In May 2008, Vice Chancellor Penny Rue convened the first meeting of the Student Affairs Assessment Coalition to discuss current theories and trends about learning and assessment in higher education. Since then, Student Affairs staff members continue to share ideas and learn how a "culture of assessment" can improve student experiences and enhance student learning in these meetings. The following are presentation slides from the 2008 Assessment Coalition meeting:

**UC San Diego Student Affairs Assessment Coalition**

**Why Assessment?**

- Assessment begins with our natural curiosity
- We’re motivated to provide the most powerful educational opportunities
- What do we want students to be able to learn, do or know as a result of our programs?
- Am I making a difference in the lives of my students?
- How do I know?
Assessment

- “...a rich conversation about students and student learning informed by data”
  - Ted Marchese, AAHE

- “…the systematic collection, review and use of information about programs/services undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning and development”
  - Palomba and Banta 1999

Precepts of Assessment Coalition

- A *culture* of assessment, not just projects
- Assessment *for*, rather than *of*, learning
- Assessment as engaged practice
- Assessment as reflective practice
- Assessment as transparent practice

Data Gathering—the foundation of decision-making

- Ongoing
- Natural
- Short turnaround time
- Involvement
- Sense of openness and full disclosure
- Potential for increasing levels of trust
- Creative process

Foundational Constructs

- Astin’s *Involvement in Learning* (1984):
  - Students’ learning and developmental outcomes are directly proportional to student involvement in the college experience
  - Both the quantity and quality of involvement that students invest in their college experience make a difference
  - Academic activities, co-curricular activities, and interaction with peers, faculty and administration all have value
Foundational Constructs

- **Student Learning Imperative (1994):**
  - Learning, student development and personal development are intertwined and inseparable
  - Deeper learning occurs through active engagement and collaboration with others
  - Environments can be intentionally designed to promote learning

- **Powerful Partnerships (1998):** *Learning ...*
  - Is about making and maintaining connections
  - Takes place in compelling situation with challenge and support
  - Active search for meaning by learner
  - Cumulative, involving whole person
  - Intrinsically tied to others as collaborators
  - Affected by educational climate
  - Requires frequent feedback
  - Can take place informally and incidentally
  - Grounded in particular context and individual experience

Foundational Constructs

- **Learning Reconsidered (2004, 2006):**
  - Cognitive complexity
  - Knowledge acquisition, integration and application
  - Humanitarianism
  - Civic Engagement
  - Interpersonal and intrapersonal competence
  - Practical competence
  - Persistence and academic achievement

Assessment Coalition Principles

- **Meaningful** = about something important
- **Transparent** = understood by students, with their full involvement
- **Manageable** = takes into account varying resources, including time – do not assess everything every year
- **Flexible** = takes into account assessment learning curves – some people will be more sophisticated in their assessment than others
Ask Yourself These Questions

- What decisions did you make about your program(s) last year?
- What evidence did you use to inform that decision?
- What was it that you were trying to influence about your program when making that decision with the stated evidence?

Bloom’s Taxonomy

- Knowledge
- Comprehension
- Application
- Analysis
- Synthesis
- Evaluation

*From Benjamin S. Bloom, *Taxonomy of educational objectives.*
Published by Allyn and Bacon, Boston, MA. Copyright (c) 1956 by Pearson Education.

The Assessment Cycle
Adapted from CUPR Guidelines

- The key questions...
  - What are we trying to do and why? or
  - What is my program supposed to accomplish?
  - How well are we accomplishing that which we say we are?
  - How do we know?
  - How do we use the information to improve or celebrate successes?
  - Do the improvements we make work?

Knowledge

- observation and recall of information
- knowledge of dates, events, places
- knowledge of major ideas
- mastery of subject matter

*Question Cues:*
list, define, tell, describe, identify, show, label, collect, examine, tabulate, quote, name, who, when, where, etc.
**Comprehension**
- understanding information
- grasp meaning
- translate knowledge into new context
- interpret facts, compare, contrast
- order, group, infer causes
- predict consequences
- Question Cues:
  - summarize, describe, interpret, contrast, predict, associate, distinguish, estimate, differentiate, discuss, extend

**Application**
- use information
- use methods, concepts, theories in new situations
- solve problems using required skills or knowledge
- Question Cues:
  - apply, demonstrate, calculate, complete, illustrate, show, solve, examine, modify, relate, change, classify, experiment, discover

**Analysis**
- seeing patterns
- organization of parts
- recognition of hidden meanings
- identification of components
- Question Cues:
  - analyze, separate, order, explain, connect, classify, arrange, divide, compare, select, explain, infer

**Synthesis**
- use old ideas to create new ones
- generalize from given facts
- relate knowledge from several areas
- predict, draw conclusions
- Question Cues:
  - combine, integrate, modify, rearrange, substitute, plan, create, design, invent, what if?, compose, formulate, prepare, generalize, rewrite
Evaluation

- compare and discriminate between ideas
- assess value of theories, presentations
- make choices based on reasoned argument
- verify value of evidence
- recognize subjectivity

*Question Cues*
- assess, decide, rank, grade, test, measure,
- recommend, convince, select, judge, explain,
- discriminate, support, conclude, compare,
- summarize

Student Learning Outcomes

- What group of students...
- Who participate in...
- What activity, course, program or service...
- Will be able to do, know or value what...
- Determined by what means...

Questions to Ask Yourself About Outcomes

- Is it measurable/identifiable?
- Is it meaningful?
- Is it manageable?
- Who is the target audience of my outcome?
- Who would know if my outcome has been met?
- How will I know if it has been met?
- Will it provide me with evidence that will lead me to make a decision for continuous improvement?

Assessment methods

- Direct: require students to display what they’ve learned
- Indirect: reflect upon the learning that has occurred
  - Palomba and Banta, 1999
- Naturally—occurring: embedded in the project—debates, presentations
- Designed—surveys
  - Ewell, 2003
Direct Assessment methods

- Observations of student behavior
- Portfolios
- Juried reviews of projects
- Case study performance
- Document analysis
- Use of rubrics for self-assessment
- Pre- and post-tests

Ewell, 2003

Indirect Assessment methods

- Exit interviews
- Employer surveys
- Job placement
- Retention studies
- Alumni surveys
- Percentages of students involved in X

Sample learning outcomes

- Students will successfully apply conflict resolution skills in their organization
- Students will demonstrate responsible leadership by organizing a successful event that their group’s membership deems important and relevant to the community
- Leaders will hold members accountable who demonstrate an inability to make responsible choices
- Students that live in the residence hall will demonstrate an understanding of personal safety practices
- Students will demonstrate improved study skills

Pieces of the Assessment Puzzle (Ratcliff)

- Usage: Track who uses your services and programs
- Satisfaction: Measure user satisfaction with facilities and services
- Needs: Assess student needs in systematic way
- Environments and cultures: Assess perceptions of climate, norms and sub-groups
- Benchmarks: Identify best practices
- Standards: Compare your operations to professional standards
A range of related questions: start where you are!

- Who uses our services?
- How satisfied are our users?
- What are the needs of our users?
- What are the needs of our stakeholders?
- How satisfied are our stakeholders?
- In what ways do we contribute to the University?
- What is our image in the eyes of our users?
- What are the implications of our data for our planning?

Examples of Evaluative Evidence

STUDENT RECRUITMENT MATERIALS:
- Brochures & other program information
- Participation policies & procedures

PROGRAM DOCUMENTS:
- Mission statements; program purpose & philosophy statements
- Catalogs & related materials
- Staff & student manuals; policies & procedures statements

ADMINISTRATIVE DOCUMENTS:
- Organization charts; student & staff profiles
- Financial resource statements & budgets
- Annual reports

STAFF ACTIVITY REPORTS:
- Curriculum vitae & resumes; professional activity
- Service to other programs, departments, or community

STUDENT ACTIVITY REPORTS:
- Portfolios, developmental transcripts, resumes
- Reports of student service

RESEARCH & EVALUATION DATA:
- Needs assessments & self-studies
- Program evaluation; graduate & follow-up studies

Building the coalition

- What talents, aptitude, and expertise exists within our team?
  - Where is program evaluation already common?
  - Which units are already data driven?
  - Who is pursuing a program of graduate study that includes inquiry?
  - Who has natural talent for assessment?

Building the coalition

- What natural inclinations to learn and measure have we demonstrated?
  - UCUES surveys
  - USES report
  - Grant applications
  - Admissions data
  - Health assessment
  - Program impact studies
  - Others?
Building the coalition

- What partners exist for this work?
  - Professional organizations
  - Graduate programs
  - Conferences
  - Academic departments
  - Individual faculty

Resources: NASPA’s Net Results Assessment Corner

- Recent Topics include:
  - Advanced Tools for Assessment: It’s Not Your Grandfather’s Assessment, Part III — April 9, 2008
  - Collecting Information about Current Learning Experiences and Current Measures Used — November 14, 2007
  - Accountability in Higher Education: Driven by Business or Social Responsibility? (Part III) — October 21, 2007
  - Accountability in Higher Education: Driven by Business or Social Responsibility? (Part II) — October 10, 2007
  - Measuring What Matters in Student Development and Enrollment Services — September 26, 2007
  - Defining and Measuring Nonresponsive Error in Student Surveys — April 25, 2007
  - Using a Client for Service Research — March 4, 2007
  - Suggestions for Student Affairs Services Practitioners to Address the Implications of the Commission on the Future of Higher Education’s Recommendations — November 9, 2006
  - Significance Testing: How Important is It? — October 12, 2006
  - Improving Assessment Through the Use of Peer Review — September 13, 2006
  - Offices of Assessment in Student Affairs: Perceived fit: Misperception or passing fancy? — August 9, 2006
  - Conceptualizing and Introducing Assessment to Student Affairs Practice Through Diffusion of Innovation — July 13, 2006
  - The Politics of Assessment — June 24, 2006

Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS)

- Establish, adopt, and disseminate unified and timely professional standards to guide student learning and development programs and services
- Promote assessment and improvement of higher education programs and services through self-study
- Establish, adopt, and disseminate unified and timely professional preparation standards for the education of student affairs practitioners, and to promote the assessment and improvement of graduate preparation programs
- Advance the use and importance of professional standards
- Develop and provide materials to support the use of standards
- Promote and encourage a focus on quality assurance
- Promote inter-association efforts to address these issues

Ellis, CAS Basics, 2008

Range of existing CAS Standards

- Academic Advising
- Admission Programs
- Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Programs
- Campus Activities Programs
- Campus Information and Visitor Services
- Campus Religious & Spiritual Programs
- Career Services
- Clinical Health Programs
- College Honor Societies
- College Unions
- Commuter and Off-Campus Living Programs
- Conference and Events Programs
- Counseling Services
- Disability Support Services
- Distance Education Programs
- Edue. Abroad Programs and Services
- Financial Aid
- Fraternity and Sorority Advising Programs
- Health Promotion Programs

- Housing and Residential Life Programs
- International Student Programs
- Internship Programs
- Learning Assistance Programs
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Programs
- Multicultural Student Programs and Services
- Orientation Programs
- Outcomes Assessment and Program Evaluation
- Recreational Sports Programs
- Registrar Programs and Services
- Service-Learning Programs
- Student Conduct Programs
- Student Leadership Programs
- TRIO and Other Educational Opportunity Programs
- Women Student Programs
- Master’s Level Student Affairs Administration Preparation Programs
CAS Learning Domains

- intellectual growth
- effective communication
- realistic self-appraisal
- enhanced self-esteem
- clarified values
- career choices
- leadership development
- healthy behaviors
- meaningful interpersonal relationships

Building the coalition—Discussion Groups

- independence
- collaboration
- social responsibility satisfying and productive lifestyles
- appreciation of diversity
- spiritual awareness
- achievement of personal and educational goals
- Needs assessment
- Climate studies
- Program evaluation
- Qualitative research
- Focus groups
- Data-mining
- Benchmarking
- Standards
- Exit interviews
- Writing for publication

Questions? Comments?

- Next Steps?
- Commitments?
- Ongoing interest?