Utilizing Step-by-Step Strategic Planning to Close the Co-Curricular Assessment Loop

Shawna L. Lafreniere, Ph.D.
Director of Student Learning Assessment and Program Review
Azusa Pacific University
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Student Affairs and Student Learning

↗ Relationship of student affairs to student learning is growing.

↗ Desire to understand how co-curricular programs affect students.

Good Practice

↗ "Good practice in student affairs occurs when student affairs educators ask, 'What are students learning from our programs and services, and how can their learning be enhanced?'"

(Bliming, Whitt, & Associates, 1999, pp. 206-207)

Holistic Approach to Institutional Assessment

↗ Assessing campus-wide institutional student learning outcomes is becoming increasingly important.

↗ Often, student affairs and academic assessment are not well integrated.

Academic and Co-Curricular Partnerships

"Documenting what happens to students during college is a complex, multifaceted process requiring multiple measures and cooperation by the two groups on campus that spend the most time with students – faculty members and student affairs professionals."

(Kuh in Schuh & Gansemer-Topf, 2010, p. 4)

Aligning Student Learning

↗ Purposeful alignment with teaching and learning.

↗ Move beyond student participation and student satisfaction.

ACPA (College Student Educators International)

Student affairs programs and services must be designed and managed with specific student learning and personal development outcomes in mind.

ACPA Criteria for Student Learning

1. The student affairs division mission complements the institution's mission, with the enhancement of student learning and personal development being the primary goal of student affairs programs and services.

ACPA Criteria for Student Learning

2. Resources are allocated to encourage student learning and personal development.

ACPA Criteria for Student Learning

3. Student affairs professionals collaborate with other institutional agents and agencies to promote student learning.

ACPA Criteria for Student Learning

4. The division of student affairs includes staff who are experts on students, their environments, and the teaching and learning processes.

ACPA Criteria for Student Learning

5. Student affairs policies and programs are based on promising practices from the research of student learning and institution-specific assessment data.

Limitations to Student Affairs Assessment

1. Resources

2. Time

3. Organizational contexts

4. Design

5. Political contexts

(Upcraft & Schuh, 2002)

Overall Goal

To help co-curricular programs design strategic assessment plans that measure student learning and lead to formalized program review.

Azusa Pacific University Co-Curricular Landscape

- Assessment and program review newly formalized.

- Student Life Strategic Priorities.

- Strategic Planning Cycle.

APU Student Life Strategic Priorities

- Academic bridging

- Community life

- Diversity

- Globalization

- Leadership development

- Spiritual formation

- Wellness

5-step Strategic Assessment Planning Process

1. Understand the assessment readiness of each co-curricular leader and program.

2. Capture current assessment activities.

3. Identify the assessment gaps.

4. Develop training and resources.

5. Evaluate the effectiveness of this process.

Step 1: Leader Readiness

↗ 16 Student Life leaders self-selected their confidence in fulfilling 21 areas of the NASPA assessment competencies in the Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced level criteria.

↗ Open-ended questions about current assessment activities.

Step 1: Leader Readiness Results

These leaders scored <u>higher</u> in their confidence to:

↗ Align and prioritize program and learning outcomes with organizational goals and values.

↗ Create the expectation that assessment of student learning is central to student life professional practice.

Step 1: Leader Readiness Results

The leaders scored <u>moderately</u> in their confidence to:

↗ Effectively articulate, interpret, and use results of assessment.

↗ Differentiate among assessment, program review, evaluation, planning, and research methodologies appropriate to each.

↗ Manage the implementation of assessment activities.

Step 1: Leader Readiness Results

The leaders scored <u>lower</u> in their confidence to:

↗ Assess quantitative designs and analysis techniques.

↗ Design ongoing, rigorous, and sustainable data collection efforts.

↗ Assess trustworthiness of results and the transferability of these findings to improve student learning.

Step 1: Summary of Leader Readiness

- Confident to align learning outcomes with organizational goals and values.

- Understand Student Life Strategic Priorities.

- Less confidence to analyze data.

Step 1: Program Readiness

- ↗ Well-written mission statements.

- ↗ Student Learning Outcomes developed.

- ↗ Mapped their SLOs to the Student Life Strategic Priorities.

- ↗ Program goals developed.

- ↗ ¼ had long-term assessment plans.

Step 2: Current Assessment Activities

- ↗ All programs have areas to assess.

- ↗ Surveys used often.

- ↗ Interviews and focus groups rarely used.

Step 3: Assessment Gaps

1. Lack of training in assessment practices
2. Lack of knowledge about appropriate co-curricular measures
3. Lack of personnel
4. Lack of time
5. Lack of clear purpose
6. Budgetary restrictions
7. Leadership turnover
8. Use of data to inform decisions

Step 3: Leader Suggestions for Assessment Strategies

- Utilize a long-term sustainable and integrative research cycle.

- Utilize specific tools to assess learning across co-curricular and programmatic opportunities.

- Set aside intentional time for assessment.

- Create a variety of assessment methods for each group and event.

Step 3: Leader Suggestions for Assessment Strategies

- Utilize focus groups and individual interviews.

- Develop a quantitative measure that looks at student learning.

- Move beyond event satisfaction to capturing student learning.

- Define learning outcomes vs. student satisfaction.

Step 3: Summary

- Assessment openness but knowledge tools needed

- Need for co-curricular assessment training

Step 4: Training

Created 2 workshops to address:

- Understanding of co-curricular student learning opportunities.

- Planning for ongoing data collection.

- Designing basic qualitative assessment techniques.

- Applying findings to improve student learning and program effectiveness.

Step 5: Evaluation

↗ Evaluate the effectiveness of this 5-step process after the 2012-13 academic year.

Questions and Contact Information

Shawna L. Lafreniere, Ph.D.

Director of Student Learning Assessment and

Program Review

Azusa Pacific University

slafreniere@apu.edu