Culture, Ethics, and Politics of Assessment
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Anne Lundquist, PhD
Assistant Vice President,
Campus Adoption
alundquist@campuslabs.com
NASPA/ACPA Competencies

Explain the necessity to follow institutional and divisional procedures and policies (e.g., IRB approval, informed consent) with regard to ethical assessment, evaluation, and other research activities.

Identify the political and educational sensitivity of raw and partially processed data and AER results, handling them with appropriate confidentiality and deference to organizational hierarchies.
Learning Outcomes

Describe the best practices to develop a culture of evidence

Explain the political issues related to assessment practice

Describe the ethical practices necessary to conduct assessment
Culture
“Culture is defined as the patterns of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered, or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, and that have worked well enough to be considered valid, and therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.”

Bess & Dee, 2008
Moving Toward a Culture of Evidence

Culture of Good Intentions

Culture of Justification

Culture of Strategy

Culture of Evidence

Culp & Dungy 2012, Building a Culture of Evidence in Student Affairs
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A Culture of Good Intentions</th>
<th>A Culture of Justification</th>
<th>A Culture of Strategy</th>
<th>A Culture of Evidence</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intentionality</strong></td>
<td>People have a sense that</td>
<td>People can describe what</td>
<td>People can describe</td>
<td>People know that they</td>
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<td>(Thoughtfulness in</td>
<td>they are doing good</td>
<td>they are doing (i.e.</td>
<td>what they are</td>
<td>are doing the right</td>
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<td>action or decision)</td>
<td>things.</td>
<td>operational or procedural</td>
<td>accomplishing (i.e.</td>
<td>things and can describe</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>specificity).</td>
<td>strategic pertinence,</td>
<td>why they are doing</td>
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<td>how what they are</td>
<td>them, and what they</td>
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<td>doing relates to</td>
<td>are accomplishing</td>
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<td>mission and goals).</td>
<td>through them.</td>
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<td>(Relative to position,</td>
<td>Recognize data is</td>
<td>Data is used retroactively</td>
<td>Assessment is</td>
<td>Data is collected and</td>
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<td>institutional role and</td>
<td>Important, but do not</td>
<td>as justification for</td>
<td>designed with an end</td>
<td>regularly used to</td>
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<td>general point of view)</td>
<td>make any particular</td>
<td>predetermined positions</td>
<td>in mind. (e.g.</td>
<td>inform processes. Data</td>
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<td></td>
<td>efforts to collect it.</td>
<td>or prior decisions.</td>
<td>identification of</td>
<td>helps us close the</td>
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<td>learning outcomes,</td>
<td>loop on improvement</td>
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<td>how the data will be</td>
<td>processes and</td>
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<td>used)</td>
<td>educational outcomes.</td>
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<td>(Connections that</td>
<td>Data, when collected, is</td>
<td>Assessment conducted</td>
<td>Assessment understood</td>
<td>Outsiders can see and</td>
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<td>manage movement and</td>
<td>not shared beyond</td>
<td>from a defensive posture,</td>
<td>and shared, but only</td>
<td>understand</td>
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<td>relationships)</td>
<td>assessors, so connections</td>
<td>especially related to</td>
<td>with allies or key</td>
<td>contributions to student</td>
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<td></td>
<td>cannot be made.</td>
<td>questions of budgetary</td>
<td>partners. Scope is</td>
<td>and institutional</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>and operational efficiency.</td>
<td>limited to mid-</td>
<td>success. Assessment</td>
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<td></td>
<td>managers.</td>
<td>is shared with all</td>
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<td>**Initiatives and</td>
<td>Determined by whim,</td>
<td>Administration initiates</td>
<td>Directors own and</td>
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<tr>
<td>Directions**</td>
<td>interest, opportunity.</td>
<td>assessment and it is done</td>
<td>initiate assessment.</td>
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<td>(Goals, programs,</td>
<td></td>
<td>only when asked for or</td>
<td>Data describe the</td>
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<td>projects, and plans)</td>
<td></td>
<td>required.</td>
<td>current situation.</td>
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<td><strong>Planning Processes</strong></td>
<td>Vague and individualized.</td>
<td>Sporadic and limited to</td>
<td>Organized, routinized,</td>
<td>Ongoing, strategic and</td>
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<td>(Strategic planning,</td>
<td>Success is vague or</td>
<td>immediate question or</td>
<td>and localized. Data</td>
<td>clearly linked to</td>
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<td>goal setting, measuring</td>
<td>interpretive, and</td>
<td>application. Data linked</td>
<td>informs deliberate</td>
<td>past and future.</td>
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<tr>
<td>outcomes)</td>
<td>evaluated based on “feel,”</td>
<td>retroactively to strategic</td>
<td>cyclical or</td>
<td>Triangulation of</td>
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<td></td>
<td>intent and effort.</td>
<td>context, goals, expectations,</td>
<td>episodic strategic</td>
<td>findings through</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Collective or strategic</td>
<td>etc. but not</td>
<td>planning exercises.</td>
<td>multiple/established</td>
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<td></td>
<td>planning does not exist.</td>
<td>planning-oriented.</td>
<td></td>
<td>assessments. Data</td>
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<td>Incorporated into</td>
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<td>continuous strategic</td>
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<td>thinking.</td>
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</table>

“Making assessment part of an organization’s routine is central to developing a culture of assessment, which will lead to a culture of evidence for student affairs units.”

(Schuh, Biddix, Dean & Kinzie, 2016, p. 317)
What Does a Culture of Evidence Look Like?

- People use data to make decisions
- Assessment is not an “add-on” to staff responsibilities
- Advancing student learning is central
- Resources are dedicated to assessment
Strategies to Develop a Culture of Assessment

(Schuh, Biddix, Dean & Kinzie)

1. Identify goals of programs
2. Appreciate multiple forms of assessment
3. Put someone in charge of assessment
4. Report results
5. Devote discretionary resources to assessment
6. Reward assessment with resources
7. Celebrate assessments
Culture of Evidence Questions
(Hersh and Keeling, 2013, pp. 9-11)

1. Is there institutional consensus on student learning goals?
2. Are expectations and support for students elevated?
3. Does rigorous and comprehensive assessment of student learning exist?
4. Is the assessment loop purposefully closed?
5. Do all faculty and staff have an instructional role?
6. Do continuous faculty and staff development programs exist?
7. Are academic and student affairs tightly coupled?
“To what extent does the use of evidence (data in various forms) influence how we behave at our institution?”

Schuh, Biddix, Dean & Kinzie, 2016, p. 323
# Division of Student Affairs

**Meta-Rubric: Department Culture of Assessment**

To rate, create a score by giving points associated with each of the three levels—1, 2, or 3 (half points acceptable)—and then total at bottom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Six Elements</th>
<th>Essential Questions</th>
<th>Level 1: Awareness</th>
<th>Level 2: Development</th>
<th>Level 3: Proficiency</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Purpose Statement and Goals of major/program</td>
<td>Are the program’s purpose statement, values, and goals clear? Do they tie to, and support, division’s mission?</td>
<td>Purpose statement and/or goals are incomplete, insufficient, and not published on the department website.</td>
<td>Purpose statement and goals are in progress in draft form, but may be too wordy, inconsistent in style, or there are too many.</td>
<td>Purpose statement and goals list are complete, published on the web site, and a basis for all student learning outcomes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Student Learning Outcomes</td>
<td>Is the program clear about what it expects students to do in measurable and observable terms; following program completion?</td>
<td>Outcomes are incomplete; are not measurable or observable behaviors, are not student-centered.</td>
<td>Stated outcomes are inconsistent or do not encompass students’ knowledge, skills, or attitudes shaped by the program; inconsistent use of observable and measurable behaviors, but there are some.</td>
<td>Outcomes are clear and well written, there are an appropriate number, measurable, and they drive assessments for the program.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Program and Outcomes are aligned with Division Learning Domains</td>
<td>Where in the program are there opportunities for students to learn defined Student Affairs outcomes? What outcomes are covered?</td>
<td>No written attempt to ensure coverage.</td>
<td>Alignment exists but lacks clear link to the curriculum. Revisiting curriculum is needed.</td>
<td>Shows linkages between program and division learning outcomes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes</td>
<td>Is it clear how (and how often) the program is measuring outcomes with direct and indirect assessment methods?</td>
<td>Assessment plan is not well developed, is mismatched with outcomes, or not implemented.</td>
<td>Assessment is underway but not fully implemented.</td>
<td>Assessment plan is fully developed and implemented. All outcomes are assessed.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Results of Findings are Summarized and Reported</td>
<td>Is it clear in a brief year-end report that there are findings shaping the changes to help students learn?</td>
<td>Direct measures of student learning are not being collected or analyzed and thus not reported.</td>
<td>Some summary data are reported but no suggestions to improve departmental planning or program improvement.</td>
<td>Summary data are collected, analyzed, and the annual report is submitted. Changes to department planning or program improvement are suggested.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Evidence Reported of Changes Made with Follow up Re-assessment</td>
<td>Is it clear that the program monitors and reports the impact of changes made and uses these assessment data to drive further improvement and planning?</td>
<td>Either no report or report does not suggest changes based on assessments. No evidence that assessment data is used to drive change. Evidence of pertinent department meeting discussions is not available.</td>
<td>Analysis of recent changes due to some outcomes assessment has begun, and may not yet be reported formally yet, impact may be limited; minutes documenting depart. meetings may not be present, although may be occurring.</td>
<td>Analysis of changes made in recent year(s) and their impact are further assessed and reported. There is evidence (summary of dept. meetings; web site posts) that assessments are used to drive planning and improvement.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: University of Oregon

**Total Program Actual Score → Program’s Mean Score (total divided by 6) →**
Ethics
Ethical Frameworks

- Kitchener’s Ethical Principles (in Henning & Roberts, pp. 237 - 243)
- AEA Guiding Principles for Evaluation (in Russ-Eft & Preskill, pp. 131 – 138)
- Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSRIB) and Institutional Policies
- Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation Program Evaluation Standards (in Russ-Eft & Preskill, pp. 125 - 129)
- Culturally Competent Assessment
Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation: 
*The Program Evaluation Standards*

27 evaluation standards divided into 4 CATEGORIES:

- Feasibility: cost-effectiveness and real-world constraints
- Propriety: protecting the rights of individuals
- Accuracy: valid, high-quality information
- Utility: responsive to needs of stakeholders
American Evaluation Association
Guiding Principles for Evaluation
(2004)

Systematic inquiry
Competence
Integrity and honesty
Respect for people
Responsibilities for the general and public welfare
Kitchener’s (1985) Ethical Principles

- Respecting autonomy
- Doing no harm
- Benefiting others
- Being just
- Being faithful
Institutional Review Boards (IRB)

- Approve, monitor and review research involving human subjects
- Know and understand your institution's policies, processes, and procedures

**COMPARISON: CHARACTERISTICS OF HUMAN SUBJECT RESEARCH VS. OTHER PROJECT TYPES**

Certain activities may have the characteristics of research and involve some level of interaction with people. However, IRB review that meet the federal definition of research involving human subjects. Please use the information below table to determine whether federal definition. If the project has one or more of the characteristics in the first column, the project **may** require IRB review. If it characteristics in the first column, please submit a **determination form** and a formal response will be issued for your records.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTENT</th>
<th>HUMAN SUBJECT RESEARCH</th>
<th>QUALITY IMPROVEMENT OR ASSESSMENT</th>
<th>PROGRAM EVALUATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>45CFR46.102(d) <strong>Research</strong> means a systematic investigation, including research development, testing and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge.</td>
<td>Intent of project is to improve a practice or process within a particular institution or ensure it conforms to expected norms.</td>
<td>Intent of project is to evaluate a specific program, only to provide information for and about that program.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Belmont Report: The term "research" designates an activity designed to test an hypothesis, permit conclusions to be drawn, and thereby to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge (expressed, for example, in theories, principles, and statements of relationships). Research is usually described in a formal protocol that sets forth an objective and a set of procedures designed to reach that objective.

**GHRP:** "The question 'what is research' frequently arises in relation to an investigator or institutional activity being planned or gather data to evaluate a specific program, such as a QA/QI activity. Although the determination as to whether the activity will contribute to 'generalizable knowledge' is often based on whether the data will be dissemination by means of publication or presentation, this should not be the sole factor used to make the determination. In general, GHRP gives guidance that if the data will be used to draw conclusions related to a larger entity then the activity is considered 'research.'"

**MOTIVATION FOR PROJECT**
- **Project occurs in large part as a result of individual professional goals and requirements (e.g., seeking tenure; obtaining grants; completing a thesis or dissertation).**
- **Project occurs regardless of whether individual(s) conducting it may benefit professionally from conducting the project.**
- **Project not initiated by the evaluator and occurs regardless of whether individual(s) conducting it may benefit professionally from conducting the project.**

http://research.oregonstate.edu/sites/research.oregonstate.edu/files/irb/comparison_research_v_non_research_v01042017.pdf
Ethical Use Throughout the Process

Design

Data Collection

Analysis

Reporting and Sharing Results
Ethical Use: Data

Who should have access to the results?
When should people have access to the results?
What level of access should they have?
  - Group summaries
  - Individual level data
  - Comparative data

Thoughtful Decisions

Need to Consider/Protect

Individual participant confidentiality
Department or school confidentiality
Sensitive subject matter
Transparency

Does reporting accurately and truthfully reflect the assessment?

Methods clearly described
Results presented fairly
Important issues not glossed over or ignored
Outcomes clearly articulated

How easily can the audience judge the quality of the work and the results?

Are results shared or kept private?
Culturally Responsive Assessment
“Conducting assessment in a manner that takes into consideration the various needs of different student populations is a responsibility of higher education.”

Montenegro & Jankowski, 2016
“Assessment approaches and processes can help reinforce a sense of belonging or add to students’ belief that they do not belong because their learning or experiences are not deemed as valid or important.”

Montenegro & Jankowski, 2016
“The culturally relevant component involves assuring that the assessment process—beginning with student learning outcome statements and ending with improvements in student learning—is mindful of student differences and employs assessment methods appropriate for different student groups.”

Montenegro & Jankowski, 2016
Culturally Relevant Assessment

• Mindful of the student population that the institution serves

• Expand our view of what constitutes “demonstration” of learning (including co-curricular learning)

• Use language appropriate for all students when developing learning outcomes statements

• Developing or using assessment tools appropriate for different students
Avoiding Bias

Removing contextual and cultural bias from assessments

The assessment itself and assessment context should be analyzed for factors that would affect performance.

- Are clear assessments administered in the proper environment?
- Location/equipment
- Clear instructions/questions

- Have assessments been reviewed for bias?

- Racial/ethnic/cultural stereotypes
- Disability resource center review
- Assignments that favor one group over another
Politics
“Assessment virtually always occurs in a political context that the investigators must take into account in designing the assessment.”

Upcraft & Schuh, 2002, p. 19
Political Aspects of Assessment
(Henning & Roberts, 2016, p. 258)

Allocation of resources

Influence on policy and practice

Alignment of assessment results with values, beliefs, and interests
Tips for Navigating Assessment Politics
Roberts & Osters (2006)

Consider legal and ethical implications

Know your stakeholders

Collaborate with interested parties on design and data dissemination

Tie assessment to mission and goals of the institution, division, and unit

Prepare with the end in mind

Be aware of (and use advantageously) the economic realities on campus
“[Those conducting assessment] must understand who makes decisions when, who controls the resources and directions, and who has positional and non-positional power.”

Yousey-Elsener, Bentrim, and Henning, 2015, p. 133
Resources
Equity and Assessment:
Moving Towards Culturally Responsive Assessment

Erick Montenegro and Natasha A. Jankowski

http://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/Response_Equity_Paper29_Wright.html
Resource
References


Oregon State University Institutional Review Board form: 
http://research.oregonstate.edu/sites/research.oregonstate.edu/files/irb/comparison_research_v_non_research_v01042017.pdf


Thank You!