

Student Life Studies Assessment Training Series Fall 2016 – Spring 2017

Background

According to its website (<http://studentlifestudies.tamu.edu/about>), Student Life Studies “provides leadership in assessment and planning to the Division of Student Affairs and to student organizations, maximizing program effectiveness and emphasizing student learning.” Furthermore, the vision of the department is to “create a culture in the Division of Student Affairs that values meaningful assessment, uses results to guide improvement, and articulates contributions to student success.” One goal for Student Life Studies is to educate and develop staff within the Division of Student Affairs about assessment. To accomplish this goal, the department coordinates an assessment training series throughout the year for division staff members. For the 2016-2017 academic year, eight workshops were held covering the following topics:

- Using assessment tools
- Qualtrics training (presented each semester)
- Documenting student learning
- Practical statistics
- Sharing assessment results
- Using assessment results
- Connecting plans

Student Life Studies wanted to assess the session participants to understand the effectiveness of the workshops and the intended learning outcomes for each workshop. This is the third time Student Life Studies assessed all workshops scheduled for the academic year.

Method and Sample

Each of the eight workshops were assessed individually using different methods at the end of the training session. Table 1 displays the date, assessment method, attendance, and response rate for each of the workshops. The paper surveys were developed using Teleform®, a software program that creates paper-based surveys and databases and analyzed using SPSS®, a statistical software package, and Microsoft Excel®. Other assessment methods were analyzed using checklists, Microsoft Word®, or Microsoft Excel®.

Topic	Date	Assessment Method	Attendance	Response Rate
Using Assessment Tools	Sept. 19	Paper Survey	15	87%
Qualtrics Training (fall semester)	Nov. 16	Demonstration Scored with Checklist	17	71%
Documenting Student Learning	Dec. 8	Paper Survey	11	83%
Practical Statistics	Jan. 10	In-Class Activity	12	100%
Sharing Assessment Results	Feb. 7	Class Activity Scored with Checklist	11	100%
Qualtrics Training (spring semester)	Feb. 24	Demonstration Scored with Checklist	14	79%
Using Assessment Results	March 9	In-Class Worksheet	7	100%
Connecting Assessment Plans	April 3	One-Minute Reflection	6	100%

Table 1: Workshop Assessments and Response Rates

Results

Results include frequency percentages for the number of people (n) who responded to the question. For ease of reading, frequency percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole percent, so totals may not add up to exactly 100%. Summary themes for qualitative questions are contained within this report; the full qualitative responses can be found in separate documents. Comparisons are not made to previous years since workshop topics and assessment methods changed. This report is divided into seven sections for each workshop topic. A description and the identified learning outcomes for each workshop are included in each section.

Using Assessment Tools

Workshop Description: Not sure which tools work best to get your assessment job done? Selecting the best assessment “tool” or method can be a challenge! This session will explore various assessment tools and methods, and will provide examples of which can work best, depending on your job – measuring program outcomes and effectiveness, or student learning. Demonstrations of how others have used these tools and their experiences with them will be included in the discussion. Come and learn which assessment tools should be hanging from your tool belt!

Learning Outcomes:

- Identify an assessment method(s) which could be effective in measuring their own program and/or learning outcomes
- Recognize the possible benefits and limitations of those different methods identified

The paper survey used to assess this workshop consisted of seven questions, four questions were quantitative and three questions were qualitative. The first four survey questions were asked about half way through the presentation; the remaining three questions were asked at the end of the workshop. The first question asked participants to which part of the student learning or program outcome should be strongly considered when determining the best assessment method. While the question was not intended to be multiple choice, many selected more than one response option. Just over two-thirds (69%) selected program or service, 62% said the audience, and 8% selected timing. Additionally, 15% selected the correct option which was verb.

Using a select all that apply option, workshop attendees were asked to identify the assessment method(s) they would use to measure student learning in a program they offered or to measure the learning their student employees would gain from their employment during the upcoming academic year. A majority (85%) reported they would utilize a rubric used by the advisor or supervisor rating the students' performance. Additionally, 69% each said they would use written reflection and a survey, and 46% indicated they would use a rubric for the students to rate their own progress. Another 46% selected the “other” response option and wrote in focus group, observation, interview, tracking, and retention.

Workshop participants were asked two follow-up questions to list a benefit of using the method(s) they selected and the limitations to the method(s) they selected. Participants identified benefits for written reflection as providing different perspectives on individual experiences, providing rich data, and allowing a place for students to articulate their experience. A benefit for tracking data was that it allows for a breadth of information. Participants indicated surveys were quick and could provide a simplified test option. Rubrics provide clear expectations, and when self-rated by students it can capture pre-post information. Additionally, one participant reported that using both direct and indirect methods allow for broader and more applicable data. A general limitation for assessment methods was that they are time consuming. Participants also stated that self-rated rubrics may include students' perception bias, tracking and surveys can lack a depth of information, surveys contribute to survey fatigue by students, and qualitative methods or scoring rubrics can have concerns about the validity between staff members.

At the end of the workshop, participants were asked which method from the list provided would give the most accurate information regarding program participants' persistence from year to year as well as their grade point average. Three-fourths (77%) selected the correct answer of tracking participation including UIN and 23% selected tracking attendance and participant demographics. Nobody selected the options for a survey or focus group.

After the discussion from the presentation, participants were again asked to identify the assessment method(s) they would use to measure student learning in a program they offered or to measure the learning their student employees would gain from their employment during the upcoming academic year. This time written reflection, a rubric used by the advisor or supervisor rating the students' performance, and a survey were each selected by 77% of the respondents, and 31% indicated they would use a rubric for the students to rate their own progress. In addition, 54% selected the "other" response option and wrote in focus group, observation, interview, survey without reflection, and tracking. Furthermore, if participants selected a different assessment method at the end of the workshop compared to what they selected earlier in the presentation, they were asked to explain why they changed their selection. Three people wrote in not applicable and one person reported that they have a preliminary plan but that they have not discussed this plan with the appropriate staff in the department.

Looking at the results as they relate to the two learning outcomes for this workshop, participants identified multiple assessment methods which could be effective. However, from the middle of the workshop to the end of the workshop when they were asked to identify assessment methods they would use, participants seemed to decrease slightly from using a more direct method such as rubric completed by an advisor or supervisor (85% down to 77%). Using written reflection and a survey increased from 69% to 77%. Students using a rubric to self-evaluate their own progress also decreased from 46% to 31%. In looking at the second learning outcome, a majority of the participants (92%) could accurately list benefits and limitations of several of the methods discussed.

Qualtrics Training

Workshop Description: This is a hands-on session to introduce new users to Qualtrics' basic functions and orient them to the new platform. We will briefly cover creating a new survey, including writing & editing questions, introducing logic, and using embedded data; distributing a survey via email or anonymous link; and reporting results using Qualtrics' reporting tools.

Learning Outcomes:

- Write and edit a multiple choice, matrix, and text entry question
- Use features of Qualtrics such as skip logic, display logic, recoding, and answer choice options
- Distribute a survey via email using a contact list
- Use embedded data in the survey send

As part of this hands-on workshop, participants were encouraged to bring a laptop or other device to create a survey throughout the training. Participants were then asked to send the survey to the presenter, who later reviewed the surveys using a checklist approach to measure each aspect covered in the training. Table 2, on the following page in descending order by the November workshop responses, shows the results for each item on the checklist. In the fall, of the 12 participants who emailed a survey link, 75% had all nine elements correct, 17% had eight of the nine elements correct, and 8% (n=1) had an error message their survey did not function. From the spring workshop, of the 11 participants who emailed a survey link, 55% completed all nine elements correctly, 27% had eight of the nine elements correct, and 18% did not create the survey as instructed during the training.

Checklist for Qualtrics for Beginners Training	November Workshop Percentage [n=12]	February Workshop Percentage [n=11]
Received an email with link to the survey	100%	100%
Email included name embedded in the message	100%	100%
Mutually exclusive set up correctly	92%	82%
Can select multiple responses for multiple choice question	92%	64%
Text entry set up for "other" response option	92%	82%
Matrix designed correctly and recoded appropriately	92%	82%
Display logic set up in-page based on response option selected	92%	82%
Some form of beginning or introductory message to the survey	83%	82%
Skip logic set up correctly to go to the end of the survey based on response	83%	82%

Table 2: Qualtrics Training Results

In focusing on these results as they related to the identified learning outcomes, most participants were able to demonstrate doing each of the items listed. The one exception was from the February workshop when just under two-thirds (64%) were able to correctly set up a multiple response question.

Documenting Student Learning

Workshop Description: How do you know what your students can do? How do you help your students know what they have learned from their experiences or employment? This workshop will assist you in articulating what you want your students to learn and how to document that it has happened. Additionally, we will discuss how you help your students document their own learning.

Learning Outcomes:

- Define program outcomes and student learning outcomes
- Write a student learning outcome
- List examples of direct and indirect assessment methods

The paper survey used to assess this workshop consisted of six questions, two questions were quantitative and four questions were qualitative. The first question asked participants to select the correct definition of a program outcome. All (100%) correctly selected that a program outcome is what a program or process is to do, achieve, or accomplish. When asked to select the correct definition of a learning outcome, 100% of the participants selected the accurate option of what students are expected to demonstrate in terms of knowledge, skills, or attitudes upon completion of a program, course, or activity.

When asked to write a student learning outcome using the ABCD model, 100% of the participants were able to accurately do this. Based on the outcome participants wrote, they were asked to identify each of the four aspects to the model. All (100%) accurately identified the audience (A) and the behavior (B) from their outcome. Almost two-thirds identified the condition (C). Of the two outcomes with a degree of achievement (D), 50% accurately identified it correctly. Staff confused the condition with what would be performed (should have been part of the behavior) and the extent that it is performed (which is the degree).

The last two questions asked participants to provide examples of a direct and indirect assessment method. Of the methods listed as being direct assessments, participants wrote in options as survey with questions that have correct responses, students being observed while demonstrating a skills, and testing options. One participant indicated using a rubric, which could be a direct method if completed by someone observing a student and not as a self-rated score. The indirect methods that were mentioned included asking students if they can do a certain behavior rather

than observing them doing it, asking students if they understand a concept, and asking students to articulate their experience. There was one method listed as an indirect method that could be a direct measure. It was asking a customer if they had good service; however, if there was an outcome such as students performing positive customer service, this could be closer to a direct method.

The learning outcomes for this workshop appear to have been met by most participants. All attendees were able to accurately identify the correct definition for a program and learning outcomes. Additionally, they were all able to write a learning outcome; however, there were some confusion on the different parts when using the ABCD model. Most of the examples provided were accurately listed as a direct or indirect assessment method. There were a couple of responses that based on what was written, it could be either a direct or indirect depending on how it was used.

Practical Statistics

Workshop Description: Statistics can be an intimidating for some, but everyone can be a “numbers person.” The purpose of this session is to give you a refresher on basic terminology (e.g., mean, standard deviation) and the knowledge of statistics you need to make savvy decisions about what kinds of analysis to request from SLS. With an emphasis on practical application, we will also practice reading tables and identifying meaningful crosstabs for your projects.

Learning Outcomes:

- Identify which types of statistics are appropriate given various types of questions
- Define terms such as mean and standard deviation
- Interpret the results of a crosstabulation table

During the workshop, attendees were asked questions as part of an interactive activity and they put answers on post-it notes and placed in the room. After responses were shared, the correct answer was given and explained why it was correct, and to help anyone who missed it understand that content.

For the first question, participants were given the following situation and asked what type of analysis they would request from a list including A) Mean (descriptives), B) Frequencies, or C) Mean (descriptives) and Frequencies. Of the 12 participants, half selected the correct response of A, Mean (descriptives) and half selected C, both Mean and Frequencies.

You are administering a survey on students' preferences and satisfaction with the on campus dining options. The question that appears on the survey is “In an average week during the academic year, how many times do you purchase a meal or snack from a vendor on campus? Please enter a numeral between 0-100.”

Participants were again asked to identify which type of analysis they would request for the situation below from the same response options: A) Mean (descriptives), B) Frequencies, or C) Mean (descriptives) and Frequencies. Three-fourths of the respondents (75%) identified the correct answer as C, Means and Frequencies. The remaining 25% selected B, Frequencies.

You are administering a survey on students' preferences and satisfaction with the on campus dining options. This question appears on your survey: “How would you rate your level of satisfaction in terms of the variety of on campus dining options?” The answer choices ranged from Very Dissatisfied to Very Satisfied.

For the third question, participants were given the same scenario about administering a survey on students' on campus dining preferences and satisfaction. This time the question that appeared on the survey asked "What is your most preferred location for purchasing food and snacks while on campus?" The response options included MSC, Commons, Sbisa, Evans Library, etc. The participants were again asked to select the type of analysis they would request from the same option of A) Mean (descriptives), B) Frequencies, or C) Mean (descriptives) and Frequencies. All participants (100%) selected the correct response, which was B, Frequencies.

For the final question, participants were shown a table with crosstabs of how men and women responded for each of the five categories on a Likert scale. Then participants were asked based on the table how men and women compare in terms of their self-rating of leadership skills. The participants were given the following options: A) Overall, men rate themselves higher, B) Overall, women rate themselves higher, or C) Overall men and women rate themselves about equal. A majority of the respondents (83%) selected the correct option, which was C, Overall men and women rated themselves about equal. The other 17% picked option B, that women rated themselves higher.

In terms of meeting the identified learning outcomes, there were mixed results in participants being able to accurately identify the type of statistics appropriate for different types of questions. When the same response options were given, between 50% and 100% could select the correct option for the given question. It is not known if by the last question respondents knew the correct answer or selected it by process of elimination. However, a majority were able to accurately interpret the results of a crosstabulation table. There was no assessment question focused on defining terms such as a mean and standard deviation, although those topics were part of the presentation.

Sharing Assessment Results

Workshop Description: Not sure what to share or who to share information with to tell your story? This workshop will help you identify potential stakeholders, determine what information to share, and provide options for how to share results others. Additionally, we will discuss some best practices when sharing assessment results.

Learning Outcomes:

- Identify internal and external stakeholders
- Summarize key points to determine what information to share with others
- List examples of methods to share assessment results based on the stakeholder
- Recognize best practices in sharing results

After the presentation, attendees were given a fake report with results about a leadership conference. Based on these made-up results, participants were asked to complete a worksheet where they identified two stakeholders for this project, determined if those stakeholders were internal or external, listed two key points to share with each stakeholder, and provided three methods they could use to share information with each stakeholder. Of the 11 participants returning a worksheet, 100% correctly identified two appropriate stakeholders and whether they were internal or external. Additionally, 91% were able to accurately specify two key points to share with each of the identified stakeholders. Just over half (55%) listed three methods they could use to share information with each stakeholder. Furthermore, 18% selected three methods for one stakeholder but only two methods for the other stakeholder. Another 18% selected three methods for one stakeholder but did not list anything for the second stakeholder. The remaining 9% listed two methods rather than three for each stakeholder.

Participants were asked to identify the three key steps for best practices of sharing information from a provided list of five options. The options were A) Share all information gathered, B) Decide the best format to share data for each stakeholder, C) Identify your stakeholders, D) Share the same way with all stakeholders, and E) Determine

what data to share for each stakeholder. All participants (100%) accurately selected the three correct options which were to decide the best format to share data for each stakeholder, identify your stakeholders, and determine what data to share for each stakeholder.

The final question on the worksheet asked attendees to list two tips they learned to present data. Ten of the 11 participants (91%) listed two tips they learned, and the one participant listed one tip they learned. The most common tip participants wrote in was to consider the data to share and the method for sharing based on the individual stakeholders. Other tips included were keeping data easy to read, sharing only relevant data, identifying what stands out, and making data visual.

Based on the four identified learning outcomes, it would seem that three were met. All participants (100%) were able to identify internal and external stakeholders and recognize best practices for sharing results. Almost all (91%) could list two key points of information to share with each stakeholder. However, for the one outcome only 55% were able to do what was asked, which was to list three methods for sharing information with the two stakeholders they identified. All participants were able to list some methods for each stakeholder, just not three for each one.

Using Assessment Results

Workshop Description: After analyzing your data comes the fun part – being able to use the results to improve your programs and services. Come learn common ways in which data can be used and considerations one should take into account to use assessment data. Attendees are encouraged to bring assessment results or a report with you to focus on your specific program or service area.

Learning Outcomes:

- Recognize key points to consider when using assessment results
- Feel confident to make a change in their own program or service based on their assessment results
- Identify a change in their own or another program or service based on the assessment results

As an activity during the workshop, participants were given one of two reports to read. One report was about a qualitative assessment project with focus groups and the other report was based on student learning using a rubric. Participants were then asked to respond to questions on a worksheet about content of the report and the provided assessment results.

The first question asked what the target or purpose of the assessment project was based on the report. Almost three-fourths (71%) listed at least one target or the purpose of the assessment project. Of the five who wrote in a response, 60% indicated what the purpose of the assessment was and 40% listed at least one learning outcome as the target in the assessment project. Participants were also asked if the target was met and to indicate the evidence of it being met. Just over half (57%) indicated whether the target(s) was met or not. Additionally, 43% shared the evidence from the assessment results that supported whether the target was met or not.

When asked what changes or improvements they would recommend based on the assessment results in the reports, 57% listed at least one suggestion. Some suggestions included focusing more on leading a project and communication rather than collaborating with a team, being intentional in making connections with academics, making sure no one is getting left behind in these areas, improving training for handling upset customers. Additionally, there were some comments about changing the assessment method for the project, but not about actually making changes or improvements.

The final question asked participants if their confidence in using results from their own assessments improved as a result of attending the workshop. Just over half (57%) selected “sure” and 43% selected “somewhat.” Nobody selected the options of not really much or not at all.

In considering the identified learning outcomes for this workshop, all participants (100%) reported feeling at least somewhat confident to using results from their own projects. Just over half (57%) were able identify a change to make based on assessment results. The worksheet used to assess the workshop did not asked about the key points one should consider when using assessment results; however, those were covered during the workshop.

Connecting Assessment Plans

Workshop Description: Do you ever wonder why assessment is a big deal these days? Are you trying to figure out how the strategic plans, assessment plans, and reports fit together? This workshop will provide an overview of the purposes of student affairs assessment, what that looks like at Texas A&M, and what specific initiatives the Division and University have.

Learning Outcomes:

- Articulate the purpose and philosophy behind student affairs assessment
- Identify the relationship between multiple plans

At the end of the presentation, attendees were asked to complete a one-minute paper with the prompt "What is one connection of my department to what was presented?" There were six plans that were discussed during the presentation including the President's Pillars, the University strategic plan, learning outcomes (university, A&M system, and State of Texas), the Division of Student Affairs strategic plan, department strategic plans, and department assessment plans. Several participants identified how their department initiatives connect to Texas A&M's strategic plan/transformational learning pillars or to the Division of Student Affairs strategic plan. Some indicated they connect with goals related to retention, employability, and social responsibility. While most participants (83%) could articulate at least one connection, one respondent (17%) reported not being able to identify anything specific and realized he/she was not familiar with their department's main goals.

In looking at the learning outcomes identified for this workshop, most participants were able to identify the relationship between multiple plans by making at least one connection of their department to one of the plans presented. The assessment used for the workshop did not ask participants to articulate the purpose and philosophy behind student affairs assessment.

Conclusions, Recommendations, and Action Plans

In general it would seem the Assessment Training Series workshops were a success. However, there were mixed results in participants learning all the intended outcomes for each workshop. Student Life Studies may want to work more collectively on the presentations and how the content is covering all the identified learning outcomes and different ways to present topics that have been presented in the past. It is common that workshop attendees come to training sessions from previous years or have heard some of the content previously.

Based on these results and what Student Life Studies staff has seen in the division, as well as what division staff indicated they would like additional training on, the department is encouraged to explore presenting workshops on writing learning/program outcomes, understanding the differences between program and learning outcomes, creating different assessment methods (surveys, case studies, reflections, rubrics, etc.), using MaroonLink to gather information, doing statistical analysis, using existing data such as SERU, making changes or improvements based on assessment results, developing quality assessment questions, and sharing assessment results (what to include, methods for sharing, using social media, and how to share with division).

Additionally, the department may want to brainstorm the best method to assessing individual workshops and the overall training series. In previous years, one survey was sent out at the end of each semester, but the response rates were much lower and the results provided limit data to use. Having assessments built into each workshop

provides more information about if the intended learning outcomes were met or not and resulted in higher response rates. If assessing each workshop is continued, it may be beneficial for the department staff to work collaboratively on planning the assessment for each workshop to ensure it will provide the type of information the department is looking for from the process and addresses all the identified outcomes for the workshop.

Department staff members are encouraged to share these assessment results with stakeholders. To lead by example, Student Life Studies staff may wish to discuss the key points when using assessment results such as if the targets were met, deciding what information stands out, and where we might dig deeper to understanding the results. This process may lead to additional ideas of changes or improvements that could be made to the training series. Student Life Studies might also consider the key points in sharing assessment results such as identifying stakeholders, considering each stakeholder and what data is relevant to them and the best method for sharing with each stakeholder.

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Report Prepared on: August 2, 2017

Services provided by Student Life Studies are funded, in part, by Texas A&M University Advancement Fee.