Using Assessment for Program Impact: *The Syracuse University Experience*

National Student Affairs Assessment and Retention Conference

June 4, 2004

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Office of Residence Life

Syracuse University

Agenda

- Institutional Context
- Development of Division of Student Affairs Assessment Committee
- Developing a Strategic Plan for Assessment
- Implementing the Assessment Model
  - Assessment Planning
  - Implementation of Assessment Projects
  - Results
- Questions

Syracuse University Context

- Private, coeducational research university founded in 1870
- Professional education with liberal arts and sciences core
- Comprised of 12 schools and colleges
- Approximately 11,000 undergraduate and 4,000 graduate students
- Syracuse University Vision:
  - To be the nation's leading student-centered research university

Division of Student Affairs Context

- 1996 – Sr. Vice President and Dean of Student Affairs took office
  - Identified 4 primary initiatives for the Division:
    - Increase collaboration with Academic Affairs
    - Align Division of Student Affairs with Institutional Mission and Vision
    - Enhance "Out of Classroom" Learning Environment
    - Develop Assessment Model for Division of Student Affairs
- August 2000 – announces strategic planning process to begin with formation of Strategic Planning Steering Committee

Division of Student Affairs Continued

- Sr. Vice President and Dean of Student Affairs announced rationale for strategic planning process
  - 5 year plan to provide a road map to guide the Division in its evolution
  - Success of the plan would be measured by effectiveness of Division to leverage resources to support institutional goals

Division of Student Affairs Continued

- Steering Committee Charge:
  - Integrate change through the 9 Divisional priorities
    - Assessment
    - Campus Safety
    - Collaborations
    - Diversity
    - Fund-raising
    - Space Planning
    - Student Development
    - Technology
    - Wellness and Substance Abuse Prevention

Division of Student Affairs Continued

- October 2000 – strategic planning process begins
- 4 Phase Process:
  - Ingression – preparing of Division and planning committee for change and data sharing throughout the Division
  - Analysis – providing constituents with assessment information and unit summaries (each unit was expected to participate in a self-study)
  - Strategy – committees review charge and begin developing plans
  - Synthesis – following committee SWOT analyses, committee reports integrated into one Divisional strategic planning document

Concurrent Impact of Academic Affairs and Institutional Advancement

- August 1999 – new Vice Chancellor and Provost is hired and identifies need to review the University's academic priorities and structures
- December 2000 - $370 million "Commitment to Learning" campaign concludes
  - New Sr. Vice President for Institutional Advancement lays groundwork for next capital campaign
- April 2001 – Vice Chancellor and Provost introduces new Academic Plan for Syracuse University
  - All-University Space Planning Advisory Committee completes recommendations to meet the University's need for academic space – result is $180 million academic space plan

Institutional Context Conclusion

- University-wide commitment to putting in place means by which to achieve our vision of being the nation's leading student-centered research institution
- Collaborative support from Academic Affairs, Division of Student Affairs, and Institutional Advancement

Division of Student Affairs Assessment Committee

- Developed during Division of Student Affairs Strategic Planning Process
  - Recommend protocols for assessment (survey sampling, software platforms for data maintenance)
  - Coordinate assessment projects
  - Identify areas for cross-departmental assessment collaboration
  - Provide support and training to Divisional staff
  - Serve as liaisons to departments within Division of Student Affairs

- Composed of the following members
  - Associate Dean of Students
  - Assistant Director of Assessment – Division of Student Affairs
  - Assistant Director of the Parents Office
  - Director of Career Services
  - Associate Director of the Office of Greek Life and Experiential Learning
  - Associate Director of the Office of Residence Life
  - Associate Director of the Slutzker Center for International Services
  - Coordinator of Assessment, Operations, and Technology – Residence Life

Why did we assess in the Office of Residence Life?

- Upcraft and Schuh provide solid reasons:
  - Quality
  - Survival/Accountability
  - Strategic Planning
  - Politics
- Our focus:
  - Strategic Planning and Quality
  - Development of departmental and programmatic goals and learning outcomes
  - Our vision:
    - to be the nation's leading student-centered residence life program

Elements of Good Assessment

- **Good Assessment…**
  - Asks important questions
  - Reflects the departmental/institutional mission
  - Reflects identified learning outcomes
  - Is linked to a plan for decision making
  - Encourages involvement
  - Contains relevant assessment techniques
  - Is shareable and leads to reflection

Developing a Strategic Plan for Assessment

- Begin the dialogue: assessment begins with knowing what you want
- Define your assessment vision: what do you hope to accomplish?
- Make some assumptions: what kind of resources exist?
- Decide on a guiding model: how will you assess?
- Operationalize your plan: assign responsibilities and roles

Beginning the Dialogue – Step 1

- Do not do a study that no one really wants
- Determine the confidentiality
- Determine who should be involved
- Plan to conduct a good study
- Understand what kinds of information you will need to provide in a report

Office of Residence Life – Beginning the Dialogue

- Dialogue began in 1997 – 1998
- 6 strategic objectives for assessment within the Office of Residence Life:
  - Train the Office of Residence Life staff in assessment
  - Support Office of Residence Life staff in assessment initiatives
  - Develop assessment-based resources
  - Increase knowledge about our residential students
  - Increase knowledge about our Resident Advisor staff
  - Use assessment to increase departmental and program effectiveness
- Annual and one-time projects identified
- Internet assessment software identified (Infopoll)
- Money spent on software and staff training
- Formal and informal reporting mechanisms identified

Defining Your Assessment Vision – Step 2

- **3 Primary Steps**
  - Determine who will be the audience for the results
  - Determine the appropriate format(s) of the study
  - Involve the key stakeholders in the planning of the study and allow them to review instrument drafts

Office of Residence Life – Defining Our Assessment Vision

- To contribute to the Division of Student Affairs Assessment Vision:
  - To develop and enhance our efforts to gather, analyze, and interpret evidence which describes institutional, divisional, departmental, or unit effectiveness.
- Assessment Committee formed
  - Composed of the following for 2004 – 2005:
    - Coordinator for Assessment, Operations, and Technology (committee chair)
    - 1 Associate Director of Residence Life
    - 2 Residence Directors
    - 1 Graduate Assistant for Assessment
    - 1 Administrative Secretary
- Internet assessment software identified (Infopoll)
- Involve students, faculty, and staff in the planning, as appropriate

Making Assumptions About Resources – Step 3

- Do you have the money?
- Do you have the ability to analyze data?
- Do you have cooperation of department and key stakeholders?
- Do you have people to assist in the data collection?
- Are you able to afford incentives?
- Is your organization supportive?

Office of Residence Life – Making Assumptions About Resources

- Assessment Committee budget established
- Graduate Assistant for Assessment with statistical analysis ability (i.e., SAS)
- Assessment is one of the foundational areas within the Office of Residence Life
- Assessment Committee assists with data collection / Infopoll survey software is utilized for data collection
- Gift certificate packages are offered as incentives for each assessment project

Developing an Assessment Model – Step 4

- Describes the following:
  - Your departmental or organizational mission/vision/values
  - Strategic objectives:
    - Learning outcomes
    - Behavioral indicators
    - Key performance indicators
  - Activity designed to impact students
  - How strategic objectives will be measured
  - Benchmarking over time
  - Reporting of results and feedback from stakeholders

Office of Residence Life – Developing an Assessment Model

Learning Outcome	Activity	Did the activity happen?	What did the activity do?	What was the perception of the activity?	Benchmarking over time
Describe 3 ways in which the floor community can support academic coursework	Individually design a drawing or model depicting academic support in a residence hall floor community	Yes	Required students to design a drawing or model demonstrating academic support in the floor community	Students were able to demonstrate what they learned regarding ways they can support each other as a floor community in their academics	Will be conducted at the end of each fall semester

Operationalize Your Assessment Plan – Step 5

- Assign specific tasks and roles
- Decide on formal and informal reporting plan
- Identify a dissemination plan
- Use your experience to revisit your overall strategic plan for assessment

Office of Residence Life – Operationalize the Assessment Plan

- Tasks assigned to members of the Assessment Committee
- Informal Reporting Plan:
  - The Orange Slice© is sent to the following:
    - Approximately 87 faculty and staff throughout the University
    - 49 staff members within the Office of Residence Life
    - 146 Resident Advisors
  - Copies to all Office of Residence Life staff (professional and paraprofessional) include a discussion guide to help stimulate conversations among staff and students
- Formal Reporting Plan
  - Sent to approximately 42 faculty and staff throughout the University in addition to the 49 staff within the Office of Residence Life
  - A shorter formal report is sent to the Division of Student Affairs Assessment Committee

Informal Report

- Distribute more widely than formal report
- Can serve to start discussions throughout campus
- Suggested Format:
  - Title
  - Summary of project
  - Response rate and brief description of the sample
  - 4 or 5 questions and responses (use graphical representation and benchmarking data, when possible)
  - Contact information for more information

Report Writing

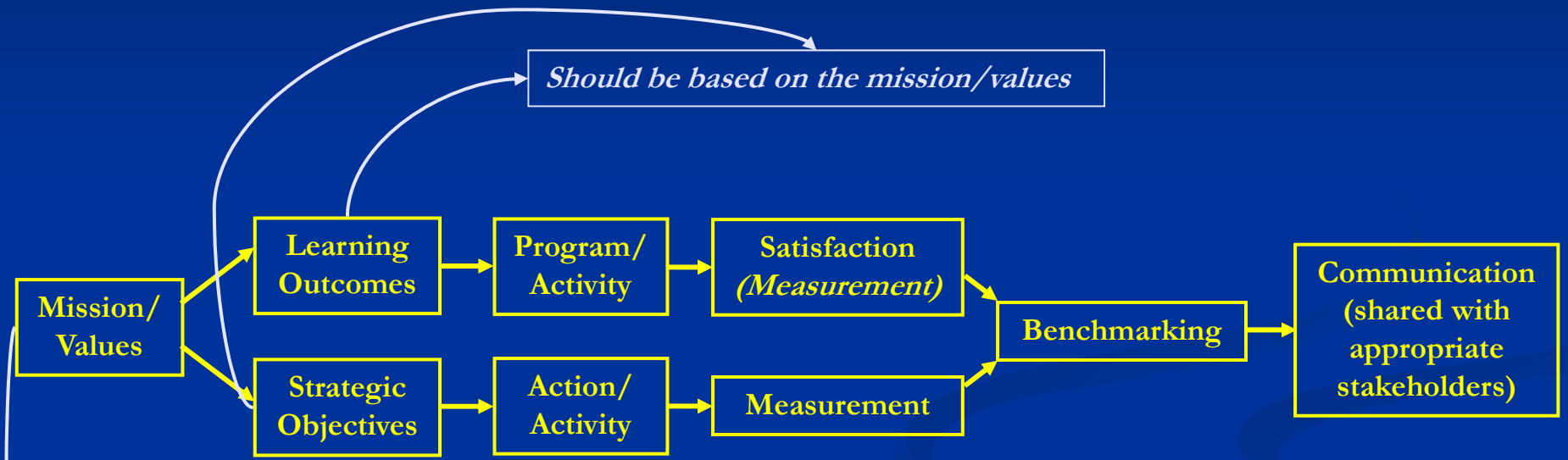
- Vehicle for communication of assessment data
- Can be formal or informal
- Should accomplish the following:
  - Link data to decision making
  - Connect data to continual redefinition of strategic goals
  - Connect data to continual redefinition of learning outcomes
  - Provide means to improve our impact on students

Formal Report

- **I. Front Cover**
  - Title of study
  - Name of individuals involved
  - Date
- **II. Summary**
  - What was assessed?
  - When did assessment project occur?
  - Why was this project conducted?
  - Highlights of major findings
- **III. Background Summary**
  - Relevant literature, when appropriate
  - Goals/History of program
  - Students, faculty, and staff involved
- **IV. Description of the Study**
  - Design of the study
  - Data collection process (including sampling technique)
- **V. Results**
  - Description of the program
  - Summarize demographic data of respondents
  - Summary of statistical results and qualitative themes
- **VI. Discussion of Results**
  - Why did you learn?
  - Limitations of study
  - Recommendations for program studied
  - Recommendations for future research

Implementing the Assessment Model in the Office of Residence Life at Syracuse University

Office of Residence Life – Develop a Guiding Model for Assessment



- *Each department should create a mission statement if one is not currently in existence*
- *Idea of "knowing what you are about"*
- *Provides a "common message" to share data*

Developed through the Division of Student Affairs Strategic Planning Process
Syracuse University

Assessment Planning

- Example: Diversity Survey for Campus Climate
- Link to Assessment Model (mission/vision)
  - Syracuse University's 5 Core Values: Quality, Caring, **Diversity**, Innovation, Service
  - One of nine Division of Student Affairs priorities for strategic planning
  - Mission of Residence Life:
    - To foster student development, support academic success, and **celebrate diversity** by creating intentional programs and experiences within a community of learners that involves students, faculty, and staff.
  - Residence Life Guiding Philosophy: The Community Action Plan
    - 5 Goals of Personal Development, Academic Development, Community Development, **Multicultural Awareness**, and Alcohol and Other Drug Awareness

Project Implementation

- Diversity Survey
  - Conducted annually since Spring 2001
  - Purpose is to assess climate in the residence halls and on-campus as it relates to diversity
  - Spring 2003 survey contained 65 multiple-choice and open-ended questions
  - Timeline:
    - October – begin discussion for additions/revisions to previous year's instrument
    - November – December – Meet with external offices
    - January – Revise instrument and present drafts to stakeholders
    - February/March – administer instrument via the web
    - April/May – Disseminate informal report (Orange Slice©)
    - April – July – Analyze results
    - July/August – Share formal report with department and summary report with Division of Student Affairs

Implementation Considerations

- Sampling
  - Stratified Sampling – represents the survey population based on specific variables, is random and representative
- Survey and Question Design
- Scales
  - Likert scales
- Method of Data Collection
  - Web based

Results and Implications

- Data from the annual Diversity Survey has been used to create and support our nationally recognized "No Place for Hate" campaign, a program for anti-bias education

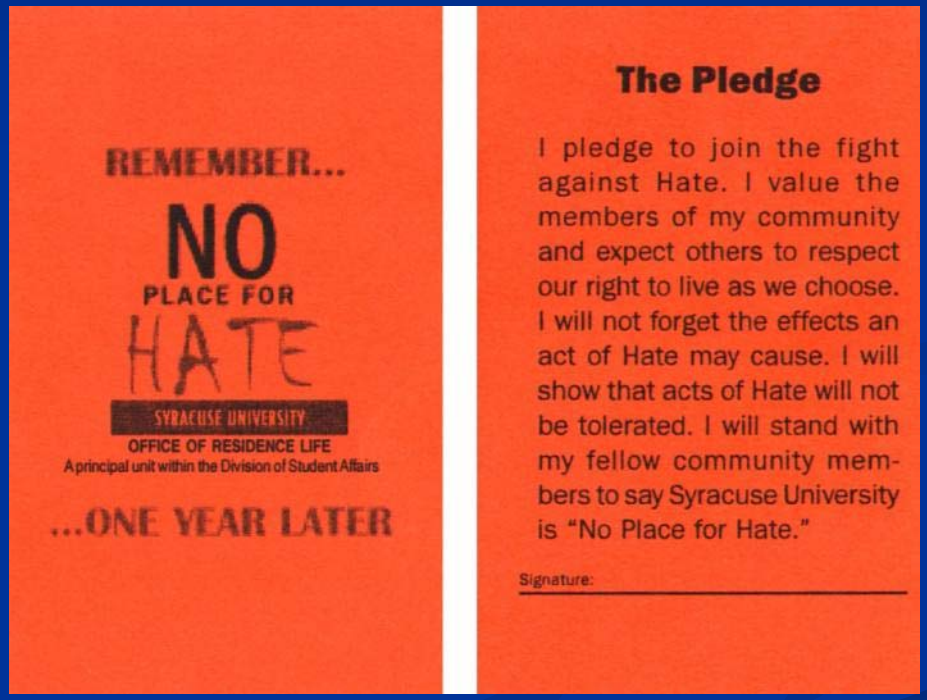
- Spring 2001 results:
  - 37% of students dissatisfied with diversity programming
  - 31% of residential students reported observing an incident of discrimination in 2000-2001
  - 35% of residential students did not feel comfortable sharing a "different perspective" with their peers

Results and Implications

- Implications for paraprofessional training
  - Increased support for RA programming on Multicultural issues
  - Increased training support for RAs in how to lead impactful conversations about diversity related issues
  - RAs wearing "No Place For Hate" t-shirts during opening weekend and explained at the first floor meeting that hate and bias are not welcome at SU
  - First floor meeting discussions that bias and hate were not welcome in the residence hall communities, and about the importance of building a community free of hate and bias
  - Distribution of "No Place For Hate" stickers for residence hall doors as a visible support of developing communities free of bias

Implications Continued

- Assessment results added to our knowledge and provided foundation for further programmatic changes:
  - Diversity poster series created with messages supporting acceptance of diverse backgrounds
  - "No Place For Hate Banner" sponsored in the University Quad for student to sign and pledge support against hate and bias
  - Development of "No Place For Hate" day, with over 250 students viewing "Not On Our Campus" and distribution of "No Place For Hate" pins.
  - Office of Residence Life Diversity Committee sponsoring a "No Place For Hate Train the Trainer Retreat," for RAs and Hall Council members to improve facilitations and programming skills on diversity



Observed Changes in Data – Underrepresented Populations

Statement	LGBQ Students		
	2003	2002	2001
In my residence hall, residents feel comfortable sharing diverse ideas, opinions, and beliefs	85.7%	82%	67%
Experiences in my residence hall have led me to be more understanding of diversity issues	66.7%	29%	57%
Hall Council encourages the participation of students from diverse backgrounds in its events	64.4%	52%	52%

Statement	LGBQ Students			Students of Color		
	2003	2002	2001	2003	2002	2001
Level of comfort in your residence hall based on your identity	66.7%	71%	55%	70.7%	75%	62%

Observed Changes in Data – Non-underrepresented Populations

Statement	Heterosexual Students		
	2003	2002	2001
In my residence hall, residents feel comfortable sharing diverse ideas, opinions, and beliefs	88.4%	84%	81%

Statement	Heterosexual Students			White Students		
	2003	2002	2001	2003	2002	2001
Level of comfort in your residence hall based on your identity	77.1%	79%	69%	78.7%	79%	69%
Hall Council encourages the participation of students from diverse backgrounds in its events	75.6%	65%	66%	78.3%	68%	69%
In my residence hall, I participate in programs/activities related to diversity.	41.4%	32%	33%	41.8%	27%	31%

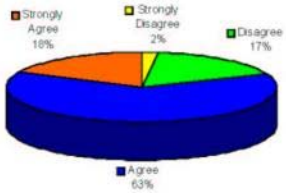
Informal Report

THE Orange SLICE®
office of residence life assessment
syracuse university • division of student affairs

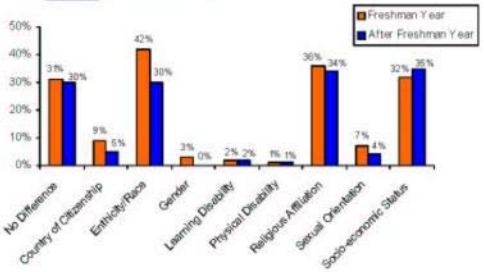
2004 Diversity Survey

The Office of Residence Life 2004 Diversity Survey was administered in the Spring 2004 semester to n=1,461 students living in the Syracuse University residence halls and apartments. Approximately 14.0% (n=204) of the surveys were returned. The following summarizes the results.

QUESTION 1 In my residence hall, residents feel comfortable expressing diverse ideas, opinions, and beliefs.

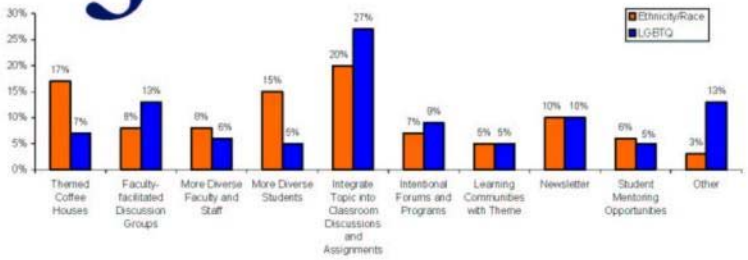


QUESTION 2 How your roommate(s) differed from your identity

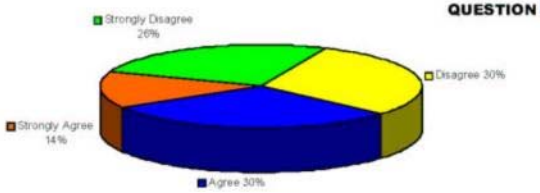


To learn more about assessment in the Office of Residence Life, visit http://orl.syr.edu/assessment/

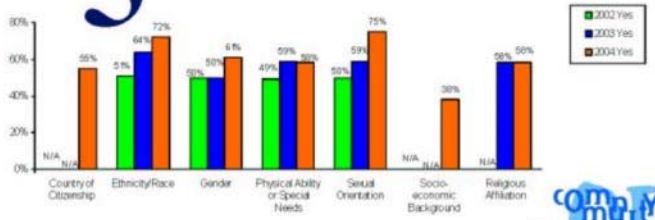
QUESTION 3 Best way to support ethnically/racially diverse and LGBTQ students on campus



QUESTION 4 A diversity course focused on exploring issues related to diversity should be a core course requirement for my home school/college.



QUESTION 5 At Syracuse University, there are clear procedures for addressing incidents of discrimination based on:



For a detailed report please go to http://orl.syr.edu/assessment/reports.htm

The Office of Residence Life is a principal unit within the Division of Student Affairs

Assessment Committee Benchmarking Projects

- Annual Internal Benchmarking Projects:
  - Move-in Survey (Fall 1999 – present)
  - Community Survey (Fall 1999 – present)
  - Diversity Survey (Spring 2001 – present)
  - Exit Survey (Spring 2003 – present)

- National Benchmarking Projects
  - ACUHO-*I*/EBI Resident Study (Spring 1999, every 2 – 3 years)
  - ACUHO-*I*/EBI Apartment Study (Spring 1999, every 2 – 3 years)

Point-in-Time Projects

- **1999 – 2000**
  - Campus Life Activities
  - Gambling
  - South Campus
  - Syracuse University First Year Newsletter
  - USA Today Readership Program
- **2000 – 2001**
  - Academic Dishonesty
  - Learning Communities
  - Resident Advisor Recruitment Survey
  - South Campus
- **2001 – 2002**
  - Financial Management
  - Resident Advisor Community Action Plan
  - Resident Advisor Selection
  - Student Activity
  - Student Activity Fee
  - Terrorism and Military Action
- **2002 – 2003**
  - Resident Advisor Floor Feedback
  - War, Terrorism, and Events in Iraq
- **2003 – 2004**
  - Brewster Hall Renovation Project
  - Departmental Values Assessment
  - Lazybones Laundry Survey
  - LIFE Floor Assessment
  - Mentor Resident Advisor Feedback on Opening and Orientation
  - Quiet Life Floor Assessment
  - Resident Advisor Floor Feedback
  - Residence Hall Student Leadership Survey
  - South Campus Living Environment Survey

Questions

Thank You!

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