabling results sharing and increased collaboration between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs.

Articulating Campus-Wide Learning Outcomes

Model #1



Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

While Model #1 is the recommended approach, the Council recognizes that a number of factors influence an individual institution's process. For example, factors such as the school's accreditation timeline, senior administrator searches, and resources all play a role in determining which model is best suited for a particular Student Affairs division.

Portland State University is a good example of Model #1. Across the past few years, the university pursued a targeted initiative to develop campus-wide learning outcomes. The institutional assessment council led the effort, identifying eight outcomes ranging from communication to diversity as the framework for the undergraduate learning experience.

Providing a Framework for Student Learning

Portland State University's Campus-Wide Learning Outcomes



Institutional Assessment Council

- All units in Academic Affairs
- Practitioners from Student Affairs
- Undergraduate student representative



PSU's Learning Outcomes

- Disciplinary and Professional Expertise
- Creative and Critical Thinking
- Communication
- Diversity
- Ethics and Social Responsibility
- Internationalization
- Engagement
- Sustainability

Working from the Top Down

"We were going to write our own divisional outcomes in Student Affairs, but then I learned about the work happening at the institutional level. It made sense for us to focus our efforts on developing campus-wide outcomes, which we can then translate down to our departments."

Jackie Balzer
Portland State University

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Challenge #1

After consultation with faculty members and other university stakeholders, the assessment council also developed a preamble, which emphasized how the learning outcomes can be achieved through both curricular and co-curricular experiences. The outcomes were subsequently approved and implemented at PSU.

Developing Students Inside and Outside the Classroom

Preamble to PSU's Learning Outcomes

“Portland State University strives to provide its students an educational experience based on the core values and unique strengths reflected in the following undergraduate learning outcomes. These campus-wide outcomes communicate the University’s priorities to prospective students, help current students understand the guiding principles behind their educational experiences, and provide a framework for campus-wide assessment of student learning. **Through engaging with these outcomes in their broad-based general education experiences, in-depth intellectual explorations within their majors, and the opportunities they encounter outside the classroom through Student Affairs and extra-curricular activities,** students will graduate from PSU prepared to contribute responsibly to society in the 21st century.”

Source: Portland State University's Campus-wide Learning Outcomes at <http://www.iac.pdx.edu/content/campus-wide-learning-outcomes-0>; Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

For PSU's Student Affairs division, the next step is to integrate the university-wide outcomes into their unit and program level assessment work. Divisional leaders are using mapping exercises, training sessions, and other initiatives to help practitioners make connections between their daily work and the institutional learning outcomes.

Model #2 focuses on creating learning outcomes at the divisional level. This approach can be used to make university-wide learning outcomes more applicable to Student Affairs work or fill a void if the institution has not yet articulated broad learning goals. Council research demonstrated that most Student Affairs organizations use Model #2 to develop their co-curricular learning outcomes.

Formulating Divisional Learning Outcomes *Model #2*

Bowling Green State University



University



Student Affairs Division

University of Toronto



Student Affairs Division



Outcomes Committee

Taking the Lead

“Writing separate divisional learning outcomes allows Student Affairs to take the lead and define what we do. This exercise is something that might not happen if we just try to fit ourselves into an Academic Affairs document or an institutional framework.”

*Student Affairs Assessment Director
Public University*

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Challenge #1

Bowling Green State University's Student Affairs organization recently developed divisional outcomes to act as a bridge between institution-wide learning goals and unit-level work. Council interviewees suggested that the goal of this project was to clearly articulate the connections between unit programs and the common student learning experience.

Translating Institutional Goals to Divisional Outcomes *Bowling Green State University's Divisional Initiative*

University Outcome:
Personal and Social Responsibility



Student Affairs Divisional Outcome:
Civic and Community Involvement



Divisional Sub-Outcomes:
Values-Driven Decision Making
(Excerpt)

- "Show understanding of the value of committed involvement in local, state, national, and global opportunities"
- "Promote sustainability through environmentally conscious decision making"

Source: Bowling Green State University's Student Affairs Learning Outcomes at <http://www.bgsu.edu/offices/sa/vp/page68959.html>; Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

To ensure alignment, BGSU's Student Affairs leaders asked units to identify and assess their signature programs within the context of the divisional learning outcomes. Data from the program assessments is reported using a common template designed by the division's assessment council. The common reporting template helps to standardize the results, making it easier for leaders to aggregate data and highlight divisional contributions.

Aligning Assessment Work and Divisional Outcomes

Bowling Green's Annual Assessment Process



Units complete the following steps

1. Identify 1-3 signature programs to assess
2. Articulate the links between the signature programs and divisional learning outcomes
3. Measure learning outcomes for each program
4. Report assessment results using the divisional template

Common Reporting Template

Key Elements

- ✓ Signature program descriptions and rationale for selection
- ✓ Expectations for student achievement
- ✓ Links to Student Affairs learning outcomes
- ✓ Instruments used in assessment efforts
- ✓ Results and conclusions drawn from the data
- ✓ Information about how the data will be used to showcase student learning

For unit-specific examples from Bowling Green, please see:
<http://www.bgsu.edu/offices/sa/vp/page17114.html>

Source: Bowling Green State University's Student Affairs Learning Outcomes at <http://www.bgsu.edu/offices/sa/vp/page68959.html>; Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Challenge #1

Model #2 can also be used by Student Affairs to develop divisional learning outcomes that complement Academic Affairs initiatives. At the University of Toronto, the Division of Student Life Programs and Services developed co-curricular learning outcomes in order to structure unit-level assessment efforts and facilitate collaborations with Academic Affairs.


Ensuring Learning Opportunities for Students

University of Toronto's Outcomes Development Process

A Divisional Plan for Learning Outcomes and Assessment

"In the Fall of 2008 the Office of Student Life undertook a project to develop a learning outcomes and assessment plan for the Division of Student Life Programs and Services. **The purpose of this project was to ensure that as a Division we are working in a coordinated and coherent manner to ensure that all students have the opportunity to achieve specific learning outcomes during their time at the University of Toronto, and to increase our level of accountability for the programs and services we provide.**"

Timeline (Fall 2008-Winter 2009)

- 
1. Committee formed in Fall 2008, produced a draft set of divisional outcomes after several meetings
 2. Outcomes reviewed by leaders and staff across the division; committee received suggestions and feedback
 3. Committee revised outcomes, submitted new draft to the division
 4. Outcomes adopted by division in Winter 2009; units build divisional learning outcomes into annual assessment plans

Source: University of Toronto's Student Life Learning Outcomes at <http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/research/learningoutcomes.htm>; Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Model #3 is a decentralized system where individual Student Affairs units articulate their own learning outcomes. In this approach, units independently develop learning outcomes for their programs and assess them on an annual basis. While this process enfranchises practitioners, the Council does not recommend Model #3 because of the potential for misalignment.

Empowering Units to Identify Their Own Outcomes

Model #3



Campus Recreation

- Students will acquire knowledge in wellness areas
- Students will demonstrate teamwork skills
- Students will be able to think critically, make sound decisions, and explore risks



Judicial Affairs

- Students will learn ethical decision making
- Students will learn how their actions impact the community
- Students will learn to view situations from a broader perspective



Residence Life

- Students will display life skills
- Students will learn how to evaluate residence hall and campus climate
- Students will develop positive communication strategies

Enfranchising Practitioners

“Having units develop their own learning outcomes really helps with staff buy-in and ownership. If they perceive outcomes as something that is being imposed from above, it is a lot harder to get people engaged.”

*Student Affairs Assessment Director
Private University*

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Challenge #1

The main drawback to Model #3 is that often unit-level assessment data does not connect to broader divisional and institutional outcomes. As a result, it can be difficult to aggregate data across various units to demonstrate divisional impact. Council research showed that institutions using Model #3 typically have problems using results data and subsequently experience a decline in assessment efforts.

“What Are We Contributing?”

The Challenges of Lifting Up in a Decentralized Model

Units Collect a Variety of Assessment Data...

“Interviews revealed that students are satisfied with the depth and content of the wellness programs offered”

“Focus groups demonstrated that students serving on the campus Judicial Board improved their decision-making skills”

“84% of workshop participants increased their knowledge of recreation and the resources available on campus”



...But Divisional Leaders Struggle to Aggregate Results

- Hard to compile data from various unit-level assessments
- Difficult to identify key contributions to student learning across the units
- Tough to create a clear message about divisional contributions to university priorities

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Challenge #1

Additional Implementation Guidance

1. Determine Best Fit Model for Developing Outcomes

First, Student Affairs leaders must determine which model for developing learning outcomes fits best within their institutional context. While the campus-wide model is the best practice approach, the Council recognizes that it may not be currently feasible at all college and universities. Factors to consider in selecting a model for developing outcomes include:

- The progress made by Academic Affairs on learning outcomes at the department and school levels
- The willingness of Academic Affairs leaders to collaborate on university-wide learning outcomes
- Any vacancies or leadership transitions in key roles, such as the Provost, President, and Vice President for Student Affairs
- The school's accreditation cycle
- Ongoing or upcoming strategic planning initiatives, such as drafting a new master plan for the institution

2. Create Opportunities for Feedback

Regardless of the model used for developing outcomes, opportunities to solicit feedback from a wide group of stakeholders must be incorporated into the process. Getting feedback from Student Affairs practitioners, students, alumni, and faculty helps to ensure the learning outcomes are broadly applicable and resonate with people outside the division.

3. Recognize the Process Takes Time

While senior leaders may be tempted to move quickly through the development process, Council work suggests that a slower pace is more desirable because it allows for more consultation and feedback. It also gives unit-level staff more opportunities to participate in the process, helping to increase their understanding and buy-in.



I. Designing Learning Outcomes

Key Challenge #2:

What are Student Affairs Organizations Choosing for Divisional Outcomes?

Profiles

- ∞ University of Minnesota
- ∞ Education Advisory Board Divisional Outcomes Analysis

To combat “outcomes paralysis,” the Council recommends that leaders begin by reviewing the common frameworks for learning outcomes developed by prominent national associations, such as NASPA, ACPA, and AAC&U. Reviewing these frameworks provides a useful starting point for divisions since they contain many overlapping themes, such as communication and social responsibility.

“Don’t Reinvent the Wheel”

Use Common Themes as a Starting Point

<i>Learning Reconsidered 2: Core Values</i>	AAC&U’s Essential Learning Outcomes	<i>CAS Standards (Excerpt)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cognitive Complexity • Humanitarianism • Civic Engagement • Practical Competence • Persistence and Academic Achievement • Interpersonal and Intrapersonal Competence • Knowledge Acquisition, Integration, and Application 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World • Intellectual and Practical Skills, including inquiry, information literacy, and teamwork • Personal and Social Responsibility, including civic knowledge and engagement, and ethical reasoning and action • Integrative and Applied Learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intellectual Growth • Enhanced Self Esteem • Career Choices • Leadership Development • Healthy Behavior • Collaboration • Appreciating Diversity • Spiritual Awareness • Effective Communication • Realistic Self Appraisal • Independence • Social Responsibility

Source: ACPA, NASPA, et al., *Learning Reconsidered 2* (2006); Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, *CAS Professionals Standards for Higher Education* (2006); AAC&U’s Essential Learning Outcomes at http://www.aacu.org/leap/documents/EssentialOutcomes_Chart.pdf; Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Challenge #2

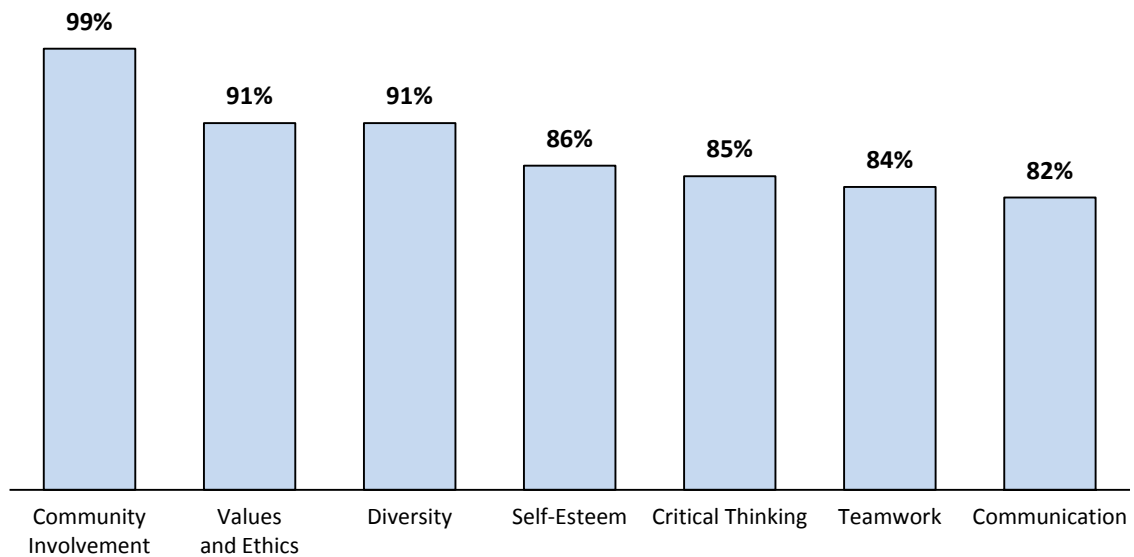
Student Affairs executives consistently expressed a desire to know what other institutions were selecting for their co-curricular learning outcomes. Council analysis of learning outcomes from more than 80 institutions revealed several common themes. Regardless of type of institution or accrediting region, the top co-curricular learning outcomes were community involvement, values and ethics, and diversity.

Top Co-Curricular Learning Goals

EAB Analysis of Divisional Outcomes

Percentage of Student Affairs Outcomes That Include...

n=85



Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Council analysis showed that all but one institution included community involvement in the divisional learning outcomes. For institutions beginning the learning outcomes process, the Council recommends community involvement as an area for focus as many experiences and programs in Student Affairs map well to this outcome.

Focusing on Students and Community Involvement

A Co-Curricular Priority for Student Affairs Organizations

Key Insights

- All but one institution identifies community involvement as a divisional outcome
- Also called “active citizenship” or “civic engagement”
- Outcome maps well to majority of activities and programs in Student Affairs portfolio

Sample Community Involvement Outcomes

“Civic Engagement reflects a person’s ability to recognize and fulfill responsibilities to self, community, and society at large. A civically engaged individual demonstrates social consciousness, practices volunteerism, and makes effective contributions in respectful and ethical ways.”

Weber State University

“Students will learn to engage in the life of the university and other communities as participants and leaders.”

University at Albany

“Students will engage in informed political and social action, rooted in personal responsibility as members of their communities.”

John Carroll University

Source: <http://www.weber.edu/SAAssessment/learningoutcomes.html>;
http://www.albany.edu/studentsuccess/assessment/learning_outcomes.shtml;
http://www.jcu.edu/campuslife/division/docs/POLICIES_AND_PRACTICES_MANNUAL_09_10_REV.pdf; Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

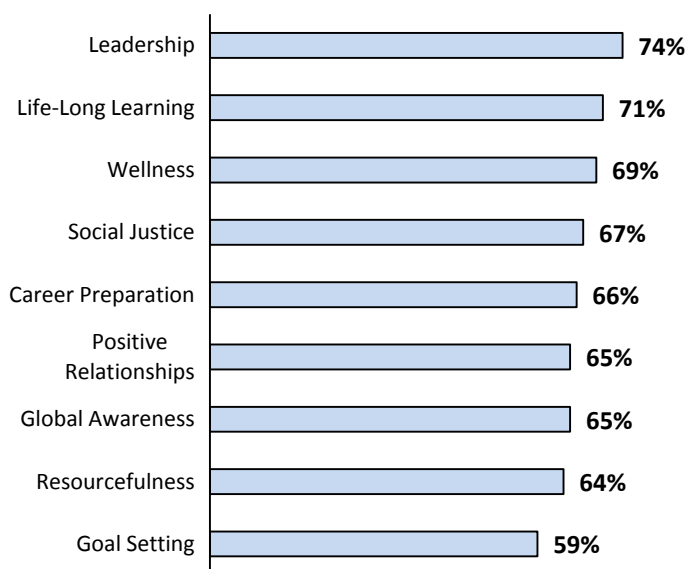
Challenge #2

The Council's work also highlighted nine themes that appeared in the divisional outcomes of more than half the surveyed institutions. These outcomes included leadership, wellness, and global awareness.

The Middle of the Pack

Over 50 Percent of Student Affairs Outcomes Discuss...

n=85



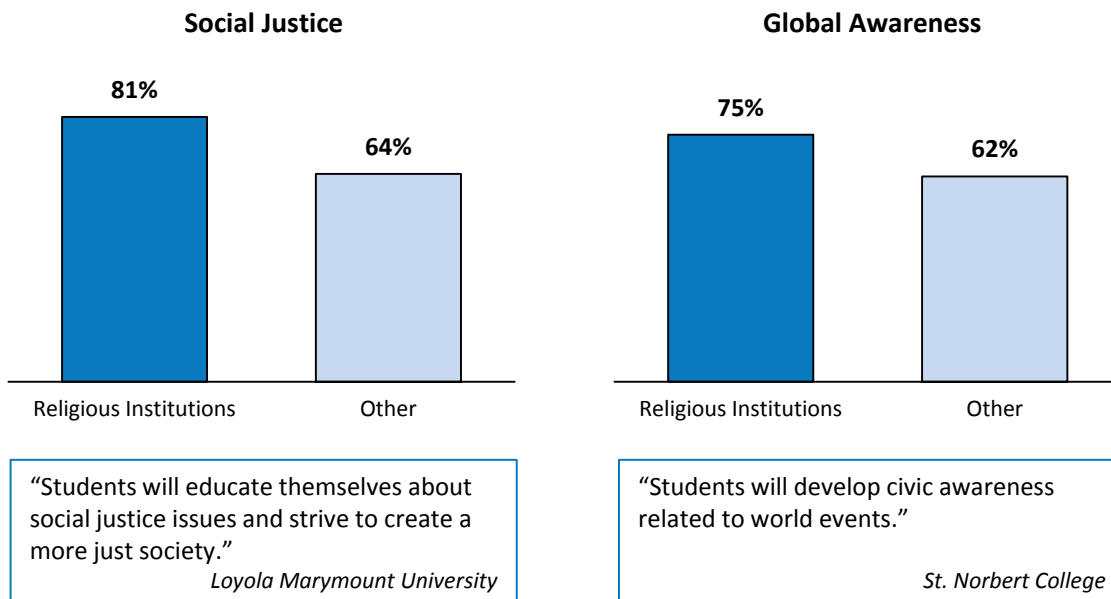
Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Although some institutions did not specifically address themes such as goal setting at the divisional level, Council research found that in many cases these themes featured prominently in outcomes for specific Student Affairs units, such as Career Services or the Counseling Center.

Council work demonstrated that some themes were selected more frequently by certain types of institutions. For example, schools with religious missions were more likely to include social justice and global awareness in their divisional outcomes. This finding underscores the importance of aligning co-curricular outcomes with the university mission.

A Slightly Different Focus

Learning Outcomes at Religious Institutions



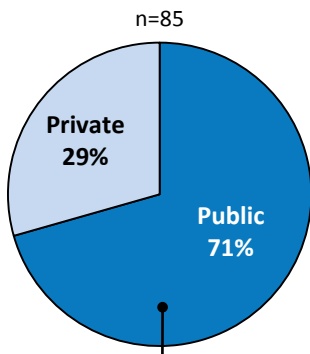
Source: http://www.lmu.edu/studentlife/Student_Affairs_Administration/Division_Goals.htm;
<http://www.snc.edu/studentaffairs/corecompetencies.html>; Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Challenge #2

Council analysis revealed that public institutions were more likely to publish their co-curricular outcomes online, which reflects the greater demands for accountability faced by state schools. Similarly, public institutions emphasized career preparation in divisional outcomes more often than private universities.

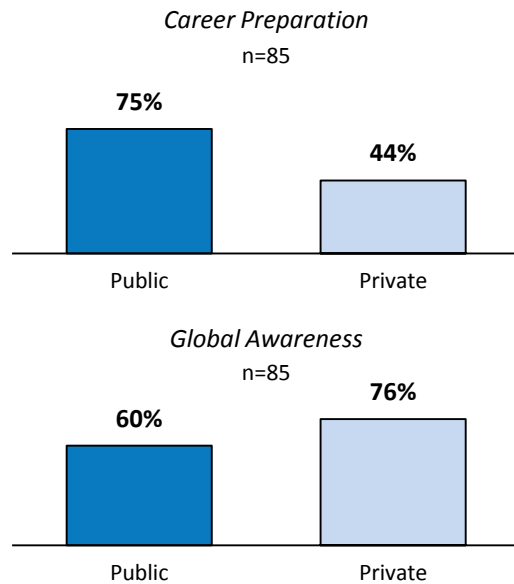
Greater Outcomes Visibility at Public Institutions

Publics More Likely to Communicate Outcomes



Public institutions were more likely to publish outcomes online, enabling them to be included in the survey

Some Differences in Outcomes Between Public and Private Institutions

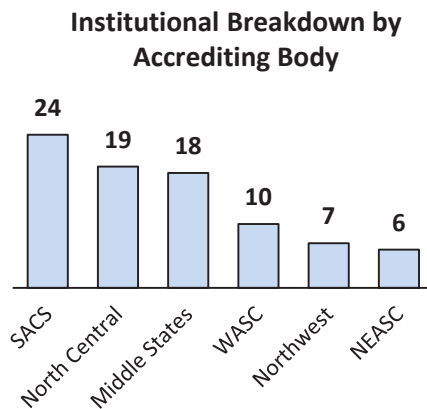


Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Council analysis revealed that schools accredited by SACS, North Central, and Middle States were far more likely to post their co-curricular learning outcomes online.

Trends in Outcomes by Accrediting Body

Differences Between Regions



Key Findings

- Middle States, North Central, and SACS institutions were most likely to have Student Affairs learning outcomes available online
- Few variations in outcome themes among institutions with different accrediting bodies



Online Resource Center

- Divisional Outcomes Spreadsheet
- Council Results and Analysis
- Sample Outcomes
- Links of Interest

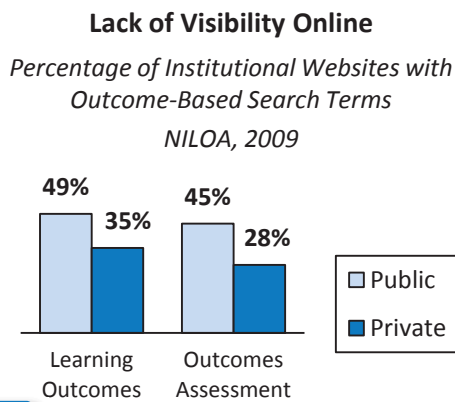
http://www.educationadvisoryboard.com/salc/nbpr_toolkitPortal.asp

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Challenge #2

Although accreditors emphasize learning outcomes in their campus visits, data from the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment suggests that considerable work needs to be done to improve visibility and results transparency in higher education. Council research reinforced this finding as locating divisional outcomes online proved to be a cumbersome task.

A Needle in the Haystack *Learning Outcomes Difficult to Locate*



Access Often Obstructed

Few institutions publish learning outcomes on Student Affairs home pages. Outcomes are frequently placed on pages where students are unlikely to access them.



Many institutions place outcomes and assessment data on password-protected sites.

Don't Keep Students in the Dark

“If I’ve never told the students any of these outcomes and if they’ve never heard that these outcomes are the goal, then it seems really weird to ask about these things later.”

*Student Affairs Practitioner
Private University*

Source: Jankowski, Natasha and Julia Panke Makela, “Exploring the Landscape: What Institutional Websites Reveal About Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Activities,” *National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment* (2010); Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

The Council recommends the University of Minnesota as an exemplar in terms of publicizing and branding student learning outcomes. For example, both the institutional homepage and the Student Affairs website have easily identifiable links to the university-wide learning and development outcomes. The branding campaign also involves bookmarks, posters, and “student advice” pamphlets.

More Than Just a Document

University of Minnesota’s Branding and Education Campaign



Advice from Students

The university has two brochures focused on learning outcomes, including one targeted at first-year students. Each pamphlet provides advice from current students about achieving the outcomes.



Orientation Sessions

The Vice President for Student Affairs makes a point of highlighting the outcomes when talking to incoming students and their families.



Online Resources

The university has recently launched a comprehensive outcomes website that features resources for students, faculty, staff, and parents. Available resources include assessment tools, sample job descriptions for student employees, and links to e-portfolios.



Working with Student Affairs

Student Affairs practitioners are encouraged to reference the outcomes in their daily work with students. Hearing staff talk about the learning and development objectives reminds students of the skills and knowledge they should be gaining at the institution.

Source: University Outcomes Website: <http://sdo.umn.edu/>; Student Affairs Learning and Development Outcomes Brochure: <http://www.osa.umn.edu/pdfs/Learning.Development%20Outcomes%20Freshmen.pdf>; Student Affairs Student Development Outcomes Website: <http://www.osa.umn.edu/outcomes/index.html>; Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Council interviewees also emphasized that students and their families should hear about the learning outcomes early and often during their time at the institution.

Challenge #2

Additional Implementation Guidance

1. Focus Divisional Outcomes on Four to Six Areas

Although Student Affairs practitioners find it challenging to select a limited number of divisional outcomes, the Council recommends choosing no more than 6 divisional outcomes. Council work suggests that four to six outcomes is a manageable and realistic number for staff to implement in their unit-level work, which is important to ensure long-term success with co-curricular learning outcomes. Also, Council analysis illustrates that divisions with more than 10 learning outcomes tend to have duplicate items.

2. Write Concrete Outcomes

Divisional outcome statements must be concrete and translate easily to stakeholders outside the Student Affairs division. For example, students should clearly be able to understand the skills, knowledge, and experiences they can expect to gain as a result of participating in co-curricular programs and activities.

3. Publicize Co-Curricular Outcomes Widely

The final step in the writing process is to widely publicize the division's learning outcomes. The Council recommends that the learning outcomes appear prominently on the divisional website. Senior leaders should brainstorm with practitioners about other ways to increase awareness of divisional learning outcomes, such as social media campaigns, brochures, or sessions at orientation.



II. Embedding Outcomes in Daily Work

- ☞ *Key Challenge #3:*
How Are Leaders Shifting the Divisional Mindset from Satisfaction to Learning Outcomes?

- ☞ *Key Challenge #4:*
What Practices Increase Assessment Skills and Knowledge Among Divisional Staff?

II. Embedding Outcomes in Daily Work

The questions below are designed to help evaluate your current strategies for embedding learning outcomes in daily work. Answering “no” to several questions suggests that the practices covered in challenges #3 and #4 might be well-suited to your institution.

Diagnostic Questions

	Key Questions	Yes	No
1	Are senior leaders confident that practitioners understand the importance of the division’s learning outcome initiatives?		
2	Do practitioners often reference student learning outcomes in their daily work?		
3	Is there a robust training program to increase staff skills and knowledge around assessment?		
4	Does the division have internal support mechanisms for measuring co-curricular learning outcomes such as an assessment council?		
5	Are assessment efforts publically recognized at the divisional level?		

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.



II. Embedding Outcomes in Daily Work

Key Challenge #3:

How Are Leaders Shifting the Divisional Mindset from Satisfaction to Learning Outcomes?

Profiles

- ∞ Brigham Young University
- ∞ University of Toronto
- ∞ Education Advisory Board Unit Outcomes Analysis

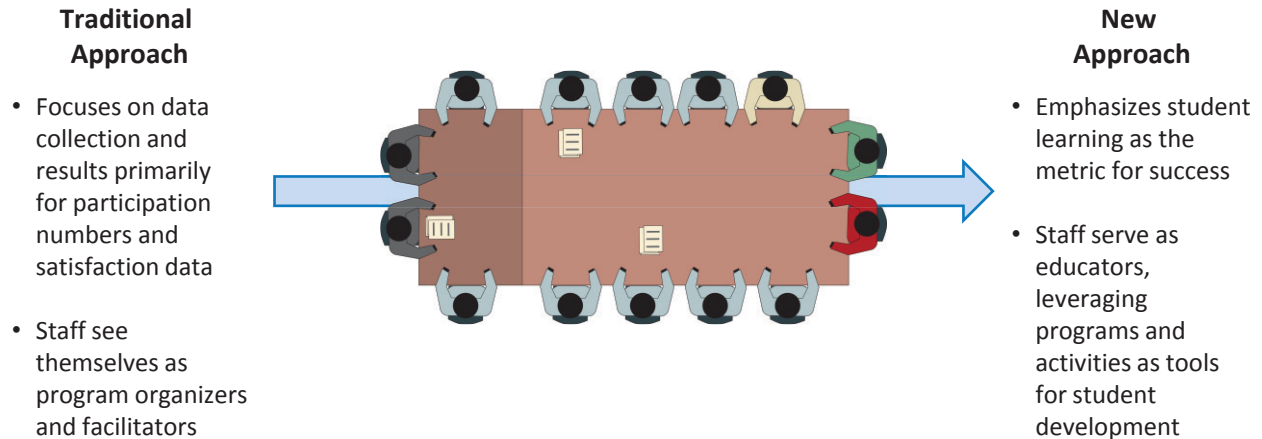
Challenge #3

By focusing on learning outcomes, Student Affairs leaders are making a change that requires a significant mind shift as practitioners move from viewing themselves as program facilitators to thinking of themselves as educators. Given that some staff don't naturally see their role as educators, this transition can be extremely challenging.

Moving from Satisfaction to Learning

A Significant Mind Shift Is Required

Behavioral Change, the First Step to Culture Change



Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Most Student Affairs practitioners did not enter the field because of an attachment to data collection and analysis. As a result, staff have traditionally focused assessment efforts on satisfaction and participation numbers, which do not require sophisticated skills or analysis.

Council research suggests that there is a range of attitudes towards learning outcomes in Student Affairs divisions. The majority of practitioners tend to fall into the middle: neither excited nor resistant to learning outcomes. These practitioners tend to feel overwhelmed about the implications of learning outcomes, especially in terms of time and resources.

From Dissent to Enthusiastic Buy-in

Staff Attitudes Toward Learning Outcomes



Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

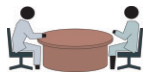
To help practitioners successfully implement learning outcomes, the Council recommends that Student Affairs leaders focus the bulk of their education and training initiatives at the neutral segment, helping staff members see how assessment can be smoothly integrated into their day-to-day activities.

Challenge #3

Over the past few years, the Campus Life organization at Brigham Young University introduced and focused attention on learning outcomes. As units started to develop and assess learning outcomes, leaders became aware of the varying levels of understanding and commitment among practitioners.

Evaluating Staff Understanding of Learning Outcomes

Brigham Young University's (BYU) Awareness Survey



Basic Assumptions

- The purposes of learning outcomes should be clearly defined and understood by the division
- Achievement of learning outcomes is strengthened when the message of their importance is persistent and pervasive



Awareness Survey

- Instrument created by assessment director
- All members of Campus Life received e-mail invitation with survey link
- Director used Zoomerang for data collection and analysis

Sample Questions

Rate the extent to which you agree or disagree:

- "I participated in developing learning outcomes for my department"
- "The learning outcomes for my department are frequently discussed in staff meetings"
- "I am aware of departmental learning outcomes"

Source: Westerberg, Sarah and Norman Roberts, "Snoring or Soaring: Energizing Colleagues about Learning Outcomes and Assessment," (Conference Presentation, 2010); Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

As a result, the divisional assessment director created a survey instrument designed to gauge staff understanding and commitment to learning outcomes. The director felt that the results data would be useful in identifying areas for follow-up.

The survey results data showed several areas for improvement including staff familiarity with the Campus Life mission and the assessment process for unit-level outcomes. Using the results data, the assessment director created several initiatives designed to increase awareness, gather staff feedback, and provide additional training opportunities.

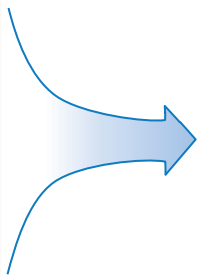
Highlighting Areas for Improvement Across the Division

Results from BYU's 2009 Survey

Question	Winter 2009 (Agree)
The learning outcomes for my department are frequently discussed in staff meetings	62%
I am familiar with the assessment process for my department	65%
Learning outcomes are an important part of the work we do in Campus Life	85%
I am familiar with the mission of Campus Life	52%

Follow-Up Initiatives

- New outreach efforts, including “Jamba-Walking”
- Guest speakers and additional education opportunities
- Focus groups for staff members regarding unit-level learning outcomes



Source: Westerberg, Sarah and Norman Roberts, “Snoring or Soaring: Energizing Colleagues about Learning Outcomes and Assessment,” (Conference Presentation, 2010); Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Challenge #3

In Winter 2010, the division re-administered the survey and saw improvement in several key areas including the percentage of staff who were familiar with the assessment process at the unit-level. Council interviewees also suggested that the education initiatives helped reinforce key messages around the importance of learning outcomes throughout the organization.

Significant Progress One Year Later

BYU's Survey Results in 2010

Question	Winter 2009 (Agree)	Winter 2010 (Agree)
The learning outcomes for my department are frequently discussed in staff meetings	62%	65%
I am familiar with the assessment process for my department	65%	74%
Learning outcomes are an important part of the work we do in Campus Life	85%	92%
I am familiar with the mission of Campus Life	52%	87%

Stressing the Value

"I have recognized that grasping the concepts and practices takes a bit of time, so I have accepted that there is a learning curve in this process....You can't talk about learning outcomes once per year. This message needs to be repeated, its importance and value stressed again and again."

*Norm Roberts
Brigham Young University*

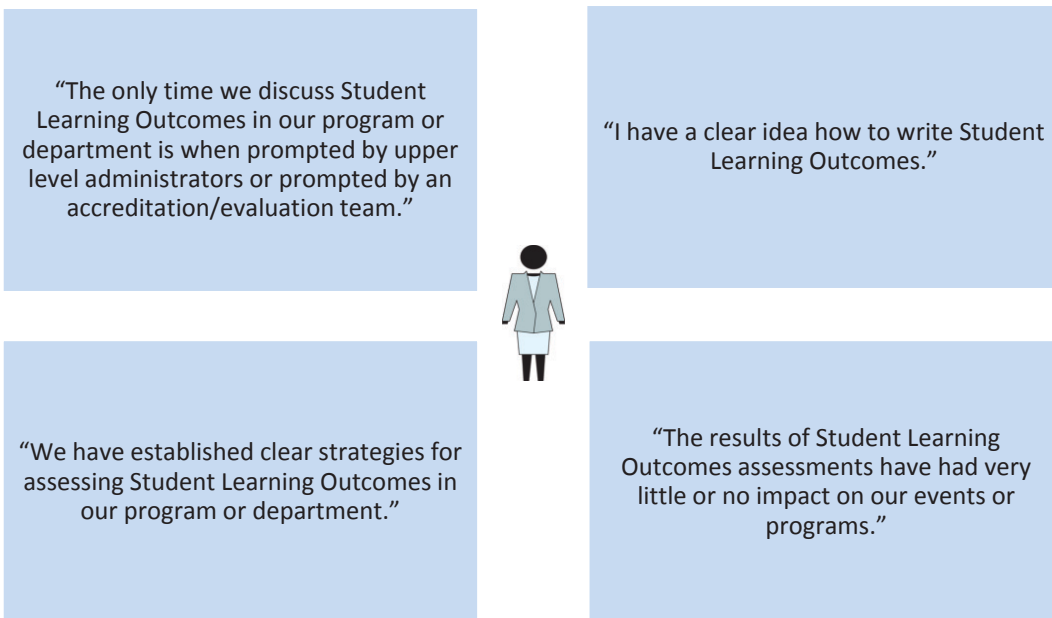
Source: Westerberg, Sarah and Norman Roberts, "Snoring or Soaring: Energizing Colleagues About Learning Outcomes and Assessment," (Conference Presentation, 2010); Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

In 2011, the division's assessment director plans to use another homegrown survey to evaluate how practitioners integrate learning outcomes into their daily work. The data generated from this new survey will shape education efforts and help to target assessment support at the unit level.

Next Step: Targeting Perceptions and Experiences

BYU's Upcoming 2011 Survey for Campus Life Staff

"To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?"



Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Challenge #3

Council research highlighted how misperceptions can be a barrier to learning outcomes implementation at the unit level. In some cases, staff don't understand what they are being asked to produce, while other practitioners believe they are already collecting the necessary information through program assessment and satisfaction data.

“Why Should I Do This?”

Getting Staff Engaged in Learning Outcomes



Making Outcomes Accessible to Unit Staff

“We have some fear and uncertainty around learning outcomes. We are struggling to arrive at terms that each department can grab onto. We need a consistent learning outcomes framework for all Student Affairs units.”

*Student Affairs Practitioner
Public University*



Fighting Misperceptions

“People think program assessment, benchmarking, and satisfaction are learning outcomes...and they are wrong.”

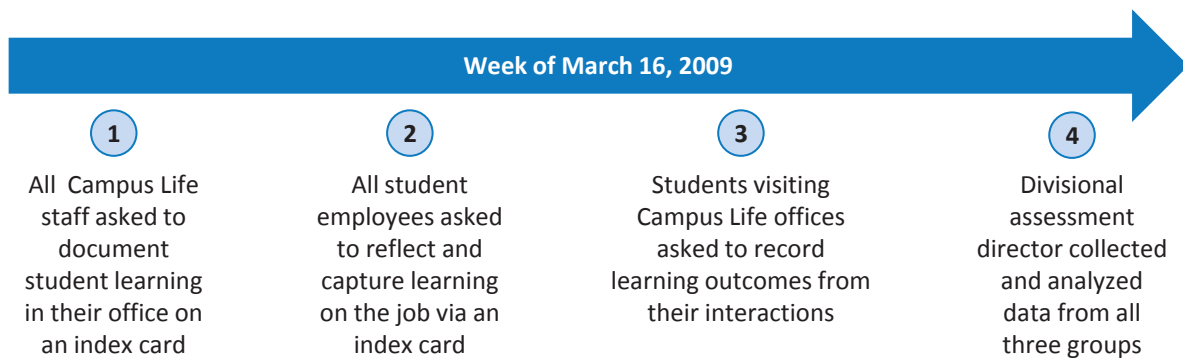
*Student Affairs Assessment Director
Public University*

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

In March 2009, BYU’s Campus Life division implemented a hands-on exercise designed to help practitioners reflect upon the learning that happens in their daily work. To increase staff understanding and familiarity with learning outcomes, all practitioners were asked for to record on an index card the student learning happening in their unit for a single week.

Creating Moments for Reflection on the Job

BYU’s Perceptions Exercise



Learning in Campus Life (Divisional Employees)

During the week of March 16th, please list what **students learn when working with or in your area** that relates to the Aims of a BYU Education—What do they learn that strengthens them spiritually, enlarges them intellectually, builds character, and/or prepares them for lifelong learning and service.

1. _____

2. _____

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Challenge #3

The division also included other stakeholders in the exercise to create a holistic picture of learning throughout the organization. For example, all student employees in the Campus Life division were invited to participate in the initiative.

Including Students in the Effort

BYU's Perceptions Exercise

Learning in Campus Life (Student Employees)

During the week of March 16th, **please list what you learn when working in (department) that relates to the Aims of a BYU Education**—What do you learn that strengthens you spiritually, enlarges you intellectually, builds your character, and/or prepares you for lifelong learning and service.

- _____
1. _____
 2. _____

Learning in Campus Life (Students)

Please list what you have learned through your contact with (department) that relates to the Aims of a BYU Education—What have you learned that strengthens you spiritually, enlarges you intellectually, builds your character, and/or prepares you for lifelong learning and service.

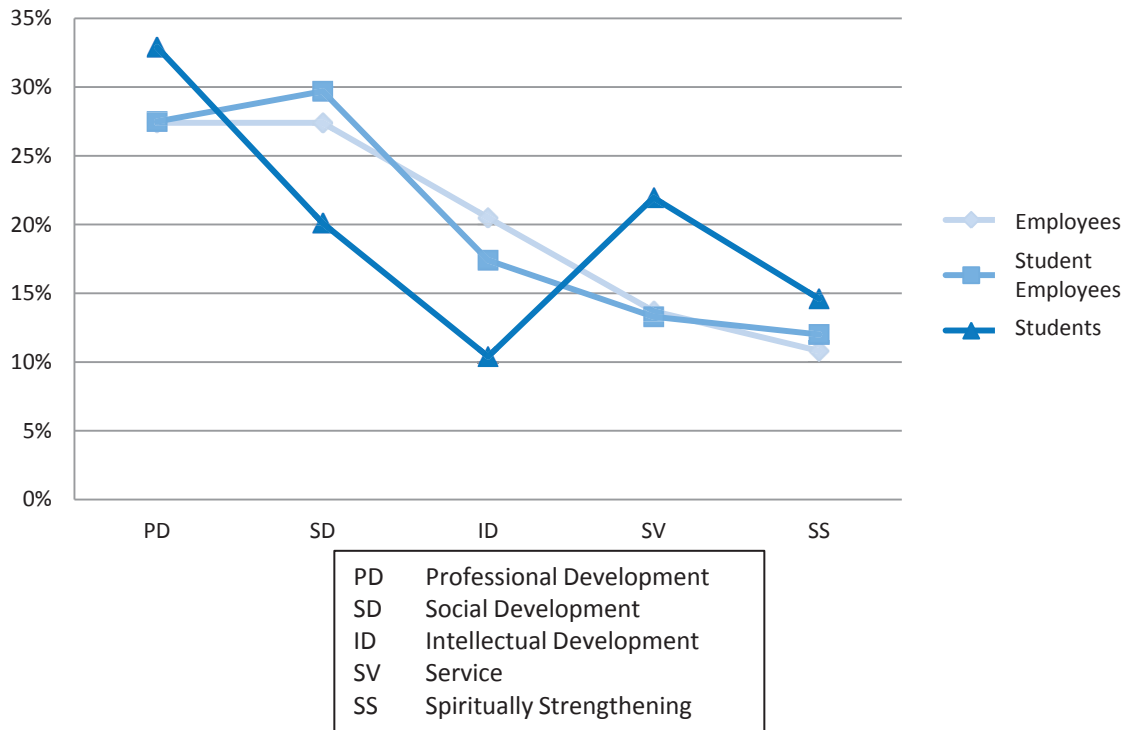
- _____
1. _____
 2. _____

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Overall, the exercise captured 754 learning outcomes from 167 responses. Outcomes documented included leadership, time management, and teamwork. An analysis of the data revealed five big themes that directly correspond with the institution’s framework for student learning.

Documenting Learning Throughout the Division

Five Key Areas Identified in Perceptions Exercise



Source: Westerberg, Sarah and Norman Roberts, "Snoring or Soaring: Energizing Colleagues About Learning Outcomes and Assessment," (Conference Presentation, 2010); Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

In mapping the results, the division’s assessment director also noted the differences between staff, student employee, and student perceptions of outcomes, such as professional development, service, and intellectual development.

Challenge #3

Council interviewees suggested that this exercise was successful in helping practitioners reflect on the learning that happens in their daily work. The exercise was a small task and did not require a lot of extra work on the part of staff members. However, it helped to demystify learning outcomes and provided tangible evidence of student learning outside the classroom.

Making Co-Curricular Outcomes Tangible



Benefits for Staff

- Allows for reflection on student learning in their unit
- Provides hands-on experience identifying learning outcomes
- Helps staff better understand the concept of learning outcomes and how it fits with their daily work



Benefits for Students

- Provides opportunity for student employees to reflect on skills and knowledge gained through their position
- Highlights learning experiences happening outside the classroom
- Reinforces institutional mission and learning priorities

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

By soliciting feedback from students, the exercise also illustrated the connections between staff members' daily work, students' co-curricular experiences, and the broader university framework for undergraduate learning.

Council work suggests that lack of time is another barrier to implementing learning outcomes. At many institutions, staff are stretched thin due to budget cuts and vacancies. As a result, few practitioners have time to dedicate to learning outcome assessment, which can be perceived as extra work.

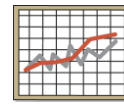
“Change Is Hard”

Difficulties in Achieving Broad Ownership of Learning Outcomes



“A Lonely Burden” The Unit Point Person

- Many units assign one person to shoulder the bulk of assessment duties
- This person may have little choice and/or aptitude for the new assignment
- Point person can struggle in both conducting assessment work and finding support among colleagues



Recasting Old Data as Learning Outcomes

Some units try to repurpose satisfaction and participation data as learning outcomes:

- “70% of students who completed the training were satisfied that it met their expectations”
- “90% of attendees reported they would participate in another session focused on teamwork”

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

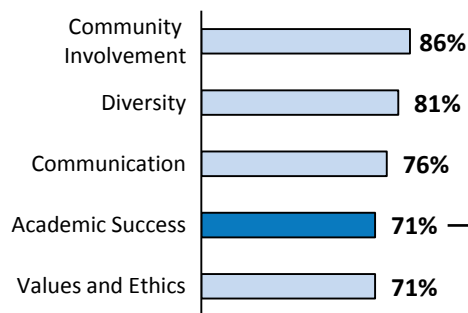
As a result, learning outcomes development and assessment tends to fall to one or two people in each unit. Council interviews suggest that the unit point person tends to be a new professional who can struggle to find support from colleagues in conducting assessment. In other cases, units try to save time by recasting satisfaction data and participation numbers as learning outcomes, hoping the information will be enough to fulfill annual project requirements.

Challenge #3

Recognizing the challenges staff face when implementing learning outcomes, the Council analyzed unit-level outcomes to identify common themes in order to save practitioners time. For Residence Life units, learning outcomes tend to mirror divisional outcomes by focusing on focus on community involvement, communication, and academic success.

Supporting the Whole Student *Learning Outcomes in Residence Life*

Close Alignment with Top Divisional Outcomes



Sample Academic Success Outcomes

“Through participation in their on-campus residential communities, students will be encouraged and supported to expand their awareness, knowledge, and skills in the following areas:

- Identifying the conditions that best support their ability to study and learn
- Making increasingly better choices about how they choose to spend their time
- Analyzing situations from diverse perspectives...”

Michigan State University

Source: http://www.reslife.msu.edu/learning_outcomes/acad_success.html; Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Campus Recreation unit-level outcomes generally emphasize teamwork, physical fitness, and sportsmanship. Council analysis found that Campus Recreation units frequently produce outcomes targeted at student employees. These outcomes tend to focus on customer service and conflict resolution.

Encompassing Many Facets of Student Learning

Outcomes for Campus Recreation Participants and Staff

Student Participants



Common Outcomes

- Teamwork
- Physical Fitness
- Emotional Wellness
- Leadership

“Students will be able to acquire, use, and refine teamwork skills and leadership qualities (in groups) to obtain goals.”

University of Idaho

Student Employees



Common Outcomes

- Customer Service
- Conflict Resolution
- Crisis Management
- Time Management

“Students who officiate intramural sports contests will be able to identify proficient game time conflict management skills.”

University of Texas at Arlington

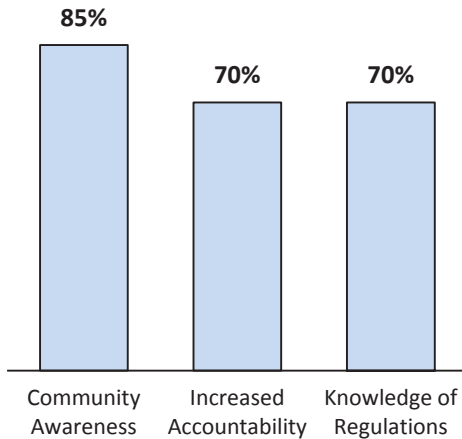
Source: <http://www.campusrec.uidaho.edu/Mission>;
<http://www.uta.edu/campusrec/images/2010/downloads/slostratcr.pdf>; Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Challenge #3

Council analysis demonstrates that many Judicial Affairs units use student learning outcomes to reinforce the educational nature of the conduct process. Judicial Affairs unit-level outcomes generally include community awareness, accountability, and knowledge of regulations.

Changing Perceptions Through Learning Outcomes *Common Judicial Affairs Outcomes*

Learning, Not Punishment, Is the Goal



Sample Outcome

“The student will understand the effect of their behavior on others. The student will demonstrate ethical development, will comply with institutional policy, and commit no further violations of policy. The student will gain understanding of the institutional values reflected in institutional policies. The student will gain a better understanding of the importance of personal integrity.”

University of Colorado at Boulder

Source: <http://www.colorado.edu/StudentAffairs/judicialaffairs/downloads/studentcode2009.pdf>; Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

A handful of Judicial Affairs units also developed outcomes specifically for students serving on institutional conduct boards. These outcomes stress critical thinking and the ability to use evidence to make sound decisions.

At some institutions, Health and Counseling Services struggle to develop learning outcomes due to the transactional nature of their work. The Council's analysis revealed that some units are tackling this issue by focusing broadly on wellness while other units are addressing students' practical knowledge in their outcomes.

Learning in Service-Oriented Units

Health and Counseling Services Outcomes

Practical Competence



- Managing a Treatment Plan
- Understanding Health Issues
- Self-Advocacy

Wellness



- Emotional Awareness
- Preventing Illness
- Healthy Lifestyle Habits

Academic Improvement



- Improved Attendance
- Stress and Anxiety Management



Online Resource Center

- Unit-Level Outcomes Spreadsheet
- Council Results and Analysis
- Sample Outcomes
- Links of Interest

http://www.educationadvisoryboard.com/salc/nbpr_toolkitPortal.asp

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Challenge #3

Overall, Council analysis demonstrated that many units struggle with the proper level of detail and alignment when developing outcomes. At the University of Toronto, the Division of Student Life Programs and Services uses a matrix to ensure alignment between program outcomes, short-term goals, and divisional outcomes.

Breaking Outcomes into Smaller, More Manageable Pieces

University of Toronto's Assessment Matrix

Unit: Student Life Programs and Communications (Excerpt)

Program/Service	Activities	Population Served	Short-Term Outcomes	Assessment Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group Leadership Workshop Series 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full-day workshops Three-hour workshops Resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undergraduate students involved in campus organizations or groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students are able to listen effectively Students are able to raise a concern Students are able to de-escalate tense situations Students are able to facilitate a group process effectively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paper evaluation of short-term outcomes

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Each year, staff use the matrix as part of their unit assessment efforts. They start by filling out the program outcomes and gradually expanding their focus to broader and less immediate goals.

At the University of Toronto, the matrix provides a visual reminder for staff about the need for alignment between unit outcomes and the larger goals surrounding the student experience. Council interviewees also suggested the matrix helps with outcomes implementation because it allows practitioners to break assessment into smaller and more manageable pieces.

Illuminating the Big Picture

Matrix Aligns Program Outcomes with Divisional Goals

Unit: Student Life Programs and Communications

(Excerpt)

Program/ Service	Short-Term Outcomes <i>(Generally the result of a single intervention)</i>	Medium-Term Outcomes <i>(Generally the result of a series of interventions)</i>	Long-Term Outcomes <i>(Should be drawn from divisional level learning outcomes)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group Leadership Workshop Series 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are able to listen effectively • Students are able to raise a concern • Students are able to de-escalate tense situations • Students are able to facilitate a group process effectively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students contribute to a group process and goals • Students listen to and consider other points of view • Students understand that leadership is a process rather than a position • Students comprehend that leadership occurs at all levels of an organization • Students are able to run effective organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students demonstrate the ability to work collaboratively towards a common purpose • Students are able to negotiate with others and manage conflict • Students demonstrate a commitment to a cause or organization

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Challenge #3

After units complete the matrix, the division's assessment director compiles the data into a single spreadsheet. This chart allows staff to easily identify the learning outcomes being assessed across the division. It also helps to promote collaboration among units and raise practitioners' awareness.

Promoting Collaboration and Discussion Across Units

University of Toronto's Divisional Outcomes Tracker

Student Life Programs and Services—Divisional Learning Outcomes

(Excerpt)

	Career Centre	Centre for Community Partnerships	Counseling and Psychological Service	Hart House	Centre for International Experience	Student Crisis Response	Office of Student Life
Divisional Outcome: Social Responsibility							
Students are able to draw connections between their personal life, academic courses, and social issues.	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Students understand and participate in relevant governance systems.		X		X	X		X

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Challenge #3

Additional Implementation Guidance

1. Gauge Practitioners' Understanding and Comfort Regarding Learning Outcomes

Distributing a simple survey to all Student Affairs staff provides better insight regarding where the division stands in terms of knowledge and enthusiasm. The results data helps identify gaps that senior leaders can address through educational offerings, individual consultation, and broad divisional initiatives.

2. Create Opportunities for Hands-on Learning

The Council recommends that senior leaders focus time and attention on demystifying learning outcomes for staff members. One way to make outcomes seem less overwhelming is to have practitioners engage with them through brief hands-on learning exercises. Tactics like *Brigham Young University's Perceptions Exercise* help practitioners reflect upon the learning that happens in the context of their daily work.

3. Ensure Alignment Between Unit-Level and Divisional Outcomes

Council work demonstrates that units often struggle with the proper level of detail and alignment in creating learning outcomes for their programs and services. It is very important that unit-level outcomes connect with divisional or institutional goals. A tool such as the *University of Toronto's Alignment Matrix* surfaces misaligned outcomes early in the assessment process, helping to correct the problem at the outset. If left unaddressed, misaligned unit outcomes generate unusable data and waste resources, causing considerable frustration among practitioners.



II. Embedding Outcomes in Daily Work

Key Challenge #4:

What Practices Increase Assessment Skills and Knowledge Among Divisional Staff?

Profiles

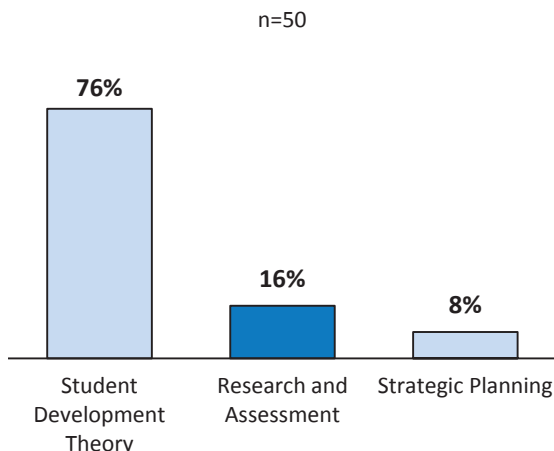
- ☞ Queen's University
- ☞ Program Enhancement Institute
- ☞ Oregon State University
- ☞ University at Albany
- ☞ Northern Arizona University

Challenge #4

Interviewees noted that assessment skills are not necessarily an area where Student Affairs staff members have considerable experience. For learning outcomes initiatives to be successful, the Council recommends that senior leaders invest time and resources in expanding practitioners’ skills, knowledge, and confidence regarding data collection and assessment.

Not a Traditional Strength for Student Affairs *Many Practitioners Lack Assessment Skills and Knowledge*

Graduates of Student Affairs Administration Programs Perceived as “Proficient” or “Above Average”



Staff Focus on Students, Not Data

“Data collection and assessment are not why practitioners go into Student Affairs...they do it because they want to work with students. So it isn’t surprising to find people struggling in terms of the skills and confidence needed to make learning outcomes meaningful.”

*Student Affairs Assessment Director
Public University*

Source: Herdlein, Richard J., “Survey of Chief Student Affairs Officers Regarding Relevance of Graduate Preparation of New Professionals,” *NASPA Journal*, 42 (2004): 51-71; Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Council work highlighted how important it is for all divisional staff to have basic knowledge about co-curricular learning outcomes and assessment. The most common method for creating this foundation is the division-wide boot camp, and examples surfaced in the research range from half-day workshops to two-day intensive sessions.

Creating a Foundation for Learning Outcomes

Divisional Boot Camp

Sample Agenda	
9:00-10:00	Overview of Learning Outcomes
10:15-11:30	Identifying and Writing Learning Outcomes in Student Affairs
11:30-12:30	Writing Unit-Level Outcomes
1:45-2:45	Breakout Sessions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct and Indirect Approaches to Assessment • The Unit Director's Role in Assessment of Student Learning • Unique Issues in Assessment for Student Affairs Practitioners
3:00-4:00	Breakout Sessions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing and Applying Rubrics • Analyzing National Survey Data • Using Qualitative Methods in Learning Outcomes Assessment
4:15-5:00	Wrap-Up and Closing Remarks

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Depending on the available resources and practitioners' skill levels, the boot camp can include sessions on basic terminology and concepts as well as more advanced breakout groups covering topics such as using photo analysis, conducting focus groups, and analyzing longitudinal survey data. In general, the purpose of the boot camp is to introduce all staff to assessment and learning outcomes, building a shared framework of knowledge.

Challenge #4

Conducting a boot camp is only the first step in increasing assessment skills and knowledge. The Council recommends that leaders build on that foundation across the school year. Various strategies for keeping assessment top of mind include spotlighting unit projects at divisional meetings, creating an assessment newsletter, and hosting brown bag lunches around national webinars.

Keeping Learning Outcomes Top of Mind

Leaders Must Build on Boot Camp Momentum

Methods to Increase Staff Knowledge



**Unit
Spotlights**



**Assessment
Newsletter**



**Lunch and Learn
Sessions**

Refresher Boot Camps

“Given the high turnover in Student Affairs, especially among entry-level staff, I do a boot camp refresher every two to three years. It is important that we don’t assume people are coming into our organization with these skills...because generally they aren’t.”

*Student Affairs Assessment Director
Public University*

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

In order to ensure continuity in assessment practices, interviewees noted the importance of conducting a boot camp for new employees on an annual basis as well as offering a division-wide refresher session every two or three years.

While it is important to establish a foundation of knowledge for all staff, Council research illustrates the need for more targeted training for staff charged with conducting unit-level assessment. At Queen's University in Canada, the divisional assessment coordinator recently established an assessment certificate for practitioners interested in building their skills.

Building Skills and Knowledge Across the Year

Queen's University's Assessment Certificate

Program Objective

"To optimize assessment and research activities by providing staff with the skills to ethically choose, use, and interpret the results of qualitative and quantitative methodologies."

Key Details

- 18 sessions blending lectures, discussions, and practice exercises
- Participants drawn from departments across campus
- Student Affairs assessment coordinator organizes the program, recruits instructors, leads majority of two-hour sessions

Schedule (Excerpt)

Session 1:
Assessment: What Is It All About?

Session 8:
Defining Qualitative and Quantitative Methodologies

Session 12:
An Introduction to Photovoice

Session 17:
Incorporating Data into Program Design and Service Delivery

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

The certificate is a year-long voluntary program that covers key topics in Student Affairs assessment and research such as ethics, qualitative methods, and quantitative approaches. The division's assessment coordinator recruits faculty members and subject experts from across the university to lead various sessions.

Challenge #4

Queen's University had 24 participants in the program during the 2009-2010 pilot year, drawing staff members from Student Affairs as well as other parts of the institution. Due to the success of the pilot, Queen's University plans to offer the certificate every other year moving forward.

Enhancing Learning Outcomes Initiatives *Certificate Program Builds Cohort of Practitioners*



Benefits for Staff

- Creates opportunity to improve assessment skills and knowledge
- Provides a free, in-house professional development opportunity
- Develops a cohort of staff members across the institution for collaboration, networking, and support



Benefits for Division

- Increases divisional assessment capacity
- Gives faculty presenters insight into Student Affairs work
- Emphasizes the importance of data collection and assessment in unit-level work

Building Bridges with Academic Affairs

"Many of the faculty [who taught sessions in the certificate program] had no idea about the type of work and also the range of assessment projects that are happening in Student Affairs...Many of those faculty members now have partnerships with Student Affairs staff...as mentors, as program participants, and as advocates and champions."

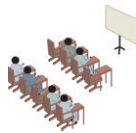
*Jennifer Massey
Queen's University*

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Council interviews underscored the difficulties staff members face in trying to integrate concepts from assessment workshops into their daily work. In many cases, practitioners emphasized the need for hands-on training and support in order to successfully implement assessment initiatives at the unit level.

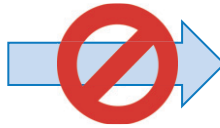
Translating Theory into Practice a Challenge

Staff Struggle to Apply Concepts in Everyday Life



Learning Outcomes Workshops (Sample Titles)

- “Understanding Bloom’s Taxonomy”
- “Planning for Success: Outcomes Assessment”
- “Survey Design Guidelines”
- “Direct versus Indirect Measures of Student Learning”
- “Writing Reports That Matter”



A Day in the Life of a Practitioner

- Consult with student media organizations about effort to increase ad revenue
- Approve check dispersal to three organizations for recent expenses
- Lead event management workshop
- Attend unit meeting regarding new Graduate Assistants
- Speak at reception for Student Government leaders

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Challenge #4

The Program Enhancement Institute developed by Carrie Zelna (NC State) and Pamela Steinke (Meredith College) is a free professional development opportunity for Student Affairs practitioners offered on an annual basis. Using projects drawn from participants' daily work, the institute focuses on teaching the basics of how to write and assess unit-level learning outcomes.

An Opportunity for Hands-on Learning and Support

The Program Enhancement Institute

Program Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach basics of how to write and assess unit-level learning outcomes in an accessible manner • Provide free professional development opportunity to practitioners interested in enhancing skills and knowledge
Topics Covered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and Foundational Theory • General Assessment Information • Skills for Implementing Assessment • Program Enhancement
Key Logistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consists of four two-hour sessions offered across one month • Participants bring sample project to work on to gain practical experience • Led by assessment experts Carrie Zelna (North Carolina State University) and Pam Steinke (Meredith College)

Source: Program Enhancement Institute at <http://studentaffairs.ncsu.edu/saparr/initiatives/pei/index.php>; Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

To encourage hands-on learning, the institute's exercises are designed to help participants apply the concepts discussed in the weekly sessions to their own projects. The institute organizers are also available after each session to consult with individual practitioners about their projects. Council interviewees indicated that they often use this time to help staff who are struggling with a particular issue, such as survey design.

For the June 2010 institute, the organizers added another element to the institute: the fellowship. This element is designed to extend the program for interested participants through regular meetings and consultations with the organizers in order to facilitate leveraging data and assessment results in everyday work.

Reinforcing Learning Through the Fellowship

Ongoing Support for Assessment Work



The Fellowship Cohort

- The Fellowship is a new element in the Program Enhancement Institute added in Fall 2010
- Interested participants meet 3-4 times across the Fall with institute organizers to continue their assessment work
- Sessions provide opportunity for discussion and brainstorming around ongoing projects

Making Assessment Accessible

“We’re trying to keep [the participants] from being overwhelmed, from feeling like they have to be a scholar in the field of assessment to be able to do assessment.”

“Workshops are good but follow-up conversations are valuable in helping people get it...Staff need someone to ask questions of. Otherwise, they just stop and then the project gets lost.”

*Carrie Zelna
North Carolina State University*

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Challenge #4

Feedback from participants suggested that the institute is a valuable training opportunity for staff members. Council interviewees also noted that the institute builds a network of practitioners who are engaged in assessment, creating the possibility for further education initiatives and collaboration across institutions.

Making an Impact


Results from the Program Enhancement Institute

Feedback from 2009 Participants

“The workshop atmosphere encourages active participation among professionals, rather than inactive listening. Participants are encouraged to work with and for their own programs and projects; they should leave the PEI with real and usable assessment tools and products.”

“Good foundational information for beginners and good refresher for those already doing assessment. It helped me to refocus and move forward with some projects that were becoming stagnant.”

2010 Institute Participants Drawn From Various Institutions

- North Carolina State University
 - Wake Technical Community College
 - Shaw University
 - Winston-Salem State University
 - Wilkes Community College
 - Duke University
- 
- University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill
 - Forsyth Technical Community College
 - Halifax Community College
 - Peace College
 - Meredith College
 - Durham Technical Community College

Source: Program Enhancement Institute at <http://studentaffairs.ncsu.edu/saparr/initiatives/pei/index.php>; Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

The Council also recommends that Student Affairs leaders work with their teams to leverage educational opportunities beyond the institution. Council work revealed a wide array of resources at the regional and national levels designed to improve staff assessment skills, including webinars, dedicated conferences, and online communities.

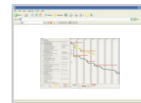
Looking Beyond the Institution to Boost Skills

Leveraging Regional and National Resources



Professional Associations

- NASPA's Assessment, Evaluation, and Research Knowledge Community
- ACPA's Commission for Assessment and Evaluation



Webinars

- "Creating a Culture of Assessment through Professional Development: The Student Services Assessment Institute"
- "Developing Tests That Assess Higher Order Thinking Skills"



Online Communities

- Student Affairs Assessment Leaders (SAAL)
- ASSESS - Assessment in Higher Education Listserv



Specialized Conferences

- ACPA's Student Affairs Assessment Institute
- IUPUI's Outcomes in Higher Education Institute
- NASPA's Assessment and Retention Conference

Source: Student Affairs Assessment Leaders (SAAL) at <http://studentaffairs.ncsu.edu/saparr/saal/members.html>; Assessment in Higher Education Listserv at <http://lsv.uky.edu/archives/assess.html>; Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

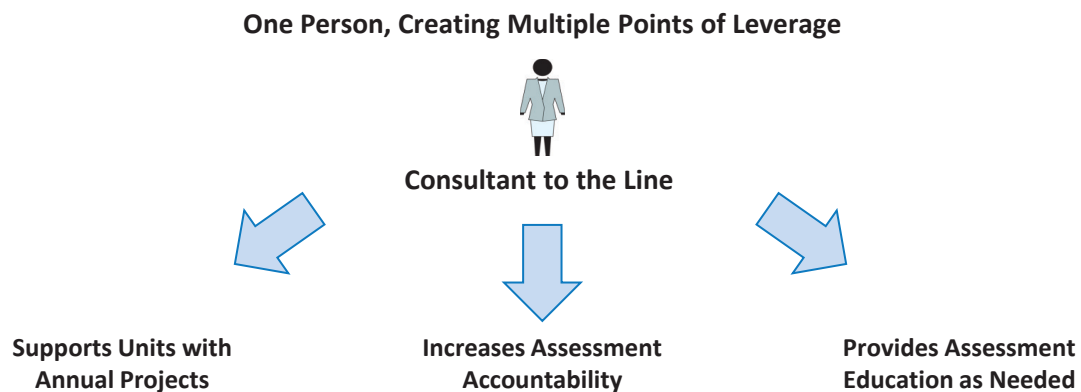
Some of these resources, such as the Student Affairs Assessment Leaders, are particularly well suited to staff members with advanced assessment skills looking to connect with peers at other institutions to enhance their practice.

Challenge #4

While training plays a key role in building skills, Council research suggests it is also important to establish assessment support mechanisms within the division. As recommended in the Council's 2008 publication, *The Data-Driven Student Affairs Enterprise*, the best option is to establish a consultant to the line position.

Creating Internal Support Mechanisms

The Consultant to the Line



Building Divisional Expertise

“In the beginning I tried to do everything myself. That didn’t work because people weren’t engaged in their own data; they looked at a report, said ‘that’s nice,’ and shelved it. I quickly realized that I was most effective as a consultant. Again, it’s about building expertise across the division.”

*Student Affairs Assessment Director
Public University*

Source: Student Affairs Leadership Council, *The Data-Driven Student Affairs Enterprise* (2009), 92; Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

In this model, the division hires an assessment expert who works closely with units as they develop and implement learning outcomes projects. When problems arise, the consultant is available to provide support and guidance as well as answer questions. For example, the consultant might help a unit that is struggling with their assessment efforts to change their approach or reframe the project. It is important to note that the consultant does not conduct or implement unit-level assessment projects.

A less resource-intensive strategy is to establish a divisional assessment council. Typically, these councils have at least one representative from each unit, which helps to enfranchise staff members. While their duties range across institutions, many councils coordinate educational offerings and provide advice regarding unit-level projects.

Divisional Assessment Council Enfranchises Practitioners

Student Affairs Assessment Council



- Representatives from each unit
- Staff from Institutional Research
- Faculty members
- Graduate students

Key Benefits

- Builds divisional assessment capacity by creating a group of practitioners focused on assessment
- Provides forum where staff can discuss assessment issues, seek advice, and get support
- Establishes a group that can organize trainings and workshops
- Creates a team of practitioners to pursue divisional projects as needed

Student Affairs Assessment Council Links

- Oregon State University: <http://oregonstate.edu/studentaffairs/assessment/assessmentcouncil.html>
- Texas A&M: <http://studentlifestudies.tamu.edu/about/assessmentteam>
- UC San Diego: <http://blink.ucsd.edu/sponsor/student-affairs/assessment/coalition.html>

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Challenge #4

The assessment council can also spearhead learning outcomes initiatives across the division. At Oregon State University, the divisional assessment council developed a cultural knowledge and effectiveness rubric. They created this tool to serve as a guide for Student Affairs units as they begin to assess their work in the area of diversity.

Setting the Expectation for Success

Oregon State University's Cultural Knowledge and Effectiveness Rubric

Rubric Created by Student Affairs Assessment Council¹
(Excerpt)

	Beginning	Developing	Conversant	Advanced
Openness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates little or no interest or willingness to learn more about one's own or other cultures • Has little or no awareness of one's own assumptions, judgments, and biases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is open to opportunities to engage in experiences to broaden understanding of one's own culture and the culture of others • Expresses openness to interactions with one's own and other cultures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeks opportunities and knowledge to answer questions to broaden understanding of one's own culture and the culture of others • Begins to initiate, engage, develop, and value interactions with members of one's own and other cultures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistently seeks and integrates experiences that broaden understanding of one's own culture and the culture of others • Initiates, engages, develops, and values interactions with one's own and the culture of others • Demonstrates ability to assess the impact of interactions
Advocacy and Coalition Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates little or no action in support of members of one's own and other cultures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begins to demonstrate support for members of one's own and other cultures through some action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates support for members of one's own and other cultures through actions and behaviors to influence and/or implement positive change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates ability to influence, implement, and assess the impact of institutional change.

¹ Adapted by Oregon State University from AAC&U Intercultural Knowledge and Competence VALUE Rubric, 2009.

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

While internal support mechanisms are important, the Council also recommends senior leaders create initiatives to publicly recognize outstanding assessment efforts. Currently, staff members have few tangible incentives to conduct and improve their assessment efforts.

Recognizing a Job Well Done

University at Albany's Assessment Awards



Award Categories, 2009-2010

- Comprehensive Assessment Activity, Large Unit
- Comprehensive Assessment Activity, Small Unit
- Outstanding Assessors, Individual Staff Members
- Innovative Assessment

Rewarding Outstanding Assessment

“Having these awards helps stimulate the competitive spirit among practitioners. People realize that they have to up their game if they want to be acknowledged.”

“Staff in the division have noticed the awards...the winners hung the certificates in their units and I received some calls from Directors whose staff had been selected, thanking me for the recognition.”

*Michael Christakis
University at Albany*

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

The University at Albany's Student Success division recently created several assessment awards to recognize individual accomplishments and unit-level projects. Council interviews revealed that the purpose of these awards is to publicly celebrate practitioners doing a good job with assessment. Having these awards reinforces the message that assessment is an important and valued component of divisional work.


Challenge #4

Northern Arizona University holds an annual fair to recognize assessment efforts across the institution. The fair is open to all faculty, Student Affairs staff, and graduate students. To be included in the event, presenters submit project abstracts that are reviewed and vetted. At the fair, participants give brief poster presentations to attendees describing their work and the results.

Documenting Student Learning Across the Institution

Northern Arizona University's Annual Assessment Fair

Assessment Fair Timeline

- 
1. Faculty, Student Affairs staff, and graduate students submit abstracts for projects to be included in the fair
 2. Participants create posters displaying their assessment work
 3. Attendees view the posters and listen to short presentations by participants during the two-hour fair
 4. Attendees vote for the best presentation and cash prizes are awarded



2009 Projects Included

- "Evaluating One-on-One Student/Staff Meetings Across Four Offices"
- "But Why Should I Join a Greek Organization? Benefits of Being a Greek Life Student"
- "Digital Social Networking: A New Wave in Student Recruitment"
- "Report on Assessment Reports, Part I: Rubric Analysis"

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Overall, the fair provides public recognition for assessment efforts at Northern Arizona University. The event also gives the participants exposure to high-level attendees from across the institution and reinforces the university's commitment to continuous improvement.

Facilitating Knowledge Sharing Among Peers

Benefits for Student Affairs Participants and the Institution



Student Affairs Participants

- Provides an opportunity for units to display their assessment projects to the broader university community
- Gives practitioners an opportunity to discuss their work with senior administrators
- Raises staff awareness about other datasets and assessment efforts on campus



University

- Demonstrates the institution's commitment to assessment and continuous improvement
- Creates an opportunity for faculty, Student Affairs staff, and graduate students to network
- Encourages collaboration and knowledge sharing across the institution

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Challenge #4

Additional Implementation Guidance

1. Ensure Baseline Learning Outcomes Knowledge for All Divisional Staff

Council work suggests it is important for all staff members to have a basic knowledge of learning outcomes and why they are important to the division's work. The best practice for providing that foundation is through the *Divisional Boot Camp*. After offering a division-wide education session, the next step for leaders is to ensure that learning outcomes and assessment remain top-of-mind for practitioners. Leaders should work with directors and assessment champions to develop initiatives to spotlight unit-level work across the year.

2. Identify Resources for Advanced Training

Practitioners charged with conducting assessment at the unit-level may require more advanced skills and knowledge than provided in the *Divisional Boot Camp*. The Council recommends that divisions explore the range of internal and external resources available to help practitioners enhance their skills. Professional organizations like NASPA and ACPA offer specialized assessment conferences with a range of sessions for all skill levels; smaller groups, such as Student Affairs Assessment Leaders, provide an online community to help assessment professionals continue to develop their practice.

3. Recognize Outstanding Assessment Projects

While Student Affairs organizations typically do a good job in recognizing practitioners' work, Council research uncovered a lack of incentives in the learning outcomes and assessment space. To reinforce the message that learning outcomes are an important part of divisional priorities, senior leaders must find creative ways to reward outstanding achievements at the unit level. For example, the *University at Albany's Annual Assessment Awards* provide a tangible incentive for staff members to participate in and improve their assessment efforts.



III. Measuring Learning Outcomes

- ☞ *Key Challenge #5:*
What Methods Are Available to Gather Data on Learning Outcomes?

- ☞ *Key Challenge #6:*
What Strategies Help Units Engage in Systematic Learning Outcomes Assessment?

III. Measuring Learning Outcomes

The questions below are designed to help evaluate your current strategies for measuring learning outcomes. Answering “no” to several questions suggests that the practices covered in challenges #5 and #6 might be well-suited to your institution.

Diagnostic Questions

	Key Questions	Yes	No
1	Do unit-level assessment plans focus primarily on surveys to measure learning outcomes?		
2	Do practitioners use various assessment methods when evaluating co-curricular learning outcomes?		
3	Have divisional staff regularly experimented with rubrics, reflection exercises, or skills tests in assessments?		
4	Are units expected to change or expand their assessment methods on an annual basis?		
5	Does the division have targeted learning outcomes for student employees or student leaders?		

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.



III. Measuring Learning Outcomes

Key Challenge #5:

What Methods Are Available to Gather Data on Learning Outcomes?

Profiles

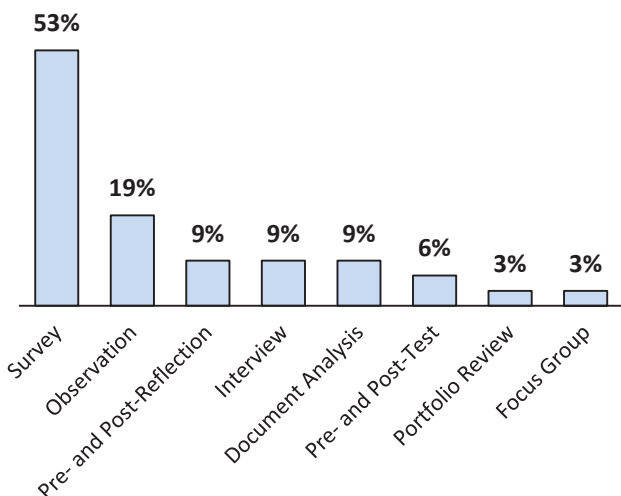
- ∞ Texas A&M University
- ∞ California State University-Fullerton

Challenge #5

During this research, Council interviewees regularly noted that Student Affairs practitioners typically struggle to assess learning outcomes. Some staff struggle because they don't have the time to conduct assessments, while others lack the skills and knowledge. As a result, many practitioners default to methods they perceive as quick and easy, primarily student surveys.

Too Little Time, Too Few Options *Staff Struggle to Diversify Assessment Tools*

**Assessment Tools Used in Student Affairs,
Southern University¹**
(n=32 learning outcomes)



Frustration with Limited Assessment Methods

“Respondents indicated that the selection and implementation of assessment methods was a unit-level decision and that most units were relying primarily on locally developed surveys to assess student learning. The Vice President at Southern University commented, ‘It has been a challenge for folks to understand that there are other ways [than surveys] to measure outcomes that are often more appropriate.’”

“An Exploration of High-Quality Student Affairs Learning Outcomes Assessment Practices”

¹ Pseudonym used in source work.

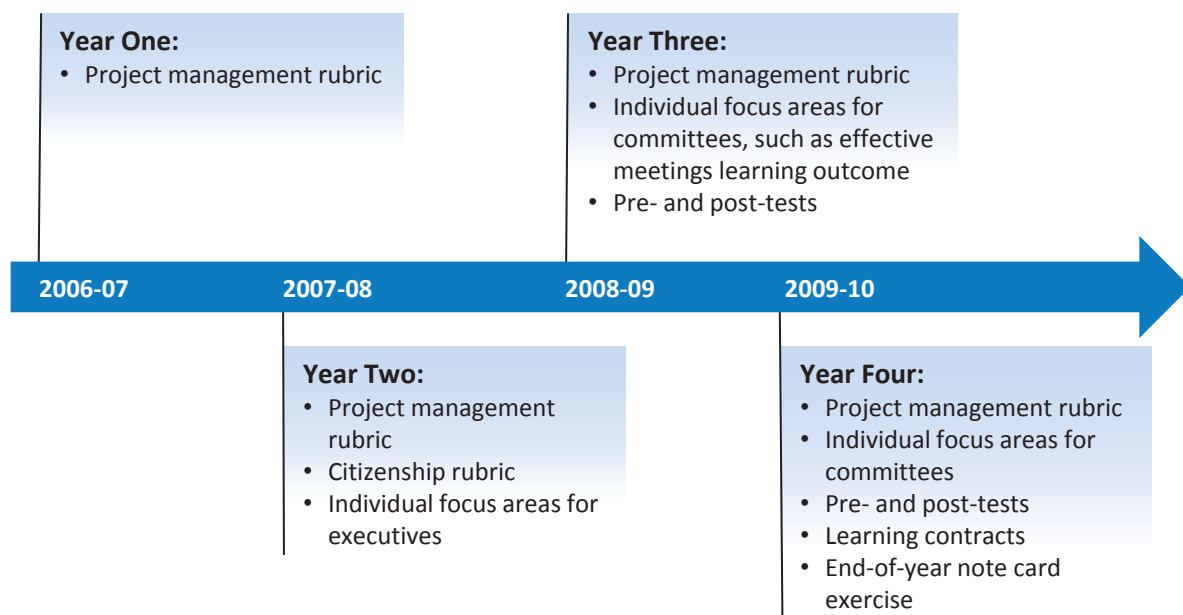
Source: Green, Adam S., “Exploring High Quality Student Affairs Learning Outcomes Assessment Practices at Three American Research Universities” (dissertation); Green, Adam, Elizabeth Jones, and Susan Aloï, “An Exploration of High-quality Student Affairs Learning Outcomes Assessment Practices,” *NASPA Journal*, 45.1(2008): 146; Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Across the past four years, the Freshmen in Service and Hospitality (FISH) program at Texas A&M University has implemented a comprehensive assessment plan for student participants. Council interviews revealed that the plan evolved from using a single rubric to its current form, which incorporates several assessment methods.

Moving Beyond Surveys

Multipronged Approach at Texas A&M University

Evolution of the Freshmen in Service and Hosting (FISH) Assessment Plan



Source: Student Leader Learning Outcomes Project at <http://slo.tamu.edu/>; Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

FISH consists of a hundred first-year student volunteers, 16 sophomore assistant leaders, and six juniors who serve as program executives. A Student Affairs staff member serves as FISH program coordinator and administers the assessments. Several of the instruments used in the FISH program are based upon work done at the divisional level through the Student Leader Learning Outcomes (SSLO) Project.

Challenge #5

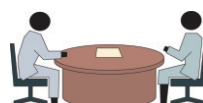
During the first year, the assessment plan focused on the project management outcome, evaluating all the FISH student leaders via a common rubric. Students performed a self-evaluation using the rubric, which was then compared to evaluations completed by the FISH chairs and the program coordinator.

Teaching Students to Articulate Goals and Tasks

Year One: Project Management Rubric



Student uses rubric for self-assessment



Student leaders and program coordinator assess participants



Leaders and students discuss results and plans for growth

Project Management Outcomes	<u>Novice</u> Awareness or Base Level Knowledge	<u>Transition</u> From Novice to Intermediate	<u>Intermediate</u> Apply the Concept Somewhat	<u>Transition</u> From Intermediate to Advanced	<u>Advanced</u> Intentional and Effective Application
Articulate series of goals	Set goals for project		Write goals and articulate to group		Write tangible goals that relate to organization's vision, mission, and purpose; articulate goals to entire group
Initiate tasks	Start task with encouragement from advisor		Initiate task on own and have end in mind		Recognize a need/opportunity; initiate task on own within the defined timeline

Source: Texas A&M University's Student Leadership Learning Outcomes rubrics at <http://slo.tamu.edu/sites/slo.tamu.edu/files/Project%2520Management%2520-%2520Rubric%2520-%25207-24-08.pdf>; Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

The results and areas for improvement were discussed in individual meetings with the student leaders. The assessments were administered in August, November, February, and April in order to track student progress across the year.

In the second year, the FISH coordinator added the citizenship outcome to the assessment plan. Students filled out a standard rubric to rate their skills and knowledge around citizenship. This particular outcome, however, was difficult for students to concretely evaluate in their daily work, and they struggled to rate their proficiency on items such as promoting social change.

Introducing a Second Learning Outcome

Year Two: Citizenship Rubric

Project Management Outcomes	<u>Novice</u> Awareness or Base Level Knowledge	<u>Transition</u> From Novice to Intermediate	<u>Intermediate</u> Apply the Concept Somewhat	<u>Transition</u> From Intermediate to Advanced	<u>Advanced</u> Intentional and Effective Application
Translate role within organization to larger community	Notices (see, hear, read, etc.) their social topic in everyday life		Seeks to understand relationship between organization & social issues		Discusses the organization's subject matter in an educated way to outside constituents including professors, classmates, friends and family
Develop global perspective/ promote social change	Initial involvement with other organizations promoting similar services/issues		Attends multiple events on a variety of social issues relating to the organization mission		Establishing network for others to communicate ideas on issues

Source: Texas A&M University's Student Leadership Learning Outcomes rubrics at <http://silo.tamu.edu/sites/silo.tamu.edu/files/Project%2520Management%2520-%2520Rubric%2520-%252024-08.pdf>; Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

After experimenting with the citizenship rubric for a year and observing some of the challenges students experienced in self-evaluation, the program coordinator decided not to use this rubric as part of FISH's assessment plan moving forward.

Challenge #5

In the third year, the program coordinator collaborated with the Director of Student Life Studies to develop pre- and post-tests. These assessments allowed the program coordinator to gather data on student outcomes from the FISH program. For example, students reported increases in their leadership capacity and time management skills.

One Assessment Method Is Not Enough Year Three: Adding Pre- and Post-Tests

**Pre- and Post-Tests Administered at
End of Each Semester**

December						
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

April						
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

2009 Results¹
(Excerpt)

Because of my involvement in FISH...	2008-2009 PRE Mean (sd)	2008-2009 POST Mean (sd)
I feel confident leading others	4.12 (.73) (n=73)	4.54 (.54) (n=61)
I feel confident taking initiative	4.18 (.70) (n=71)	4.52 (.57) (n=61)
I have improved my time management skills	3.81 (.86) (n=73)	4.18 (.74) (n=61)

¹ Survey responses were provided on a 1 to 5 scale, with 1 indicating "strongly disagree" and 5 indicating "strongly agree."

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

While these assessments helped to document student learning, the test results also enabled the FISH coordinator and student leaders to change programming as necessary in response to emerging needs and skill gaps.

Council interviewees shared that the FISH program introduced two new assessment initiatives in the fourth year. First, they developed learning contracts for the six juniors who serve as FISH's executive leaders. These students worked individually with the program coordinator to develop professional goals, outline learning objectives, and identify metrics to gauge their progress.

Improving Learning Outcomes and Student Accountability

Year Four: Learning Contracts for FISH Leaders

Sample Learning Contract

- **Professional goal:** "My professional goal is to bring the servant leadership qualities that I have developed in FISH to my career as a nurse."
- **Professional goal statement:** "To achieve my professional goal, I have chosen to continue in FISH as the executive director of the Service Committee. My role in this organization will better develop the leadership characteristics that I have..."
- **Learning objectives:** Effective meetings
- **Learning methods:** "I will plan out meetings so that we know what needs to be accomplished."
- **Methods for evaluating learning:** "1) Provide an outline for what should be covered in the meeting. 2) Stick to the outline until everything on it has been covered."

Lasting Value for Students

"The learning contract was important in keeping my goals in front of me and letting people know what I was working on...It forces you to take time to sit down and think about where you are and where you want to be."

*Elizabeth Andradi
Former Student Chair, FISH
Texas A&M University*

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

The learning contracts are a time-intensive exercise that require a significant commitment on the part of both the students and the program coordinator. To foster accountability, the student leaders were paired off with each other for additional encouragement, support, and guidance.

Challenge #5

The second initiative involved the introduction of a structured reflection opportunity into the year-end banquet for all FISH students. As part of this exercise, all students received an index card and had a few minutes to answer a predetermined question. Afterwards, the program coordinator performed a content analysis to gather data on student learning outcomes.

Providing Structured Reflection Opportunities

Year Four: Minute Exercises at Year-End Event

Exercise Logistics



- Each student receives a note card with one question
- Students take one minute to respond
- Program coordinator compiles responses in spreadsheet and analyzes trends

What's the biggest lesson you learned in FISH?

"To give people and things a chance; don't judge things before you truly give them a chance."

"The importance of giving to others less privileged than yourself (especially Boys and Girls Clubs)."

"Appreciation: how lucky we are to be involved in this organization, to attend A&M, to live life!"

What is the one thing you will take away from your FISH experience?

"The leadership skills I gained are very important. I'm grateful for the opportunity to grow as a person."

"I am not so accepting of other leaders who have different beliefs than me. I have learned so much [about] how every single person brings something so different to the table...and it's all because of FISH."

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

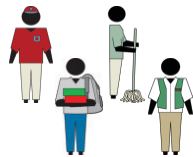
Despite concerns that students might resist frequent evaluations, Council interviewees noted that students have been very receptive to the FISH assessment program. Several student leaders cite increased assessment opportunities as an important factor in their decision to continue with the program after their first year.

At California State University-Fullerton, the Associated Students, Inc. (ASI) introduced a learning outcomes initiative targeted at student employees. ASI's program was modeled on work done at the University of Minnesota to develop outcomes applicable to all student employees. The outcomes ranged from goal orientation to humility to independence.

Developing Learning Outcomes for Student Employees

California State University-Fullerton's Associated Students, Inc.

Making Outcomes Applicable to All Employees¹



- Responsibility and Accountability
- Independence and Interdependence
- Goal Orientation
- Self-Confidence and Humility

Clarifying Expectations for Student Employees



Responsibility and Accountability *Sub-outcomes*

- Makes appropriate decisions to handle assorted responsibilities
- Plans and follows through on commitments set by supervisor
- Recognizes and accepts the consequences of actions taken
- Accepts responsibility for errors made
- Completes tasks and assignments correctly and in a timely manner

¹ This initiative is based on a model developed by the University of Minnesota. The student employee outcomes and tools have been adapted from the University of Minnesota by CSU-Fullerton.

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

At Fullerton, ASI's leaders liked the idea of broad outcomes that established a common framework for student employees. For example, the outcomes were applicable to student workers regardless of their roles as front desk staff, childcare providers, or maintenance crew members.

Challenge #5

At Fullerton, ASI staff developed additional programmatic elements surrounding the learning outcomes initiative. Before the start of the school year, ASI student employees are introduced to the outcomes as part of a mandatory conference. The conference includes general training workshops as well as small breakout sessions.

Raising Awareness, Improving Results *Ensuring Students and Supervisors Understand Outcomes*

Consistent Programming Keeps Outcomes Top of Mind



- Mandatory student employee development conference at beginning of school year
- Workshops for supervisors
- Poster and e-mail campaigns to highlight specific outcomes

Importance of Messaging

“Sending the weekly e-mail gives people an opportunity to reflect upon the development outcome...and the repetition is important...I need to keep reminding them that this initiative is something that is important for the organization.”

*Anthony Ragazzo
California State University-Fullerton*

Question of the Week: Responsibility and Accountability Outcome

“Ask your student assistants to give an example of how they took responsibility for their own learning on the job. Reinforce with them the need for all of us to ask questions of clarification and seek out information.”

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

ASI also implemented poster and e-mail campaigns that take place across the school year. Council interviewees noted that the purpose of these efforts is to keep the learning outcomes top of mind for student employees and supervisors.

A key aspect of ASI's initiative is that the learning outcomes evaluation is deliberately built into the workflow. At their three-month performance review, student employees use a rubric to assess their own level of competence while their supervisors perform the same exercise. The scores are combined on the performance review form to structure the conversation.

Embedding Outcomes in the Regular Workflow

Rubric Integrated into Performance Reviews

Rubric Used at Three-Month Review¹

To what extent has the student assistant learned each of these skills on the job?	Student	Manager
	Please rank performance from 1 to 10, 1 indicating never and 10 indicating always.	
Makes appropriate decisions to handle assorted responsibilities	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Completes tasks and assignments correctly and in a timely manner	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Accepts responsibility for errors made	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Recognizes and accepts the consequences of actions taken	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



- Student employee fills out rubric, as does supervisor
- At performance review, supervisor and student employee discuss strengths and areas for development
- Rubric is reviewed again at six months and at subsequent performance reviews

¹ This rubric was originally developed by the University of Minnesota to evaluate student employee learning outcomes. It has since been revised by CSU-Fullerton.

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

The rubric is used again at the six-month review and subsequent appraisals moving forward. Integrating the rubric into the performance review process for student employees allows for more systematic data collection and widespread buy-in since it not an additional step or an extra form.

Challenge #5

ASI's learning outcomes initiative has produced clear benefits for students and supervisors. First, it provides a common framework to discuss the learning that happens for student employees. Second, the rubric provides students with a chance to reflect on the skills and knowledge they are gaining through campus employment.

Practical Benefits for Students and Supervisors

Student Employees



- Improves ability to articulate skills in resumes and interviews
- Creates habit of self-reflection

Supervisors



- Leads to more structured interactions with employees
- Creates shared language to use in discussing student progress

The Key to Learning Outcomes Success

“This process works because we put it into the workflow for supervisors. It needs to be a regular part of what they do...not seen as extra work.”

*Anthony Ragazzo
California State University-Fullerton*

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Finally, the outcomes and evaluation rubric provide supervisors with a standard way to structure interactions with student employees. It gives supervisors a shared language to use in coaching and giving feedback to students.

In order to save practitioners time and effort, the Council compiled an online toolkit for assessment resources. The toolkit contains rubrics, reflection exercises, and other tools developed by Student Affairs staff at institutions across the country. This resource is accessible to all members via the Council's website.

Co-Curricular Learning Outcomes Toolkit

Available Now Via the Council's Website

The screenshot shows the website interface for the Student Affairs Leadership Council. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the logo and name of the Education Advisory Board and Student Affairs Leadership Council. Below this is a secondary navigation menu with links for 'About the Council', 'National Best Practice Research', 'Meetings and Webinars', and 'Member Custom Research'. The main content area features a 'Toolkit Library' section with a sub-header 'Student Affairs Learning Outcomes Compendium and Assessment Toolkit'. A text block describes the toolkit's purpose and content. To the right, there is a 'Share Your Assessment Tool' box with a call to action. Below the text, there are four tabs: 'Divisional Outcomes', 'Unit Outcomes', 'Assessment Tools', and 'Unit-Level Tools'. The 'Divisional Outcomes' tab is active, displaying a list of resources with 'Show / Hide' links for each item.

Toolkit Library
Student Affairs Learning Outcomes Compendium and Assessment Toolkit

The top priority for Student Affairs executives in 2010, this material is the result of more than 150 interviews with senior leaders, assessment Directors, and frontline staff. The compendium analyzes divisional and unit level outcomes from institutions across the country, providing sample outcomes to jump start writing efforts. Recognizing that many practitioners are pressed for resources, the toolkit provides "just in time" support for unit-level assessment efforts with rubrics, reflection exercises, and other instruments to assist staff in measuring learning outcomes.

The online compendium and toolkit supplement the forthcoming Council publication, *Aligning Co-Curricular Initiatives with Learning Outcomes* »

Share Your Assessment Tool

If you have an assessment tool that you think works well and should be shared with the broader Student Affairs Leadership Council membership, please [submit this simple form](#) »

Divisional Outcomes | Unit Outcomes | Assessment Tools | Unit-Level Tools

Divisional Outcomes [Toggle Tab Content](#)

EAB Analysis	Show / Hide
Sample Outcomes by Theme	Show / Hide
Sample Divisional Learning Outcomes Websites	Show / Hide
Resources for Writing Outcomes	Show / Hide

Source: http://www.educationadvisoryboard.com/salc/nbpr_toolkitPortal.asp

Challenge #5

Additional Implementation Guidance

1. Target Specific Student Populations

During the initial stages of co-curricular learning outcomes assessment, the Council recommends practitioners focus their efforts on student employees and student leaders. These groups have frequent and often prolonged contact with Student Affairs across the year, making them ideal populations for demonstrating the impact of co-curricular programs, activities, and experiences.

2. Start with Small Assessment Efforts

In the beginning, leaders should encourage units to start small, focusing their assessment efforts on a program or a couple of outcomes. The *FISH Program at Texas A&M University* is a great case study, highlighting how program assessment can start out modestly and grow over time into a robust effort. Gradually ramping up assessment efforts allows practitioners to become comfortable with co-curricular learning outcomes and to find ways to integrate them into the program or activity.

3. Encourage Practitioners to Experiment

Council work suggests that it is important for leaders to encourage practitioners to try different assessment methods in their unit-level work. While practitioners can be hesitant to move beyond surveys, other tools like reflection exercises, rubrics, and skills tests can yield rich data.



III. Measuring Learning Outcomes

Key Challenge #6:

What Strategies Help Units Engage in Systematic Learning Outcomes Assessment?

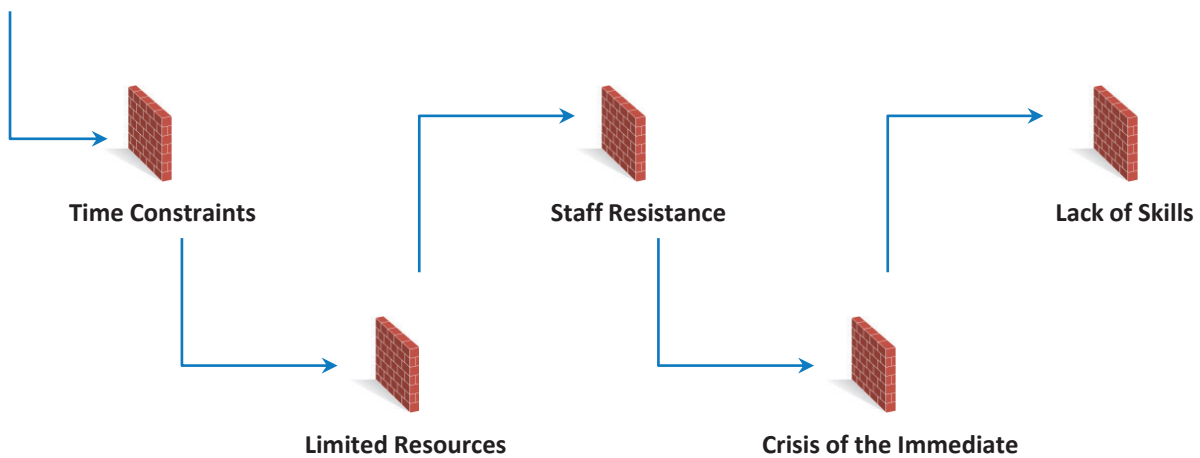
Profile

∞ Buena Vista University

Challenge #6

To achieve meaningful success with co-curricular learning outcomes, Student Affairs organizations must focus on systematic data collection and analysis at the unit-level. Council interviews, however, highlighted several barriers to consistent assessment practice including resource constraints and the urgency of everyday student crises.

Ambitious Goals, Practical Challenges *Barriers to Achieving Consistent Assessment in Student Affairs*



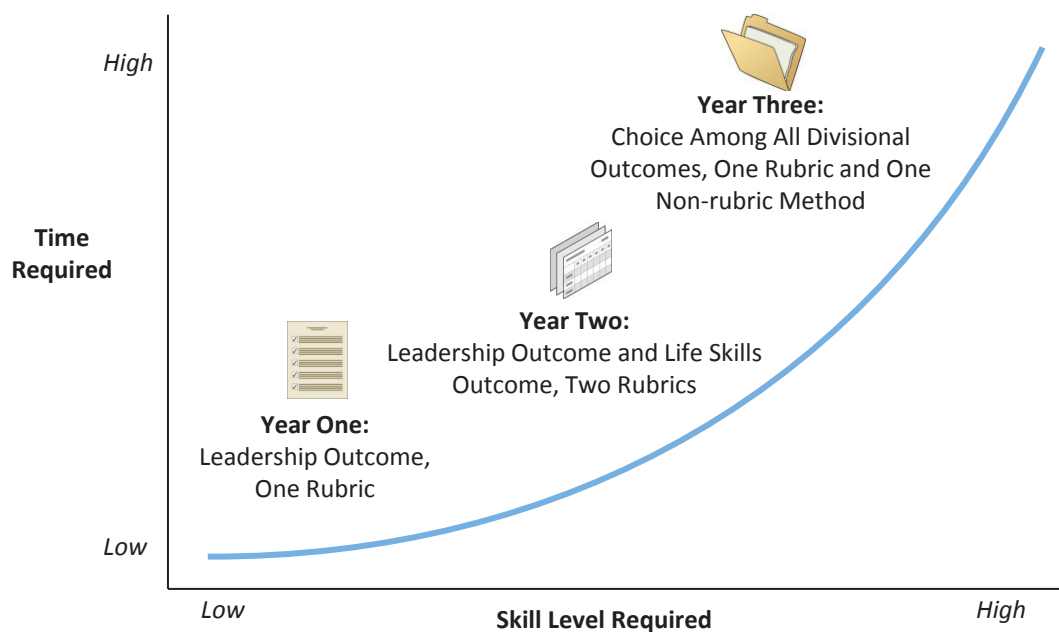
Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Although it is tempting for leaders to quickly ramp up assessment efforts at the outset, Council research suggested the best way to successfully implement learning outcomes is through slow and sustained progress. Interviewees noted that careful groundwork and a series of small, successful projects at the unit-level help to build staff confidence.

A Marathon, Not a Sprint

Gradually Ramping Up Assessment at Buena Vista University

Assessment Activities from Fall 2008 to Spring 2011



Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Across the past two years, the Student Success division at Buena Vista University (BVU) invested considerable time and resources in developing a systematic annual process for learning outcomes assessment. This case study highlights many of the key elements needed for Student Affairs organizations to achieve success with co-curricular learning outcomes.

Challenge #6

The practitioners at BVU began by identifying five key co-curricular outcomes and several sub-outcomes at the divisional level. After adopting these outcomes, leaders asked individual units to complete a mapping exercise, pinpointing three sub-outcomes that could be easily assessed either with data they already had or could get with a small change.

Starting Small, Getting Staff Involved *Narrowing the Outcomes Focus*

Mapping Unit Activities to Divisional Outcomes

Unit	Identity Development	Life Management Skills	Leadership: Teaching, Nurturing, and Leading Others	Civic Responsibility	Global Cultural Awareness
Associate Dean	X		X	X	
Career Services	X	X	X		
Residence Life		X	X		X
Student Activities and Leadership			X X	X	

Units select three sub-outcomes they can easily assess

Nearly all units identified at least one leadership sub-outcome to assess

Source: Buena Vista University's Student Services Learning Outcomes at <http://www2.bvu.edu/academics/assessment/SSLOs/index.jsp>; Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Council interviewees noted that the results of the unit-level mapping exercise highlighted the synergy around the leadership outcome. Building upon that information, the division's assessment coordinator identified leadership as the focus for the initial assessment efforts at the unit-level.

To increase staff buy-in, the assessment coordinator assembled a group of practitioners to create a rubric for evaluating leadership. The group developed a tool to capture data on leadership, rating student proficiency from beginner to exemplary in several areas, such as motivating others to work as a team.

Accumulating Quick Wins

Bringing Staff Together, Building Confidence

Buena Vista University's Leadership Rubric, Fall 2008

		Exemplary: Advanced level of development seldom seen in college students	Proficient: Acceptable level of development for the typical BVU graduate	Developing: Some development, but not at a satisfactory level for a BVU graduate	Beginning: Little or no development of the relevant skills, attitudes, or behaviors
Leadership: Teaching, Nurturing, and Leading Others. Students will develop the self-confidence and the management skills needed to be effective leaders in the workplace and the community	Confidence in their own abilities				
	Develop a vision and organize resources				
	Motivate others to work as a team				

Source: Buena Vista University's Student Services Learning Outcomes at <http://www2.bvu.edu/academics/assessment/SSLOs/Index.jsp>; Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Challenge #6

Across Fall 2008, all units were required to complete at least one leadership rubric. This task was a light ask as the rubrics could be filled out by students after a program for self-reported data or could be done by a staff member after facilitating a student group meeting or an event.

Incorporating Data Gathering into Existing Processes *Avoiding Additional Demands on Staff*

Easing the Data-Gathering Process



Students complete rubrics
at end of activities



Supervisors fill out rubrics
immediately after facilitating
student group meetings

Streamlining Assessment

“It is important to make assessment part of staff workflow. You don’t want it to be an extra burden because it isn’t going to get done that way.”

*Student Affairs Assessment Director
Buena Vista University*

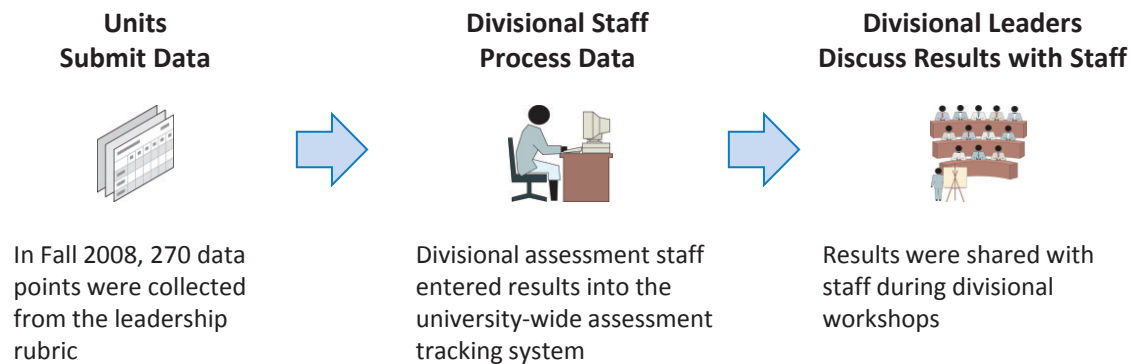
Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Council contacts emphasized that this approach allowed staff members to fit the leadership rubric into their daily work. For example, practitioners could decide where to incorporate the assessment instrument, making it less likely to be perceived as additional work or a heavy burden. Interviewees that noted this approach also increased the number of rubrics completed across the division, enabling more regular data collection.

By the end of Fall 2008, BVU's Student Success division had collected more than 270 data points from the leadership rubrics. The division entered their co-curricular results data into the university's assessment tracking system (FOCUS). Practitioners also discussed the data at divisional workshops.

Removing the Analysis Burden from Units

Synthesizing Data at the Divisional Level



Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Council interviewees reported that some of the trends in the results data, such as a gap in leadership skills by male juniors, confirmed practitioners' experiences and observations in their daily work. Having this data allowed staff members to brainstorm about potential solutions, such as offering targeted programming for male student leaders or increasing opportunities for individual mentoring.

Challenge #6

In Spring 2009, the Student Success division expanded assessment efforts to incorporate a second co-curricular learning outcome: life management skills. In order to prevent extra work, the division's assessment coordinator met with individual units to figure out a way to embed the second outcome into their normal workflow.

Gradually Raising the Bar

Incorporating a Second Outcome into the Assessment Process

High Involvement from Divisional Assessment Director



- Assessment director meets with unit staff to discuss incorporating additional assessment into workflow
- Existing processes are revised to include assessment of the life management skills outcome
- Assessment director encourages staff to use additional, non-rubric methods

Exploring Additional Assessment Methods



Focus Groups



Portfolios



Journals

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

The assessment coordinator also began gradually introducing staff members to non-rubric assessment methods, such as event dossiers, focus groups, and journaling. By exposing practitioners to these different assessment methods, the coordinator aimed to increase staff members' skills and knowledge as well as diversify unit-level projects.

After two years of using the original rubrics, practitioners wanted to revise the instruments. Through a series of conversations with the divisional assessment coordinator, a group of staff members drafted new rubrics for all five of the divisional outcomes. Their aim in revising the rubrics was to make the assessment process more concrete, adding specific examples of beginning, developing, proficient, and exemplary behaviors.

Revising Rubrics to Improve Reliability

Providing Concrete Examples of Learning for Staff and Students

New Rubric, Summer 2010

		Exemplary: Advanced level of development seldom seen in college students	Proficient: Acceptable level of development for the typical BVU graduate	Developing: Some development, but not at a satisfactory level for a BVU graduate	Beginning: Little or no development of the relevant skills, attitudes, or behaviors
Leadership: Teaching, Nurturing, and Leading Others. Students will develop the self-confidence and the management skills needed to be effective leaders in the workplace and the community	Confidence in their own abilities	The student consistently leads others in new initiatives in a self-assured manner.	The student often leads others in initiatives with little or no advisory oversight.	The student sometimes leads others with advisory oversight.	The student does not take on leadership roles and shows little confidence in their leadership skills.
	Develop a vision and organize resources	The student consistently develops and models/leads others towards a vision by utilizing known and unknown resources.	The student often models/leads others towards a vision utilizing familiar resources.	The student sometimes models/leads others but lacks the knowledge of resources necessary for implementation.	The student does not lead others toward a vision and possesses minimal knowledge of resources.

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Council interviewees suggested that these changes will make the rubrics more reliable for data collection, reduce the margin for error, and give the staff members tangible behaviors to focus on in their assessment work.

Challenge #6

BVU's division expanded its assessment efforts again in the 2010-2011 school year. Units are now required to evaluate one outcome through non-rubric methods, such as focus groups or document analysis. The goal behind this requirement is to continue to increase practitioners' skills and prevent stagnation in unit-level projects.

Increasing Assessment Scope, Sharing Results

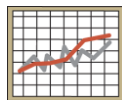
Next Steps: 2010-2011

Assessing a Broader Range of Outcomes



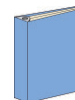
Units will choose which outcomes to assess in yearly plans; preliminary information suggests that each divisional outcome will be assessed by at least one unit

Using Non-Rubric Tools



Using varied assessment tools can yield more reliable results than solely collecting self-reported data

Producing an Annual Report



Divisional data will be compiled into an annual report, which will be shared with students, faculty, and the Board of Trustees

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

At the divisional level, the assessment coordinator plans to focus more attention on data analysis and results sharing. The coordinator hopes to produce the division's first annual report for learning outcomes in Summer 2011, communicating results data to practitioners, students, and other university stakeholders.

Challenge #6

Additional Implementation Guidance

1. Enfranchise Practitioners in Learning Outcomes Initiatives

At the outset, *Buena Vista University's Student Services division* brought together staff members from across the division to help with the assessment work surrounding the leadership outcome. Involving practitioners at all levels helped divisional leaders foster buy-in and also created assessment champions within individual units.

2. Build Confidence with Quick Wins

Buena Vista University's divisional assessment coordinator worked with staff members to develop a standard rubric to evaluate the leadership outcome. Creating this rubric as a group helped staff members get comfortable with learning outcomes, provided a chance for them to give feedback, and built confidence in the assessment process. The rubric was subsequently integrated into unit-level assessment work.

3. Raise Expectations Gradually

After successful efforts around the leadership outcome, *Buena Vista University's Student Success division* continued to expand assessment initiatives, adding a second outcome into the mix. Also, the divisional assessment coordinator worked with staff to introduce non-rubric methods into unit-level projects. The Council recommends this approach as it prevents stagnation at the unit-level and pushes practitioners to continue to expand their skills and knowledge.



IV. Putting Results into Action

- ☞ *Key Challenge #7:*
How can Leaders Help Units Leverage Results Data for Program Improvement?
- ☞ *Key Challenge #8:*
How can Student Affairs Better Communicate Results Data to Institutional Stakeholders?

IV. Putting Results into Action

The questions below are designed to help evaluate your current strategies for putting results data into action. Answering “no” to several questions suggests that the practices covered in challenges #7 and #8 might be well-suited to your institution.

Diagnostic Questions

	Key Questions	Yes	No
1	Do units use learning outcomes data as part of the yearly planning process?		
2	Are all units required to outline future initiatives based on learning outcomes data in their annual reports?		
3	Do senior leaders check in with individual units regarding program and service adjustments outlined in the annual report?		
4	Is the division’s annual report less than 40 pages?		
5	Do units regularly share learning outcomes results with divisional staff, students, or university stakeholders?		

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.



IV. Putting Results into Action

Key Challenge #7:

How Can Leaders Help Units Leverage Results Data for Program Improvement?

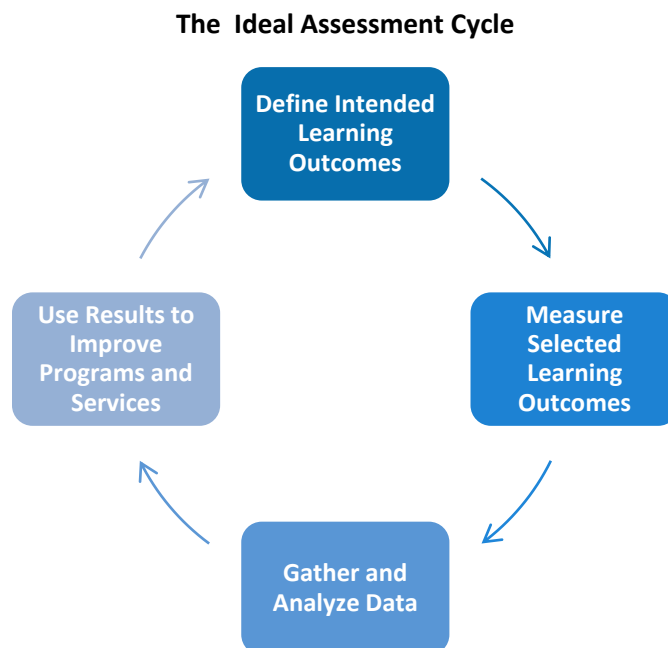
Profile

∞ Northern Arizona University

Challenge #7

The ideal assessment cycle is a closed loop with results data being leveraged to improve programs and services. Council research, however, uncovered a large gap as few Student Affairs organizations consistently use their assessment data to drive unit-level improvements.

From Learning Outcomes to Program Improvement



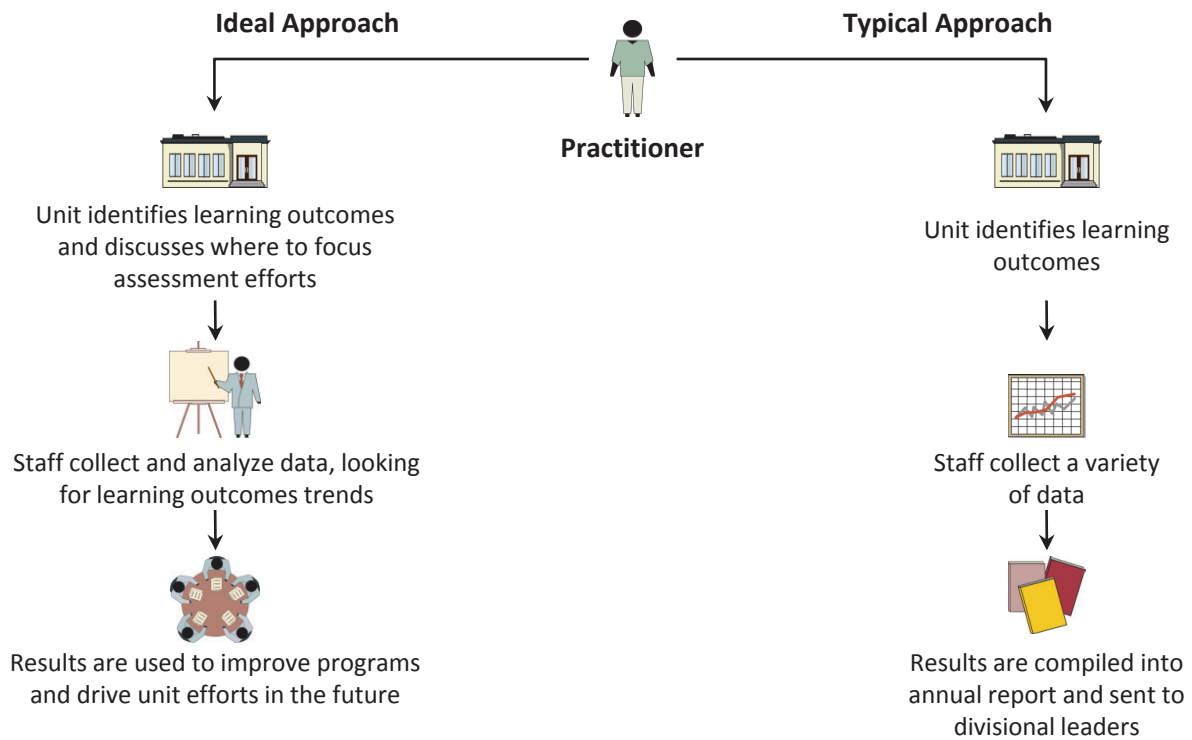
Source: Bresciani, Marilee, 'Implementing an Assessment Cycle,' at <http://interwork.sdsu.edu/elip/consultation/presentations/implement-cycle.pdf>; Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

During this research, the Council surfaced small, one-off examples of programmatic improvements, such as revising the content in resume workshop presentations or taking down online wellness modules that weren't producing the desired learning outcomes for students. However, these examples were neither the result of a systematic process nor robust enough to be case studies for member institutions.

Overall, Council research did not find effective tactics for getting staff to systemically leverage learning outcomes data to improve programs or cut ineffective offerings. Interviewees, particularly assessment directors, acknowledged that using data to inform decision making is still a big challenge for Student Affairs organizations.

Assessment Complete, Now What?

An All Too Familiar Refrain



Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Challenge #7

Given the dearth of examples, the Council focused on illustrating the factors behind poor results data. Reasons surfaced in the research included flawed instruments, very small samples sizes, and incorrect methods. Interviewees also highlighted the fact that many practitioners do not have the time to do data analysis and pull out the key implications.

If at First You Don't Succeed... *Common Causes of Poor Assessment Results*

Instrument Flaws



- Poorly worded survey questions
- Rubric lacks specificity
- Incorrect scales

Wrong Method Used



- One size rarely fits all
- Time-intensive methods ill-suited for large groups
- Long reflection exercises may not work well for programs with sporadic student contact

Sample Too Small



- Small sample sizes require less time and energy, but can yield distorted data
- Data is not representative enough that staff can use it with confidence

Right Outcome Not Assessed



- Measuring wrong goal
- Attempting to assess poorly-worded outcome
- Asking too many questions on a survey, straying from central purpose for assessment

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Council research revealed that the greatest barrier to systematic use of assessment data is the lack of accountability. While a unit might outline service and program changes in its annual report, senior leaders do not regularly check in to see whether those changes are implemented and the subsequent impact on student learning.

A Significant Gap

Failing to Use Assessment Data in Decision Making

Reasons Why Units Don't Use Outcomes Data and Results...



Collecting data viewed as endpoint of assessment



Lack of time to conduct analysis



Lack of skill and/or initiative to analyze data

...Stem from a Lack of Accountability



Staff not ultimately held accountable for implementing changes based on assessment data

Low Accountability, Low Priority

“When I first arrived here, I had one unit attempt to submit made-up data in order to check the box on doing assessment. When I asked for more information, it quickly became clear that the results didn't hold up and that their assessment efforts had fallen to the bottom of their to-do list ”

*Student Affairs Assessment Director
Public University*

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Council interviewees suggested this accountability gap means that even the most dedicated practitioners might lose their sense of urgency around unit-level improvements given the other demands on their time.

Challenge #7

The Council strongly recommends that Student Affairs leaders focus attention on this accountability gap. Senior leaders can help units leverage results data through a variety of methods such as carving out a half day to analyze results in each unit or spotlighting service changes at divisional meetings.

Following Through on Using Data *Improving Accountability at Northern Arizona University*

Recognizing Small Changes



Vice President keeps a list of “things we no longer do,” which reflects programmatic decisions made from results data

Articulating Next Steps



In assessment project final reports, units are required to include plans for making changes based on data

Following Up Annually



Associate Vice President hosts an annual roundtable with direct reports to discuss actions taken on next step recommendations

Persistence Pays Off

“Most of the time, the changes made from data seem underwhelming, especially in Student Affairs...but if you look across a three- or four-year period, you [start to] see how all these changes do add up.”

*Margot Saltonstall
Northern Arizona University*

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

The Council believes that even small steps such as those outlined above can help tackle the current accountability gap and reinforce the importance of leveraging results data for improvements.

Challenge #7

Additional Implementation Guidance

1. Recognize the Current Accountability Gap

Council analysis demonstrates that there is an accountability gap around leveraging results data for unit and program improvements. While units might identify next steps and changes in their annual report, senior divisional leaders currently have no mechanisms in place to determine whether the efforts have been implemented. The Council feels it is important for senior leaders to recognize that they have a role to play in ensuring that units leverage data for program and service improvements.

2. Brainstorm Ways to Encourage Data Use

The Council recommends that senior leaders quickly identify one or two tangible ways to encourage units to leverage results data. The strategies do not necessarily need to be the same across the whole division. For example, certain units might benefit from different approaches depending on their staffing, resources, and results data. Potential tactics may include a data analysis retreat, next step timelines, and program improvement spotlights.

3. Monitor Progress on Next Steps

In order to hold units accountable, the Council recommends that leaders create mechanisms to monitor progress on service and program improvements. Some ideas to increase accountability include semi-annual check-in meetings, progress reports, and monthly task lists.



IV. Putting Results into Action

Key Challenge #8:

How Can Student Affairs Better Communicate Results Data to Institutional Stakeholders?

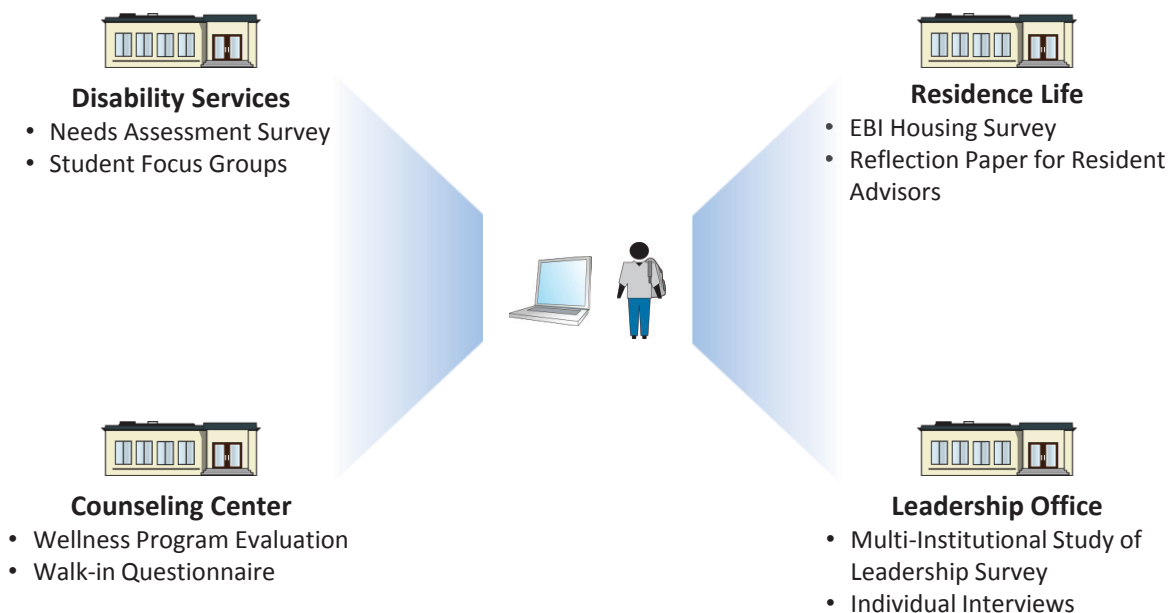
Profiles

- ☞ Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology
- ☞ Weber State University
- ☞ University at Albany
- ☞ William Patterson University

Challenge #8

Given the number of surveys and other assessments administered to students, it is surprising that few Student Affairs organizations consistently share the results with students. Council interviewees suggested that this lack of transparency can magnify survey fatigue as well as lead to declining response rates.

“Where Does the Data Go?” *Lack of Transparency Frustrates Students*



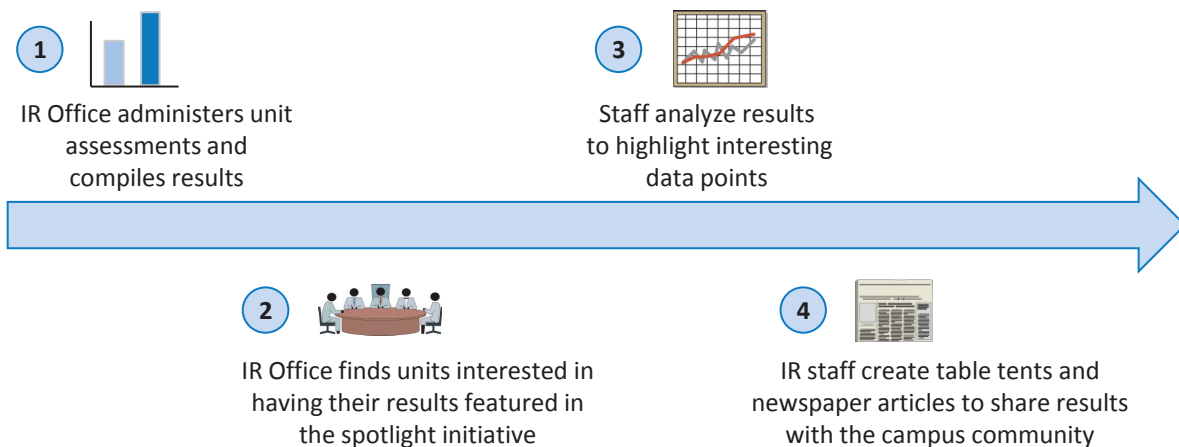
Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Moving forward, the Council recommends that Student Affairs leaders do more to communicate learning outcomes data and results to the broader university community.

At Rose-Hulman, the Institutional Research Office developed the 360-Degree Spotlight initiative to enhance communication efforts around assessment results. The spotlight takes data from select unit-level assessments and shares the results with students and the broader university community via table tents in the dining halls and articles in the campus newspaper.

Communicating Results Back to Students

The 360-Degree Spotlight Initiative at Rose-Hulman



Sharing Back Data and Results

“When thinking about what to spotlight [on the table tents], we ask ourselves what information do we have that is fun and might be interesting...and then we use it to create this story.”

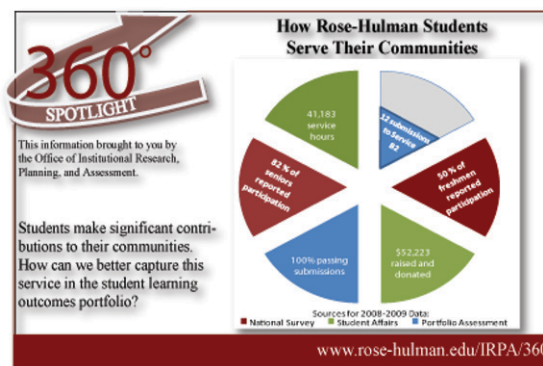
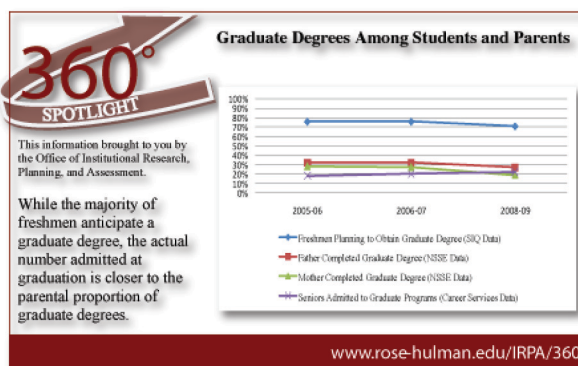
Sarah Forbes
Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology

Source: Sexton, Shannon and Sarah Forbes, “360-Degree Spotlight: Closing The Data Loop on Campus,” (Conference Presentation, 2010); Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Challenge #8

During the pilot year 2009-2010, the Institutional Research Office produced table tents covering a variety of topics such as retention, community engagement, and the quality of student relationships with faculty members. Council interviewees noted that the feedback from students has been very positive.

Highlighting Improvements, Sparking Conversations *Spotlight Emphasizes How Student Survey Results Are Driving Change*



Key Goals and Next Steps, 2010-2011

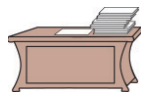
- Communicate to campus stakeholders changes implemented based on survey results
- Encourage continuous improvement based on survey data
- Assess the effectiveness and impact of the 360-degree communication efforts

Source: Sexton, Shannon and Sarah Forbes, "360 Degree Spotlight: Closing The Data Loop on Campus," (Conference Presentation, 2010); Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Council research demonstrated that institutions usually have a plethora of data from assessments conducted by different campus entities. However, interviewees reported little transparency and data sharing at the unit, divisional, and institutional levels.

“In File Cabinets, Spreadsheets, and Databases”

Data Stockpiles Rampant Across Campus



Academic Affairs

- NSSE and FSSE results
- Student course evaluations
- Data gathered from students via faculty research projects



Business Affairs

- Student satisfaction surveys
- Cost benefit analyses
- Alumni giving information



Student Affairs

- Student organization rosters
- Residence Life satisfaction data
- Program evaluation results

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Challenge #8

Weber State's Student Affairs division developed an initiative targeted at faculty and staff members in Academic Affairs in order to raise awareness of co-curricular assessment efforts. Several times a year, the Student Affairs division hosts focus groups with faculty and staff members to share information drawn from unit-level assessments on topics such as campus recreation.

Bringing Student Affairs and Academic Affairs Together

Weber State University's Faculty Focus Groups



Planning and Logistics

- Piloted focus group project in 2009-2010, conducted five sessions across that period
- Covered topics such as student mental health, campus recreation, and general student data
- Sessions organized and led by Student Affairs assessment coordinator



Focus Group Details

- Relied on Deans and Department Chairs to recommend faculty and staff participants
- Conducted the 90-minute sessions over lunch
- Other attendees included senior leaders from Student Affairs, divisional assessment coordinator, and representative from the area under discussion

Strengthening Student Affairs by Building Relationships

"These sessions are one of the most beneficial things we do...[through them] we build relationships and identify places where Student Affairs can improve."

Jessica Oyler
Weber State University

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

These sessions also serve as an opportunity for Student Affairs practitioners to talk with faculty about the services and resources available outside the classroom.

Council interviewees reported that the focus groups benefit all participants. Faculty and staff members leave with data and information that they can take back and share with their departments. At the same time, Student Affairs gets the opportunity to raise awareness about learning outside the classroom and solicit feedback from faculty and staff members.

Surfacing Areas for Improvement

Impact of Weber State Focus Groups



Focus Group



Key Benefits

- Gives faculty members data and information to share with colleagues
- Builds relationships between Student Affairs practitioners and individual faculty members
- Helps faculty members advocate for Student Affairs in their departments
- Allows Student Affairs to surface areas for improvement



Addressing Unmet Needs: A Quick Reference Guide

- Suggested in a recent focus group on general student data
- Having a reference guide with a list of campus resources will help faculty assist students
- Student Affairs is currently working to create this resource for faculty members

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

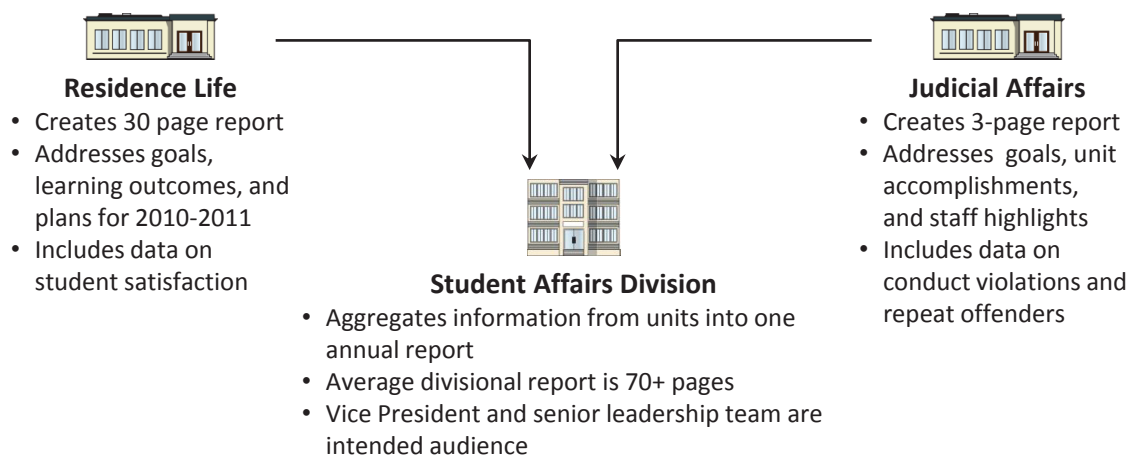
Council interviewees also mentioned that the sessions surfaced an unmet need. Student Affairs learned that faculty members would benefit from having information about outside-the-classroom programs and services in a concise guide that they could use when working with students. Currently, Weber State's Student Affairs division is creating this just-in-time resource for faculty members.

Challenge #8

Typically, units use their annual reports to document their results data as well as other accomplishments and strategic goals. However, Council research illustrated that there is little standardization among these reports, making it difficult to aggregate key data points and to communicate the division's overall impact on student learning.

The Problem with Student Affairs Annual Reports

Dense, Lengthy, and Focused on an Internal Audience



Lacking a Common Format

“As Vice President, I need to put all this data into a report. Right now, everything looks different...some units send a paragraph and others have a detailed 50 page document.

*Vice President for Student Affairs
Public University*

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Also, Council interviewees noted that few institutional stakeholders outside of Student Affairs receive either unit-level reports or the broader divisional document.

The University at Albany created a divisional briefing book to provide a more streamlined and user-friendly snapshot of divisional work. To ensure consistency across all units, the division developed a standard template so each area reports similar information including continuous improvement areas, assessment plans, and learning outcomes.

Streamlining Unit Results

University at Albany's Reporting Template (Excerpt)

STUDENT SUCCESS <small>UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY State University Of New York</small>		ANNUAL REPORT 2008-09					
Department Name:							
Location:							
Phone Number:							
Web Site:							
Director's Name:							
Director's Email:							
Number of Staff:	Staff Type		No.				
	Full-time Professional/Classified Staff						
	Part-time Professional/Classified Staff						
	Graduate Assistants:						
TOTAL:							
Staff Diversity:	GENDER	API	A/AN	BLACK	HISPANIC	WHITE	TOTAL:
	FEMALE						
	MALE						
	TOTAL:						
Staff with Disabilities:	GENDER	No. of Staff					
	FEMALE						
	MALE						
	TOTAL:						
A. Mission:	Please include the most recent version of your unit's mission statement.						


J. Strategic Goals (09-10):	Please list your unit's strategic goals for the <u>coming year</u> and address efforts to be made towards achieving each goal. <i>NOTE: Goals should be specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely.</i>
GOAL #1:	
GOAL #2:	
GOAL #3:	
GOAL #4:	
GOAL #5:	
<i>Please add more space for goals as your unit's activities warrant.</i>	
K. Learning Outcomes:	Please list your unit's learning outcomes. If your unit has not adopted a set of learning outcomes, please develop at least one (and not more than three) learning outcomes, specific to your unit, that could be adopted and incorporated into your unit's programs, activities and services to students and that are consistent with the Division's DRAFT learning outcomes
1. ...	
2. ...	
3. ...	
L. Assessment Plan:	Please attach a REVISED copy of your unit's Assessment Plan (in WORD).
M. Dashboards:	Please attach a current copy of your unit's dashboard (in EXCEL) consistent with dashboards currently on file with the Vice President's Office.
N. Organizational Chart:	Please attach an up to date organizational chart for your unit (electronically in whatever form you prefer).
<p><i>Please submit this annual report (and supporting documents for sections L, M and N) to Dr. Michael Christakis in the Office of the Vice President for Student Success by Friday, August 7, 2009 electronically at mchristakis@uamail.albany.edu.</i></p>	

Source: Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Challenge #8

Each unit gets one to two pages in the briefing book. The pages highlight unit-level mission statements, strategic goals, and learning outcomes as well as results data that is of general interest to university stakeholders.

A Clear and Concrete Overview *University at Albany's Briefing Book, 2008-2009*



**CONFLICT RESOLUTION
& CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY**
UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY
State University of New York

Campus Center 361
PHONE: 518.442.5501 **Clarence L. McNeill, Director**
WEB: albany.edu/judicial_affairs EMAIL: cmcneill@uamail.albany.edu

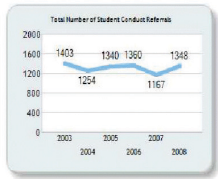
UNIT OVERVIEW:
The Office of Conflict Resolution & Civic Responsibility will:

- Meet with students to resolve formal student conduct referrals and to inform and educate students about their rights, responsibilities, and options for resolution of their cases;
- Provide consultation with and presentation(s) to faculty, staff, and students as it relates to the campus judicial system, the student code of conduct, and methods of resolving conflict;
- Assist in the coordination of campus resources and support services in the resolution of student behavioral problems via a team approach which includes leadership and participation in: BRISK, CUBIT and Divisional Serious Cases Meetings;
- Develop, interpret and enforce the student code of conduct code – Community Rights & Responsibilities
- Recruit, select, and train members for the Committee on Student Conduct, Judicial Board, and the University Community Accountability Board

MISSION:
The Office of Conflict Resolution & Civic Responsibility upholds the student code of conduct that establishes standards for our students that stress the values of personal and academic integrity, respect for others and property, and the appreciation and acceptance of a diverse community.

GOALS:

- Promote an environment where respect for the individuality of each student is valued and the principles of justice and civic responsibility are upheld and insure that all students are extended due process regardless of their abilities, race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation or religion
- Maintain, disseminate and educate students with regards to *Community Rights and Responsibilities*, the student code of conduct
- Provide students, faculty, and staff with access to consultation services, conflict resolution and alternative dispute mediation
- Empower community members to embrace and put into practice the restorative principles



Year	Total Number of Student Conduct Referrals
2003	1403
2004	1254
2005	1340
2006	1360
2007	1167
2008	1348

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

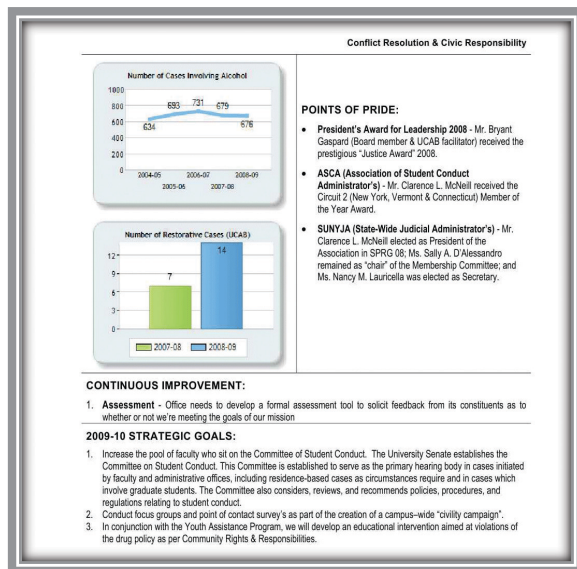
1. Students will recognize that a code of conduct exists and that, as citizens of the University, they will be held accountable for violations of said code.

Source: Christakis, Michael and Glen Sherman, "The Assessment Movement Towards Key Performance Indicators," (Conference Presentation, 2010); Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Over the past two years, Albany's Student Success division has leveraged technology to reduce the time and effort needed to create the briefing book, enabling staff to go from manually cutting and pasting text to using an online template that makes aggregating the information easier.

Overall, the briefing book provides a clear and concise snapshot of unit-level work that is accessible to a wide audience across the university. Each year, the book is printed in hard copy and distributed across the division as well as to key stakeholders in Academic Affairs. It is also available online and draws considerable attention to the division's contributions to student learning.

Conflict Resolution and Civic Responsibility Unit *University at Albany's Briefing Book (Continued)*



Key Elements

- 1-2 pages for each unit
- Total book is less than 40 pages
- Publication is bound and shared with key stakeholders, such as the Dean's Council in Academic Affairs
- Units receive a bound copy to read and display

University at Albany's Briefing Book is available online at:
<http://www.albany.edu/studentaffairs/assessment/docs/Briefing%20Book%2008-09/index.html>

Sources: Christakis, Michael and Glen Sherman, "The Assessment Movement Towards Key Performance Indicators," (Conference Presentation, 2010); Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Challenge #8

Often, Student Affairs leaders struggle to aggregate unit-level data to provide a broad summary of divisional impact. As a result, Student Affairs work can appear disconnected from other university priorities. Over the past few years, the Student Development division at William Paterson University developed key performance indicators (KPIs) to illustrate the impact of their work.

Illustrating the Impact of Student Affairs Work

William Paterson University's Divisional Dashboards



Assessment Team

Includes Representatives From

- Residence Life
- Undergraduate Admissions
- Campus Activities
- Dean of Students Office
- Athletics
- Institutional Research and Assessment Office

Key Performance Indicators

- ✓ Degree of Student Satisfaction
- ✓ Degree of Student Engagement
- ✓ Creation of a Safe and Supportive Learning Environment
- ✓ Student Development

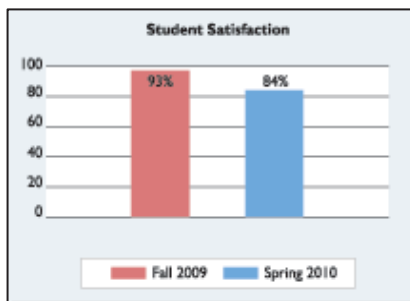
Source: Christakis, Michael and Glen Sherman, "The Assessment Movement Towards Key Performance Indicators," (Conference Presentation, 2010); Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Through the work of the assessment council, divisional leaders identified four key performance indicators that map to institutional priorities. These indicators are student development, degree of student satisfaction, degree of student engagement, and creation of a safe and supportive learning environment.

After choosing KPIs, the assessment council's next step was to create a standard question for each indicator. These questions were subsequently embedded into program assessments at the unit level. For example, the standard question for the student development indicator is "as a result of this program/activity, I have developed..." and the unit fills in the appropriate outcome.

Dashboards Enable Performance Tracking

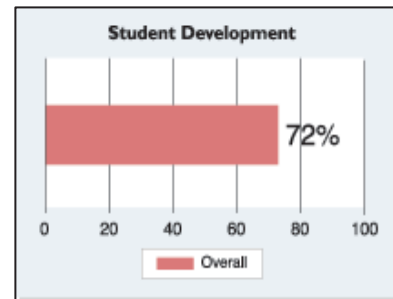
Student Development and Student Satisfaction Results, 2009-2010



Standardized Assessment Question

"Please indicate your satisfaction with:"

- Key services that offices provided
- Quality of major programs
- Quality of typical and unique events provided
- Staff members with whom the student interacted



Standardized Assessment Question

"Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement(s): As a result of attending this program, I have developed:"

- Knowledge Acquisition
- Interpersonal Competence
- Humanitarianism and Civic Engagement
- Intrapersonal Competence
- Cognitive Complexity
- Practical Competence¹

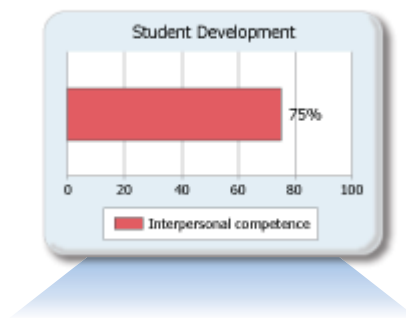
¹ These six areas are drawn from the CAS Standards.

Source: William Paterson University's Student Development and Enrollment Management Assessment Results at <http://www.wpunj.edu/enrolled/assessment/assessment-plans/academic-year-2009-2010.dot>; Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Challenge #8

By using a standard assessment question for each indicator, data collected at the program and unit-level maps directly to the KPIs, which are displayed on the division's dashboard. Senior leaders can drill down into the data to see the individual assessment results.

Drilling Down into the Data *Dashboards Allow Users to Get Granular*



Health & Wellness, Counseling Center Satisfaction Survey (Fall 2009)

"As a result of attending sessions in the Counseling Center, I am able to establish mutually rewarding relationships."

- 72% of students moderately or strongly agree (N=96)

Campus Activities, Involvement Benchmark (Spring 2010)

"As a result of participating in campus activities, my leadership skills have improved."

- 61% of students moderately or strongly agree (N=320), while 58% are better able to manage conflict

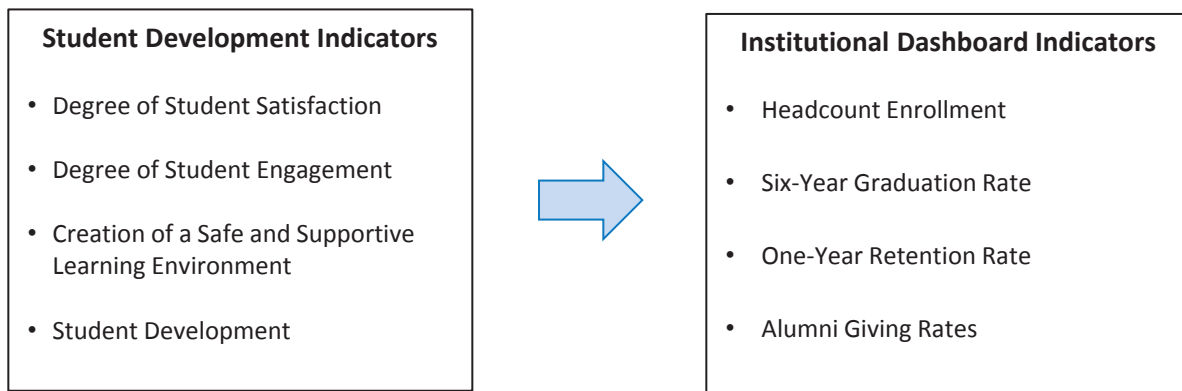
Source: Christakis, Michael and Glen Sherman, "The Assessment Movement Towards Key Performance Indicators," (Conference Presentation, 2010); Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

The key performance indicators and dashboards allow divisional leaders to track progress over time. For example, it enables them to get a student development rating for each semester as well as a score for the entire year. The division subsequently shares these results on its website for institutional stakeholders, parents, and students to review.

The Student Development indicators map to four key areas on the university-wide dashboards, including the one-year retention rate and headcount enrollment. Overall, Council interviewees noted that the Student Development indicators produced significant benefits, such as increasing the visibility of divisional work and improving data transparency across the institution.

Connecting Divisional Work to Institutional Priorities

Student Development Indicators Map to University Dashboards



Making an Impact with the Board of Trustees

"The Board had asked us to, and so we were able to create a set of Key Performance Indicators that attempts to meaningfully relate what we do in Student Development to the institutional dashboards."

Glen Sherman
William Paterson University

Source: Christakis, Michael and Glen Sherman, "The Assessment Movement Towards Key Performance Indicators,"(Conference Presentation, 2010); Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Challenge #8

Additional Implementation Guidance

1. Communicate Select Results Back to Students

Council research highlights how few Student Affairs organizations consistently share assessment results data with students. To help combat survey fatigue and declining survey response rates, Student Affairs leaders need to develop initiatives to communicate results data and its implications for programs and services. The Council urges practitioners to leverage social media tools, such as Twitter and Facebook, as well as other methods.

2. Proactively Seek Out Opportunities to Share Data

At many institutions, there is a wealth of data being collected. The Council urges Student Affairs leaders to proactively seek out opportunities to share assessment results and information on co-curricular learning with stakeholders across the institution. Examples might include presenting data at the institutional assessment council meetings, new faculty orientation, or task force retreats.

3. Publish Concise Reports Highlight Divisional Results

Council work illustrates the need to raise awareness across the institution about co-curricular learning outcomes. Currently, units reports their assessment data in lengthy and dense annual reports that have little visibility outside the Student Affairs organization. It is more important than ever that Student Affairs organizations demonstrate their contributions to student learning, making it necessary for them to develop high-level results documents targeted at institutional stakeholders, such as Academic Affairs leaders and the Board of Trustees. *The University at Albany's Briefing Book* is an exemplar here and the Council recommends that all leaders consider developing something similar for their divisions.



Coda

General Education Reform

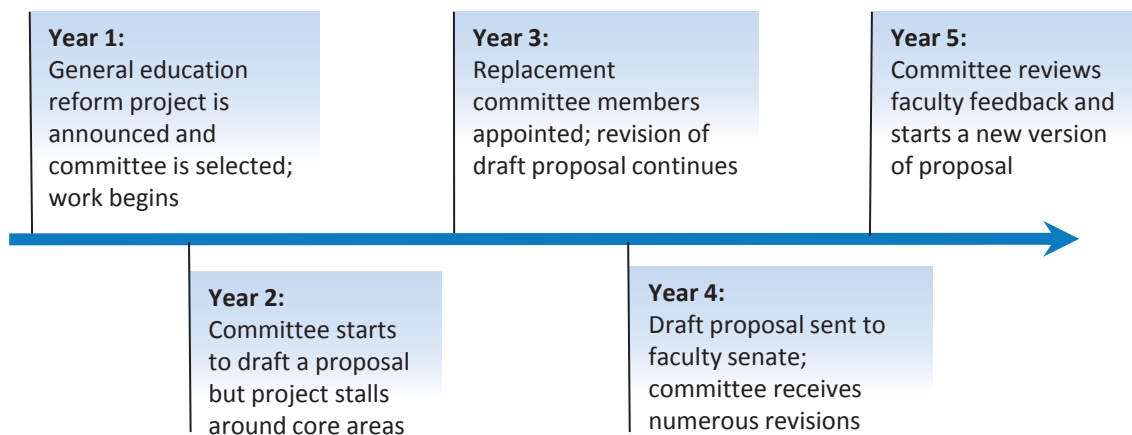
Profile

∞ Southern Methodist University

Coda: General Education Reform

At most institutions, reforming the general education curriculum is typically a lengthy and contentious process. Some Council interviewees noted that it can take anywhere between three and six years to overhaul the curriculum. The process also involves many institutional stakeholders, making it difficult to build consensus.

A Long and Painful Process *Reforming the General Education Core*



Echoes of Jarndyce v. Jarndyce

“The process of designing a new general education curriculum and selling it to the faculty has been compared to a play by Samuel Beckett, but the comparison is inapt. Beckett’s plays are short...it is better compared to Jarndyce v. Jarndyce, the lawsuit in Charles Dickens’s *Bleak House*, or to being in psychoanalysis: interminable, repetitive, and inconclusive.”

*Louis Menand
The Marketplace of Ideas*

Source: Menand, Louis, *The Marketplace of Ideas: Reform and Resistance in the American University* (2010); Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Given the average timeline for general education reform, the Council finds the recent initiatives at Southern Methodist University to be an exciting case study. During this two year process, the university overhauled a general education curriculum that had been in place for more than a decade.

A Classical, Well-Rounded Education

Southern Methodist University's General Education Curriculum

Students Select Courses from Various Areas

Areas	Courses
Perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The World of Shakespeare (ENGL) • Life in the Medieval World, A.D. 306 to 1095 (HIST) • Crime and Delinquency (SOCI)
Science/Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essentials of Biology (BIOL) • Modern Electronic Technology (EE) • Machines and Society (ME)
Cultural Formations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Order Out of Chaos (CF) • Warfare in the Modern World (CF) • Troubled Youth (CF)

Curriculum Issues

- Difficult to accommodate double majors
- Departments can only offer courses in one area
- Faculty members struggle to fit cross-disciplinary work into established framework
- Curriculum does not allow space to incorporate student experiences

Source: Southern Methodist University's General Education Curriculum at <http://smu.edu/gened/>; Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Council interviewees noted that the old curriculum contained several thematic areas and focused on ensuring that students were well-rounded in the classical sense. The curriculum, however, did not have the capacity to easily accommodate cross-disciplinary work.

Coda: General Education Reform

Interviews suggested that several factors contributed to the decision to revamp general education at SMU, including more students pursuing double majors and growing interest in experiential learning options. As a result, the Provost assembled a committee of faculty and staff members to review the general education curriculum.

Assembling the General Education Committee

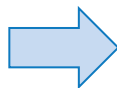
Provost Selects Participants



Provost

Criteria for Selection

- Special effort made to include recently tenured faculty who will likely be teaching the new curriculum for the bulk of their careers
- Faculty and staff not involved in the creation of the current general education curriculum



Committee Membership

Included Faculty and Staff from

- Dedman College
- Meadows School of the Arts
- School of Business
- Learning Enhancement Center
- Residence Life and Student Housing
- School of Engineering
- Arts Library
- School of Education and Human Development

A Fresh, Energetic, and Nonpartisan Group

“Over the years, I have been on a lot of committees and I have never seen a more productive group than this one...as a whole we were committed to leaving our department and school hats at the door and taking a broad view of education and what our SMU students needed to be exposed to.”

Vicki Hill

Southern Methodist University

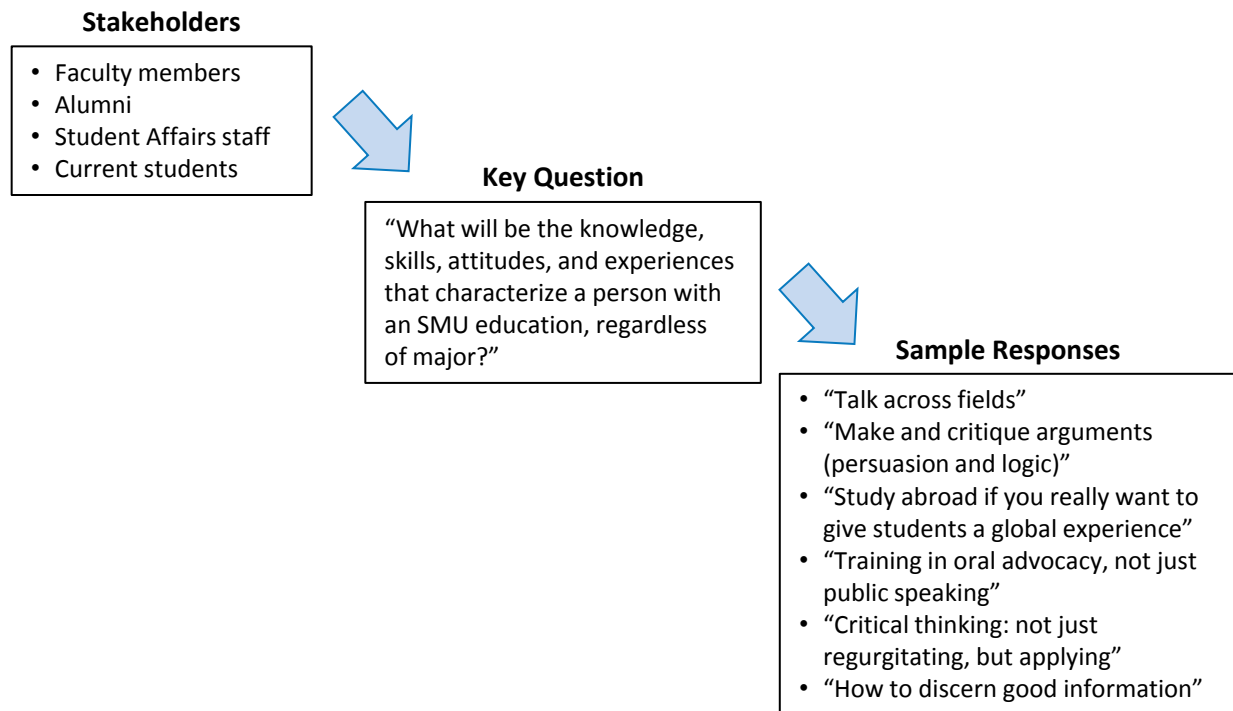
Source: Cordell, Dennis and Vicki Hill, “The University Curriculum,” (Conference Presentation, 2010); Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Drawn from departments and units across the institution, the committee members focused on a broad view of education, thinking holistically about what SMU students should be exposed to regardless of major or school.

As part of their work, the committee solicited feedback from a variety of university stakeholders, including faculty, alumni, Student Affairs staff, and current students. These efforts focused on having stakeholders weigh in on the skills, knowledge, and experiences that should characterize an SMU graduate regardless of their major.

What Characterizes an SMU Graduate?

Seeking Input from University Stakeholders



Source: “Moving from a Dialog to the University Curriculum” at <http://smu.edu/gec/document.asp>; Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Coda: General Education Reform

The committee developed four broad student learning outcomes that ranged from personal and social responsibility to intellectual and practical skills. The group also decided to focus on students' ability to demonstrate these learning outcomes, rather than on how they fulfilled the objectives. This decision created an opportunity for co-curricular experiences to factor into the new curriculum.

Broad Objectives, Ability to Demonstrate Learning

Key Insights from SMU's Reform Process

1



Developing Broad Student Learning Outcomes

- "Knowledge and Appreciation of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World"
- "Intellectual and Practical Skills"
- "Personal and Social Responsibility"
- "Integrative and Applied Learning"

2



Focusing on the Ability to Demonstrate Learning

"We were less concerned with how students fulfilled the objectives associated with proposed learning outcomes than with what they learned and their abilities to demonstrate it."

3



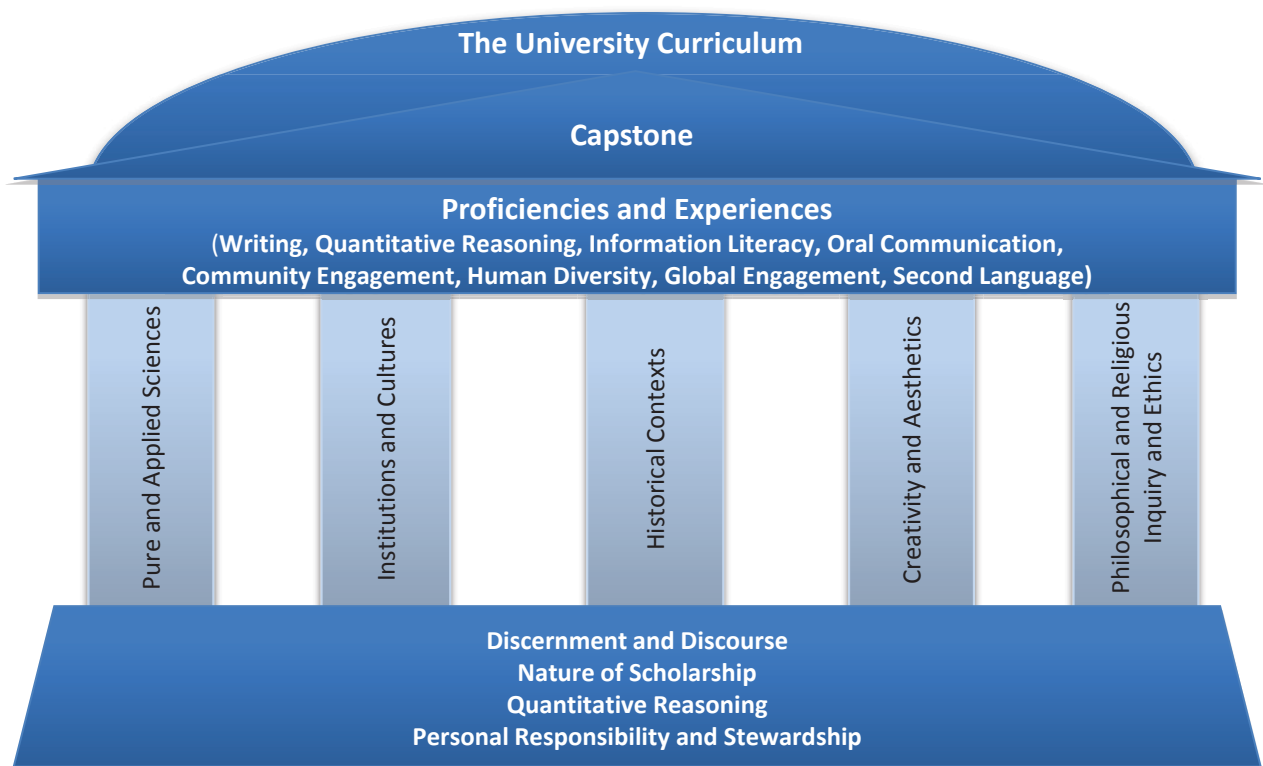
Championing the Proposal Across Campus

- Committee members realized they needed to sell the new curriculum and the rationale behind it to stakeholders
- Members spent time writing responses to questions, meeting with departments, and talking with individuals
- General faculty approved proposal in March 2010 and Board of Trustees approved in May 2010

Source: "Moving from a Dialog to the University Curriculum" at <http://smu.edu/pec/document.asp>; Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

In Spring 2010, SMU's faculty and the Board of Trustees approved the committee's proposed reforms. The new general education curriculum focuses on broad knowledge areas as well as proficiencies and experiences. Starting in August 2012, the new curriculum will go into effect at SMU.

The New Curriculum, Starting August 2012



Source: "Moving from a Dialog to the University Curriculum" at <http://smu.edu/gec/document.asp>; Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Coda: General Education Reform

Overall, the new curriculum focuses on what students have learned and done, creating a role for co-curricular activities within the general education framework. Council interviewees mentioned several examples of how a student might fulfill general education requirements through carefully reflected-upon activities, such as being an orientation leader.

Communicating the Value of Student Experiences

A Role for the Co-Curricular in SMU's General Education Core



The New Curriculum...

- Creates a role for co-curricular learning within the general education framework
- Requirements may be waived or credit granted for reflected-upon activities
- Proficiencies map to many of the activities and experiences offered through SMU's Division of Student Affairs
- Provides more possibilities for collaboration between Student Affairs and Academic Affairs



...Leverages Student Experiences

Examples

A university trained tour guide could submit materials and petition to get the oral communications proficiency waived based on their work for the Admissions Office

A student who undertook a summer mission with their church in South America and kept a journal could use that reflection piece to satisfy the global engagement experience

Source: "Moving from a Dialog to the University Curriculum" at <http://smu.edu/gec/document.asp>; Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

Currently, SMU faculty and staff are working through the details of how the co-curricular aspect will function in the new general education curriculum.

The Council feels the work at SMU is exciting and relevant for Student Affairs leaders because it articulates the linkages between the classroom and the co-curricular. It also gives Student Affairs a role in the general education curriculum and opens up possibilities for increased collaboration between Student Affairs and Academic Affairs. Finally, it provides a way for Student Affairs to tangibly demonstrate learning outside the classroom.

