ASSESSMENT OF ACADEMIC ADVISING: AN OVERVIEW

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ASSESSMENT

“Assessment is the systematic basis for making inferences about the learning and development of students. It is the process of defining, selecting, designing, collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and using information to increase students’ learning and development.”

Erwin (1991)

AGENDA

• Understanding assessment
  • Definitions of assessment
  • Purposes for conducting assessment
  • Evaluation versus assessment
  • Key terms and concepts

• Engaging in assessment of academic advising

• Use of outcome data

“Assessment is the systematic collection, review, and use of information about educational programs* undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning and development”

(Marchese, 1993)

* Advising is part of the educational process, not simply a “service”
ASSESSMENT

“Assessment is an ongoing process of collecting information* that is aimed at understanding and improving student learning and personal development”

(Angelo, 1995)

* what we like to call “evidence”

ASSESSMENT

“Assessment is a process that focuses on student learning, a process that involves reviewing and reflecting on practice as academics have always done, but in a more planned and careful way”

(Ewell, 2000)

ASSESSMENT

“Assessment is the means used to measure the outcomes of education and the achievement of students with regard to important competencies”

(Pellegrino, Chudowsky, and Glaser, 2001)

ASSESSMENT

“In a way, good assessment is teaching to the test. Assessment is part of a process that identifies what we want students to learn, provides them with good opportunities to learn those things, and then assesses whether they have learned those things.”

(Suskie, 2009)
The Higher Learning Commission defines assessment of student learning in the following way:

**Assessment of student learning is a participatory, iterative process that:**

- Provides data/information you need on your students’ learning
  - Engages you and others in analyzing and using this data/information to confirm and improve teaching and learning
- Produces evidence that students are learning the outcomes you intended
- Guides you in making educational and institutional improvements
- Evaluates whether changes made improve/impact student learning, and documents the learning and your efforts.

**ASSESSMENT – THE INTENTIONS**

- Assessment is intended to be a positive and beneficial process, yet its connotations are often negative
  - The focus has often been on activities that demonstrate accountability to the exclusion of those that are aimed at improvement

**ASSESSMENT HAS MULTIPLE PURPOSES**

- Program effectiveness
- Program improvement
- Program accountability
- Activities aimed at both improvement and accountability are important
- Most compelling purpose is “institutional curiosity” (Maki, 2002; 2004)
  - i.e., student learning and student achievement

**ASSESSMENT IS**

- Evidence-driven—relying on multiple measures
- Mostly formative rather than simply summative
- Measurement of outcomes
  - Student learning-outcome based (in education)
  - Advising process/delivery outcomes
- A complex process of comparison
- Always a process of reasoning from evidence
- Always, to some degree, imprecise
ASSESSMENT IS NOT

- episodic
- just about measurement
- about evaluating the performance of an individual staff / faculty / student
- solely an administrative process
- easy or quick

ASSESSMENT OR EVALUATION?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Programmatic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process</td>
<td>Continuous &amp; Embedded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measures</td>
<td>Outcomes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part of assessment, part of measuring outcomes

THE CONVERSATION ABOUT LEARNING

“...a lack of assessment data can sometimes lead to policies and practices based on intuition, prejudice, preconceived notions, or personal proclivities – none of them desirable bases for making decisions”

Upcraft and Schuh (2002)

“Assessment is the process of gathering and discussing information from multiple and diverse sources in order to develop a deep understanding of what students know, understand, and can do with their knowledge as a result of their educational experiences; the process culminates when assessment results are used to improve subsequent learning.”

Huba and Freed (2000)
Assessment is the process through which we **gather evidence** about the claims we are making with regard to **student learning** and the process/delivery of academic advising in order to **inform and support enhancement and improvement**

Campbell (2008)
THE ASSESSMENT MATRIX/TABLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutional Mission Statement</th>
<th>Local Mission Statement</th>
<th>Specific Goal or Objective</th>
<th>Specific Process/Delivery Outcome</th>
<th>Student Learning Outcome</th>
<th>By When You Want Outcome To Occur</th>
<th>Outcome Measures</th>
<th>Data Instrument(s)</th>
<th>Minimum Performance Criteria for Success</th>
<th>Action(s) Based on Outcome Data</th>
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Adapted from Robbins (2009, 2011, 2016); Robbins and Zarges (2011); Robbins and Adams (2013)

IDENTIFYING KEY STAKEHOLDERS: WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED?

- Colleagues, faculty, administrators, institutional researchers, staff, students, institutional community, external community, others...
- Decide how the assessment team will interact, overlap, and/or support other institutional efforts
- Encourage stakeholders on and off campus
- Continuous communication and feedback is a must!

IDENTIFYING KEY STAKEHOLDERS:
WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED?

- Building of a shared trust
- Building of a shared motivation
- Building of a shared language
- Building of support for academic advising institutionally-wide
- The result is a shared ownership and belief in the process

NEED TO INVOLVE STAKEHOLDERS AT EACH STEP

- Pre-assessment
- Establishment of vision, mission, goals, and outcomes
- Planning for assessment
- Development of a shared definition and philosophy of academic advising and assessment
- Identification of assessment criteria and methodology
- Implementation
- Reporting of results
- Facilitating change
EXERCISE 1

Identify your stakeholders

Consider both internal and external stakeholders

IT IS ALL ABOUT STUDENT LEARNING!

WE WANT TO PROVIDE “EVIDENCE” THAT STUDENTS ARE “GUILTY” OF LEARNING AS THE RESULT OF WHAT WE DO

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (SLOs)

Articulate what students are expected to

• know
• do
• value/appreciate

as a result of involvement in the academic advising experience
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COGNITIVE SLOs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What do we want students to <strong>KNOW</strong> as a result of participating in academic advising?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Know</strong> general education requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Know</strong> about academic support services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Know</strong> how to use the student information system to register</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Know</strong> how to use the catalog etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>EXERCISE 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify one thing you want students to know as the result of your academic advising</td>
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<th>BEHAVIORAL SLOs</th>
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<tr>
<td>What do we want students to <strong>Do</strong> as a result of participating in academic advising?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Generate</strong> their degree audit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Make</strong> advising appointments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Keep</strong> advising appointments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ask</strong> for help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Access</strong> degree requirements using the online catalog etc.</td>
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<th>EXERCISE 3</th>
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AFFECTIVE SLOs

What do we want students to Value or Appreciate as a result of participating in academic advising?

- Value/Appreciate general education
- Value/Appreciate the advising relationship
- Value/Appreciate the process of learning
- etc.

EXERCISE 4

Identify one thing you want students to value or appreciate as the result of your academic advising.

PROCESS/DELIVERY OUTCOMES

- Articulate the expectations for how academic advising is delivered and what information should be delivered during the academic advising experience
- Do not assess student learning, but identify what processes occurred during the advising interaction
- Delineate what must occur in advising for the SLO to be achieved

MAPPING OF OUTCOMES

The process of determining when, where and how the student learning outcomes for academic advising will be accomplished over the students’ academic career (and beyond if appropriate).
MAPPING THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

- **What** should be learned: e.g., student knows the components of the institution’s General Education requirements

- **Where** it should be learned: e.g., orientation workshops, advising sessions, personal reading of catalog or curriculum guide

- **When/by When** it should be learned: e.g., prior to first year (orientation); by end of first year (via advising sessions); by end of first year (via personal reading)

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MEASURING OUTCOMES

Once the desired SLOs have been identified, as well as when and where they will occur, the next step is to determine who or what will be measured and how the data will be gathered...

...using **multiple measures** of varying types

WHY MULTIPLE MEASURES?

- No assessment is perfect and precise
- Goal is to “strive to make assessments sufficiently truthful that we will have reasonable confidence in our findings and can use them with enough assurance to make decisions...” (Suskie, 2009, p. 38)
- “Union of Insufficiencies” (Shulman, 2007)
“One of the most dangerous and persistent myths in American education is that the challenges of assessing student learning will be met if only the right instrument can be found...”

Schneider & Shulman in Suskie (2009)

MULTIPLE MEASURES

• The multiple measures utilized should vary in type
  • Qualitative
  • Quantitative
  • Direct
  • Indirect

• This will help ensure the validity of the results of any single measure

QUALITATIVE VS. QUANTITATIVE

“Qualitative assessments use flexible, naturalistic methods and are usually analyzed by looking for recurring patterns and themes.”

“Quantitative assessments use structured, predetermined response options that can be summarized into meaningful numbers and analyzed statistically.”

Suskie (2009)

QUALITATIVE MEASURES

• exploratory
• small samples
• open-ended
• emerging information
• subjective, inductive interpretation of data
  • examples
    • focus groups
    • case studies
    • naturalistic observation

Information/data in form of rich, in-depth responses (words)
QUANTITATIVE MEASURES

- descriptive
- large samples
- structured
- objective, deductive interpretation of data
  - examples
    - questionnaires
    - surveys
    - experiments

Information/data in form of numbers, measures (statistics)

DIRECT VS. INDIRECT

“Direct evidence of student learning is tangible, visible, self-explanatory, and compelling evidence of exactly what student have and have not learned. It might also be defined as the kind of evidence that a skeptic would accept.”

“Indirect evidence consists of proxy signs that students are probably learning. Indirect evidence is less clear and less convincing than direct evidence.”

Suskie (2009)

DIRECT MEASURES

- may be qualitative or quantitative
- examples:
  - direct observation of advising interaction
  - pre-test/post-test of variable leading to desired outcome
  - standardized test or inventory measuring student learning
  - tracking of student data (enrollment rates, retention rates, GPAs, transcript analysis, etc.)
  - counts of use of services
  - advisor:student ratios

INDIRECT MEASURES

- may be qualitative or quantitative
- examples:
  - focus groups
  - surveys, questionnaires
  - interviews
  - reports
  - tracking of student perceptions (satisfaction, ratings of advisors, ratings of service, etc.)
  - tracking of advisor perceptions (student preparedness, estimation of student learning, etc.)
MEASURES CAN (AND SHOULD) INCLUDE EXISTING INSTITUTIONAL DATA

- Information from Institutional Research, Admissions, Registrar, etc. can provide tracking data, GPAs, retention rates, and other information you can utilize as assessment data
  - this can be a source of some of the multiple measures utilized (in addition to formal instruments, satisfaction inventories, and others)

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For both process/delivery and student learning outcomes, you need to identify the minimum criteria for success of the outcome measure, e.g.:

- number and/or % of students exhibiting a specific learning performance
- advisor rating of specific aspect of advising process
- student rating of specific aspect of advising process
- etc.

SUGGESTION

In the absence of any existing relevant measures of the identified student learning outcomes for academic advising, the initial cycle of assessment for any given desired student learning outcome should be considered a baseline data gathering effort

Adapted from Robbins (2009, 2011, 2016); Robbins and Zarges (2011); Robbins and Adams (2013)
DANGERS OF SATISFACTION SURVEYS

- There is often a difference between an advisee receiving good, effective academic advising and being satisfied with the advising process, e.g.:
  - exchange of negative information
  - type of interaction desired (e.g., informational, relational)
- It also takes time and skill to develop, pilot, and finalize a valid and reliable survey instrument
  - no compound items
  - no leading items
  - internal, external validity; test-retest and other reliability
- Surveys typically evaluate process/delivery outcomes

EXERCISE 5

Select one of your SLOs and identify three ways to determine whether that SLO has been achieved

AN ADDITIONAL AND IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION

Even if your outcome data supports the achievement of the desired SLO – how do you know that the student learning was a result of academic advising???

...you literally have to ask students “where did you learn the information,” “how did you know to do the behavior,” and/or “how did you develop the appreciation” in regard to the SLO

COMPLETED SAMPLE ASSESSMENT TABLE

A sample completed SLO matrix/table is included in the Guide Book.

Also included is a blank matrix/table for your use.
SO YOU HAVE THE DATA – NOW WHAT?

• Measurement is both an art and a science
• Good idea to "sit" with your data (giving it some time to ruminate) rather than jumping to immediate conclusions
• Interpretation of your results is a huge part of the process and you want to be intentional about it
• You and your program staff should review the results and discuss them

INTERPRETING THE RESULTS

• Create a summary of your work that is easy to understand, clear, and succinct
• Tailor your message to your specific stakeholder audiences
• Should be visually appealing and communicate why your stakeholders need to know the information
• Get your stakeholders passionate and engaged in your measurement processes
• If your results just sit on a shelf and you never use them and/or your stakeholders are never made aware of them, it becomes a waste of time

SUMMARIZING YOUR DATA

• Administration: President, Provost, various committees
  • via annual report, strategic plan, white paper, Web sites, etc.
• Faculty: all faculty, curricular committees, faculty advisors
  • via performance reviews, annual reports, strategic plans, Web sites, etc.
• Students: all students, student advisees, student senate, student groups
  • via newsletters, annual reports, Web sites, etc.
• Budgeting entities
  • via annual reports, budget requests, Web sites, etc.
• Accreditors
  • via self-studies, accreditation reports, Web sites, etc.

DETERMINE HOW AND WITH WHOM RESULTS ARE SHARED
DETERMINE HOW RESULTS WILL INFORM DECISION MAKING

- Revise pedagogy or curriculum
- Develop/revise advisor training programs
- Design more effective programming
  - advising, orientation, mentoring, etc.
- Increase out-of-class learning opportunities
- Shape institutional decision making
  - planning, resource allocation
- Revise SLOs, outcome measures
- Determine focus of individual advisor evaluation
- Other...

DECIDE HOW YOU WILL FOLLOW-UP ON IMPLEMENTED CHANGES

- Timetable to implement changes
  - implement all or specific components on a schedule
- Assessment of implemented changes
  - repeat assessment cycle again
- Continuous assessment
  - assessment is on-going

EXERCISE 6

Identify at least one use for the outcome data from your SLO assessment

ASSESSMENT OF ACADEMIC ADVISING IS ALL ABOUT...

- developing consensus around collective expectations about student learning that should occur in advising
- gathering evidence in order to understand student learning resulting from academic advising
- using this evidence to support improvements in academic advising that will contribute to improvements in student learning
REMEMBER:

assessment is much more than just a single evaluation

I WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

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This evaluation will be open until 10:00 p.m. tonight.