

What is Assessment and Why Does it Matter?

The Division of Student Life
Assessment, Improvement,
& Research



Assessment, Improvement, & Research (AIR)



AIR Mission

The mission of Student Life Assessment, Improvement, & Research (AIR) is to lead outcomes-based assessment in the co-curricular setting, support evidence-based decision-making, and promote a culture focused on the continuous improvement of programs and services.

Learning Outcomes

As a result of this workshop, participants will be able to...

- Differentiate between assessment, evaluation, and research
- Summarize the elements of the assessment cycle
- List one thing they learned during the workshop they will apply to their work

ACPA/NASPA Professional Competency

Assessment, Evaluation, and Research (AER)

Differentiate among assessment, program review, evaluation, planning, and research as well as the methods appropriate to each.



Assessment

“any effort to gather, analyze, and interpret evidence that describes institutional, departmental, divisional, or agency effectiveness (Upcraft & Schuh, 1996, p. 18).”

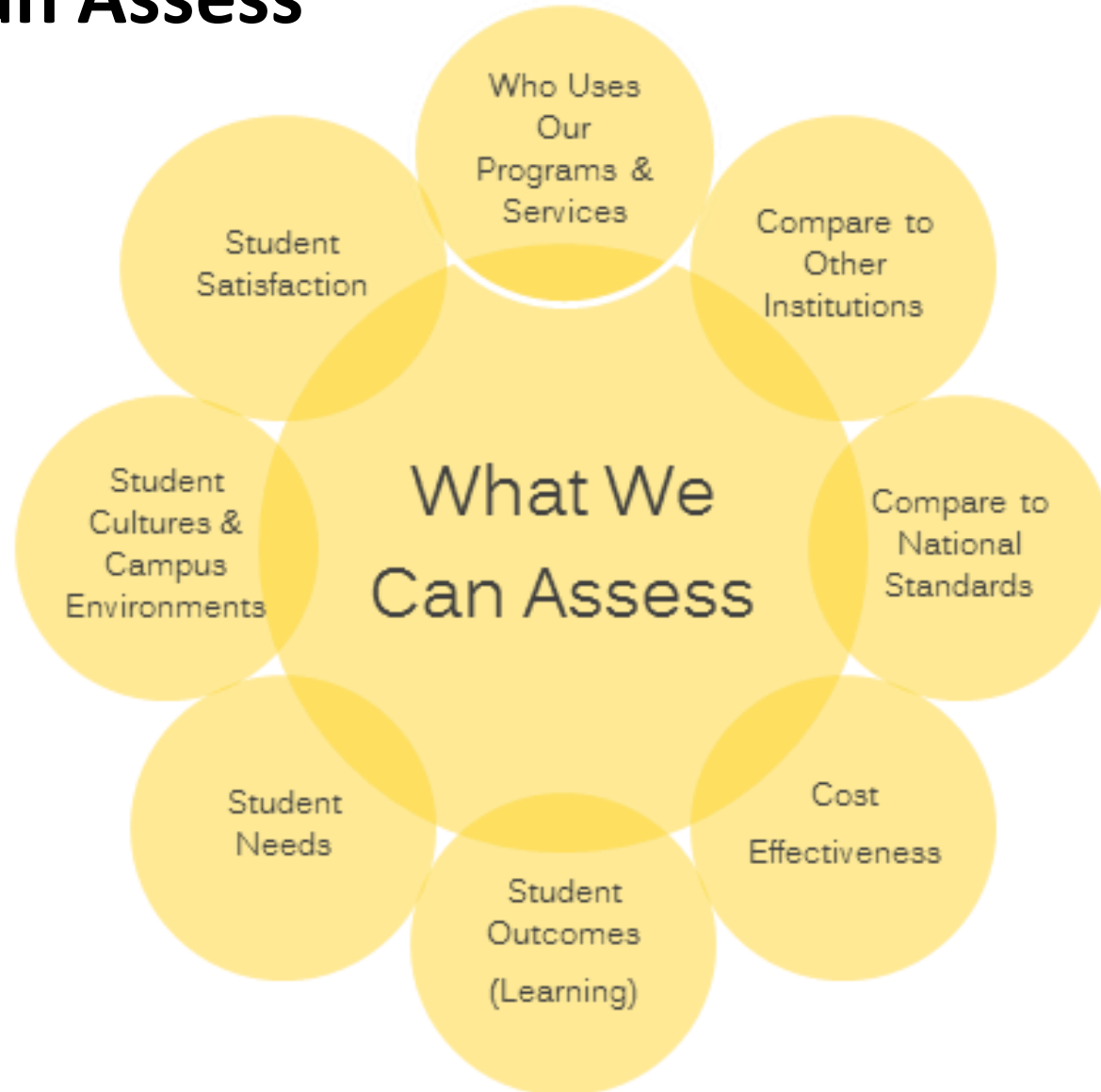
In practice, assessment is **making decisions** based on [systematically collected] **evidence** vs. instinct or tradition.

Evaluation

"Any effort to use assessment evidence to improve institutional, departmental, or divisional effectiveness."

(Upcraft & Schuh, 1996)

What We Can Assess



Outcomes-Based Assessment

(Bresciani et al., 2004, p.10)

- What is my program/service supposed to accomplish?
- What do I want students to be able to do and/or know as a result of this program/service?
- How well are we doing it?
- How do we know?
- How do we use the information to improve or celebrate success?
- Do the improvements we make work?

Research

- Conducted based on strict standards in ideal circumstances.
- Guides theory and is used to test concepts.
- The findings from research have larger implications for all organizations.

Research vs. Quality Assurance/Improvement

Points to Consider	Research	QA/QI
Purpose	To test a hypothesis or establish clinical practice standards where none are currently accepted	To assess or promptly improve a process, program or system; OR improve performance as judged by accepted/established standards
Starting Point	To answer a question or test a hypothesis	To improve performance or quality of a service
Benefits	Designed to further scientific knowledge in a particular field of study; subjects may or may not directly benefit	Designed to promptly benefit a process, program or system; may or may not benefit patients or clients
Risks/Burdens	Possible risks (physical, legal, social, psychological, financial) must be disclosed to subjects	By design, projects do not increase patient/client risk, with exception of possible privacy/confidentiality concerns
Data Collection	Systematic data collection through intervention or interaction	Systematic data collection through interaction
End Point	Answer/address a research question	Promptly improve a program or process or system
Testing/Analysis	Statistically prove or disprove a hypothesis	Compare a program or process or system to an established set of standards

Table adapted from QA/QI guidance from the Stanford University Human Research Protection Program

Improvement & Accountability

Improvement

- Improve the quality of the programs and services
- Data collection for internal audiences
 - Ex. Legislators, donors, parents

Accountability

- Demonstrate effectiveness of programs and services to stakeholders
- Data collection for external audiences
 - Ex. Faculty, administrators, students

Why does assessment matter?

"Student affairs staff members need to have more than programs, activities, and experiences they think would contribute to student learning. They need to have the empirical evidence to be confident that these programs, activities, and experiences actually do contribute to student learning. This is the point in student affairs practice where assessment is vital."

(Schuh and Gansemer-Topf, 2010)

It all starts with a question...

Activity: Identify your question!

Instructions: Think of the current program or primary functions your work area is involved in.

- *Are there puzzling things that you are curious about?*
- *Is there a system that just isn't working, and you don't know why?*
- *Have you received comments or complaints about something?*
- *Do you wonder why more people aren't involved in your events?*

Assessment Cycle



1. Identify Goals/Outcomes

- **Mission:** Statement of purpose
- **Goals:** Broad, general statements about what the program intends to accomplish
- **Outcomes:** Detailed statements that outline specifically the end results of the program
- There should be a connection between the mission, goals, and outcomes.



*What is the
program/service
trying to
accomplish?*

1.a) Identify Goals/Outcomes

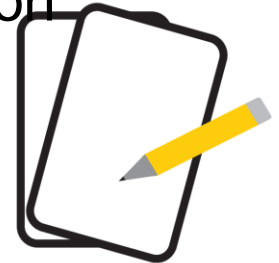
Metric: *“Standards of measurement by which efficiency, performance, progress, or quality of a plan, process, or product can be assessed.”* (Business Dictionary)



*What is the
program/service
trying to
accomplish?*

2. Gather Evidence

- Think about **how** you'll need to use the information
 - What types of information will be useful in helping you know what you need to change?
 - What will provide you with information to make decisions?
- Think about **who** will use the assessment information
 - What kind(s) of data do they respond to?
 - What will influence your constituents?



How will you gather evidence to know whether the program/ service is effective?

2.a) Assessment tools/methods

- Rubrics
- Surveys
- Focus groups
- Interviews
- Observations
- Document or Content analysis



How will you gather evidence to know whether the program/service is effective?

3. Interpret Evidence

Data can be...

- Quantitative data

- Can be counted or expressed numerically
- Example: Responses to a survey that ask participants to rate their level of agreement (1=Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree) with a statement

- Qualitative data

- Describe things in terms of themes, categories, or qualities



Approach to analysis depends on nature of the data

What does the data tell you about whether the program/service accomplished its intended purpose?

4. Make Decisions/Implement Change

- Making sound decisions based on good evidence
- Focused on improvement
- Need to *act* on our assessment findings

Data Dialogue

- Creates a community of practice
- Decreases defensiveness
- Increases shared ownership



*How will you
make decisions
and implement
change based on
the findings?*

UI Example: University Counseling Service

Question asked:

- What levels of care are needed to best meet the needs of the most students, in the briefest amount of time?

Type of data collected:

- Metric: What students use what number of sessions, i.e. 20% of students come once only.
- Outcome: Students show the greatest amount of symptom reduction in the briefest time frame by session six of individual.

Lesson learned:

- Make data driven decisions.

Operational change made:

- Added “Same Day, Quick Access” service to account for the 20% who want to be seen once and be done. This pulls this 20% out of the cue for the students who want to be seen more ongoing.
- Added session limit number to public information noting that most students improve by session six.

Student outcomes or improvement observed:

- High satisfaction ratings with same day quick access.
- Continued consistency of students doing their largest amount of symptom reduction by session six.

UI Example: Late Night Programming

Question asked:

- Are students in the high- and low-risk drinker categories (as defined by UI NCHA data) participating in Late Night Programming events?

Type of data collected:

- SWIPE and additional survey questions

Lesson learned:

- We will look to gather information from Low-Risk drinkers to learn more about their experience and how Late Night Programs affected their experience and sense of belonging, if any.

Operational change made:

- Adjusted programming and marketing efforts to target students who fall in the high- and low-risk categories. Shared data with participating departments to drive programming decisions (type of event, marketing efforts, etc.) in FY20..

Student outcomes or improvement observed:

- Observed the actual participation rates of students in Late Night Programs. Will look for improvement in the next year, as this was our first year collecting this data and we are using the data to drive programmatic decisions.

Discuss at your Table

- What are you currently assessing?

Incorporating Assessment into Practice

Meaningful

Valuable

Useful

Manageable

Focused on
Improvement

Discuss at your Table

- **What barriers to assessment do you face?**
- **What strategies could you use to overcome these barriers?**

Benefits and Barriers to Assessment

Benefits	Barriers
Evidence that we are accomplishing what we say we are	Resources
Provides evidence on how we contribute to mission	Knowledge
Evaluate the effectiveness of our services and programs	Attitude
Create more effective programs/services	Value
Allocate resources more efficiently	

3:2:1 Activity

Take a moment to write down:

3 Things you learned

2 Questions you have

1 Takeaway

Questions?

What's Next

Assessment Development Series Workshop #2

Goals, Objectives, & Outcomes: What's the Difference?

As a result of this workshop participants will be able to...

- Differentiate between goals, objectives, and outcomes
- Write measurable and specific learning outcomes
- Connect outlined goals, objectives, and outcomes to the assessment cycle

***What
should students
be able to do as
a result of
the programs and
services
we provide?***

Feedback

AIR Survey

- Please take a moment to complete a short survey about this workshop that will be sent out from a member of our office later today. The PowerPoint slides will be attached.

Learning & Development Survey

- As our course is registered through Employee Self Service, UI Learning and Development will send a survey request to your inbox. Please disregard – we will not use this data.

Resources

Assessment, Improvement, & Research

- The University of Iowa
- 231 Iowa Memorial Union
- 319-335-3557