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.)

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Poll Everywhere!

• Send a text to 37607

• In that text, say LAURABAYLESS793
• 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
• 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

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• 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

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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.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Time Horizon</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mission</td>
<td>Aspirational statement describing an organization’s purpose and major organizational commitments.</td>
<td>Long term Relatively consistent from year to year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priorities</td>
<td>Aspirational statements about what a department hopes to achieve.</td>
<td>Long term Relatively consistent from year to year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program, Service, and Learning Outcomes</td>
<td>Aspirational statements that project the direction of a program.</td>
<td>Long term Relatively consistent from year to year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Performance Indicators</td>
<td>Quick metrics that measure to what extent or how well a department delivers its services/programs; can help identify changing trends.</td>
<td>Long term Relatively consistent from year to year Updated regularly to track progress</td>
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<tr>
<td>Annual Goals</td>
<td>Area of emphasis for an academic year based on changing department, division, and institution goals and strategic needs.</td>
<td>Reviewed and modified annually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program, Service, and Learning Objectives</td>
<td>Specific, measurable statements that evaluate effectiveness.</td>
<td>Updated at least annually, and are targeted to specific functions, programs, etc. within a department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signature Assessments</td>
<td>Assess core functions of the department.</td>
<td>Conducted every year or on a regular cycle</td>
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<td>Program Review</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>7 year cycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event Description</td>
<td>Deadline</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 1</td>
<td>Finalize updated mission; will be published in the March newsletter</td>
<td>For spring 2019, then as needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1</td>
<td>Good solid draft of Priorities, Outcomes, KPIs</td>
<td>For spring 2019, then as needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1</td>
<td>Annual Goals &amp; Objectives</td>
<td>Annual deadline now and going forward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 1</td>
<td>Submit plan for the year, including mapping programs &amp; services to goals &amp; objectives, and detailing assessment plans</td>
<td>Annual deadline now and going forward</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early January 2020</td>
<td>Mid-year report</td>
<td>Annual deadline now and going forward</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 1 2020</td>
<td>End-of-year report, including results, analysis, and suggestions for future practice</td>
<td>Annual deadline now and going forward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 1 2020</td>
<td>Submit plan for the year</td>
<td>Annual deadline now and going forward</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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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
What question remains?