Assessment of Learning in Student Affairs: A Comprehensive Division-wide Plan

UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON
DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS

Robert W. Aaron, Ph.D.
Director of Assessment and Planning, Division of Student Life
Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis
Interactivity

• Please ask questions!

• E-mail me this morning
  rwaaron@iupui.edu

• Follow me on Twitter
  @Rob_Aaron
Overview

• Background/context

• Assessment of learning in student affairs
  – Learning Outcomes Defined
  – Determination of Measures
  – Data collection
  – Use data for improvement

• Questions/Answers
Session Outcomes

• After attending this program, participants will be able to:
  1. Describe the importance of providing evidence of learning in student affairs
  2. Begin the process of creating learning outcomes for their unit
Background / Context

• Rise of Accountability measures since 1990s
  – Increase in college costs
  – Decrease in evidence of student learning
  – Inability to explain / misunderstanding of what is actually done in higher ed
    (Bresciani, 2011; Palomba & Banta, 1999; Upcraft & Schuh, 1996)

• Discussions with our academic colleagues - bridging a historical divide between academic and student affairs
Assessment is...

- ...different from research
- ...a tool, not a cure-all
- ...is not alive!
  - Action must be taken on assessment
  - Assessment alone does not fix anything

- ...A VEHICLE for INFORMED DECISION-MAKING, based on a variety of rich data sources
Student Life Assessment Cycle

Planning & Budgeting
1. Mission, Vision, Goals developed
2. Unit goals aligned with Division
3. Programs based on assessable goals, with performance indicators
4. Planning to available financial resources
5. Annual reports and survey results on Web

Improvement
1. Report to internal constituents
2. Demonstrate accountability to external stakeholders
3. Propose improvement initiatives based on assessment findings
4. Implement improvements
5. Improve assessment methods

Assessable Outcomes

Implementation (Everyone in the Division implements goals)

Evaluation
1. Needs/interest assessments
2. Assessment of learning outcomes (PULs/SLLOs)
3. Surveys: NSSE, Student Satisfaction, CORE, etc.
4. Administrative program reviews
5. Contributions to Campus performance indicators
6. Benchmarking studies
7. HR and Leadership Development
8. Program, service & facilities evaluation
9. Contributions to institutional accreditation

Adapted from T. Banta's Culture of Evidence model for IUPUI
LEARNING OUTCOMES, DEFINED
Learning Outcomes

• An **outcome** is the desired effect of a program, service, or intervention but is more specific than a goal. *It is participant centered.*

Types of Learning Outcomes

• **Student learning outcomes**: cognitive or affective abilities/characteristics demonstrated
• **Program outcomes**: what your program accomplishes
• **Operational outcomes**: metrics regarding how well the operation works (financial metrics)
Domains: STUDENT Learning Outcomes

- Cognitive (knowledge)
  - Thinking
  - Mental skills
- Psychomotor (skills)
  - Doing
  - Physical skills
- Affective (attitudes)
  - Attitudes
  - Feelings
  - Emotions
Bloom’s Taxonomy

• **Knowledge**: identifies, defines, describes
• **Understanding**: explains, summarizes, classifies
• **Application**: demonstrates, computes, solves
• **Analysis**: differentiates, diagrams, estimates
• **Synthesis**: creates, formulates, revises
• **Evaluation**: criticizes, compares, concludes

Learning Outcome Anatomy

• Learning outcome =
  – SWiBAT + Bloom Word + Condition

• Example:
  Students Will Be Able To explain healthy lifestyle choices as a result of participating in outreach activities sponsored by CAPS.

Busby & Henning, 2008
WRITING LEARNING OUTCOMES & DETERMINING MEASURES
Process

• Determine the points of learning in your programs, services or activities
• Write SWiBAT statements
• Determine Measures
• Check for alignment with guiding standards (e.g., field-based, Division-based, University-based)
Determination of Measures

• Pre-existing instruments…OR…
• Develop learning outcome questions that will be incorporated into evaluation forms
• Allows for describing what was learned in addition to participation numbers
• Example of our end goal:
  • 133 students participated in LEAD IUPUI Emerging and Advanced Leaders workshops last year
  • 93% of the participants indicated this helped them gain critical thinking skills
Learning Outcomes & Measures (indirect)

• As a result of living in a Residence-Based Learning Community, students will be able to discuss ideas with their peers to assist with their academic success.
  – Measure: Add detailed RBLC Question to Residential Satisfaction Survey (compare to similar NSSE item)

• Students will be able to explain healthy lifestyle choices as a result of participation in outreach activities.
  – Measure: Increase in coping strategy indicator from outreach surveys

rwaaron@iupui.edu
@Rob_Aaron
Learning Outcomes & Measures (direct)

• As a result of working at the Multimedia Production Center, students will be able to discuss issues related to cultural heritage

  – Measure: *Portfolio of graphic design work related to cultural heritage month programming, evaluated by the Division’s graphic design coordinator and Coordinator of Social Justice*
Align with Guiding Standards

EXAMPLE:
IUPUI Principles of Undergraduate Learning (PULs)
- Core communication and quantitative skills
- Critical thinking
- Integration and application of knowledge
- Intellectual depth, breadth and adaptiveness
- Understanding society and culture
- Values and ethics

Web site: http://academicaffairs.iupui.edu/plans/pul/

rwaaron@iupui.edu
@Rob_Aaron
Other Guiding Principles

• Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS)
• Specific professional associations
• Theories relevant to your specific functional area
• Compilation of numerous ideas: Learning Reconsidered 2 has several examples
## Phase 1a: Mapping Project

<table>
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<th>Unit program/service</th>
<th>Communication &amp; quantitative skills</th>
<th>Critical thinking</th>
<th>Integration &amp; application of knowledge</th>
<th>Intellectual depth, breadth, &amp; adaptiveness</th>
<th>Understanding society &amp; culture</th>
<th>Values &amp; ethics</th>
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**Office of Student Activities**

rwaaron@iupui.edu
@Rob_Aaron
Results of PUL Mapping Project

- Core communication & quantitative skills (PUL1): 16
- Critical thinking (PUL2): 21
- Integration & application of knowledge (PUL3): 13
- Intellectual depth, breadth, & adaptiveness (PUL4): 6
- Understanding society & culture (PUL5): 18
- Values & ethics (PUL6): 12

rwaaron@iupui.edu
@Rob_Aaron
Alignment Approaches

Deductive
- University
- Division
- Department

Inductive
- Department
- Division
- University

rwaaron@iupui.edu
@Rob_Aaron
DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS
Managing Data Collection

• Combine strategies learned through the outcomes-writing project:
  – Make strategic choices to get started
  – Use the measures you determined earlier
  – Embed learning outcome items into regular program evaluations
  – Help each other – this may be new territory!

rwaaron@iupui.edu
@Rob_Aaron
Managing Data Collection

• Basic rule: Resist the temptation to assess every aspect of everything you do!

• Focus on finding meaningful results that you can use to share your story
Example: LEAD IUPUI

• Leadership education program established 2007

• **Learning Outcomes:**
  
  – Gain personal competencies
    • (PUL1: communication; PUL2: critical thinking)
  
  – Develop a sense of personal leadership identity
    • (PUL5: society & culture; PUL6: values & ethics)
  
  – Understand how their personal leadership identity relates to working with others
    • (PUL5: society & culture; PUL6: values & ethics)
  
  – Build community with the IUPUI and Indianapolis community
    • (PUL3: integration & application of knowledge; PUL 5: society & culture)
  
  – Connect to the IUPUI campus
    • (PUL1: communication; PUL2: critical thinking)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle of Undergraduate Learning</th>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Core communication and Quantitative Skills (PUL1)        | 1. This seminar encouraged me to look at ways to communicate within a team to solve problems.  
2. This seminar provided me with new skills to communicate effectively with my peers  
3. I have gained insight on how to deal with “difficult people.” | 93% indicated “agree” or “strongly agree” (n=30)                                               |
| Critical Thinking (PUL 2)                               | 1. This seminar encouraged me to analyze different ideas and proposed solutions.  
2. This seminar caused me to review my ideas about how to approach an issue.  
3. This seminar provided me with the critical thinking skills to generate new ideas or ways to improve things. | 93% indicated “agree” or “strongly agree” (n=133)                                               |
| Integration and application of knowledge (PUL 3)          | 1. What I learned today in this seminar will enhance my personal life. | 94% indicated “agree” or “strongly agree” (n=59)                                               |
| Intellectual depth, breadth, and adaptiveness (PUL 4)     | 1. I am able to define conflict and distinguish it from other forms or interaction.  
2. This program has allowed me to identify the views of nature of conflict.  
3. Through this program, I know the principles of working through conflict. | 100% indicated “agree” or “strongly agree” (n=24)                                               |
| Understanding society and culture (PUL 5)                | 1. This seminar provided me with an understanding of culture and society that allows me to respect the views of people with different perspectives  
2. This seminar helped me to see relationships among local, national, and global issues | 89% indicated “agree” or “strongly agree” (n=60)                                               |
| Values and ethics (PUL 6)                                | 1. This seminar allowed me to apply my set of values and ethics to a specific situation. | 100% indicated “agree” (n=9)                                                                 |
Lead IUPUI – Reflections (indirect)

Core Communication Skills (PUL 1)
• “I believe that the best thing a leader can do is to walk into a conversation with a strong positive mindset. This conveys confidence to who you are talking to and makes them want to be a part of the team. .. Listening is a key aspect of a good leader, by getting them to talk to you, you form a back and forth conversation that keeps both parties initiated and helps present each other’s’ viewpoints.”

Advanced Leaders Seminar Online Presentation – Passion and Inspiration

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Lead IUPUI – Reflections (indirect)

Critical Thinking (PUL 2)

• “I will contemplate further on the goals and roles of my life, so that I will always be able to determine what is most important to me.”

Emerging Leaders Seminar – Balance and Time Management

• “How to find the significance of purpose for me.”

Advanced Leaders Seminar – Finding Purpose
Lead IUPUI – Reflections (indirect)

Application of Knowledge (PUL 3)

• “I plan to use his profound ideals in my everyday life. Whether I am leading a group or just meeting new people I will convey my self-confidence. I will also listen more and talk less in order to better understand their viewpoints of the matter at hand. I will continue to focus on the positive things during times of adversity in order to boost team morale. Most importantly of all, I will find ways to use my passions and beliefs to better lead my team through the rough times and onto successful outcomes.”

Advanced Leaders Seminar Online Presentation – Passion and Inspiration
PHASE 3: USE FOR IMPROVEMENT
Student Life Assessment Loop

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**Improvement**
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**Implementation**
(Everyone in the Division implements goals)

**Assessable Outcomes**

**Application of Findings**

**Evaluation**
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@Rob_Aaron
Lead IUPUI Use for Improvement

• Collected data are very positive and support that student learning is occurring in many different outcome areas
• Although all the results were very positive, there were a few PULs that scored lower comparably to others
• More experiential, extended programs needed
• Different types assessment methods should be explored
• Staff should better assess outcomes not related to PULs
Closing the loop

• Help students make connections
  – Regular every-day conversations
  – Helping students in need

• Assist students with documenting connections
  – Portfolio
  – Resume
  – Journal

• Systematically share examples of learning

• Use data for improvement
Final Thoughts

• Student affairs assessment is messy! Jump into the pool and get wet.

• The field, and our students, are constantly changing. Continue to be flexible and go with the flow

• Don’t fear the data!

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Questions?

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@Rob_Aaron
Keep in touch!

Robert W. Aaron, Ph.D.
Director, Assessment and Planning
Division of Student Life
Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis
(317) 274-8990
rwaaron@iupui.edu
http://life.iupui.edu
@Rob_Aaron