Developing a Student Satisfaction Survey

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This presentation is designed to outline the basic procedures involved in developing, implementing, and utilizing a student satisfaction survey for evaluation of your academic advising services.

It is important to remember that a single satisfaction survey or evaluation is not assessment — specific items may be utilized as one of multiple measures for a given desired outcome, but a survey does not constitute assessment in and of itself.

Entire texts are written and workshops conducted on evaluation methods, but there are some basic points to remember when designing an survey/evaluation instrument:

1) you need to tie desired goals and final items (what you want to measure) of your survey to the mission of your area and to the mission of the institution at large.
2) you need to define exactly which points are most important to evaluate

- what is immediately and locally important to you
- what is important to whom you report the results (e.g., University President, Board of Regents, Student Government, accreditation bodies, etc.)
- conduct a self-review prior to defining what to evaluate (e.g., what is lacking; problem areas; comparison to peer institutions; using benchmark data; etc.)

Example: from Mission Statement to Measurable Outcome

Mission statement:
"To provide effective academic advising to our students in order to promote their academic success"

Translation into measurable process/delivery outcome:
what does "effective" mean?
"...provision of accurate curricular information"
"...timely advising? friendly advising?"

Which of the measurable outcomes are the most important to evaluate for your needs?

The type of data collected will be determined by your needs.

There are two types of evaluative data:

- Qualitative and Quantitative

Qualitative Questions

Qualitative methods result in data being described in words, such as responses to open-ended questions

Use Qualitative methods when:
- little is known about the topic being evaluated
- closed-ended items (e.g., multiple-choice, scaled responses) cannot yet be determined
“What did you like best about…?”
“What did you like least about…?”
“If you could change one thing about…what would it be?”

Using our example: “…provision of accurate curricular information…” -
“What is your opinion of the information you received regarding course selection?”

Quantitative Questions

Quantitative methods result in data being described in numbers (statistics, such as percentages, ratings)

Use Quantitative methods when:
- potential subjects are not available for extensive interactions or observations
- time and funds are limited
- your audience requires “hard numbers”

The best method in developing an evaluation instrument is to:
1. Begin with qualitative methods (general, open-ended questions)
2. Administer to a small sample or focus group
3. Code qualitative responses using at least 3 coders
4. Best to achieve 80% or greater inter-rater reliability - patterns of responses will likely emerge
5. Determine which similar responses are occurring over 50% of the time
6. Collapse similar responses into a single quantitative item
7. Develop your quantitative items and evaluation tool (e.g., multiple choice, true-false, rating scales, etc.)

Tips for developing a survey instrument:
1. Work with others skilled in developing survey items
2. Be conscious of the number of items in your survey - students are more likely to complete a survey that takes no longer than a few minutes
3. Always include space for open responses / additional comments
4. Assure responder anonymity and confidentiality
5. Consider the mode of administration from the start

Important Points to Remember:
1. Pilot your quantitative survey instrument on another sample
2. Finalize your survey instrument appropriately
3. Have a use for the data you gather
4. Regularly re-examine the instrument and process and revise as needed
5. Identify any variables for which you might desire or need future analysis
6. Administer the survey thoughtfully based on your needs and institutional capabilities
A Possible “Shortcut”

If you possess clearly identified and measurable outcomes, you can design a quantitative survey to pilot without taking the time to perform qualitative analysis.

Mission statement: “To provide effective academic advising to our students in order to promote their academic success”

Translation into measurable process/delivery outcome: “…provision of accurate curricular information”

You need to decide which of the measurable outcomes are the most important to evaluate for your needs.

Dangers of Satisfaction Surveys

• There is often a difference between an advisee receiving good, effective academic advising and being satisfied with the advising process:
  • receipt of negative information
  • type of interaction desired (e.g., informational, relational)
  • timing of administration of survey

You absolutely need to pilot the initial version on a small sample and make appropriate revisions.

Dangers of Satisfaction Surveys

• Development of appropriate, valid survey items
  • must avoid compound items
  • must avoid leading questions
  • must ask what is intended to be asked (validity)

• Surveys typically measure the advising process (Process/Delivery outcomes) and not student learning (SLOs)
The methodologies, strategies, interventions, and services you use and provide in your program need to meet the demographics and specific needs of your campus’ students.

- what is “hot” in the literature or at conferences or what is being used at other institutions may not necessarily be what works at your institution with your students

- continued evaluation and assessment are both necessary to insure that you are meeting the needs of your students on your campus in your climate at any given time

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5. Administration of finalized survey instrument
6. Analysis of data
7. Examination of the findings: sharing of and acting upon the findings
8. Re-examination of the survey process and continuous improvement in the process
9. Use the survey data as one of multiple measures in your assessment process

Review: Basic Methodology

1. Pilot study of a small number of students responding to open-ended questions (qualitative data)

2. Analysis of initial pilot data
   - detection of patterns of responses
   - determination of which questions are most important

3. Development of quantitative survey instrument
   - multiple-choice, rating scale, other
   - include open-ended option

4. Analysis of second quantitative survey pilot study
   - determine validity; finalize items

Resources
NACADA Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources
www.nacada.ksu.edu/Clearinghouse/NewClearinghouse.htm/#resources

   Chapter 12: “Developing Mission, Goals, and Objectives for the Advising Program”
   Chapter 23: “Assessing the Effectiveness of the Advising Program”
   Chapter 26: “Assessing Indirectly Advised Effectiveness”

   Chapter 11: “Benchmarking: Comparing Performance Across Organizations”
   Chapter 15: “Making Assessment Work: Guiding Principles and Recommendations”

   Chapter 1: “The Essentials of Successful Assessment”


   Chapter 2: “Assessing the Feasibility and Likely Usefulness of Evaluation”
   Chapter 3: “Designing and Using Process Evaluation”
   Chapter 4: “Using Qualitative Assessment”
   Chapter 5: “Using Quantitative Assessment”
   Chapter 14: “How to Use Focus Groups”