

Assessing student learning and development is a priority in most colleges and universities. Student learning is a product of academic and students affairs. Having a common language, methods, and techniques is important to assess the learning process regardless of where it happens. With these tools in mind, faculty, administrators, and student service professionals will improve educational programs and services. *Assessing Student Learning and Development: A Handbook for Practitioners* by Marilee Bresciani, Carrie Zelna, and James Anderson allows readers to have a better idea of how to manage the assessment process and how to accomplish specific assessment activities. Evaluating assessment tools and instruments, creating and using rubrics, and conducting interviews, focus groups, and surveys are some of the resources taught in this book. Student learning and development is linked to institutional excellence and its quality. Whenever Academic Affairs and Student Affairs share the responsibility for student learning, a significant progress will be made in order to improve it.

On many campuses the co-curricular programming may vary; some are nascent and underdeveloped, and some are meaningful and productive. What is more, underdeveloped collaborations are often characterized by: different perceptions of roles and responsibilities, lack of common knowledge, a power differential that ascribes more power to one group, an emphasis on the cognitive realm versus the affective, allegiance to different professional organizations and cultures, different sources of revenue, one group perceived as “thinking” and the other as “doing”, and varied sources of evidence that each group is producing student outcomes. Student learning is often summarized in ten principles: learning is fundamentally about making and maintaining connections, is enhanced by taking place in the context of a compelling situation that balances challenge and opportunity, is active research for meaning by the learner, is developmental-a cumulative process involving the whole person, is done by individuals who are

intrinsically tied to others as social beings, is strongly affected by the educational climate in which it takes place, requires frequent feedback if it is to be sustained, takes place in formally and incidentally; beyond explicit teaching from the classroom, is grounded in particular context and individual experiences, and, finally, it involves the ability of individuals to monitor their own learning, to understand how knowledge is acquired, and to develop strategies for learning and be aware of knowing ways of approaching new bodies of knowledge.

Furthermore, co-curricular programs can develop skills and competencies that many higher education experts mention such as: global literacy, accelerated technology, social ethics and responsibility, organizational networking, expanding diverse consumer markets, empowerment-oriented training and policy, analysis of process barriers to goal attainment, multicultural communities and organizations, understanding of teamwork, understanding of assessment associated with quality and effectiveness, use of problem-solving settings and context, and development of general, specific, and contextual skills. This is why assessing student learning is putting into place a systematic process that will help us answer the following questions: What are we trying to do and why? What is my program supposed to accomplish? How well are we doing it? How do we know? How do we use the information to improve or celebrate successes? Do the improvements we make work? The purpose of assessing may fulfill any of the following: reinforce or emphasize the mission of a unit, improve a program's quality or performance, compare a program's quality or value to its previous principles, inform planning, inform decision making, inform policy discussions at the local, state, regional, and national levels, evaluate programs and personnel, assist in the request for additional funds, assist in the relocation of resources, assist in meeting accreditation requirements, models of best practices, and national benchmarks, celebrate successes, reflect on the attitudes and approaches we take in

improving learning and development, and create a culture of continuous accountability, learning improvement.

Assessing also involves the following components before it can be done: assessment audience, a budget, time frame, analysis capabilities, and reports of results and decisions. Right after, criteria and rubrics shall be established to measure assessment and evaluation. These tools are effectively used to norm faculty and co-curricular specialists expectations, inform students of what it is looking for, give students an opportunity how they have improved, make rankings, ratings, and grades more meaningful, help students identify their own learning and development or absence thereof, and assess a student, activity, or program. Observations are another underused assessment technique. They measure an array of outcomes such as student learning and development. Finally, case studies can be used as a teaching technique or as a method. They offer an inquiry to a person, place, organization, or program. They include observations, document analysis, focus groups, relevant statistics, and other textual information. It is the analysis and synthesis of all the data collected from multiple methods during the study.

By effectively assessing student learning and development, a better understanding of what and how students learn, high-quality educational programs and services, and a very strong sense that what you do makes a difference in students' lives is gained. Let's keep in mind that the most important qualities of assessment are: meaningful in that it is faculty, co-curricular specialist, or expert driven, manageable in that it considers varying resources, flexible in that it factors in assessment learning curves, truth-seeking, objective, and ethical, informs decisions for continuous improvement or provides evidence of proof, and, lastly, promotes a culture of accountability, learning, and improvement.