Student Life Studies
Assessment Boot Camp
June 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 developed and hosted its second Assessment Boot Camp on June 8, 2017.

Assessment Boot Camp (http://studentlifestudies.tamu.edu/Bootcamp) was an all-day professional development opportunity for division staff members and a few invited guests. The training covered the assessment cycle, assessment processes, designing quality assessment instruments, and understanding assessment results. Student Life Studies developed the following learning outcomes for the participants attending Assessment Boot Camp:

- Staff will accurately write an outcome based on the ABCD Model.
- Staff will select an appropriate assessment method to measure the identified learning outcome.
- Staff will identify two improvements to make for a program based on provided assessment results that are not about changing the assessment method.
- Staff will identify two stakeholders and create a plan to share assessment results with each one.

Student Life Studies wanted to assess the Assessment Boot Camp participants to understand the effectiveness of the training and determine if the identified learning outcomes were met. This was the second time Student Life Studies hosted this training and assessed it.

Method and Sample

Student Life Studies implemented three assessment methods to measure the effectiveness of Assessment Boot Camp. The first method was a direct measure focused on participants demonstrating their abilities on each of the identified outcomes. Student Life Studies staff designed and incorporated activities in the Assessment Boot Camp curriculum and participants completed a worksheet through a series of activities. Through this process, participants selected an assessment project they wanted to create or redesign. Participants wrote learning and program outcomes for their project and identified an appropriate assessment method to measure the determined learning outcome. Additionally, participants identified two stakeholders for their assessment project and how information could be shared with each stakeholder. In a different activity, Assessment Boot Camp participants reviewed assessment results from a provided report of a fake project. Using these made-up results, participants developed a plan to make improvements to the imaginary conference in the project. Student Life Studies collected the planning worksheets from 34 of the 38 attendees, providing an 89% response rate. Staff from Student Life Studies conducted a formal review process of participants' work using a checklist to determine if the intended outcomes were reached.

Additionally, Student Life Studies utilized the NASPA Assessment, Evaluation, and Research Competency Rubric as a pre- and post-assessment. Prior to Assessment Boot Camp, registered participants were asked to complete the self-rated competency rubric. Participants were again asked to complete the same self-rated competency rubric approximately two weeks after Assessment Boot Camp. Participants rated themselves as a beginner, intermediate, or advanced for each of the 12 areas on the rubric. The rubric was developed using Qualtrics®, survey design software that creates web-based forms and databases. Both the pre- and post-assessment contained 12 quantitative questions for each area of the rubric. In addition, the pre-assessment included one additional quantitative question and the post-assessment included one additional qualitative question. The pre-assessment survey link was sent to the 40 registered participants on May 17, 2017. Non-respondents received up to three reminders before the survey closed on May 26, 2017. Of the registered participants, 39 completed some part of the survey, for a 98% response rate. The one respondent who did not complete the pre-assessment also did not attend Assessment Boot Camp. The survey link for the post-assessment was sent to all 38 staff members who attended Assessment Boot Camp on June 21, 2017; non-respondents received up to three reminders. When the survey closed on July 10, 2017, 33 participants had completed some part of the survey, yielding an 87% response rate. Student Life Studies evaluated the results of the pre- and post-assessments using SPSS®, a statistical software package, and Microsoft Excel®.

For the final assessment method, Student Life Studies administered a one-minute reflection at the end of Assessment Boot Camp, which consisted of one qualitative question. Of the 37 participants who were given the one-minute reflection, 31 completed it, for an 84% response rate. Student Life Studies evaluated the comments from the one-minute reflection using Microsoft Word®.

Results
Results include means, standard deviations (sd), and 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 the qualitative questions are included in this report; the full qualitative responses can be found in separate documents. This report is divided into three sections by the different assessment methods: Curriculum Based Activities, Assessment, Evaluation, and Research Competency Rubric, and One-Minute Reflection.

Curriculum Based Activities
Student Life Studies led participants through a series of activities where staff members were able to plan an assessment they wanted to create or redesign. Staff members completed an assessment planning worksheet during these activities to develop their assessment project. These worksheets were collected at the end of Assessment Boot Camp and later reviewed by two staff members in Student Life Studies. There were four sections to the checklist used by Student Life Studies staff, which was based on the learning outcomes developed for Assessment Boot Camp. Student Life Studies provided feedback to the participants as they reviewed the assessment planning worksheets, and these worksheets with feedback were returned to participants shortly after Assessment Boot Camp.

In the first activity, participants were asked to write one learning outcome and one program outcome based on the ABCD Model that was presented during Assessment Boot Camp. Student Life Studies then reviewed the learning outcome to determine if it was written accurately using the model. Almost all participants (91%, which was a 4% increase to 2016) accurately wrote an outcome using the model. Those who did not write an accurate learning outcome struggled with articulating what they wanted someone to learn or be able to do as a result of the event being offered.

Student Life Studies trained staff members on a variety of assessment methods that could be used for assessment projects, as well as what types are more appropriate to measure certain outcomes. Participants were then asked to determine one appropriate assessment method based on the learning outcome they developed in the first activity. Student Life Studies evaluated the methods to determine if it seemed appropriate based on the information provided. Again, most participants (88%, which was the same compared to 2016) selected an appropriate assessment method to measure their learning outcome. Participants who did not select an appropriate method had difficulties aligning the verb of their learning outcome with how it would be assessed or did not effectively explain how that measure would work with their outcome.

Assessment Boot Camp participants were given a fake report about a conference that had been assessed. Based on the results provided in the fake report, participants were asked a series of questions to consider when using assessment results. These questions included if the targets for the program were met, what stood out from the results, and where they would dig deeper or look to gather further analysis. Participants were then asked to identify two improvements or changes they would make to the conference. Student Life Studies staff examined the improvements provided to see if they seemed to be based on the results of the report and that the improvements were not about changing the conference assessment. Almost all participants (97%, a 1% decrease from 2016) were able to identify two improvements they would make to the conference. One participant only identified one improvement rather than two.

The final activity asked participants to identify at least two stakeholders for the assessment project they were planning.   Student Life Studies reviewed what staff members determined, and 82% identified two realistic stakeholders. Furthermore, 91% identified at least one stakeholder, which was a 5% decrease when compared to 2016 when participants were only asked to identify at least one appropriate stakeholder. For many projects, Student Life Studies suggested some additional stakeholders the participants might want to consider for their assessment project. Additionally, participants were asked to articulate how they would share assessment results with each of the stakeholders identified. A majority of the participants (85%, representing an 18% increase from 2016) could identify different ways they could share information with each stakeholder.

Assessment, Evaluation, and Research Competency Rubric
Staff members were asked to rate themselves as a beginner, intermediate, or advanced on the 12 areas identified on the rubric both before and after attending Assessment Boot Camp. Definitions were provided to staff members on the rubric to explain the differences between the three ratings. Table 1, on the following page, displays the pre- and post-assessment results in descending order by the 2017 Means Difference column. The number of people (n) for the Means Difference includes the results for those who took both the pre- and post-assessment; staff only taking one survey were not included in calculating the means for this column. In all 12 areas, staff rated themselves higher on the post-assessment than on the pre-assessment. The areas with the largest gain between the two surveys included data collection and politics. Alternatively, the areas with the least gain between means on the two surveys included interpreting results and use of results. Additionally, for several statements the gain between the two surveys were smaller compared to the gain seen in 2016.

Please rate yourself on:	Advanced (3)	Intermediate (2)	Beginner (1)	2017 Mean (sd) [n]	2016 Mean (sd) [n]	2017 Means Difference [n]	2016 Means Difference [n]
Data Collection (pre)	3%	41%	56%	1.46 (.56) [39]	1.49 (.55) [47]	+.52 [27]	+.37 [37]
Data Collection (post)	16%	53%	31%	1.84 (.68) [32]	1.86 (.54) [37]		
Politics (pre)	10%	36%	54%	1.56 (.68) [39]	1.60 (.61) [47]	+.49 [27]	+.46 [37]
Politics (post)	16%	58%	26%	1.90 (.65) [31]	2.05 (.52) [37]		
Creating Systems (pre)	3%	24%	74%	1.29 (.52) [38]	1.43 (.58) [47]	+.44 [27]	+.51 [37]
Creating Systems (post)	3%	63%	33%	1.70 (.54) [30]	1.86 (.59) [37]		
Defining Terms and Concepts (pre)	5%	48%	48%	1.58 (.59) [40]	1.70 (.62) [47]	+.41 [27]	+.44 [39]
Defining Terms and Concepts (post)	9%	72%	19%	1.91 (.53) [32]	2.13 (.41) [39]		
Values (pre)	5%	43%	53%	1.53 (.60) [40]	1.62 (.64) [47]	+.41 [27]	+.37 [38]
Values (post)	6%	72%	22%	1.84 (.52) [32]	1.95 (.57) [38]		
Define Purpose (pre)	3%	54%	44%	1.59 (.55) [39]	1.62 (.57) [47]	+.40 [27]	+.42 [38]
Define Purpose (post)	9%	69%	22%	1.88 (.55) [32]	1.97 (.43) [38]		
Ethics (pre)	23%	36%	41%	1.82 (.79) [39]	1.70 (.59) [47]	+.38 [27]	+.60 [37]
Ethics (post)	26%	61%	13%	2.13 (.62) [31]	2.22 (.48) [37]		
Design (pre)	3%	36%	62%	1.41 (.55) [39]	1.34 (.48) [47]	+.30 [27]	+.44 [37]
Design (post)	13%	41%	47%	1.66 (.70) [32]	1.76 (.55) [37]		
Analysis (pre)	18%	32%	50%	1.68 (.78) [38]	1.57 (.62) [47]	+.29 [27]	+.19 [37]
Analysis (post)	16%	66%	19%	1.97 (.60) [32]	1.73 (.50) [37]		
Reporting (pre)	5%	51%	44%	1.62 (.59) [39]	1.60 (.58) [47]	+.26 [27]	+.33 [37]
Reporting (post)	16%	56%	28%	1.88 (.66) [32]	1.84 (.65) [37]		
Use of Results (pre)	3%	49%	49%	1.54 (.56) [39]	1.55 (.62) [47]	+.25 [27]	+.40 [37]
Use of Results (post)	7%	68%	26%	1.81 (.54) [31]	1.89 (.52) [37]		
Interpreting Results (pre)	13%	33%	54%	1.59 (.72) [39]	1.57 (.58) [47]	+.19 [27]	+.22 [37]
Interpreting Results (post)	16%	53%	31%	1.84 (.68) [32]	1.68 (.58) [37]		

Table 1: Staff Scores on Assessment, Evaluation, and Research Competency Rubric

Additionally, on the pre-assessment, Assessment Boot Camp attendees were asked a question about their motivation for attending the training. The results were a close split with 51% reporting they were looking forward to doing a little "toning up" with their assessment and 49% saying they could not wait to spend a full day "working out" (Mean=2.49/3.00; sd=.51; n=39). Nobody said they were only coming because they had been told they needed to increase their "physical exercise."

Furthermore, on the post-assessment, participants were given the opportunity to share any additional feedback they had regarding Assessment Boot Camp. Of the 11 respondents who wrote in a comment, many shared positive remarks about their experience such as the training being informative, well-organized, wonderful, enjoyable, interactive, awesome, and helpful. Some staff members also shared suggestions including moving people around more in the afternoon, adding a panel discussion, scheduling more breaks, providing more time for question and answer, making the training two half-days rather than one full-day, and slowing down the information presented on program and learning outcomes.

One-Minute Reflection
At the end of Assessment Boot Camp, participants were given a notecard and asked about other assessment related topics they would like to learn more about. Of the 31 staff members who completed a notecard, several indicated they would like to learn more about writing learning outcomes and understanding the differences between learning and program outcomes. Other suggestions included creating surveys, knowing how to use different types of assessments (case studies, reflections, rubrics, etc.), understanding statistical analysis, using existing data, and sharing assessment results with others.

Conclusions, Recommendations, and Action Plans
Overall, Student Life Studies can consider the Assessment Boot Camp a success. Generally, participants learned the intended outcomes and could demonstrate their skills in the identified outcomes for Assessment Boot Camp. Additionally, participants expressed many positive comments about the training.

Even though 91% of participants accurately wrote a learning outcome using the ABCD Model, many also indicated they would like more practice with this area and more information about the differences between program and learning outcomes. Student Life Studies may want to consider allowing more time for this section and more opportunities to practice during the training. Additionally, the staff may want to consider additional training during the year on this topic.

The department may also want to consider sharing specific examples of how to use various assessment methods in addition to the description of these different methods. Additionally, Student Life Studies might show examples of other staff members or departments who have used different methods successfully or develop a panel of these staff members to explain how they used a method with their students.

While more participants could identify stakeholders and how to share with them when compared to 2016 participants, there were still several who reported wanting to know more related to sharing such as what to include in a report or presentation, how to effectively use social media to share, and methods for sharing with the Division of Student Affairs. Student Life Studies may want to consider focusing more attention on sharing information differently with various types of stakeholders and look at activities or the workshop that help participants develop this plan and articulate it.

It is recommended that using assessment results continue to be a topic covered, even though almost all participants could identify changes to make based on made-up assessment results. Using results for continuous improvement is a key purpose for doing assessment. This was an area that showed a smaller gain when participants rated themselves before and after the training, and therefore that topic is important to keep in the curriculum. The training planners may want to look at how this is accomplished or creating made-up results that are challenging for participants.

Furthermore, Student Life Studies could look at different activities focused on design, creating systems, data collection, and interpreting results. These were areas that 30% or more felt their competency was at a beginner level after attending Assessment Boot Camp. In addition, interpreting results, use of results, and reporting had the smallest gains between the pre- and post-assessment.

Student Life Studies staff may want to explore the option of sending reading materials to participants prior to Assessment Boot Camp as a foundation for the topics being covered throughout the day. This might also help attendees think about the assessment project they want to work on during the day prior to coming.

Participants had many positive comments about the format of Assessment Boot Camp and enjoyed the interaction, engagement, and variety between speakers, activities, and group work. There were some suggestions related to the scheduling of the training. Student Life Studies is encouraged to consider these recommendations such as dividing the training over two days, planning more interactive activities in the afternoon, and scheduling more breaks.

Department staff members are encouraged to share the results from this assessment with stakeholders. To lead by example, Student Life Studies staff may wish to specifically share with the Assessment Boot Camp participants what improvements will be made based on the results and the plan to share results with each identified stakeholder.

While themes for the qualitative questions were summarized, staff are also encouraged to read all comments to have a complete understanding of responses.