

Building a Comprehensive Student Affairs Assessment Program

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A bit about Fitchburg State, Student Affairs, and Assessment

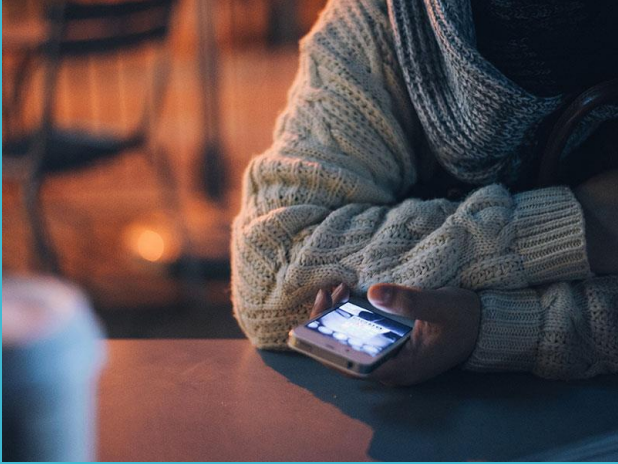


Why build a comprehensive assessment program in Student Affairs?



Tell our story.

- Document program/service impact
- Encourage continuous improvement
- Inform decision-making
- Help align and justify resources
- Address internal and external accountability
- Answer questions (Are we effective? Are efficient? In alignment with University priorities? Using best practices? Meeting student needs and wishes? Etc.)



Poll Everywhere!

- Send a text to 37607
- In that text, say
LAURABAYLESS793

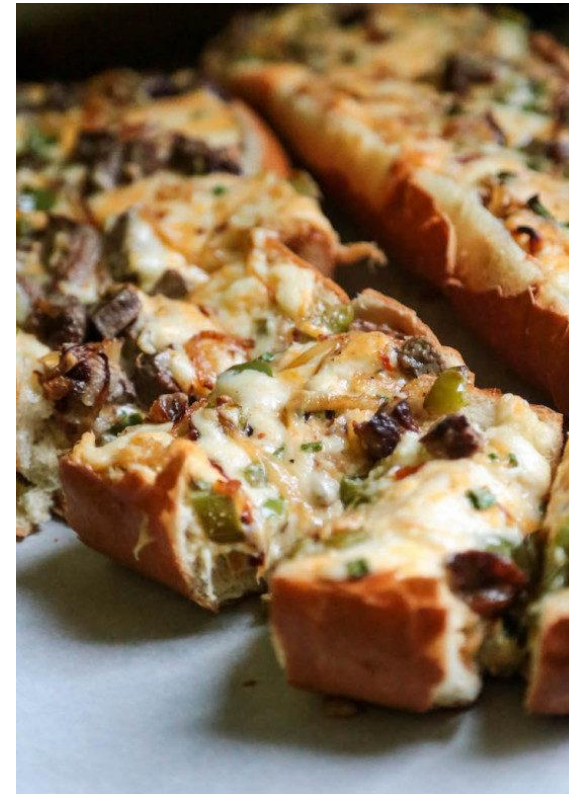


Test Poll

Text to 37607



- Are you more tempted by sweets or savories?



What kinds of things might we assess outside the classroom: **LEARNING**

Text to 37607



What kinds of things might we assess outside the classroom: EFFECTIVENESS

Text to 37607



Key assumptions and foundational elements



- If we start with the “why,” all the rest will fall into place
- We built our areas of focus on:
 - Institutional Priorities
 - Division Priorities
 - Department Priorities
 - Best Practice/Expectations of our functional areas
- Both learning and effectiveness are important

Key assumptions and foundational elements

- Process is designed using institutional language, structure, and timeline
- Process is designed to be sustainable and adaptable
- A long-term vision is propelling us in the process while we implement in a measured way



How are we
building the
process?



People leading the effort:

- Assessment Team
- Department Leaders (Director and one additional person)

Process to tool up:

- Messaging
- Training
- Individualized Support

Messaging

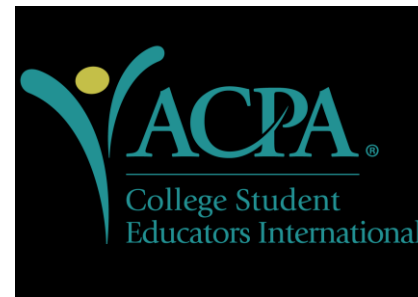
- Began in interview and early messaging

- Adopted a theme of “Tell Our Story”



Training

- Division-Wide Workshops
- Monthly Workshop Series for Department Leaders
- Conference Attendance



Training: All-Division Workshops



Workshop I:

- Explore the basics of why and what we assess
- Articulate a shared definition and process
- Embark on defining what assessment looks like for Student Affairs departments at Fitchburg State

Workshops II & III:

- Start with the Why
- Based on institutional, division, and department priorities & best practices
- Intentionality is key
- Practitioner as educator
- Logistics:
 - Highlight assumptions
 - Timeline
 - Expectations
 - Terms
 - Support
 - Getting started

Training: Monthly Training Schedule



- September: All-Division Retreat (Workshop I)
- October: A focus on the “why” and a look at what you are already doing
- November: Aligning departmental and program goals with division and institutional goals
- December: Assessment of student learning
- January: All-Division Retreat (Workshops II and III)
- February: ~~Methods Beyond Surveys I~~ Starting to operationalize priorities, outcomes, annual goals, objectives
- March: Individual meetings with departments
- April: Methods beyond surveys II AND individual meetings with departments
- May: All-Division Retreat (celebrating and sharing our progress)

Individualized Support

- Individual Sessions with Department Leaders
- Assessment Mentors



An example of a suggested departmental meeting focus

When developing the high level, long-term statements and data points (Priorities, Outcomes, KPIs):

- Engage the entire department staff.
- Priorities and Outcomes are:
 - Broad statements that describe the overarching, long-range intentions and hopes.
 - Explicitly support overall university goals.
 - Used for planning.

After reviewing the three mission statements (university, division, department) and the Institution-Wide Learning Priorities, discuss the following:

- What are our overarching intentions as a department? What do we want to accomplish, in a grand sense? (These are priorities – establish these first)
- Arrive at 3-ish priorities. If applicable, strongly consider both learning-related priorities and effectiveness priorities.
- Using these finished priorities, what more specific direction do you want to highlight?
- Arrive at 1-3 for each priority. Note that you will not likely have an annual goal related to each of these. Just be sure that you are addressing them over time.

Terms



Term	Definition	Time Horizon
Mission	Aspirational statement describing an organization's purpose and major organizational commitments.	Long term Relatively consistent from year to year
Priorities	Aspirational statements about what a department hopes to achieve.	Long term Relatively consistent from year to year
Program, Service, and Learning Outcomes	Aspirational statements that project the direction of a program.	Long term Relatively consistent from year to year
Key Performance Indicators	Quick metrics that measure to what extent or how well a department delivers its services/programs; can help identify changing trends.	Long term Relatively consistent from year to year Updated regularly to track progress
Annual Goals	Area of emphasis for an academic year based on changing department, division, and institution goals and strategic needs.	Reviewed and modified annually
Program, Service, and Learning Objectives	Specific, measurable statements that evaluate effectiveness.	Updated at least annually, and are targeted to specific functions, programs, etc. within a department
Signature Assessments	Assess core functions of the department.	Conducted every year or on a regular cycle
Program Review	Characterized by a combination of self-reflection and evaluation to critically assess all aspects of a department. Will use the standards and guidelines provided by the Council for the Advancement of Standards or other professional standards.	7 year cycle

Timeline



Timeline

March 1	Finalize updated mission; will be published in the March newsletter	For spring 2019, then as needed
May 1	Good solid draft of Priorities, Outcomes, KPIs	For spring 2019, then as needed
July 1	Annual Goals & Objectives	Annual deadline now and going forward
August 1	Submit plan for the year, including mapping programs & services to goals & objectives, and detailing assessment plans	Annual deadline now and going forward
Early January 2020	Mid-year report	Annual deadline now and going forward
June 1 2020	End-of-year report, including results, analysis, and suggestions for future practice	Annual deadline now and going forward
August 1 2020	Submit plan for the year	Annual deadline now and going forward

Early Lessons Learned



- There will be a variety of emotions associated with this process. That's OK! Work through them.
- It is unlikely any department is starting from zero; intentionally build on the work that has come before.
- Terms are going to be a challenge.
- Model taking risks, making mistakes, revising things. It makes the process better AND demonstrates that the process is indeed messy and nonlinear.
- Individualized attention is critical.

What is one
takeaway you
are leaving
with?

Text 37607



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What question
remains?

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Thank you

