



What is Assessment?

Assessment is a learning process. Through assessment, we are often able to determine what students are learning in programs and whether the learning or operational outcomes are being achieved. Sometimes information learned from the results we collect is directly applied to the program/activity. Other times, changes are made to the assessment plan. These changes can include revision of learning outcomes, different data collection methods, or changing the data analysis we use. Assessment is not a perfect process, the key is to keep going and to ask new questions based on the information you learned. As Suskie (2009) has said, *"There is no magic formula to creating a culture of assessment. What works on any campus depends on its culture, history and values."* In assessment, it is also important to share your results with others. The continued communication about assessment, areas for improvement, and areas of strength is what builds a culture of evidence.

(Successful Assessment for Student Affairs: A How-To Guide, 2013)

Thoughts on Assessment

"Assessment is a mindset, not just an activity. Student affairs professionals committed to their roles as adviser, helper, counselor, responder and advocate should also be dedicated to using assessment as a framework for practice. It's about wanting answers to questions and about using evidence to help students make good decisions. If we are to be intentional about serving students we must adopt an evidence-based approach to determine best practices. Assessment can help us to do this!"

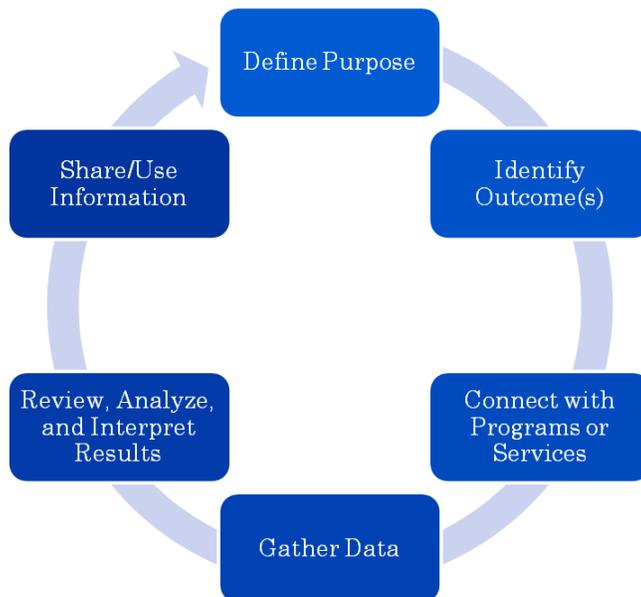
~ Dan Bureau, Director of Student Affairs Learning & Assessment,
University of Memphis (TN)

What is "good" assessment?

Good assessment:

1. **Is Used:** Planned with a purpose, focused on goals and the results are used by multiple constituencies
2. **Is Cost-effective:** Realistic given the financial, technological and human resources that need to be involved
3. **Yields reasonably accurate and truthful results:** Developed thoughtfully with a clear goal and purpose
4. **Is Valued:** Results inform important decisions and are part of an institutional culture that values asking questions and using information to make decisions
5. **Focuses on and flows from clear and important goals**

The Assessment Cycle: Defining your Purpose



Source: Successful Assessment for Student Affairs: A How-To Guide, 2013

The beginning step to assessment is first defining your purpose. Why are you or your institution interested in assessment? It may be helpful to first ask yourself why your program and services exist. Once you know the answers to your why, you will know what to assess, as this is the impact you hope to make. When you're deciding which programs and services to assess, start by selecting those that work directly with program goals, those that are related to longer interventions, those with a greater number of participants, and those that use greater resources. Identifying any areas for improvement in high participant, high resource programs could help save the department's valued resources, and also provide guidance for how to better use participants time and the department's materials during a program. Of course, if you have several activities that are associated with a program goal, it isn't feasible to assess every activity related to the goal, rather, assess a few activities relating to a large program goal.

(Successful Assessment for Student Affairs: A How-To Guide, 2013)

Why you should define your assessment purpose:

1. You can save time by only focusing on assessment projects that are needed for the year
2. You can do less by planning to rotate assessments from year-to-year
3. You can intentionally plan for what resources you may need
4. You increase the effectiveness of your assessment methods by asking better questions and varying the techniques you use
5. You spend less time assessing everything, and more time analyzing, interpreting, sharing and using assessment results

(Successful Assessment for Student Affairs: A How-To Guide, 2013)

Join us for the 1st Student Affairs Assessment Coffee of the Fall Semester!

Date: Tuesday, September 9

Time: 9 a.m.—10 a.m.

Who: Anyone!

Where: Martinsville Room, MLK, Jr. University Union

Why: To converse with students, faculty, and staff about assessment topics and beginning the Fall semester at EIU