From survey software to student response systems such as clickers, technology can help make assessment easier. Handheld devices (such as iPods) can be very a useful way to gather student data while out on campus or get feedback about a program during the event.

**Student Health & Wellness:**

Student Health & Wellness uses seven iPod Touches to gather student data on alcohol use every Fall and Spring semester. Student Health & Wellness staff members travel around campus asking students to complete a short (seven question) survey on alcohol use on an iPod Touch. Using survey software called SurveyGizmo, student responses are automatically collected and reports can be generated based on the data. Student Health & Wellness has also used iPod touches to gather assessment data on other several programs and initiatives such as the Campaign Against Laziness and Fat Talk Free Week.

Trish Welter, Behavioral Health Consultant at Student Health & Wellness, says that using iPods is a convenient way to gather assessment data. Not only can you catch students as they are walking around campus but students seem more likely to fill out the survey when asked in person versus through email. Since student responses are collected electronically there is also no extra data entry, and it is a much greener assessment process. Trish says that it has been a great experience using the iPods for assessment, and Student Health & Wellness will continue to use them in the future.

**Celebrating Cultural Diversity Festival:**

The Celebrating Cultural Diversity Festival (CCDF) has educated the community and honored the many cultures represented in the area for the past 23 years. This past September the CCDF Assessment Team systematically implemented a new assessment method to collect feedback from patrons attending the festival. Historically, feedback had been collected via a paper survey and then analyzed to help guide improvements to the festival from year to year. For this year’s CCDF assessment, seven iPod Touches were utilized to conduct a short, six question survey during the festival. Volunteers intercepted attendees throughout the event, asking them to complete the survey. To determine who had already taken the assessment, those who completed the survey were given a CCDF sticker.

Using this method, 191 individuals agreed to take the survey. The CCDF assessment indicated that the festival met attendees’ expectations and that the food and music were the most popular aspects of the event. Attendees’ feedback indicated that a greater variety of cultures, performances, booths, and food would be appreciated. Demographic information was also gathered along with frequency of attendance and time of day preference for the festival. This information will be used in planning next year’s CCDF.

Roy Salcedo, a member of the CCDF Assessment Team, says that this new assessment approach was successful. The major benefit of using iPod Touches for the survey was that the data was immediately available in an electronic format with statistical analysis already executed. Using the original paper survey would have required manual entry of the data, time delay, and an increased likelihood of data entry errors. Based on some challenges, for future festivals more training on the use of the iPods and the survey software, SurveyGizmo, will be provided for volunteers. Roy says that CCDF plans to use handheld devices for the next year’s festival survey.

If you would like to learn more about using handheld devices to conduct assessment, please contact Teri Schnelle at teri-schnelle@uiowa.edu.
Using Photography as an Assessment Method
Division of Student Life

Trying to find a way to assess your program or experience rather than using surveys or focus groups? Using photography as an assessment method can help you gather useful evidence on your program or experience while making the assessment process more interactive for students.

Photography is an example of a visual assessment method. Visual methods use images as the main form of data and can include pictures, videos, art work, and sculptures. Photography (which also can be known as photo journaling or photo voice) can be used as a structured method of self-reflection. Giving students a photo prompt focused on their experience can provide useful data on what they learned. For example, you could ask students to take a picture that captures something they learned during the program and also include an explanation of why they chose to take that photo. Photos can then be analyzed to determine common themes.

The following photo is an example of asking students what their experience is like living with a roommate.

"Adjusting to college life includes having to clean up after yourself… And maybe your roommate."

A current project at Iowa that captures assessment information through photography is Capture Iowa. First-year students submit photos of their UI experience and are then asked to reflect on why they chose to take the photo by writing an artist statement. If you would like more information about this project please email Katie Radke at captureiowa@uiowa.edu

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Helpful Tips
Selecting an Assessment Tool

After determining your outcomes, you have to determine how you’ll assess them. Consider these questions:

1. **Which outcome(s) do you want to measure?** Rather than assessing all learning outcomes at once, you may want to focus on specific groups of learning outcomes to make the assessment process more manageable.

2. **How will you know if a student has achieved the outcome? What will achieving the outcome “look like”?**
   - What do “effective presentation skills” look like?
   - What are the essential elements that must be present in a “leadership vision”?
   - What does a student need to be able to tell you for you to know they can identify their next steps for counseling or treatment?

We are often asked what the “best assessment” method is. Really, the best method is one that measures your outcome as effectively and efficiently as possible, is pertinent to your key stakeholders, and that gives you useful and useable data. Consider the audience for your assessment data – what types of data do they respond to?

When writing questions or selecting a method, note that there is a difference in asking students if they learned vs. what they learned. We are most interested in what they have learned.

Direct measures of collecting information require students to display learning. Examples include collections of student work, pre-post tests, and performance on a case study.

Indirect measures ask students or others to reflect on student learning. Examples include questions asking self-perceptions of learning, job placement statistics, and the percentage of students who graduate.

When possible, select a method that actually captures how students demonstrate what they have learned vs. their perception of what they’ve learned.

Ideas? Comments? Please email to: teri-schnelle@uiowa.edu