

Student Life Studies Assessment Boot Camp May 2016

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 Student Affairs culture 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 first Assessment Boot Camp on May 24, 2016.

Assessment Boot Camp (<http://studentlifestudies.tamu.edu/Bootcamp>) was an all-day professional development opportunity for division staff members. 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 Book Camp:

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

Student Life Studies wanted to assess the participants to understand the effectiveness of the training and determine if the identified learning outcomes were met. This was the first 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 outcomes for their project and identified appropriate assessment methods to measure the determined outcome(s). Additionally, participants identified the stakeholders for their assessment project and how they would share information with different types of stakeholders. In a different activity, Assessment Boot Camp participants reviewed assessment results from a provided report of a fake project. Using these results, participants developed a plan to make improvements to the fake conference in the project. Student Life Studies collected the planning worksheets from 49 of the 50 attendees, providing a 98% 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. The post-assessment included one additional qualitative question. The pre-assessment survey link was sent to the 51 registered participants on May 9, 2016. Non-respondents received up to three reminders before the survey closed on May 23, 2016. Of the registered participants, 47 completed some part of the survey, for a 92% response rate. The survey link for the post-assessment was sent on May 31, 2016 to all 50 staff members who attended Assessment Boot Camp, and non-respondents received up to three reminders. When the survey closed on June 15, 2016, 42 participants had completed some part of the survey, yielding an 84% 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 two qualitative questions. Of the 49 participants who were given the one-minute reflection, 46 completed it, for a 94% 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%. Qualitative themes are summarized within this report, the full qualitative responses can be found in separate documents. This report is divided by the three 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 were 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 at least one learning outcome based on the ABCD Model that was presented during Assessment Boot Camp. Student Life Studies then reviewed the learning outcome(s) to determine if it was written accurately using the model. Almost all participants (87%) 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 the measure certain outcomes. Participants were then asked to determine at least one appropriate assessment method based on the learning outcome(s) 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%) 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. For example, an outcome could be about students demonstrating some skill, but the assessment method to determine this might be a one-minute reflection about the students' experience.

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 to identify at least 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 assessment of the conference. Almost all participants (98%) were able to identify two improvements they would make to the conference. There was one participant that only identified one improvement rather than two.

The final activity asked participants to identify stakeholders for the assessment project they were planning. Student Life Studies reviewed what staff members determined, and 96% could 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 different stakeholders. Two-thirds of the participants (67%) could identify different ways they could share information with the different types of stakeholders. For many participants, they did not articulate different ways to share information with each type of stakeholder.

Assessment, Evaluation, and Research Competency Rubric

Staff were asked to self-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, starting below and continuing on the next two pages, displays the pre- and post-assessment results in descending order by the 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 ethics, creating systems, and politics. Alternatively, the areas with the least gain between means on the two surveys included analysis, interpreting results, and reporting.

Please rate yourself on:	Advanced (3)	Intermediate (2)	Beginner (1)	Mean (sd) [n]	Means Difference [n]
Ethics (pre)	6%	57%	36%	1.70 (.59) [47]	+.60 [37]
Ethics (post)	24%	73%	3%	2.22 (.48) [37]	
Creating Systems (pre)	4%	34%	62%	1.43 (.58) [47]	+.51 [37]
Creating Systems (post)	11%	65%	24%	1.86 (.59) [37]	
Politics (pre)	6%	47%	47%	1.60 (.61) [47]	+.46 [37]
Politics (post)	16%	73%	11%	2.05 (.52) [37]	

Please rate yourself on:	Advanced (3)	Intermediate (2)	Beginner (1)	Mean (sd) [n]	Means Difference [n]
Defining Terms and Concepts (pre)	9%	53%	38%	1.70 (.62) [47]	+.44 [39]
Defining Terms and Concepts (post)	15%	82%	3%	2.13 (.41) [39]	
Design (pre)	--	34%	66%	1.34 (.48) [47]	+.44 [37]
Design (post)	5%	65%	30%	1.76 (.55) [37]	
Define Purpose (pre)	4%	53%	43%	1.62 (.57) [47]	+.42 [38]
Define Purpose (post)	8%	82%	11%	1.97 (.43) [38]	
Use of Results (pre)	6%	43%	51%	1.55 (.62) [47]	+.40 [37]
Use of Results (post)	8%	73%	19%	1.89 (.52) [37]	
Values (pre)	9%	45%	47%	1.62 (.64) [47]	+.37 [38]
Values (post)	13%	68%	18%	1.95 (.57) [38]	
Data Collection (pre)	2%	45%	53%	1.49 (.55) [47]	+.37 [37]
Data Collection (post)	8%	70%	22%	1.86 (.54) [37]	
Reporting (pre)	4%	51%	45%	1.60 (.58) [47]	+.33 [37]
Reporting (post)	14%	57%	30%	1.84 (.65) [37]	
Interpreting Results (pre)	4%	49%	47%	1.57 (.58) [47]	+.22 [37]
Interpreting Results (post)	5%	57%	38%	1.68 (.58) [37]	

Please rate yourself on:	Advanced (3)	Intermediate (2)	Beginner (1)	Mean (sd) [n]	Means Difference [n]
Analysis (pre)	6%	45%	49%	1.57 (.62) [47]	+.19 [37]
Analysis (post)	5%	62%	32%	1.73 (.50) [37]	

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

Additionally, on the post-assessment, participants were given the opportunity to share any additional feedback they had regarding Assessment Boot Camp. Of the 14 respondents who wrote in a response, many gave positive comments about their experience. Respondents shared that they felt the training was engaging, well-presented, interactive, informative, well designed, a great use of the day, a valuable experience, and a good variety in the format. A couple staff members suggested having tracks for beginners and intermediate and one person thought two half days would work better than one full day.

One-Minute Reflection

Participants were given a notecard and asked two questions. The first question asked participants what they learned from attending Assessment Boot Camp that they would use in their work. The most common responses shared included writing a learning outcome, developing creative methods to assess, sharing assessment results with stakeholders, and using assessment results to make improvements. In addition, some participants reported learning general assessment processes, gathering new ideas, and that they needed to be intentional in their assessment efforts.

The second question asked participants for suggestions to improve Assessment Boot Camp in the future. Many wrote in positive comments and expressed appreciation for the keynote speaker, the activities, and the worksheet. Those that provided suggestions recommended having more examples of different assessment methods beyond surveys, offered two tracks, one for beginners and one for advanced staff members, and breaking the training into two half days rather than one full-day.

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 articulate what they learned by attending this professional development. Additionally, participants expressed many positive comments about the training overall, specifically the keynote speaker, the activities, and the worksheet.

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. While participants could identify primary stakeholders, planning staff may want to assist participants in recognizing additional stakeholders. Furthermore, Student Life Studies could look at different activities focused on interpreting results, understanding analysis, reporting information, and designing assessments. These were areas that 30% or more felt their competency was at a beginner level after attending Assessment Boot Camp.

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 several suggestions to offer different tracks based on experience as well as scheduling the training over two days. Student Life Studies is encouraged to look at these suggestions when planning future programs.

Student Life Studies is strongly encouraged to continue having some form of direct assessment measure as part of Assessment Boot Camp. There were a few difficulties for some Student Life Studies staff in using the checklist when evaluating participants' assessment planning worksheets. Planning staff may want to discuss the checklist and what they are looking for in each item or consider reviewing the worksheet together to reach some agreement if Division of Student Affairs staff members demonstrated the specific learning outcome.

Department staff members are encouraged to share the results from this assessment with stakeholders. While qualitative themes were summarized, staff are also encouraged to read all comments to have a complete understanding of responses.

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