Making Student Affairs Assessment a Priority at UConn: A Plan for Implementation

University of Connecticut
Division of Student Affairs
August 4, 2010
Executive Summary

The national impetus for student affairs to emphasize assessment is in response to several interconnected factors: 1) an emerging philosophy of the student affairs profession that emphasizes intentional alignment of student affairs work with the academic mission to promote students’ success (ACPA, 1996), (NASPA & ACPA, 2004); 2) the desire of student affairs professionals to promote evidence-based practice (ACPA & NASPA, 2010), and 3) growing pressure for increased accountability from within the academy and also from governmental agencies, accreditation bodies, and the public (Schuh & Upcraft, 2008), especially in light of current economic difficulties facing the State of Connecticut.

The student affairs professionals at the University of Connecticut were influenced by these same factors along with the emphases that emerged from the University of Connecticut Academic Plan (2009) and the resultant University of Connecticut Student Affairs Strategic Plan (2010).

It is essential to have a plan that can be understood and implemented by a vast majority of Division staff members. Our plan is streamlined and manageable, and focuses on a model that includes three major areas: metrics, service and learning outcomes, and unit review. Our plan includes in depth explanations of these three model components, as well as definitions, guiding principles, and examples, and timelines.

- **Metrics** are “numbers” that indicate performance or effectiveness. One can think of metrics as “taking the temperature” of a program or service.

- **Service outcomes assessment** examines what a unit will do, achieve, or improve to demonstrate operational effectiveness; for example, assessment of timeliness of responses, satisfaction with customer service, efficiency of resource utilization, etc.

- **Learning outcomes assessment** examines cognitive skills that students (or other stakeholders) develop through department/group memberships, interactions, programs, and services; i.e. assessment of what students will know (knowledge), do (skills), or believe (dispositions).

- **Unit review** is a collaborative process designed to provide an in depth, comprehensive study of a unit/department. The purpose of unit review is to provide an opportunity for focused reflection, study, and gathering of information which supports on-going unit development and improvement. The intention is to set up patterns and processes to systematically and regularly collect, analyze, and interpret data concerning a unit. The review process is expected to have positive effects on Student Affairs planning, decision-making, and performance.

High quality assessment requires considerable time, expertise, and resources. And given the nature of our work, it is essential to create a climate of meaningful and strategic assessment collaboration among staff and across units. Hence, in order for us to carry out high quality assessment in a collaborative environment, the Division will offer consultation and training about quality assessment, best practices, assessment aids (such as StudentVoice), and a
variety of other resources to make the process of designing and implementing effective assessment easier and more efficient.

Our plan also includes the history and context of the Assessment Division Initiative Committee. This committee was charged in 2007 to “develop a comprehensive and strategic approach to division-wide assessment”. Documentation about the makeup of the team, as well as the team’s progress and activities has been included.

Finally, the plan provides information about the team that will implement the plan moving forward (the Student Affairs Assessment Advisory Council).
# Table of Contents

Executive Summary ................................................................................................................... 3  
Table of Contents ...................................................................................................................... 5  
Introduction .............................................................................................................................. 9  
   Assessment Philosophy ......................................................................................................... 9  
   Purpose of Assessment ....................................................................................................... 10  
      Figure 1: Strategic Planning and Assessment Cycle ........................................................ 11  
   Definition of Assessment ................................................................................................... 11  
   Guiding Principles for Assessment ...................................................................................... 12  
      Rigor/Quality .................................................................................................................. 12  
      Choice/Autonomy ............................................................................................................ 12  
      Effectiveness/Use ........................................................................................................... 12  
      Ethics/Legal .................................................................................................................... 12  
      Connected to Division .................................................................................................... 12  
      Collaboration .................................................................................................................. 13  
UConn’s Student Affairs Assessment Model .......................................................................... 14  
      Figure 2: DSA Assessment Model ................................................................................ 14  
Metrics ................................................................................................................................ 15  
   What is a metric? .............................................................................................................. 15  
   What types of assessments are typically used as metrics? ............................................. 15  
   What metrics might units need to assess? ................................................................. 15  
   What constitutes an effective unit-level metric? ........................................................... 16  
   Examples of unit-level metrics ..................................................................................... 16  
   How to have a meaningful and manageable set of metrics ............................................ 16  
Outcomes ............................................................................................................................... 17  
   When will the Division begin to use outcomes? ............................................................ 17  
   What is outcomes assessment? ....................................................................................... 17  
   What types of work incorporate learning outcomes and service outcomes? ............... 17  
   Examples of service and learning outcomes .............................................................. 17  
   Constructing learning and service outcomes ............................................................. 18  
   How to manage learning outcomes ............................................................................. 19
Differences among Unit-level Metrics, Division-level Metrics, Strategic Planning Metrics, and Outcomes ..................................................................................................................... 19

Table 1: Comparison of Unit-level Metrics, Division-level Metrics, Strategic Plan Metrics, and Outcomes ................................................................................................................................. 19

Unit Review ................................................................................................................. 20

What is Unit Review? ...................................................................................................... 20

Purpose ........................................................................................................................... 20

Guiding Principles of Unit Review ................................................................................... 20

Types of Assessment Incorporated into Unit Review ..................................................... 20

Review Process ............................................................................................................... 21

Timeline ....................................................................................................................... 21

Budget ......................................................................................................................... 21

Accreditation Processes .............................................................................................. 22

Pre-Review Preparation .............................................................................................. 22

Self-Study .................................................................................................................... 22

Self-Study Report ........................................................................................................ 22

External Review .......................................................................................................... 22

External Review Report ............................................................................................... 23

Action Plan .................................................................................................................. 23

Debriefing Meeting ..................................................................................................... 23

Oversight and Coordination of the Unit Review Process ............................................. 23

Oversight ..................................................................................................................... 23

Student Affairs Assessment Advisory Council (SAAAC) ............................................. 23

Unit Director ............................................................................................................... 24

Unit Review Coordinator ........................................................................................ 25

Review Cycle ............................................................................................................... 25

Planning and Reporting Cycle ..................................................................................... 26

Figure 3: Planning and Reporting Cycle ...................................................................... 26

Implementation of Strategic and Assessment Models ................................................... 27

Year 1 (2010) ............................................................................................................... 27

Year 2 (2011) ............................................................................................................... 27

Year 3 (2012) ............................................................................................................... 28

Year 4 (2013) and beyond .............................................................................................. 28
Student Affairs Assessment Advisory Council ................................................................. 36

Mission ................................................................................................................................ 36

SAAAC Function ..................................................................................................................... 36

Provide Assessment Critique and Consultation ................................................................. 36

Provide StudentVoice and Other Assessment Coordination ............................................. 36

Table 3: SAAAC Roles, Examples, and Activities .............................................................. 36

Membership ........................................................................................................................ 37

Leadership of SAAAC........................................................................................................... 38

Reporting Relationship between SAAAC and the Division ............................................... 38

SAAAC Support Processes ................................................................................................... 38

Assessment Project Logging and Review Process .......................................................... 38

StudentVoice Account Creation Process ........................................................................ 39

Requesting Assessment Project Assistance ................................................................... 39

Using StudentVoice ......................................................................................................... 39

Context and History of the Assessment DI ............................................................................. 40

Charge to the Assessment DI Committee from the Strategic Plan Committee (Fall 2007) 40

Commentary about the Charge .......................................................................................... 40

Membership ........................................................................................................................ 41

Activities Undertaken by the Committee ........................................................................... 41

Environmental Scan ............................................................................................................ 42

Focus Groups (See Appendix A for full report)............................................................... 42

Inventory of Current Assessment Efforts (See Appendix B for full report) .................... 43

Professional Development Activities .................................................................................. 43

Appendix A: Assessment Committee Focus Groups (Fall 2008) ............................................ 45

Questions ............................................................................................................................ 45

Focus Group Narratives ...................................................................................................... 45

1. What do you define as assessment? What does assessment mean in your area? ... 45
2. Why would/do you do assessment, what’s your motivation? ................................... 46
3. What are your feelings in general about assessment? What are the feeling in general in your office/department related to assessment? ................................................. 46
4. Based on your experience here at UConn and elsewhere, what assessment have you found helpful/useful to improve your practice/operation? ........................................... 46

5. Based on your experience here at UConn and elsewhere what has been the most challenging/difficult for you in terms of assessment? ................................................... 47

6. When thinking of program or service delivery, how much time and energy do you put into thinking about assessment of that program or service? ........................................... 47

6A. Are you satisfied how much time you put in? .......................................................... 47

6B. What would need to change for you to devote more time to thinking about assessment? .................................................................................................................... 48

7. What assessment related resources, databases, or services would you recommend the assessment committee investigate? ................................................................. 48

8. What advice do you have for the assessment committee for getting buy-in for divisional assessment? What cautions might you have for the assessment committee? ......................................................................................................................................... 48

Overall Themes/Reflections ................................................................................................ 49

Appendix B: Student Affairs Assessment Initiative (Spring 2008) .......................................... 50

What have you been doing relative to assessment (however defined)? What methods / measures? ........................................................................................................................... 50

Have you done anything with learning outcomes? ............................................................ 51

Where are the measures and results stored? .................................................................... 51

How did/does the data inform your practice? .................................................................. 51

What are your future trends relative to assessment? ........................................................ 51

References .............................................................................................................................. 53

Introduction
In the fall of 2007, the Division of Student Affairs Strategic Planning Committee created an Assessment Division Initiative (DI) which had as its purpose to build the Division’s capacity to perform high quality assessment. Beginning in the spring of 2008, the Assessment DI Committee worked diligently to create a manageable, flexible, and streamlined Assessment Plan.

This document is the first iteration of the Assessment Plan and contains the following elements:
1. Philosophy of assessment, including purpose, definitions, and guiding principles
2. Division assessment model, including explanation of components and guidance for practitioners charged with creating and implementing unit assessment activities
3. Reporting assessment findings, including timeline and report worksheets
4. Resources for all practitioners completing Student Affairs Assessment at UConn, including structure of the Student Affairs Assessment Advisory Council, and procedures for completing quality assessment (including using StudentVoice).
5. Context and history of the Assessment DI, including original charge, environmental scan, and professional development activities
6. Reports from the Environmental Scan completed by the Assessment DI Committee

This August 2010 iteration of the University of Connecticut Student Affairs Assessment Plan is necessarily incomplete. There is more work ahead to create a finalized comprehensive plan, but that work must be informed by the experience of Division staff members who begin working with this Assessment Plan in fall 2010.

Assessment Philosophy
The Division’s mission is to provide programs, services, and co-curricular experiences that enhance student success. Intentional assessment allows us to evaluate the effectiveness of these experiences and services. Assessment is the foundation of unit, program, and service improvement. When assessment is engrainged into the day-to-day operations of each unit, it can be most effectively used to measure progress and completion of unit goals.

Therefore, the Division of Student Affairs aims to develop a climate of meaningful and strategic assessment in order to inform and improve practice. The first step in this process is the development and subsequent implementation of intentional assessment focused on metrics, outcomes, and comprehensive unit review.

High quality assessment requires considerable time, expertise, and resources. The Division will offer consultation and training about quality assessment, best practices, assessment aids (such as StudentVoice), and a variety of other resources to make the process of designing and implementing effective assessment easier and more efficient. It is also essential to create a climate of meaningful and strategic assessment collaboration among staff and across units.
The following document outlines the Division’s assessment philosophy about creating and implementing effective unit assessment congruent with unit, Division, and University priorities.

**Purpose of Assessment**

Nationally, the impetus for student affairs to emphasize assessment is in response to several interconnected factors:

1. An emerging philosophy of the student affairs profession that emphasizes intentional alignment of student affairs work with the academic mission to promote students’ success (ACPA, 1996), (NASPA & ACPA, 2004)
2. The desire of student affairs professionals to promote evidence-based practice (ACPA & NASPA, 2010)
3. Growing pressure for increased accountability from within the academy and also from governmental agencies, accreditation bodies, and the public (Schuh & Upcraft, 2008), especially in light of current economic difficulties facing the State of Connecticut.

The student affairs professionals at the University of Connecticut were influenced by these same factors along with the emphases that emerged from the University of Connecticut Academic Plan (2009) and the resultant University of Connecticut Student Affairs Strategic Plan (2010). The connections between the Academic Plan, Student Affairs Strategic Plan, and Assessment Plan Cycle are depicted in Figure 1.

Therefore, the purpose of student affairs assessment at the University of Connecticut is to:

- Substantiate our impact on the success of students and the campus environment
- Document our progress in meeting the University and Division strategic priorities
- Focus unit and division efforts to improve the effectiveness of our programs and services
- Generate evidence to guide Division decision making
**Definition of Assessment**

Assessment is the systematic efforts to collect, analyze, and interpret information to determine institutional, divisional, or unit effectiveness.

Assessment is **NOT**:
- Limited to students’ perceptions or behavior
- Focused on one individual to provide feedback for her/his improvement
- Equivalent to individual staff performance appraisal

What might be assessed (some examples):
- Utilization of services
- Efficiency of service delivery
- Staff and student needs
• Campus cultures
• Cost effectiveness
• Student learning outcomes
• Quality of service
• Comparisons to similar institutions and professional standards

**Guiding Principles for Assessment**

The Division of Student Affairs aims to develop a climate of meaningful and strategic assessment that supports the autonomy and authority of its units to create effective, useful, and realistic assessment.

**Rigor/Quality**

• Assessment should focus on quality over quantity.
• Assessment does not necessarily equal research, but it should be valid and reliable, and should inform practice.

**Choice/Autonomy**

• Assessment initiatives should be determined primarily by the professionals most closely associated with the work of the unit.
• Choices about assessment initiatives should be made in collaboration with Division leadership and in the context of Division and University priorities.

**Effectiveness/Use**

• Assessment is intended to measure effectiveness, based on evidence.
• Assessment is practical and useful.

**Ethics/Legal**

• Assessment projects must be designed, and data must be collected and managed in a way that assures that the greatest variety of demographic diversities, life experiences/identities, and multiple perspectives are included.
• Participants must be informed that their participation is voluntary, about foreseeable risks of harm, and about the degree of confidentiality of their responses.
• Data must be kept and maintained in a way that prevents loss, unauthorized access or divulgence of confidential information.

**Connected to Division**

• Assessment is clearly aligned with the Division and unit missions and should inform division and unit strategic plans.
• Assessment is foundational to unit improvement.
Collaboration

- Assessment results should be shared with other units to promote collaboration and cross-unit improvement.
- Assessment should be done in consultation with colleagues from inside and outside the division to provide guidance and support.
UConn’s Student Affairs Assessment Model

This Assessment Model provides the framework that will enable each student affairs unit to annually report assessment findings and resultant actions in a systematic fashion. Figure 1 outlines an Assessment Plan Cycle that emphasizes using assessment results to inform practices and program or service development.

The Plan contains three primary components:

- **Metrics**—are simple numeric indicators, which could include such assessments as: tracking who uses our programs, services and facilities; monitoring level of student and clientele satisfaction; examining resource utilization; reviewing response times.
- **Outcomes**—measure the impact of our initiatives in achieving their fundamental purposes, such as student learning or quality of service delivery.
- **Unit Review**—is a comprehensive examination of the effectiveness of a particular units’ functioning that occurs every five to seven years and includes a self-study as well as an external review; multiple types of assessment can be incorporated into the unit review.

All components of the Assessment Model must be grounded in the Division of Student Affairs Mission to provide programs, services, and co-curricular experiences that enhance student success. Each unit of the Division has also created its own mission statement which serves as a conceptual foundation for unit assessment.

All three components of the Assessment Model should inform improvement. The model is streamlined and should lead directly to action. Further the three primary components of the model are interrelated. Figure 2 depicts the interrelationships of these components and the connections to Division mission and resultant priorities and unit improvement.

![Figure 2: DSA Assessment Model](image-url)
Metrics
In the UConn Division of Student Affairs Assessment Plan, metrics are designed to provide easily accessible information that offers the unit, the Division, and external constituents important information about the utilization and effectiveness of a program or process.

What is a metric?
A metric is a number that is:
- An indicator of performance or effectiveness
- Useful for decision making
- Could support measurement of outcome achievement

What types of assessments are typically used as metrics?
- Tracking—monitoring who uses programs, services and facilities
- Satisfaction—measuring the level of student and clientele satisfaction with programs, services, and facilities
- Resource utilization—examining how individual or unit time, expertise, or financial resources are used

What metrics might units need to assess?
For the purposes of the Assessment Model metrics are derived from three sources:
- Strategic Plan Metrics
- Division-level Metrics
- Unit-level Metrics

Strategic Plan Metrics
Strategic Plan Metrics are contained in the Division of Student Affairs Strategic Plan 2010-2015. These metrics are evidence of progress toward the strategic priorities of the Division. The strategic priorities represent areas in which the Division should show demonstrable growth.

Any unit that provides services or programming that falls under one of the defined Strategic Plan Metrics will report their relevant numbers as part of their annual unit assessment report. The strategic metrics, included in the Student Affairs Strategic Plan 2010-2015, are described in the Department Metrics Worksheet.

Division-level Metrics
The Office of the Vice President of Student Affairs may determine specific metrics that should be reported as part of the annual unit assessment report. These metrics may pertain to an individual unit or multiple units.

Unit-level Metrics
Reporting units will develop metrics that they will report annually as part of their assessment report. The metrics will be determined by unit staff in consultation and
negotiation with the appropriate Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs. The details below provide additional parameters for developing unit metrics.

What constitutes an effective unit-level metric?

- Easy to track
- Manageable in terms of number of metrics
- Reflective of salient priorities and resources of the unit
- Congruent with the mission of the unit
- Can be connected to the strategic priorities of the Division
- Important for the leadership to know about
- Helps unit to tell its story to external stakeholders

Examples of unit-level metrics

- HESA—number of applicants to the program; ratio of offers to acceptances
- STEP—enrollment in SYE; participants in all programming offered by STEP
- Student Health Services—results of annual satisfaction survey
- Student Affairs Information Technology—average response time to resolve clients’ concerns

How to have a meaningful and manageable set of metrics

- Generally, in addition to strategic plan metrics, units should also plan to have approximately 5-10 metrics that are reported annually as part of the Assessment Report. Not all numbers that a unit tracks will rise to the level of a metric that is part of the unit’s annual assessment report.
- Staff members are consulted about the efficacy of each metric, in terms of
  - Feasibility of gathering the data
  - Utility for decision-making
  - Connection between the metric and the Division’s strategic priorities
Outcomes

Outcomes assessment is the most valid way of demonstrating the effectiveness of services, programs, and facilities, especially in defining and promoting higher education, and also in meeting accreditation standards. It is also the most difficult, complex, and misunderstood of all the assessment methodologies. (Upcraft & Schuh, 1996)

When will the Division begin to use outcomes?

Although some departments are already using outcomes as a useful assessment tool, they won’t be a required part of the formal Division assessment plan until 2011 – 2012. The information in this section will continue to be enhanced and elaborated upon as we move toward this time frame. Training will also be provided as we fully incorporate outcomes assessment.

What is outcomes assessment?

Outcomes are specific statements that describe desired performance of key functions and services in a unit. Outcomes can be defined as statements that describe the desired quality (timeliness, accuracy, responsiveness, etc.) of key functions and services within the unit. Outcomes can also be stated in terms of student learning outcomes. (University of Central Florida, p. 19)

- Service outcomes assessment examines what a unit will do, achieve, or improve to demonstrate operational effectiveness; for example, assessment of timeliness of responses, satisfaction with customer service, efficiency of resource utilization, etc.
- Learning outcomes assessment examines cognitive skills that students (or other stakeholders) develop through department/group memberships, interactions, programs, and services; i.e. assessment of what students will know (knowledge), do (skills), or believe (dispositions).

What types of work incorporate learning outcomes and service outcomes?

Any department that engages students for the sake of learning can have learning outcomes. And we are all interested in improving the processes and programs in our work, so service outcomes can apply to all of our units.

Examples of service and learning outcomes

Service Outcomes

- As a result of redesigning the applications website, Career Services will increase the number of students who apply for student jobs so that the percentage of online applications per term increases from 35% (in spring 2009) to 75% by spring 2011.
- As a result of staff training on customer service techniques, SAIT will achieve a 10% increase over 2009 results in the percentage of customers who indicate an overall rating of “satisfied” or “very satisfied” on the annual survey.
- As a result of attending Countdown to Commencement, 50% of students will join the Alumni Association before graduation.
• As a result of new intake processes, CMHS will decrease the average “wait time” for non-emergency counseling appointments from two weeks (in FY 2009) to one week (in FY 2011).

Learning Outcomes
• As a result of attending customer service training, 85% of student workers will be able to list the five main components of active listening (knowledge).
• As a result of serving as the student leader of an alternative break, the student will be able to plan a program that includes the eight quality components of a quality alternative break (skill).
• As a result of serving as a peer leader, students will be able to explain the value of peer leadership (disposition).

Constructing learning and service outcomes
Programs, processes, and services may have more than one outcome. Both service and learning outcomes need to be specific and measurable. There are two parts to an outcome:
• The program, process, or service that is targeted to have specific results (sometimes called an “intervention”)
• The desired results

The following are examples of the “desired results” part of learning outcomes. These examples are designed to show that similar concepts that one would want to measure can often be written in both ineffective and effective ways (i.e., sometimes it is the wording, not the concept, that is the issue).

Too GENERAL and VERY HARD to measure
• ...will appreciate the benefits of exercise.
• ...will be able to access resources at the University.
• ...will develop problem-solving skills and conflict resolution.
• ...will be able to have more confidence in their abilities.

Still GENERAL and HARD to measure
• ...will value exercise as a stress reduction tool.
• ...will be able to develop and apply effective problem solving skills that would enable student to adequately navigate through proper resources within the university.
• ...will demonstrate ability to resolve personal conflicts and assist others in resolving conflicts.
• ...will demonstrate critical thinking skills, such as problem solving as it relates to social issues.

SPECIFIC and EASIER to measure
• ...will be able to explain how exercise affects stress.
• ...will be able to identify the most appropriate University resource that is pertinent to the student’s concern.
• ...will be able to assist roommates in resolving conflicts by helping them negotiate agreements.
• ...will demonstrate the ability to analyze and respond to arguments about racial discrimination.

How to manage learning outcomes
• Be realistic.
  o The length and intensity of your program, training, or workshop should help you determine how many outcomes you want/need. If your program is a one hour workshop, you probably don’t want to develop 15 outcomes.
  o Although there is no magic number of outcomes for a program, be realistic in what students can learn in the length of time you are working with them.
• Keep it simple.
  o Use the examples above to help keep the process simple. Outcome statements don’t need to be complex and long. Keep this format in mind - “As a result of (intervention), students will be able to (desired result)”.
• Seek feedback/input from others.
  o This is a new process for many staff members. Consult with your colleagues, SAAAC, or Student Voice for feedback or assistance

Differences among Unit-level Metrics, Division-level Metrics, Strategic Planning Metrics, and Outcomes

Unit-level and Division-level Metrics track particular activities of importance to the unit or Division. They are specific and measureable. There is no indication of expected or desired performance results.

Strategic Plan Metrics include desired results. These metrics are specific and measureable. These metrics are not necessarily connected to any specific program or service, but can be connected to multiple programs, processes, or services.

An outcome includes both a desired performance result and a program, process, or service. The goal is attributable to a given program, process, or service.

Table 1: Comparison of Unit-level Metrics, Division-level Metrics, Strategic Planning Metrics, and Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Specific &amp; Measureable</th>
<th>Desired Result Specified</th>
<th>Attributable to a Particular Program, Process, or Service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unit-level or Division-level Metric</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Planning Metric</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Unit Review

What is Unit Review?
Unit review is a collaborative process designed to provide an in-depth, comprehensive study of a unit/department. A unit review is a data-based review of the unit mission with the goal to provide information for unit growth and continuous quality improvement. Unit review includes unit self-study, external review, reporting, and action plan components. External review is analysis by professionals with relevant expertise who do not work at UConn. The unit review process can be modified depending on a variety of variables, for example functional area accreditation requirements, size of unit, fiscal constraints, or similar factors. Modifications must be negotiated with the appropriate Assistant Vice President.

Purpose
The purpose of unit review is to provide an opportunity for focused reflection, study, and gathering of information which supports on-going unit development and improvement. The intention is to set up patterns and processes to systemically and regularly collect, analyze, and interpret data concerning a unit. The review process is expected to have positive effects on Student Affairs planning, decision-making, performance, and stature within the University.

Guiding Principles of Unit Review
Unit review should be conducted according to this basic set of principles:
• Involve in the review a broad and representative group of staff, students, and faculty
• Demonstrate adherence to professional standards and best practices
• Provide evidence of the excellence, including satisfaction, and effectiveness of the unit’s programs, activities, services, and operations
• Identify obstacles to accomplishing the unit mission and goals
• Encourage strategic thinking about the unit’s plans for the future
• Identify and celebrate what the unit is doing well
• Implement change to address areas for growth and support strengths

Types of Assessment Incorporated into Unit Review
These types of assessment should always be included in a unit review:
• Metrics
• Outcomes

The following types can be included in unit review if appropriate:
• Needs Assessment—identifying the needs of students and clientele (e.g., student perceived, research supported and institutionally expected).
• Student Cultures and Campus Environments Assessment—assessing the collective perception of the campus and student experience (e.g., campus climate, residential quality of life, etc.).
• Comparable Institution Assessment—identifying how the quality of our programs, services, and facilities compare to peer or aspirant institutions’ high quality practices.
• National or International Standards Assessment—using nationally or internationally accepted standards to assess the quality of our services, programs, and facilities (e.g., CAS standards, APA Accreditation Guidelines and Principles, etc.)

Review Process

Timeline

Ten Months before External Review Visit
• Letter of notification from the Vice President for Student Affairs (VPSA) to unit
Nine Months before External Review Visit
• Unit review coordinator appointed
• Unit self-study is initiated
Eight Months before External Review Visit
• Unit submits the names of six potential external reviewers to the VPSA
Six Months before External Review Visit
• The VPSA selects three external reviewers
Three Months before External Review Visit
• Unit self-study report is submitted to the VPSA and appropriate supervisors
One Month before External Review Visit
• Unit self-study report is distributed to the external review team

External Review Team Visit
• External review team visits campus and conducts a focused and intense evaluation of the unit and issues noted in the self-study report

One to Three Months after External Review Visit
• External review team submits their report to the VPSA and the unit review coordinator

Two Months after External Review Report Submission
• Unit submits their response to the external reviewers’ report along with a set of recommendations to the VPSA
• Debriefing meeting with the Division Assessment Committee, unit director, and self-study team

Budget
Units may request travel funds from the VPSA for the external review visit.
Accreditation Processes
Some units are required to obtain accreditation from a governing body. An accreditation process may substitute, in part, for the Division-mandated unit review if the accreditation process includes a comprehensive self-study and a visit from external reviewers. The decision to substitute an accreditation review for the Division unit review will be made by the appropriate Assistant Vice President.

Pre-Review Preparation
The unit review process begins with written notification from the VPSA. The letter of notification will include unit review guidelines and other important information. The unit director will then appoint a unit review coordinator. It is recommended that the unit review coordinator not be the unit director because of the amount of work required of the coordinator; for small units, however, it is likely that the unit director will need to perform the unit review coordinator’s duties. The unit review coordinator and unit director will select the unit self-study team.

Self-Study
The unit shall initiate a self-study nine months prior to the external review site visit. This is an in-depth, reflective process that should be continually visited during the entire five to seven year review cycle. This study should rely on metrics and outcome and possibly other types of assessments to support conclusions. The purpose of this self-study is to provide a comprehensive overview of the unit to the external review team. All units should use a standard set of guidelines for the self-study (see below). Modifications to the standard guidelines, such as incorporating accreditation or industry standards, should be done through consultation between the Assistant Vice President and the unit director. The unit director and unit review coordinator will create a self-study team to conduct the unit self-study. Units may include other Student Affairs unit directors and other University employees on the self-study team.

Self-Study Report
Three months before the external review visit, the unit self-study team will submit the self-study report to the VPSA and appropriate supervisors. Following review of the self-study report, the report will be sent to the external review team at least one month prior to the external review visit.

External Review
Eight months before the external review visit, the unit will provide the VPSA with a list of six knowledgeable and experienced individuals from their specific functional area not associated with UConn. Six months before the external review visit, the VPSA will select three external reviewers from this list of six individuals or other experts. This process may be modified for those units who work with professional associations to provide review or accreditation (e.g., APA or NACE). A travel budget will be provided by the VPSA if necessary, and the unit is responsible for scheduling the visit.
External Review Report
One to three months after the external review visit, the external review team will submit a report to the VPSA, the Assistant Vice President, and the unit review coordinator.

Action Plan
One month following receipt of the external reviewers’ written report and recommendations, the unit will provide a response to the external reviewers’ report and prepare a final set of recommendations for unit operations and improvement. When the recommendations have been approved by the appropriate Assistant Vice President, the unit will develop an action plan that supports existing strengths and addresses areas where improvements are needed.

Debriefing Meeting
One month following receipt of the external reviewer’s report, the Division Assessment Committee will conduct a debriefing meeting with the unit director and self-study team to evaluate the unit’s review and the Division unit review process.

Oversight and Coordination of the Unit Review Process

Oversight
The Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs (VPSA) oversees Unit Review and will:
- Establish a positive culture for unit review
  - Communicate the purpose, process, and value of unit review to employees
  - Promote a climate that supports inquiry and candid dialogue
  - Celebrate the achievement and commitment of the employees who participate in the unit review process
- Schedule unit reviews
- Monitor deadlines
- Review budget requests
- Coordinate unit review activities with the Vice President’s schedule
- Approve modifications to the self-study protocol, in consultation with the unit director
- Determine the appropriate unit review cycle for units with an accreditation cycle other than five years, in consultation with the unit director

Student Affairs Assessment Advisory Council (SAAAC)
The Council will:
- Revise unit review guidelines as needed
• Provide clear communication about unit review guidelines, expectations, and deadlines to the unit head and unit review coordinator
• Facilitate a unit review orientation meeting with the unit director and unit review coordinator
• Facilitate additional unit review orientation meetings for unit staff and the self-study team as needed
• Serve as consultants regarding design and facilitation of the unit review process
• Review the final draft of the self-study report to assist the unit in meeting unit review guidelines and expectations
• Facilitate the external review visit planning meeting to review logistics and agenda
• Co-facilitate a debriefing meeting with the unit director, unit review coordinator, and self-study team

**Unit Director**

The Unit Director will:
• Establish a positive unit culture for unit review
  o Communicate the purpose, process, and value of unit review to employees
  o Promote a climate that supports inquiry and candid dialogue
  o Acknowledge the time commitment associated with unit review and allow self-study team members to negotiate their professional responsibilities accordingly
  o Celebrate the achievement and commitment of the self-study team and other employees who participate in the unit review process
• Ensure the development and implementation of a unit review process and timeline that meets VPSA and Assistant Vice President’s expectations and is congruent with the guidelines presented
• Appoint a unit review coordinator
• Collaborate with the unit review coordinator to:
  o Identify and recruit self-study team members
  o Identify possible external review panel members
  o Design and facilitate a unit review process that is inclusive of employees not selected for the self-study team
  o Develop the unit review budget and ensure the availability of necessary unit or Division funds
  o Establish the external review site visit agenda
• Submit list of potential external review panel members to the VPSA
• Prepare external review panel invitation letters
• Submit copies of unit review documents (Self-Study, External Review Panel, Action Plan) to the VPSA, appropriate supervisors, and the Division Assessment Committee
• Develop and implement an action plan based on the results of the self-study and external review reports
• Present a unit review summary and action plan to the VPSA and Assistant Vice President

Unit Review Coordinator
• Establish a positive unit climate for unit review
  o Communicate the purpose, process, and value of unit review to employees
  o Promote a climate that supports inquiry and candid dialogue
  o Celebrate the achievement and commitment of the self-study team and other employees who participate in the unit review process
• Ensure the development and implementation of a unit review process and timeline that meets VPSA and Assistant Vice President’s expectations and is congruent with the guidelines presented
• Collaborate with the unit director to:
  o Identify and recruit self-study team members
  o Identify possible external review panel members
  o Design and facilitate a unit review process that is inclusive of employees not selected for the self-study team
  o Develop the unit review budget and ensure the availability of necessary unit or Division funds
  o Establish the external review site visit agenda
• Facilitate and coordinate the self-study review process
• Develop the self-study report
• Prepare external review site visit materials
• Serve as external review site visit host
• Co-facilitate a debriefing meeting with the unit director, unit review coordinator, and self-study team

Review Cycle
Each unit/unit will participate in a review on a five to seven year cycle, with the schedule established by the VPSA. The schedule for unit review is yet to be determined.
Planning and Reporting Cycle

Year 1 (2010)

Spring
- Strategic Plan
  - Mission (April 30)
  - Establish / review metrics
  - Establish metrics
- Departments develop action plans to move towards targets (not just their own)
- Assessment Plan developed (August 1) asking departments to develop comprehensive set of annual metrics (departmental, institutional, divisional, etc.)

Summer
- Departments begin development of a complete set of annual metrics in consultation with OVPAA (and appropriate AIP)

Fall
- Departments finalize complete set of annual metrics

Year 2 (2011)

Spring
- Departments organize metric collection
  - Establish new metrics
  - Collection of metrics currently available
- Departments analyze and interpret results

Summer
- Departments develop annual action plan based on results, interpretation, and targets

Fall
- Division level - from departmental reports divisional metrics are summed, strategic plan progress report is issued, and any other reports necessary are generated.

At this point Strategic Planning Model is fully implemented

Year 3 (2012)

Spring
- Select departments will prepare for external review process

Summer
- Departmental data collection of metrics and outcomes

Fall
- Departments analyze and interpret results from annual assessment and external review where applicable
- Departments develop annual action plan based on results, interpretation, and targets
- Departments issue annual report containing:
  - Assessment results
  - Interpretation
  - Annual Action Plan

Year 4 (2013) and beyond...

Spring
- Departmental data collection of metrics and outcomes

Summer
- Departments develop annual action plan based on results, interpretation, and targets

Fall
- Departments issue annual report containing:
  - Assessment results
  - Interpretation
  - Annual Action Plan

At this point Assessment Model is fully implemented

Figure 3: Planning and Reporting Cycle
Implementation of Strategic and Assessment Models

Year 1 (2010)

- Strategic Plan launched (April 30) with priorities, metrics and strategies
- Departments develop Action plans to help move metrics toward targets (not just their “own”)
- Assessment Plan launched (August 4) asking units to develop complete set of annual metrics (unit, strategic, divisional, etc.)
- In September, unit directors along with their SAAAC representative and other staff members develop initial plan for unit metrics and strategies to measure Division metrics
- In October, unit directors consult with their Assistant Vice President to receive feedback about the initial plan for metrics.
- In November, unit directors and staff finalize their plan for metrics.
- By December 1, unit directors submit final plan for metrics to the AVP for approval.
- Modifications to the final plan that are recommended by the AVP should be incorporated by December 15.

Year 2 (2011)

- Departments organize for metric collection
  - Strategies for new metrics
  - Collection of metrics currently available
- Departments review the mission statements in light of Academic Plan and Strategic Plan and develop programmatic goals
- Departments analyze and interpret results
- Departments develop annual action plan based on results, interpretation, and targets
- Departments issue annual report containing:
  - Assessment results (minimally strategic metrics, department and other metrics if able to do so)
  - Interpretation
  - Annual Action Plan
- Division level – from departmental reports divisional metrics are summed, strategic plan progress report is issued, and any other reports necessary can be generated
- At this point Strategic Plan model is fully implemented!
- Using programmatic goals, Departments develop unit/program outcomes (learning and/or service)
Year 3 (2012)
- Departmental data collection of metrics and outcomes
- Departments analyze and interpret results
- Departments develop annual action plan based on results, interpretation, and targets
- Departments issue annual report containing:
  - Assessment results
  - Interpretation
  - Annual action plan
- Division level – from departmental reports divisional metrics are summed, strategic plan progress report is issued, and any other reports necessary can be generated
- Select departments will prepare for external review process
- External reviews begin

Year 4 (2013) and beyond . . .
- Departmental data collection of metrics and outcomes
- Departments analyze and interpret results from annual assessment and external review where applicable.
- Departments develop annual action plan based on results, interpretation, and targets
- Departments issue annual report containing:
  - Assessment results
  - Interpretation
  - Annual action plan
- Division level – from departmental reports divisional metrics are summed, strategic plan progress report is issued, and any other reports necessary can be generated
- At this point Assessment Model is fully implemented!

Department Metric Worksheet
This worksheet (Table 2) will allow units to indicate which strategic plan metrics they will report as well as develop and categorize additional unit-level metrics.

Indicate the Strategic Metrics to which your unit will contribute by listing the specific items that will be counted under that metric.

Additional unit metrics can be developed and categorized by supplying the metric and definition under the specific Strategic Priority to which the metric corresponds. If appropriate, specific items that will be counted under that metric can be listed as well.
Table 2: Department Metric Worksheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Items Counted under Metric</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Engagement</strong></td>
<td>The Division of Student Affairs will provide programs, services, and co-curricular activities that enhance student learning, engage students in their academic and University experiences, and prepare students for the world of tomorrow.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategic Plan Metrics</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Students in leadership positions</td>
<td>Undergraduate students in leadership positions within the Division as a percentage of total Storrs FTE undergraduate enrollment calculated as an average of fall and spring registration numbers. ]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The percentage will be calculated annually and will reflect all units within the Division.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Students in leadership development programs (see notes A &amp; B)</td>
<td>Undergraduate students in leadership development programs offered by, or in partnership with, the Division as a percentage of total Storrs FTE undergraduate enrollment calculated as an average of fall and spring registration numbers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The percentage will be calculated annually and will reflect all units within the Division.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Formal and informal partnerships between the Division of Student Affairs and academic units</td>
<td>The number of partnerships between units within the Division of Student Affairs and academic units within the University of Connecticut.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The number will be tallied per academic year and will include counts for the previous summer. The number will be the sum of partnerships counted in all units within the Division.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metric</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% First Year Students participating in living &amp; learning communities</td>
<td>First-year students participating in living &amp; learning communities as a percentage of total Storrs first-year undergraduate enrollment calculated as an average of fall and spring registration numbers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Student participating in internships</td>
<td>Storrs undergraduate students participating in academic credit bearing and non-credit bearing internships. Internships are work experiences that may be linked to an academic department or done independently. The experience is related to a student’s major or career goal.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Students in registered student organizations (see notes A &amp; B)</td>
<td>Undergraduate students who participate in registered student organizations as a percentage of total Storrs FTE undergraduate enrollment calculated as an average of fall and spring registration numbers. The percentage will be calculated annually and be determined with respect to the total number of enrolled Storrs undergraduates.</td>
<td></td>
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**Division-level Metrics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Description</th>
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**Unit-level Metrics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</table>
Effectiveness and Service Delivery
The Division of Student Affairs will support the institution’s goals through a quality portfolio of services based on the principles of reliability, evidence based decision making, and effectiveness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic Plan Metrics</th>
<th>Units determined to have fully implemented as a percentage of units in the Division Assessment Plan.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% Reportable units who have fully implemented the Division Assessment Plan</td>
<td>The relevant Assistant Vice President and department heads will determine if a reportable unit will be considered to have fully implemented the Division Assessment Plan in consultation with the Vice President for Student Affairs. Details of implementation are contained in the Division Assessment Plan. Determinations will be made annually at the end of each spring semester.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Reportable units who have a working Service Continuity Plan</td>
<td>Units determined to have a working Service Continuity Plan as a percentage of units in the Division of Student Affairs. The relevant Assistant Vice President and department head will determine if a reportable unit will be considered to have a working Service Continuity Plan in consultation with the Vice President for Student Affairs. To have a working Service Continuity Plan, units will have to have a written Service Continuity Plan as well as conduct annual testing and revision. Determinations will be made annually at the end of each spring semester.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Reportable units who have a working Environmental Plan</td>
<td>Units determined to have a working environmental plan as a percentage of units in the Division of Student Affairs. The relevant Assistant Vice President and department head will determine if a reportable unit will be considered to have a working Environmental Plan in consultation with the Vice President for Student Affairs. The specifics of what will constitute an environmental plan will be developed during the first year of the strategic plan.</td>
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**Division-level Metrics**

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**Unit-level Metrics**

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</tbody>
</table>

**Diversity**
The Division of Student Affairs will foster a campus community that provides a welcoming environment, attracts and supports a diverse student body and staff, promotes a diverse culture in which students live and learn, and prepares students to succeed in a diverse global environment.

**Strategic Plan Metrics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% Managerial staff who are female</th>
<th>Female staff in the Division who are considered management exempt under the University’s classification system as a percentage of all management exempt staff. Percentage will be calculated annually.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% Managerial staff from underrepresented groups</td>
<td>Staff in the Division from underrepresented groups who are considered management exempt under the University’s classification system as a percentage of all management exempt staff. Percentage will be calculated annually.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division-level Metrics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit-level Metrics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Engagement and Service</td>
<td>The Division of Student Affairs will provide opportunities for engagement between the Institution and the community that enhance learning, promote student engagement, foster connections with the Institution, and provide services to the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Plan Metrics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Public and Private Partnerships</td>
<td>The number of partnerships between units within the Division of Student Affairs and public and private entities outside the University of Connecticut. The number will be tallied annually and be the sum of partnerships counted in all units within the Division.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Hours of community service and outreach <em>(see note B)</em></td>
<td>The number of hours of community service and outreach done by undergraduate students in programs organized or sponsored by the Division.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Division-level Metrics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% Students involved in community service and outreach <em>(see notes A &amp; B)</em></td>
<td>Undergraduate students participating in community service or outreach programs organized or sponsored by the Division as a percentage of total Storrs FTE undergraduate enrollment calculated as an average of fall and spring registration numbers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Alumni Involvement and Development

The Division of Student Affairs will provide opportunities that engage alumni in the Institution, foster alumni development, and enhance charitable giving in support of Division programming and priorities.

### Strategic Plan Metrics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># Alumni at events</td>
<td>The number of alumni at events that are sponsored or organized by, or in partnership, with the Division. Events can be on or off campus. The number will be tallied annually and will be the sum across units within the Division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Alumni who participate in programs</td>
<td>The number of alumni who participate or have an active role in Division programming. This number does not reflect monetary donations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The number will be tallied annually and will be the sum across units within the Division.

| # Dollars raised | The dollar amount raised annually for all Division of Student Affairs funds under the account designations 4800, 4801, 4802, 4803, 4804, 4805, 4807, and 4808. The amount will be calculated annually per fiscal year. Numbers will be provided by the UConn Foundation |
| Division-level Metrics | |
| Unit-level Metrics | |

**Uncategorized Metrics**
This section can be used to list any Divisional Needs or Unit Needs metrics that are considered not to indicate support of a Division Strategic Priority in some way.
Student Affairs Assessment Advisory Council

Mission
The mission of the University of Connecticut Student Affairs Assessment Advisory Council (SAAAC) is to enhance student learning/development and organizational effectiveness by providing assessment guidance and assistance to the Division of Student Affairs and its individual departments. SAAAC actively shares knowledge about best assessment practice, works to enhance the Division’s understanding of UConn students, staff, and faculty and their experiences. Further, SAAAC coordinates use of designated assessment tools, such as StudentVoice.

SAAAC Function

Provide Assessment Critique and Consultation
- Share information with departments about available assessment tools
- Assist departments in integrating assessment findings into departmental changes
- Serve as vehicle for adding Division questions into departmental assessments
- Provide IRB coaching for projects prior to entry to IRB review process
- Provide assessment and methodological consultation
- Provide linkage to other assessment resources
- Provide linkage to UConn and other financial resources for assessment
- Provide linkage to StudentVoice consultants
- Facilitate access to contact databases
- Provide consultation for developing annual unit assessment reports

Provide StudentVoice and Other Assessment Coordination
- Pair departmental assessments with similar departmental assessment initiatives
- Provide intra- and inter-departmental assessment redundancy checks, coordinate usability, and facilitate appropriate storage of data
- Coordinate inter- and intra-departmental timing
- Provide support and assistance for collaboration and resource sharing

Table 3: SAAAC Roles, Examples, and Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Activities that Must Be Completed by 2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To provide guidance and assistance to individual departments conducting assessments.</td>
<td><strong>Conceptual</strong>: identifying assessment questions, choosing methodologies, tool development, reporting results, designing unit review strategies. <strong>Technical</strong>: data storage, IRB</td>
<td>• Following education about the Assessment Plan from the ADIC, SAAAC members will help to educate their colleagues about the Assessment Plan.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Membership

Membership of SAAAC will include representatives from all reporting units, as identified by the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs. Members of SAAAC should be administrators who are middle managers or senior leadership within their departments. A few interested graduate assistants and new professionals can also be invited to serve on SAAAC. Members will be nominated by the department heads of reporting units and appointed by the Vice President for Student Affairs or designee. To provide an appropriate transition, the members of the Assessment DI Committee will remain members of SAAAC until at least December 2010. Members of SAAAC must commit to a minimum of a two-year term of service. Initially terms will be staggered to insure continuity of membership.

| To serve as the liaison between StudentVoice and other assessment tools and departments within the Division. | Coordinate use of StudentVoice by departments to avoid survey fatigue among respondents. | • Begin implementing workflow plan for coordination of StudentVoice use by the Division.  
• Complete StudentVoice training.  
• Monitor feedback after initial uses of StudentVoice. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On an annual basis, the SAAAC members will be invited to provide suggestions to the Office of the Vice President of Student Affairs about revisions to the Assessment Plan.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To plan annual Assessment Day and other educational events as required.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Plan 2nd annual Assessment Day for fall 2010.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Resource acquisition:** determining UConn services, internal or external grants, and financial assistance that might be helpful.

- SAAAC participates in a study program based on Schuh, J. (2008). *Assessment Methods in Student Affairs* or similar resource.
- SAAAC participates in a study program to determine technical requirements and local resources.
Leadership of SAAAC
The Vice President for Student Affairs will appoint the leadership of SAAAC.

Reporting Relationship between SAAAC and the Division
SAAAC reports to the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs.

SAAAC Support Processes

Assessment Project Logging and Review Process
The Division of Student Affairs conducts a significant amount of assessment. To facilitate collaboration and data sharing, the SAAAC is implementing an assessment project logging and review process. The impact of this process on most assessment projects will be simply recording parameters of the project into a standard form and having the Department SAAAC representative review the project. For a few assessment projects that meet certain criteria (see below), the entire SAAAC will review the project.

Steps in the assessment project logging and review process are:

1. The assessment project contact creates a project log entry on the SAAAC SharePoint site. The log entry should be created as early as possible (IRB review and approval may take a month).

2. The department SAAAC representative reviews the log entry and determines if the assessment project should be forwarded to the entire Council. If any of the following criteria are met, the project should be forwarded to the entire Council. If these criteria are not met, the department SAAAC representative will review the log entry and work with the assessment project contact to address any questions.
   a. Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval is required. Criteria for IRB consideration are:
      i. Data will be published or presented.
      ii. Data will be shared with a benchmarking (multi-institutional) project.
      iii. The assessment project targets possibly vulnerable individuals (victims of violence, cancer survivors, disabled persons, etc.).
      iv. The assessment project addresses sensitive topics (sexual activity, illegal behavior, alcohol and drug use, etc.).
   b. An audience beyond the typical clientele of the assessment project contact and/or department

3. The entire Council reviews the assessment project using the following guidelines:
   a. Scheduling
   b. Appropriate methodology and quality
   c. IRB requirements

4. The department SAAAC representative works with the assessment project contact to incorporate SAAAC recommendations (if any) into the assessment project.
**StudentVoice Account Creation Process**

SAAAC strongly encourages assessment project contacts to use StudentVoice for their assessment needs. A login account is required for using StudentVoice. The creation of StudentVoice accounts will be done according to these criteria:

1. Department SAAAC representative approval
2. Completion of the *How to Use StudentVoice: Fundamentals* webinar
3. Completion of one other StudentVoice webinar, preferably an assessment theme related to contact’s area of responsibility

To request a StudentVoice account, an employee completes an account request form on the SAAAC SharePoint site. The department SAAAC representative reviews the account request. If the request is approved, the SAAAC co-chairs are notified and asked to arrange account creation with StudentVoice.

**Requesting Assessment Project Assistance**

Assessment project contacts should place quality at the top of their goals when conducting an assessment project. One function of SAAAC is to ensure that assessment project contacts have expertise available to conduct high quality assessment projects. This assistance may come from SAAAC members, StudentVoice, or other content experts.

To request assistance, an assessment project contact completes an assistance form on the SAAAC SharePoint site. The department SAAAC representative reviews the request for assistance. The representative may provide the assistance directly or forward the request to the entire Council for action.

**Using StudentVoice**

- Assessment project managers using StudentVoice are expected to request project review by our StudentVoice consultant when a new survey instrument or protocol is submitted. StudentVoice consultant review is not required when an existing project is copied for reposting.
- Assessment project managers are expected to complete the project metadata description fields (Methodology, Results/Findings, Actions Taken, and Other Notes). These data fields are designed to support collaboration with other StudentVoice users and ensure that critical information is kept in our institutional memory.
Context and History of the Assessment DI

Charge to the Assessment DI Committee from the Strategic Plan Committee (Fall 2007)

*Develop a comprehensive and strategic approach to division-wide assessment.*

Objectives:

1. Dedicate a focused and appropriate allocation of resources for strategic divisional assessment and the use of assessment data. (Summer 2008)
   a. It is recommended that the Vice President determine an appropriate structure and allocate resources for divisional assessment.

2. Reorient the Division to a comprehensive strategic assessment model, focused on learning outcomes, engagement and such other strategic measures as utilization of services, satisfaction with programs, and student needs. The model should demonstrate clear connections to the academic plan of the institution. (Fall 2009)
   a. It is recommended that the Vice President in coordination with staff designated by the VP determine the strategic assessment needs for the Division and develop a cohesive assessment framework for the Division.

3. Develop and implement a training and support program for divisional staff regarding the use and development of learning outcomes, the framework of engagement or other strategic measures. (Plan developed by December 2008 for implementation in Spring 2009)
   a. It is recommended to the Vice President that all Division staff who develop programs and programmatic goals participate in this training.
   b. It is recommended that this training be available on an annual basis for training of new staff and reinforcement for current staff.

Commentary about the Charge

From the Assessment DI Committee, June 2010

The charge created by the Strategic Planning Committee in 2007 focused heavily on resource allocation. Because of the subsequent economic downturn and related budget shortfall, there were limitations on new funds available for assessment and other priorities. Therefore the Assessment DI committee focused on creating a strategic assessment model (item 2a) rather than resource allocations.
The decision by the Division to use StudentVoice as a cost-effective assessment platform with multiple consultation opportunities eliminated the need to create a separate structure and line-item resource allocation for assessment.

The assessment model, along with the comprehensive plan, and fundamental procedures are integrated with the Division’s Strategic Plan and therefore, the University’s Academic Plan.

Because of limited resources accompanied by travel and consultation restrictions, assessment training (items 3a and 3b) relied on local resources rather than conference attendance or consultants. The Assessment DI committee planned a successful Assessment Sharing Day and facilitated the use of StudentVoice webinars and StudentVoice staff member presentations.

**Membership**

In order to build the Division’s capacity in a coherent and structured way, a number of individuals have worked diligently since spring 2008 to create a manageable, flexible, and streamlined Assessment Plan. The following individuals volunteered to serve on the Assessment Division Initiative Committee (ADIC):

Sue Saunders, Higher Education and Student Affairs Master’s Program (chair)
Ryan Barone, Residential Life;
Nancy Bilmes, Career Services;
Tom Bloom, Student Affairs Information Technology
Daniel Doerr, Senior Transition and Engagement Program
Adam Frank, Graduate Student (served 2008-2009)
Liz Green, Graduate Student (served 2008-2009)
Rachel Larson, Career Services
Stephanie Muehlethaler, Graduate Student (served 2008-2009)
Elizabeth Rapoport, Graduate Student (began serving 2010)
Ashley Reichenbach, Graduate Student (served 2009-2010)
Barry Schreier, Counseling and Mental Health Services
Christine Wilson, Student Activities

**Activities Undertaken by the Committee**

**SUMMER 2008**

- Operationally defined assessment
- Inventoried current assessment activities within the Division
- Focus groups— to scan the environment and understand staff perceptions of assessment

**FALL 2008—build capacity**

- Read *Assessment in Student Affairs* (Upcraft and Schuh, 1996)
• Guided discussion of each chapter
• Reviewed model assessment plans from other universities
• Determined the connection (and/or disconnections) with the Strategic Plan
• Developed basic model structure

SPRING 2009—refine and define
• Developed understanding of UConn’s current assessment efforts that are led by Eric Soulsby
• Refined the model to include three primary components:
  o Metrics
  o Outcome Assessment
  o Unit Review

FALL 2009—operationalize and develop
• Operationalized components of the model
• Established guiding principles for assessment
• Established relationship with StudentVoice
• Created parameters for permanent assessment committee (Student Affairs Assessment Advisory Council)
• Conducted Assessment Sharing Day for all Division staff

SPRING 2010—finalize procedures and train
• Facilitate training with StudentVoice
• Provide professional development webinars
• Develop procedures for implementing Assessment Model

Environmental Scan

Focus Groups (See Appendix A for full report)
An early task completed by the Assessment DI Committee was to scan the environment and listen to our colleagues’ thoughts and feelings about assessment. We relied on the qualitative research expertise of several of our members—Ryan Barone, Liz Green, and Rachel Larson—who conducted three focus groups with a total of nearly 30 participants. As a result of careful analysis of the content of the focus group conversations, several themes emerged:

THEME 1: There was a strong desire to do high-quality assessment that informs practice.
Many felt that solid assessment results would be a worthy alternative to the “decision-making by anecdote” that can easily occur.

THEME 2: Expertise about quality assessment is needed.
It appeared that many division colleagues felt that they didn’t know enough about assessment methodologies to conduct quality assessment. Some felt that inadequate assessment instruments or sampling strategies had been used.

**THEME 3: Guidance about the context of and standards for assessment would be helpful.** Some colleagues wanted clarity about how assessment data would be used and how it would fit into Division planning. Others wanted to better understand the expected standards for assessment.

**THEME 4: A streamlined assessment effort across the Division was desired.** Many felt that there was “survey fatigue” among student respondents, resulting in poor response rates and unusable results. It was hoped that time spent on assessment would be more purposeful and focused.

**Inventory of Current Assessment Efforts (See Appendix B for full report)**

Another early task was to inventory the types of assessment being done by the units within the Division. Results of interviews conducted by Christine Wilson and Barry Schreier indicated that there was a considerable amount of assessment being conducted, but relatively few efforts involving learning or service outcomes. It also appeared that there was great variability across the Division in the amount of assessment being conducted. Some units were very active in assessment efforts and other units were not as involved. It appeared that some units had more expertise among their staff members than others. Further, interviews indicated that there was no central repository for the storage of data or a systematic way to report findings.

In constructing the Assessment Plan, the Assessment DI Committee worked diligently to respond to the findings of these efforts to scan the environment and determine needs.

**Professional Development Activities**

The major professional development activity facilitated by the Assessment DI committee was Assessment Sharing Day, conducted in the fall of 2009 and attended by nearly 60 Division staff members. Additionally, the committee facilitated participation in StudentVoice webinars about learning outcomes, qualitative methods, and planning for assessment projects.

The following information outlines the Assessment Sharing Day activities:

**University of Connecticut • Division of Student Affairs**

**Assessment Day**

**Sharing Our Assessments • Strengthening Our Practice**

September 25, 2009 • 8:30 AM – 1:30 PM • Student Union
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:30 – 9:00 AM</td>
<td>Registration</td>
<td>SU 331 Ballroom</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:00 – 9:45 AM</td>
<td>Welcome</td>
<td>SU 331 Ballroom</td>
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<td></td>
<td>John Saddlemire, Ed.D., Vice President for Student Affairs</td>
<td>SU 331 Ballroom</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>SU 331 Ballroom</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sue Saunders, Ph.D., HESA Program Coordinator &amp;</td>
<td>SU 331 Ballroom</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student Affairs Assessment Division Initiative Committee Chair</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>UConn’s Academic Assessment</strong></td>
<td>SU 331 Ballroom</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eric Soulsby, Ph.D., Assistant Vice Provost</td>
<td>SU 331 Ballroom</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:00 – 10:30 AM</td>
<td>Concurrent Sessions</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>External Review</strong></td>
<td>SU 303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C. Dennis Pierce, Dining Services</td>
<td>SU 330 Ballroom</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Learning Outcomes</strong></td>
<td>SU 104</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nancy Bilmes, Larry Druckenbrod, &amp;</td>
<td>SU 104</td>
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<td>Beth Shapiro Settje, Career Services</td>
<td>SU 104</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Metrics</strong></td>
<td>SU 330 Ballroom</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Donna Korbel &amp; Manju Banerjee, Ph.D.,</td>
<td>SU 104</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Center for Students with Disabilities</td>
<td>SU 104</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:45 – 11:15 AM</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:30 AM – 12:30 PM</td>
<td><strong>Opportunities, Challenges, &amp; Next Steps?</strong></td>
<td>SU 331 Ballroom</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jennifer Lease Butts, Ph.D., Associate Director of the Honors Program</td>
<td>SU 331 Ballroom</td>
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<td></td>
<td>&amp; Director of the Office of Undergraduate Research</td>
<td>SU 331 Ballroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30 – 1:30 PM</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>SU 331 Ballroom</td>
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</tbody>
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Appendix A: Assessment Committee Focus Groups (Fall 2008)

Questions

• What do you define as assessment? What does assessment mean in your area?
• Why would/do you do assessment, what’s your motivation?
• What are your feelings in general about assessment? What are the feeling in general in your office/department related to assessment?
• Based on your experience here at UConn and elsewhere, what assessment have you found helpful/useful to improve your practice/operation?
• Based on your experience here at UConn and elsewhere what has been the most challenging/difficult for you in terms of assessment?
• When thinking of program or service delivery, how much time and energy do you put into thinking about assessment of that program or service?
  o Are you satisfied how much time you put in?
  o What would need to change for you to devote more time to thinking about assessment?
• What assessment related resources, databases, or services would you recommend the assessment committee investigate?
• What advice do you have for the assessment committee for getting buy-in for divisional assessment? What cautions might you have for the assessment committee?

Location: SU 312 12-1:30pm
Note: Note Taker Training to take place 30 minutes before start of focus group (11:30am)

• July 10th: Facilitator: Liz Green
  Primary Note Taker: Marisa Sullivan; Secondary Note Taker: Rita Bottoni
• July 23rd: Facilitator: Ryan Barone
  Primary Note Taker: Adam Frank; Secondary Note Taker: Liz Green
• August 5th: Facilitator: Rachel Larson
  Primary Note Taker: Rita Bottoni

Focus Group Narratives

1. What do you define as assessment? What does assessment mean in your area?

Assessment was most frequently defined as information collection, measurement, or analysis. What assessment means was explained by listing specific types of assessment, including satisfaction surveys, technology tracking, post evaluations, and exit interviews. Types of assessment can be categorized as comprehensive, narrow, or simple. One participant indicated that it’s important to note when discussing assessment that inputs do not equal outputs, a comment that was supported in the focus group.
2. Why would/do you do assessment, what’s your motivation?

The most frequently coded reason for doing assessment is to confirm or dispel instincts or un-quantified gut feelings about ones work, “you think you know but until you ask the questions and get information you don’t know for sure”. The second most frequently coded reason for doing assessment is to measure effectiveness and to gather evidence to improve practice. Improving practice can mean improving services, programs, or staff performance. Another common reason for doing assessment is to acquire “objective” information. This links to the rationalization for doing assessment of using data to acquire better resources. Additionally, reporting out to external constituencies is a motivation for doing assessment, and it was mentioned several times that assessment data can help allow staff’s voices to be heard in a more significant way. Finally several participants indicated that they do assessment because it is required by accreditation.

3. What are your feelings in general about assessment? What are the feeling in general in your office/department related to assessment?

Positive feelings about assessment were found in addition to negative feelings related to assessment. Positive feelings induced the frequent response that assessment can provide job security, and that it is enjoyable, “our staff likes it, it helps us do our job and it is taken seriously”. It’s noteworthy that more negative than positive feelings were found in the focus groups. The two most significant and frequently heard negative responses were that assessment took up too much time, “time that is devoted to assessment impacts the services we can provide to students”. There also exists a general fear about assessment. This fear is complex, and it is related to feelings of defensiveness and job insecurity when the topic is raised. Fear also comes from individual’s feelings that there is a lack of skill in regards to doing assessment, and that much of the assessment that occurs is poorly done, “It is...okay to do it but it’s not done right most of the time”. While it was mentioned that outside consultants can create positive feelings about assessment, it was three times more likely that participants indicated negative feelings toward having outside consultants conduct assessment or institutional benchmarking. Some participants feel that consultants often have an “agenda” which can influence their findings.

Some responses were neither negative nor positive, and several individuals indicated that they do assessment because it is required as part of their job, but it does not induce any kind of feelings. “If assessment is drastically different than your work, it’s bad assessment...it needs to be incorporated as part of the job”. Finally, it was noted several times that there is support for the use of reliable assessment using validated instruments.

4. Based on your experience here at UConn and elsewhere, what assessment have you found helpful/useful to improve your practice/operation?

Many different assessment resources were noted as being helpful in improving practice. The most frequently coded resources were: the use of established instruments (ex. EBI), Survey Monkey, collaborations with colleagues, individually created surveys, professional
associations, and outside consultants. The Higher Education in Student Affairs (HESA) assessment projects were also frequently cited as being useful, “[the] HESA assessment group…gave great information and provided many suggestions which have been implemented”.

**5. Based on your experience here at UConn and elsewhere what has been the most challenging/difficult for you in terms of assessment?**

Many individuals shared challenging assessment experiences, though most items shared were coded only once. This is likely due to each individual sharing unique perspectives occurring in specific contexts. However a few items were coded several times, with the most frequently shared difficulty being the experience of individuals making poor decisions based on assessment data. “[It’s frustrating] seeing people with data who don’t understand it…and manipulating data to make bad decisions”. This bad experience was at times related to poor methodology, and at other times related to poor interpretative skill of the individual using the data. Participants shared that staff sometimes have a hard time accepting results when the data are different from expectations.

Difficulty with outside consultants was also mentioned, “To have outside peers give recommendations from their point of view is helpful but arduous to give materials, make meetings, arrange visit, etc”. Also, there was some frustration with how data are used, “decision making is hyper-political here at UConn….anecdotes rule the day”. Other challenging experiences were related to staff failing to show how assessment data are used, individuals having a lack of ownership in relation to doing assessment, and having low responses rates when engaging in assessment initiatives.

**6. When thinking of program or service delivery, how much time and energy do you put into thinking about assessment of that program or service?**

Participants had a hard time quantifying how much time and energy is put into programming or service, with most participants indicating that it depends on the situation. An equal number of participants said they put in too much versus too little time and energy.

**6A. Are you satisfied how much time you put in?**

Slightly more individuals indicated they were unsatisfied with how much time they put into assessment, “very few days go without having to make a decision when I wish I had information/assessment/knowledge to base it on”. It was mentioned several times that people were unsatisfied with how little time they devote to assessment because they need data and they know how important they are.
6B. What would need to change for you to devote more time to thinking about assessment?

Many good ideas were shared for change that would facilitate more time being invested in assessment. Most common was the need for a more comprehensive divisional approach to assessment, “[we need the Division to] provide minimum standards as to what the Division is looking for, and tools to go about doing it”. Additionally having an expert staff member who can help support or coordinate assessment initiatives was frequently shared by participants. Therefore a need for vision and structure was discussed.

Other items coded several times included the need for more divisional tools for assessment, more training, and making assessment more user-friendly.

7. What assessment related resources, databases, or services would you recommend the assessment committee investigate?

The most overwhelming response for the committee to investigate was the recommendation of having an assessment office or person dedicated to division assessment. “I need someone to tell me the right way to do this. Guidance that the data and results are valid”, was a commonly coded response. The second most common response was the need to have technology standardization across the division, which would also ease in data storage and sharing. Finally, many specific suggestions were noted, including:

- EBI
- CAS Standards
- StudentVoice
- SPSS
- SharePoint
- Metrics
- Guidebooks

A final recommendation was that a structure for sharing division assessment data be created.

8. What advice do you have for the assessment committee for getting buy-in for divisional assessment? What cautions might you have for the assessment committee?

Participants were forthcoming with many pieces of advice. The overwhelmingly most frequently coded response was that the committee would do well to relax division fears about assessment, and keep the division informed to help put a positive spin on assessment by highlighting benefits. Several participants shared that the term “buy-in” should not be used because of potentially negative connotations. Some people shared that assessment needs to be contextualized, and with the poor economy a focus on outcome assessment would be productive: “[the] economy is bad, thus costs will be cut, but [the] emphasis on results will be increased”. Participants suggested that the committee work to make assessment a part of practitioners’ everyday jobs.
Overall Themes/Reflections

- There is a lack of divisional assessment expertise.
- There is a lack of divisional direction.
- People want help, including consultants and experts.
- There is a lot of surveying already going on, without divisional or institutional coordination.
- There is a concern about the poor and/or invalid instruments being used.
- There is a sense of survey fatigue by professionals, and staff are running out of creative incentives for survey completion.
Appendix B: Student Affairs Assessment Initiative (Spring 2008)

This initiative was designed to find out very basic information about what is already being done relative to assessment in our Division.

What have you been doing relative to assessment (however defined)?

What methods / measures?

- **Student demographics tracking** (most departments, in varying ways for varying purposes)
- **Attendance / use tracking** (all offices in some form)
- **Satisfaction Surveys**—student consumers, staff, and faculty, employers (most departments)
- **Tracking retention and graduation rates**
- **Focus Groups** (many departments, with students and outside “clients”)
- **Staff work goal attainment and staff work performance**
- **Tracking mental health symptomology (CMHS)**
- **Quality Improvement assessments (CMHS-TQI)**
- **Use Survey Monkey** (often from web pages)
- **In-house paper/pencil surveys**
- **Grade point averages** (OFSL-FS students to non-FS students; chapter; new members; Community Standards re: UCompass Students)
- **Statistical analysis** (Community Standards—cases from year to year, gender, semester standing, locations, hearing types, sub-groups of students like athletes or FS members)
- Requests for information (Community Standards—ODE complaints, AEC complaints, FOI requests; OSCC-complaint logs, calls, etc.)
- **EBI** (Residence Life and Student Union)
- **Door counters** (Student Union)
- **Comment Cards** (Student Union, Dining Services)
- **SU “Report Card”** (SU employees)
- **Perceived competency** (Student Union student employees)
- Spring Weekend report (AOD; used CSRA)
- **Compliance** tracking regarding adherence to external national standards for accreditation, state and federal law requirements, associational program standards, industry standards, etc. (CSD—ADA; Dining Services—NACUFS; Community Standards—ASJA; Dining Services—meals per labor hour and per meal cost; CAS—informally in several departments)
- Working toward standards and use of data from relevant organizations (NCHA, for example, in Wellness)
- Financial analysis (Dining Services—Food Mark, followed up by comparison reports and quarterly conversations)
• Outside consultant to evaluate and recommend (Dining Services Catering)
• Mostly use data descriptively and not with any sense of true causation

**Have you done anything with learning outcomes?**
• Developed learning outcomes for peer educators and learning competencies for GAs (non-HESA)
• Part of mentoring program (CSD)
• Part of Husky Tech Training (SAIT—student training modules have quizzes)
• In the process of developing overarching learning outcomes for the department; will test first on student employees in the Student Activities Business Office, SUBOG, and SUBOG student employees

**Where are the measures and results stored?**
• In-house computers
• Annual reports
• SAIT for online tools
• Department Wiki
• HuskyCT

**How did/does the data inform your practice?**
• Use data to anecdotally change programs
• Provide data to managers in office to make program changes
• Determine program success
• Change service allotments based on utilization data
• Used to promote under used programs and advertise well used programs
• Departments discuss the results regularly
• For satisfaction surveys, follow up on anything less than positive
• SAIT—during opening, Husky Tech uses real time review and addresses problems immediately

**What are your future trends relative to assessment?**
• Tracking annual program developments
• Faculty and staff needs relative to programs and services
• Develop incentives for filling out surveys
• Being more proactive with assessing program outcomes
• Aligning cross-department efforts (language for outcomes, questions, etc.)
• Setting up user friendly assessment and evaluation infrastructure
• Culture audit (maybe)
• CAS + other standards (formal analysis)
  - ...related: seek out optional accreditation; align more with relevant standards and benchmarks (when that isn’t being done yet)
• Using StudentVoice instead of Survey Monkey
• Create reporting interface to get more usable information ("drill down")
• Unit review
• No more satisfaction surveys (use outcomes based evaluations only)
  o ...related: more data driven / science based decisions about programs and services
References


