

SSAI-Classic Workshop Topics

Workshop 1: Introduction to Assessment

Instructor: SSAI team member

Workshop outcomes

- Gain a basic understanding of the assessment cycle (Bresciani, 2002)
- Be able to identify the purpose of assessment within student services
- Increase knowledge about the characteristics of effective assessment practices
- Gain confidence about ability to integrate assessment into ongoing operations

Description

Student services professionals care deeply about promoting student learning. This session emphasizes how assessment can lead to improvements in program delivery, planning, and decision-making. It also emphasizes the role of assessment in determining whether their efforts toward promoting student learning are working. Participants also learn how assessment can provide evidence for funding requests and budget allocation decisions.

Application

- Self reflection on strategies and actions participants currently use that could be considered assessment
- Group activity using case studies to identify elements that do and do not conform to best practices

Workshop 2: Assessment Planning

Instructor: SSAI team member

Workshop outcomes

- Be able to describe the different parts of an assessment plan
- Be able to distinguish between strategies and outcomes
- Be able to describe the characteristics of effective outcome statements

Description

This session shows how to make assessment more manageable by integrating it into daily activities. It helps participants recognize the importance of using goals and outcomes to drive programming and activities instead of the other way around. Focusing on outcomes instead of strategies can reduce mission creep and lead to more efficient and effective use of program resources.

Application

- Small group activity on identifying strategies vs. outcomes
- Writing outcome statements (individual and partner activity)

Workshop 3: Designing an Assessment Project

Instructor: SSAI team member

Workshop outcomes

- Be able to describe the different steps for completing an assessment project
- Be able to identify assessment project topics that are realistic and meaningful

Description

The assessment project provides an opportunity to apply concepts presented in the workshops. Participants gain hands-on, “real-world” experience doing assessment. Because participants select and design their assessment project based on issues

and needs relevant to their individual programs, they have an opportunity to contribute to the program's improvement efforts. They also have the chance to demonstrate newly developed skills to colleagues and supervisors.

Application

- Brainstorming activity that includes self-reflection, partner work, and small group work to produce list of project topics
- Homework assignment to meet with supervisor and select an assessment topic the participant will explore for her/his project

Workshop 4: Assessment Data: Collection, Interpretation, Utilization, and Dissemination

Instructor: SSAI team member

Workshop outcomes

- Be able to describe the different types of data used for assessment purposes
- Gain an understanding of the types of naturally occurring data that are produced in their service area and within the institution
- Increase knowledge of different types of data collection methods
- Be able to explain why they would select a particular type of data to answer different types of assessment questions
- Gain an understanding of the differences and similarities between assessment and research

Description

This session helps participants understand what types of data are appropriate for addressing different types of assessment issues. It also helps to reduce anxiety about the work load associated with data collection by increasing participants' awareness of the wide array of existing data that are available to answer many of the assessment questions they might be interested in pursuing.

Application

- Group activity on identifying existing sources of data within individual programs and the larger institution
- Group activity on matching different types of data (existing and new) to different assessment questions
- Homework assignment to discuss with supervisor the data collection method participant will use for project

Workshop 5: Institutional Research: Using Institutional Data to Support Program Assessment

Instructor: IR staff member

Workshop outcomes

- Increase understanding about the types of data available from Institutional Research
- Increase ability to retrieve standard reports from the university's online reporting tool
- Be able to describe the process for requesting customized reports

Description

This session introduces participants to an extensive set of data that is useful for assessing many different issues within their areas. It helps participants understand how to use new technology resources and opens their eyes to the possibility of designing customized reports that would provide timely and accurate data in an easy-to-access format.

Application

- Group activity to discuss ways participants do or could use institutional data for their projects or other assessment issues within their programs.

Workshop 6: Using Surveys for Assessment¹

Instructor: Faculty member with expertise in survey design and research

Workshop outcomes

- Understand when and why to use a survey
- Increase awareness of basic survey design principles and analysis
- Identify effective strategies for increasing response rates

Description

Surveys are often the method of choice in many areas, even when they may not be the best approach. Also, many student services practitioners have limited experience in designing surveys and are often disappointed when the results don't yield good data because of poor survey design. Finally, overuse of surveys can result in survey fatigue, especially on college campuses. Practitioners invest considerable time and effort in developing, administering, and analyzing surveys, and they need to understand strategies for improving the quality of data they acquire when they do decide to use a survey.

Application

- Embedded discussion woven throughout presentation using examples from surveys submitted by participants
- Survey design activity where participants are asked to apply the concepts presented in the session

Workshop 7: Data-Informed Decision Making

Instructor: SSAI team member

Workshop outcomes

- Increase awareness of data to improve program-level decision-making
- Identify opportunities for sharing data
- Be able to describe specific strategies for making data meaningful
- Identify strategies for involving all staff members in data-driven decision making

Description

We hear the term "data-driven" decision making all the time, but experience suggests that many practitioners have limited understanding of how to engage in this practice in meaningful ways. Too often, assessment involves collecting information, writing a report, and then filing it away someplace. This session exposes participants to specific, concrete strategies for "closing the loop." An added benefit is an emphasis on involving staff at all levels within a unit, which yields deeper insights into the meaning behind the data and increased understanding of how and why decisions are made.

Application

- Data Driven Dialogue activity – participants observe staff members from a single program participate in a discussion using a large set of data followed by a question and answer session
- Data Nugget Exercise – a group activity using "sound bites" of data to introduce participants to data-based reflective dialogue

Workshop 8: Using Technology to Support Assessment

Instructor: SSAI team member

Workshop outcomes

- Understand the importance of having a data management system for tracking a program's assessment plan
- Increase knowledge of TracDat, an assessment software tool used by the university
- Be able to identify ways that a data management tool can support a program's assessment activities

¹ May substitute other methodological topics as appropriate to cohort needs and interests.

Description

It's easy to become buried under a mountain of assessment data and even easier to lose track of what a program has done in the past without a strategy for storing assessment-related information in an accessible, secure environment. Participants become familiar with the institution's assessment software tool and develop insight into the importance of effective data management.

Application

- Participants have the opportunity to enter sample assessment information into the system.

Workshop 9: Promoting Professional Development through Assessment

Instructor: SSAI team member

Workshop outcomes

- Gain appreciation for the benefits associated with sharing the results of assessment activities
- Increase knowledge about the different venues and opportunities for sharing assessment results internally and externally
- Increase understanding about ethical issues associated with sharing assessment results (IRB)
- Be able to create and present a poster on the results of the assessment project

Description

This session enhances participants' awareness of their relationship to a larger community of professionals. It helps them understand how the results of their assessment activities can inform practice and theory. In addition, the session encourages participants to consider how sharing their assessment findings through conference presentations and publication can support their own professional growth and lead to opportunities for career advancement.

Application

- Group activity on deciding when IRB would be required prior to disseminating assessment results
- Group activity on identifying appropriate venues for sharing the results of participants' assessment projects
- Poster presentation of assessment project results at SSAI reception/poster session