

# Telling Your Assessment Story: How to Communicate Results



# Learning Outcomes

After participating in this workshop you will be able to:

- Describe why documenting the assessment process is important.
- List the process of communicating assessment results.
- Describe the value of pairing qualitative and quantitative data.

# Documentation is Foundational

In order to effectively communicate our assessment results, we need to:

- Establish learning outcomes related to what we are assessing
- Document the process we used to assess the outcomes
- Tie the results back to our learning outcomes to communicate whether the program or service “worked” as we intended
- Make note of decisions we made as a result of the assessment process
- Document successes!



# Why document our assessment processes?

- Accountability
- Institutional and individual memory
- Documenting the decisions made (confirmation is a finding, too)
- Capitalize on lessons learned for next time

-Bresciani



*“Assessments are worthwhile only if the results are put to good use, and those uses can take place only after careful consideration and discussion. That consideration and discussion, in turn, can take place only if assessment results are communicated usefully, clearly, and accurately.”*

*-Linda Suskie*

## **Major Goal in Providing Assessment Results:**

The format and presentation paints a clear picture of the meaningful, actionable results.

# Communicating Results

*“View sharing assessment results as an opportunity to tell an important story with a meaningful point.”*

By the time you share results, no one on the planet likely knows more (or cares more) about the data than you do. Therefore, your role is to educate stakeholders about:

- Context
- Background
- Methods
- Results (in context)

And to involve stakeholders (as applicable) in:

- Making sense of the results
- Identifying possible solutions or next steps



# Small Group Discussion

- In your setting, where could you be doing a better job documenting your assessment efforts?
- What is one step you could take to improve your current documentation of assessment efforts?



# Process of Communicating Results

- Determine your audience
- Target your communication to your audience
- Choose the communication format
- Create the communication



# Determine Your Audience(s)

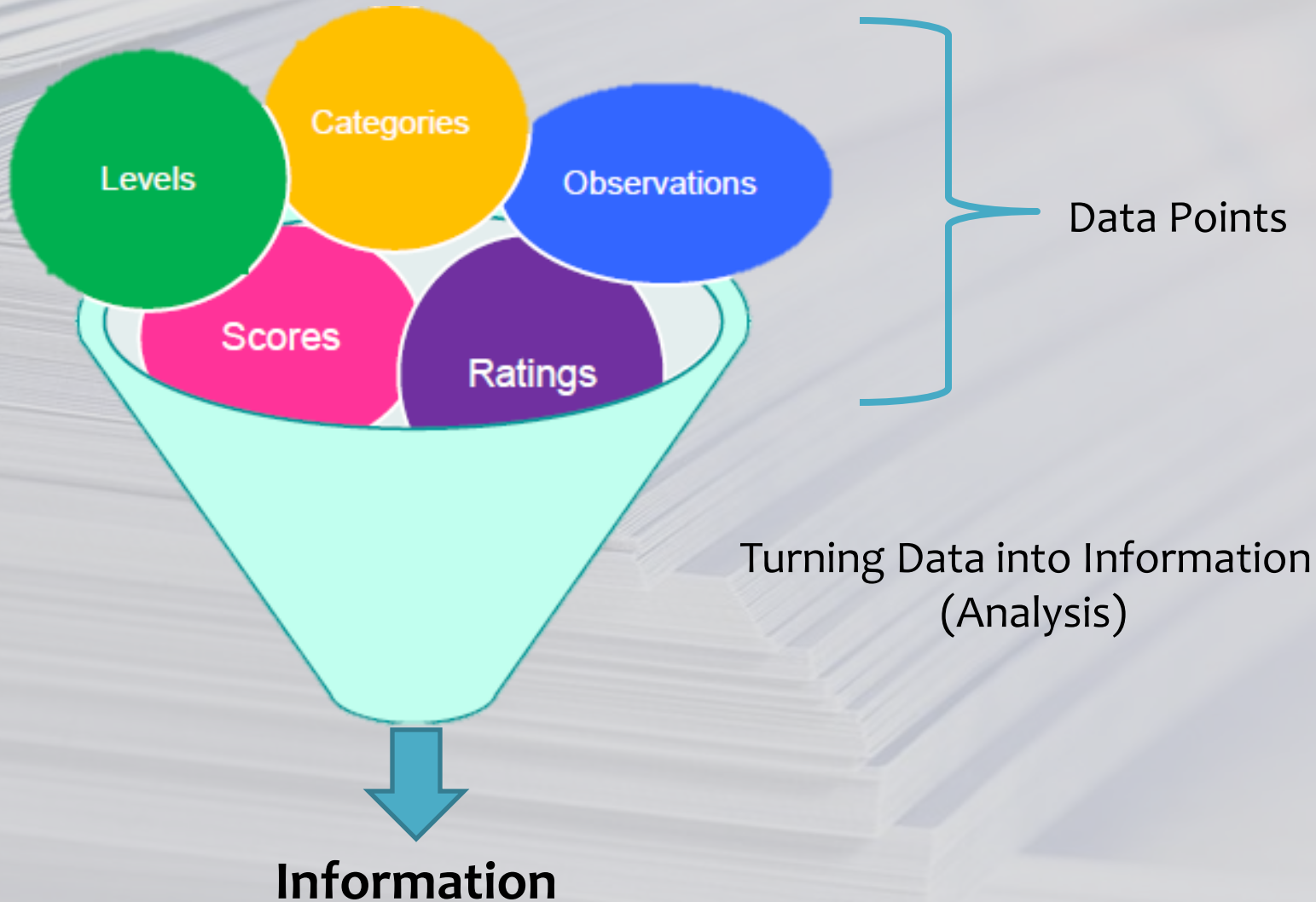
- Administrators
  - Partners/collaborators
  - Students
  - Parents
  - Funding Sources
  - Faculty Members
  - Referral Sources
  - Colleagues
  - Community Members
- 
- A background image showing a crowd of people from behind, with many hands raised in the air, suggesting a large gathering or event. The image is semi-transparent and serves as a backdrop for the text.

# Target Communication to your Audience(s)

- What information is most relevant to \_\_\_\_\_?
- What information does \_\_\_\_\_ need from the assessment in order to make decisions?
- What communication format might be most effective?



# Data is not Information





# Communicating Assessment Results: Where, How, Whom

- In communicating assessment results, think of all possible stakeholders and venues.
  - Strategies may be different for each audience, but consider what your central nugget of findings tells you (e.g., “students learn XXX from participating in XXX”) and find various ways to communicate this.
- Avoid data overload. Pair data with stories. Hit the key points. Don’t be shy.



# Communicating Assessment Results: Where, How, Whom

Most people care about:

- Something they are in a position to change
- Interesting or unanticipated findings
- Meaningful differences

*“Make sure everything you include tells an important, interesting part of your story.”*

# *Keep it Simple...*

When communicating to decision-makers:

- Central nuggets
- Focus on implications (the So What?)
- They receive immense amounts of information
  - Bullets
  - Anticipate questions and provide answers
  - Connect results to outcomes or goals



# On Iowa!

***State at least one “big idea” about excelling at Iowa, learned from the faculty lecture***

- Over two-thirds of students were able to list one “big idea” about excelling at Iowa.

***Report that On Iowa increased their sense of connection to The University of Iowa community***

- 59% of students reported they have been in contact with the member of their On Iowa small group since classes.
- 53% of students agreed that On Iowa gave them a greater sense of community and identity as the Class of 2015.
- 56% of students agreed that On Iowa helped them make connections with other UI students.

# Power of Information

Sorian and Baugh, 2002

- Study of key decision-makers (legislators, legislative staff members, and executives)
- Study examined volume of information they received and how they managed it relative to their positions as decision-makers
  - **They read 27% of what they received in detail**
  - **Skimmed 53% for general content**
  - **“Never get to” 35% of the material**

# Power of Information

Sorian and Baugh, 2002

- 49% of information they get is not “relevant” to their work
- What is relevant?
  - **Related to a current issue in their purview**
  - **Something that impacts “real people” (students, staff, faculty)**
  - **Similar contexts (e.g., information from other settings)**
  - **Easy to read format**



# Power of Information

Sorian and Baugh, 2002

- What makes information least useful?
  - **Not relevant**
  - **Too long, dense or detailed**
  - **Jargony**
  - **Not objective/biased**
- Staff (middle managers) were more likely to want both a short report and a detailed version.

# Communication Format

- Written Report
- Poster, flier, quarter sheets
- Presentation
- Newsletter
- Student newspaper
- Website
- Infographic
- Annual Report

*Flier from  
University of  
North Carolina,  
Wilmington*



**We've heard your voice...  
and taken action.**

**CHANGE #1**

You said: "An internship is important to my career future"

**We responded:** The number of internship listings on SeaWork has doubled since last year.

**Thank You**  
for your feedback and time spent taking surveys about your UNCW experience.



CAREER CENTER

# Small Group Discussion

- What communication formats do you often use when communicating your results?
- Thinking of a recent or upcoming assessment project, where would be one opportunity for you to use a new/different format for communicating your results?





# Creating the Communication

- Goal is to wring out all **useful** information from your data – but, not all information is relevant to all audiences.
- Never assume your communication will only be seen by those you give it to
- Consider that you might end up presenting assessment results in many ways over time
  - Initial reports
  - Sub-reports for various audiences
  - Excerpts on websites or marketing materials
  - Presentations

# Creating the Communication

- Present information in ways that communicate your story (not in the order questions were on the survey, for instance)
- Provide context on program, participants, methods, response rate (if applicable)
- Acknowledge limitations
- Never just present a web survey report when communicating your findings

# Aggregate Results

An assessment report is meant to lift up individual results to the aggregate. Think about a gradebook:

Student	Assignment1	Test 1	Test 2	Overall Student Performance
1				
2				
3				
4				
<b>Overall</b>				

- **Rows** tell us about individual student performance. Looking at the **columns** would provide information on the individual course components and the course overall.



# Storytelling as an Assessment Tool

- Our culture is a story-telling culture – it's how important lessons are passed along
- Additional tool for painting the full picture of the impact of a program or service
- While you won't have stories to support every aspect of your assessment project, they can boost the meaning of your data.
- It's okay to have a “point of view”

# Combining Quantitative and Qualitative Data

Students who participate in tobacco cessation consultations at Health Iowa have a 40% cessation rate.



*“ ...I came to see you over a year ago for smoking cessation help and I used Chantix to quit. I wanted to let you know that next Wednesday will be the one year anniversary of my quit date, and I have not smoked since then. One year free! I just wanted to thank you for your help again. It’s a great feeling to have accomplished it!”*



# IOWA GROW

Guided Reflection on Work

Thank you for all your hard work in making IOWA GROW™ possible. With the help of thoughtful and caring individuals like you, student employees are making connections between work and academics and gaining valuable skills.

By participating in IOWA GROW™ you help students succeed at the University of Iowa and beyond. Students who participated in IOWA GROW™ were more likely to agree that their job was helping them:

- Improve their written and oral communication skills
- Prepare for real-world employment
- Gain multicultural competence
- Develop time management and conflict resolution skills
- Learn about career options
- Use critical thinking skills to solve problems
- Gain the ability to see connections between work and academics

To continue to help students succeed here are some tips to consider:

- Focus your IOWA GROW™ conversation with students on making connections between work and academics, work and future career, etc., and ask all four core IOWA GROW™ questions every time.
- During your IOWA GROW™ conversations make it explicit that this is a work-academic connection conversation. Our data indicate that students who perceived the conversation as a work-academic connection conversation received the benefits of IOWA GROW™.
- Visit the IOWA GROW™ website for additional acceptable questions to ask students.



"My work as a student employee has allowed me to get a real-world look into the marketing field and experience many aspects of a marketing career, including project management, data analysis, and more."

- Laura Miller,  
Marketing Representative, Student Life Marketing + Design

<http://studentlife.uiowa.edu/grow>

The University of Iowa  
Division of Student Life



# Combining Quantitative and Qualitative Data

- Quotes should represent the general range and distribution of responses
- Numbers aren't always needed. Think about when it works to say 'most' vs. 55%.
- Ways to summarize results:
  - Tallies
  - Percentages
  - Aggregates
  - Averages
  - Qualitative Summaries


Most stakeholders have two questions:

- What did you learn?
- What will you change?

# Narrative and Numbers

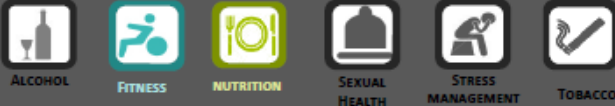
63% of IOWA GROW® participants listed the relationships they formed as a specific way their work has positively influenced their success at Iowa.

*“My job provided me with a sense of belonging. It gave me a place where I was needed, a place where I was accepted, and a place I was expected to be.”*



What is an example your setting where you could pair quantitative and qualitative data?





Knowledge  Skills  Responsibility  Integration & Application

Intuitive Eating is an evidence-based approach that teaches students how to create a healthy relationship between mind, body, food, and exercise. Intuitive Eating workshops and programming launched in fall 2011. All Intuitive Eating workshops and programming were free for students and were coordinated and presented by Student Health & Wellness health educators who possess the Intuitive Eating Counselor certification.

### Knowledge Gains & Intention to Change Behavior

Students completed an evaluation after each principle.

Principles	Correct on Learning Question	Could State Action Commitment
1 - Reject the Diet Mentality (n=30)	96.6%	100%
2 - Honor Your Hunger (n=21)	95.2%	100%
3 - Make Peace with Food (n=20)	95%	100%
4 - Challenge the Food Police (n=20)	100%	100%
5 - Feel Your Fullness (n=18)	100%	100%
6 - Discover the Satisfaction Factor (n=16)	100%	100%
7 - Cope with Emotions without Using Food (n=15)	100%	100%
8 - Respect Your Body (n=16)	100%	100%
9 - Exercise and Feel the Difference (n=16)	100%	100%
10 - Honor Your Health with Gentle Nutrition (n=16)	100%	100%

A pre-post comparison of seven students shows there were two significant changes (p=.03): students increased confidence in giving themselves unconditional permission to eat what they really want and respecting their bodies.



> **32 students**  
Participated in the 4-week workshops



> **486 students**  
Attended one-hour programs about Intuitive Eating

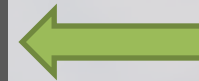


100% of participants who completed the evaluation (n=7) agreed that Intuitive Eating helped them create a healthy relationship with food and exercise, feel more positive and accepting of their bodies, and feel more confident in making healthy nutrition and exercise choices.

### > What Students Think:

I'm learning to accept my body the way it is, something that's been hard for me to do in the past. | Looking at positive things instead of negative things is really helpful. | It's helped me be kinder to myself about my body.  
I accepted my genes but know that I am going to be as healthy as I can be. | I can now see that food is not the enemy and exercise is great for improving my state of mind and disposition.

# Report Example



SH&W Services



Institutional Outcomes



Context



Findings connected to outcomes



Qualitative Information



# What's Next?

- Consider where the communication should “live” electronically (web, shared drive, stakeholder files, etc.)
- Determine what, if any data, needs to be retained and how
- Continue looking for relevant opportunities to use assessment results in same or different formats/settings



# Works Cited and Photo Credits

- Suskie, L. 2009. *Assessing student learning: A common sense guide*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Bresciani, M. J., Zelna, C. L., & Anderson, J.A. (2004). *Assessing student learning and development: A handbook for practitioners*. Washington, DC: National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA).
  
- Stack of reports background: retrieved [here](#)
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- Documents: retrieved [here](#)
- Women talking: retrieved [here](#)
- Audience: retrieved [here](#)
- Target: retrieved [here](#)
- Key: retrieved [here](#)
- Smoking: retrieved [here](#)
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- Questions: retrieved [here](#)