Developing Learning Outcomes for Living-Learning Communities

The University of Iowa
The greatest impact appears to stem from students’ total level of campus engagement:

- Academic
- Interpersonal
- Extracurricular

1. What **students** do -- time and energy devoted to educationally purposeful activities

2. What **institutions** do -- using effective educational practices to induce students to do the right things
What Matters Most for Student Success: Student Engagement

- Learning Communities
- First year seminars and experiences
- Course in Common/General Education
- Study Abroad
- Writing Intensive Courses

“High-Impact Practices”

- Diversity/Global Learning
- Service Learning, Community-Based Learning
- Internships
- Capstone Experiences
- Research with a Faculty Member
- Collaborative Assignments and Projects
How we can tell if LLC’s at Iowa are “high impact”?

- **Assessment**
  - Any effort to gather, analyze and interpret evidence that describes institutional, departmental, divisional or agency effectiveness.

- **Student Learning Outcomes**
  - Describe what a student should know or be able to do as a result of an experience (e.g., participation in living-learning communities)
    - Provides more meaningful information than just counting participation numbers or measuring satisfaction
Outcomes can be:

- What you think you know about experiences (students who participate in learning communities are more likely to persist)
- What you’d like to find out about what students learned by participating in a learning experience. In a focus group of learning community participants you ask, “What did you learn by participating in a learning community?”

Courtesy: John Schuh
Characteristics of Good Assessment Practices

- **Values Based**
  - Assess what is important – Time, money, and energy are limited
  - Assessment makes a difference when it begins and ends with issues we really care about

- **Focused on Improvement**
  - The goal is to get better
  - Assessment can also help you make decisions about what to give up doing

- **Cyclical**
Characteristics of Good Assessment Practices

- Connected to the overall environment
  - Look Up: institutional (departmental/program) mission, vision, values
  - Look Down: where are you (within the institution), who are you serving, what do they need?
  - Look around: How does your work 'fit'?
Use your natural curiosity!

- What you think you know about your LLC
  - Students who participate in X are more likely to Y.

- What you’d like to find out about your LLC
  - I wonder if.....

- What do you think is the highest impact part of the LLC experience for your students?
As a result of (the learning experience) students will be able to (demonstrate what?) as evidenced by (measure)______________.

As a result of participating in the Healthy Living Network LLC, students will be able to make decisions aimed at living a healthy lifestyle, as evidenced by scores on pre/post wellness inventory.
Format for writing a student learning outcome

First year students
Graduating seniors
Students

who
participate in
engage with
complete

activity
program
course
8 counseling sessions

will be able to

intended elements
as demonstrated by
intended elements
as required by

identify
list
describe
summarize
discuss
explain

at least 3 out of 4
70% accuracy
more/fewer than
all

intended elements
as demonstrated by
intended elements
as required by

interview
observed behavior
journaling
blog
portfolio
post-survey

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Measuring Learning Outcomes

- Measures may be indirect
  - Pre/Post surveys
  - Reflection papers or journals
  - Student self-perceptions of growth

- Or Direct
  - Portfolios
  - Student projects
  - Performances
  - Research
  - Observations of student behavior (needs to be used with agreed upon standards for assessment)
Well-Formulated Outcomes

- Specific
- Measurable
- Connected with mission, vision, values
- Focused on something important and useful
- Demonstrate learning has occurred
Know – As a result of living in a LLC, students will be able to:

- Discuss University resources available to them
- Demonstrate college level study strategies and skills
- Explain how college expectations are different from high school expectations
- Form effective study groups
- Articulate the University’s “Message”
Do – As a result of living in a LLC, students will be able to:

- Collaborate with other students in the LLC to master material by working together outside of class on course assignments and by attending peer-led study groups.
- Discuss ideas from readings or classes with other LLC students.
- Establish social connections with other students in the LLC by participating in LLC social activities and events.
- Apply college-level study strategies and skills (e.g. time management, note taking) to their academic coursework.
- Interact with LLC faculty in formal (e.g. office hours) and/or informal venues.
- Interact in positive ways with diverse students.
- Use campus resources as appropriate
- Demonstrate the University’s “message” through their daily actions.
Selecting Measures for Learning Outcomes

The University of Iowa
The Golden Rules of Measurement

- Measure what you value, value what you measure

- Make your outcomes and your measurement:
  - Useful (practical)
  - Valuable (important)

- Focus on “small wins” first
### Assessment Strategies to Consider

*Source: Suskie, *Assessing student learning*, 2009; Courtesy John Schuh*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If You Want To...</th>
<th>Consider Using...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assess thinking and performance skills</td>
<td>Assignments or prompts planned and evaluated using scoring guides or rubrics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assess knowledge, conceptual understanding, or skill in application and analysis</td>
<td>Multiple choice tests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assess attitudes, values, dispositions, or habits of mind</td>
<td>Reflective writing, surveys, focus groups, or interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draw an overall picture of student learning</td>
<td>Portfolios</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compare your students against peers elsewhere</td>
<td>Published tests or surveys</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Direct vs. Indirect Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct Measures: Measure activity of the learner</th>
<th>Indirect Measures: Measure perceptions/opinions of the learner (including self-ratings of competence)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Posters</td>
<td>Surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Portfolios</strong></td>
<td>Retention Rates/Achievement Rates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papers</td>
<td>Focus groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentations</td>
<td>Reflections/Journals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance/Observation (artistic/theatrical or skill)</td>
<td>Exit Interviews</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tools for Direct Measurement

- Pre and Post Comparisons
- Experimental Designs
- RUBRICS
Rubrics

- A detailed set of criteria for defining the standards for evaluating a performance
- Are criterion-referenced, not norm-referenced (i.e., collaborative learning, not competitive learning)
- Can vary in complexity from simple checklists to detailed components with detailed scales
- May use developed rubrics, or develop a rubric based on discipline or best practice standards (ex. CAS)
Online Help for Creating Rubrics

Online Resources:

http://rubistar.4teachers.org/index.php

http://openedpractices.org/resources?page=2

http://jonathan.mueller.faculty.noctrl.edu/toolbox/howstep4.htm

http://rubrics.kon.org/
One Rubric Design

Students will be able to ______________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component A</th>
<th>Does not meet</th>
<th>Meets</th>
<th>Exceeds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Descriptive Criteria</td>
<td>Descriptive Criteria</td>
<td>Descriptive Criteria</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component B</th>
<th>Does not meet</th>
<th>Meets</th>
<th>Exceeds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Descriptive Criteria</td>
<td>Descriptive Criteria</td>
<td>Descriptive Criteria</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component C</th>
<th>Does not meet</th>
<th>Meets</th>
<th>Exceeds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Descriptive Criteria</td>
<td>Descriptive Criteria</td>
<td>Descriptive Criteria</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hatfield, Susan (2007)
Students will be able to **articulate aspects of creating a healthy, balanced lifestyle.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical Activity</th>
<th>Does not meet</th>
<th>Meets</th>
<th>Exceeds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thinks being “active” is sending text messages</td>
<td>Can state basic physical activity guidelines</td>
<td>Can outline an effective physical activity plan based on personal needs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nutrition</th>
<th>Does not meet</th>
<th>Meets</th>
<th>Exceeds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thinks Red Bull is a food group</td>
<td>Can describe the basic components of MyPyramid</td>
<td>Can identify better and best ways to meet nutrition guidelines</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component C</th>
<th>Descriptive Criteria</th>
<th>Descriptive Criteria</th>
<th>Descriptive Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

*Adapted from: Judy Bosland, NMSU*
## Pre/Post Survey Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Item</th>
<th>Pre-test Mean</th>
<th>Post-test Mean</th>
<th>Change</th>
<th>Supervisor Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Growth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I maintain the essential knowledge for the given sport I am responsible for.</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>+.23</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An official’s role is to control and administer a contest with little or no recognition.</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>+.23</td>
<td>4.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As an official, I can make a call without causing interruption.</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>+.23</td>
<td>4.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective Communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am skillful at effectively handling conflict.</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>+.23</td>
<td>4.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am approachable and easy to communicate with.</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>4.54</td>
<td>+.39</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can resolve conflict in a calm matter</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>+.53</td>
<td>4.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tools for Indirect Measurement

Institutional Data
Survey Data (Internal and External)
Focus Groups
Internal Surveys

Advantages:
- Personalized and Specific
- Relatively low cost
- Relatively quick to produce

Disadvantages:
- Not statistically robust (validity and reliability)
- Response rates and biased samples
- Open-ended questions can be difficult to analyze
Free/Cheap Survey Software

Websurveyor (UI-sponsored):
http://cs.its.uiowa.edu/sda/survey/

SurveyMonkey:
http://www.surveymonkey.com

Zoomerang:
http://www.zoomerang.com/
External Surveys (e.g., NSSE)

Advantages:
- Statistically robust
- Benchmark data available
- Quick Analysis

Disadvantages:
- Expensive
- Limited “personalized” questions
Survey Considerations

• Incentives
  Pre-paid, one per participant result in highest return

• Length (<~15 minutes)

• Salience/Personalization
  “Emails from Sally Mason will be deleted”
Focus Groups

Advantages:
- Allows for in-depth questioning
- Flexibility in questioning
- Can select the participants

Disadvantages:
- Need a trained facilitator for most accurate results
- Strong/weak personalities can skew results
- Can get expensive if using incentives
- Should do multiples to evoke true “themes”
Focus Groups

Ask questions related to outcomes (vs. satisfaction):

• What did you learn as a result of ___________?
• What have you done as a result of ___________?
• Give me an example of how you have applied your learning from this experience to __________.
Selecting Your Measures and Tools

- Consider using both a direct and an indirect measurement to create a holistic picture of student learning.

- Ask what will best fit your needs and answer the questions you want to answer.