Beyond the Checkbox: Quick & Easy Assessments!
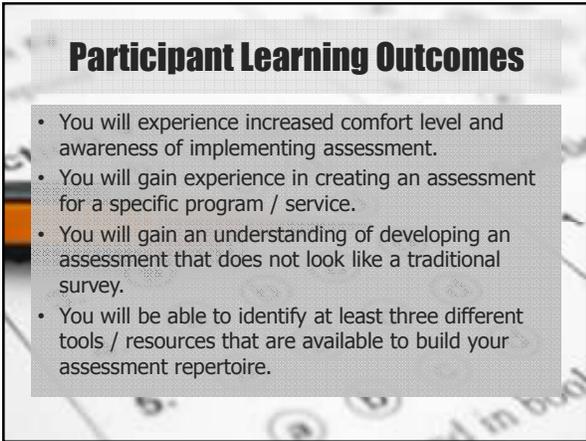
Kristen Renée Lindsay, Ph.D.
Director of Career Development
Heidelberg University

Participant Learning Outcomes

- You will experience increased comfort level and awareness of implementing assessment.
- You will gain experience in creating an assessment for a specific program / service.
- You will gain an understanding of developing an assessment that does not look like a traditional survey.
- You will be able to identify at least three different tools / resources that are available to build your assessment repertoire.
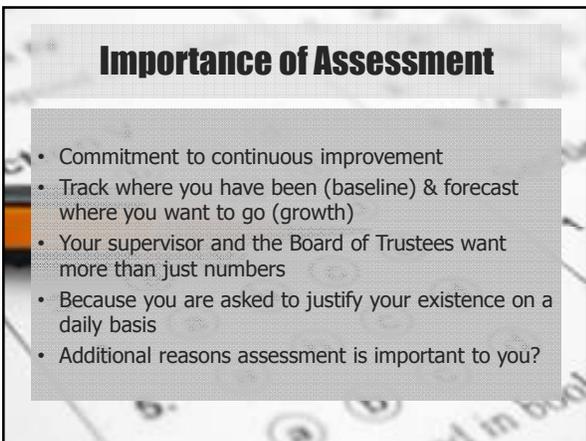
Importance of Assessment

- Commitment to continuous improvement
- Track where you have been (baseline) & forecast where you want to go (growth)
- Your supervisor and the Board of Trustees want more than just numbers
- Because you are asked to justify your existence on a daily basis
- Additional reasons assessment is important to you?

Effective Program Assessment

- *Systematic...* an orderly and open method of acquiring assessment information over time.
- *Built around the mission statement...* an integral part of the department or program.
- *Ongoing and cumulative...* over time, assessment efforts build a body of evidence to improve programs.
- *Multi-faceted...* assessment information is collected on multiple dimensions, using multiple methods and sources.
- *Pragmatic...* assessment is used to improve the campus environment, not simply collected and filed away.
- *Staff-designed and implemented...* not imposed from the top down.

Adapted from California State University-Chico, Assessment Plan (1998) and Ball State University, Assessment Workbook (1999).
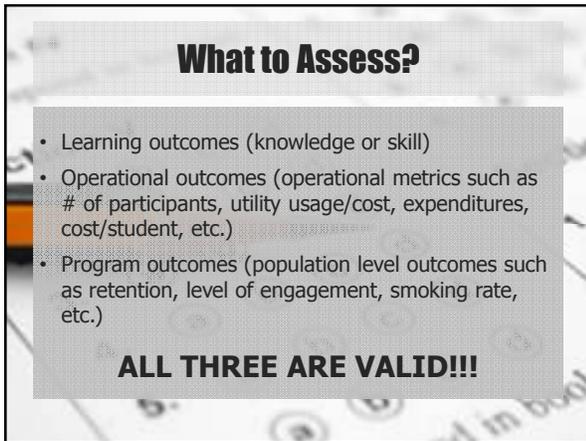
Good Assessment = So Much More Than a Survey

- Everyone – staff and students – are burnt out on surveys (Lipka, 2011)

- Quality information should be collected in a variety of ways, from a variety of sources, to provide an accurate picture of program delivery, program implementation, or plain old program satisfaction that respects the time and energy of the students and staff in developing and participating in assessments (Wise & Barham, 2012)

- Practitioners should consider quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods, incorporating both direct and indirect measures of learning, ensuring that people know their voices matter (Wise & Barham, 2012)

"Small Wins" Theory

- Karl Weick, an organizational theorist, introduced the concept of "small wins" to the field of organizational development in the 1980's
- The concept is intended to refocus perceptions of social problems, specifically when the daunting enormity of problems contributes to high stress levels
- Can be used to translate a destined-to-be-covered-with-dust-on-a-bookshelf-strategic-assessment-binder into small, manageable, executable daily tasks that are user-friendly at various staffing levels
- The small win is not an easy victory or a quick fix, but a continuous application of small advantages
- It reminds me of the "starfish story"....

Station Break

What to Assess?

- Learning outcomes (knowledge or skill)
- Operational outcomes (operational metrics such as # of participants, utility usage/cost, expenditures, cost/student, etc.)
- Program outcomes (population level outcomes such as retention, level of engagement, smoking rate, etc.)

ALL THREE ARE VALID!!!

Assessment Can Be Quick & Easy!

- Visual observation (create a rubric and check the boxes!) at a majors fair
- Direct collection (Fear in a Hat… collect the topics students are apprehensive about) at orientation
- Ranking (what did you learn most or least) following a residence hall program
- Show of hands (instant assessment) in a class
- Pro & con list in a time management seminar

More Quick & Easy Ideas!

- Word journal (pick a word; explain why selected) during a roommate conflict meeting
- Muddiest point (what are you still cloudy about?) during student worker training
- Application card (explain something in writing) during a leadership theory workshop
- Review tweets or Facebook posts during an athletic event
- Thumbs "up / straight / down" during tutoring

Even More Quick & Easy Ideas!

- Minute reflection (beginning and end) of a career development class
- Monthly random satisfaction questionnaire (pick a day... three questions max... sneak in a learning outcomes question) in the Counseling Center
- Poll (all the students in line) at a job fair or in dining hall
- Take a vote during a parent program

Religious Life Example

- Electronic survey was actually the best option
- One demographic question (built in BergLink information made this possible)
  - Have you attended a program or not?
- Limited number of questions
  - Which learning outcome does the weekly spirituality event best meet?
  - How do you feel about the length of the program?
  - Do you have any topic suggestions for future programs?
- Responses collected from approximately 10% of the campus population

Even Coding Isn't That Difficult
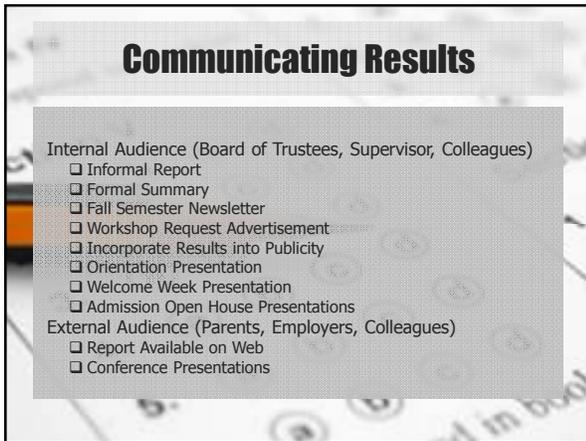
Your Turn!!!

- Select a program!
- Ask the important questions!
  - What do you want to know?
  - Who do you want to solicit?
  - Why do you want to know these things from these people?
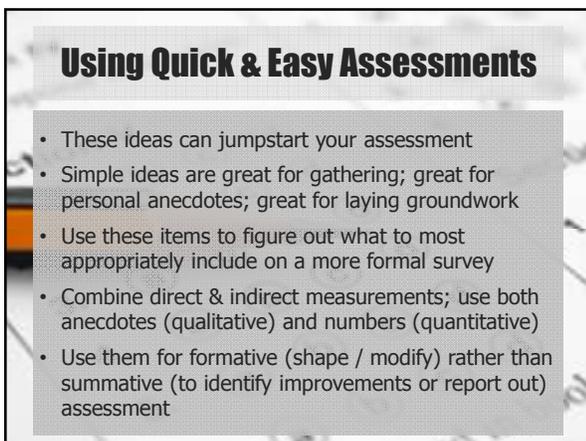- Brainstorm potential assessment strategies!

Best Practice Review

1. Have specific goals.
2. Consider alternatives.
3. Select samples that well represent the population to be studied.
4. Use designs that balance costs with errors.
5. Take great care in matching question wording to the concepts being measured and the population studied.
6. Pretest questionnaires and procedures.
7. Train interviewers carefully on interviewing techniques and the subject matter of the survey.
8. Check quality at each stage.
9. Maximize cooperation or response rates within the limits of ethical treatment of human subjects.
10. Use appropriate statistical analytic and reporting techniques.
11. Develop and fulfill pledges of confidentiality given to respondents.
12. Disclose all methods of the survey to allow for evaluation and replication.

American Association for Public Opinion Research (aapor.org)

Station Break

Communicating Results

Internal Audience (Board of Trustees, Supervisor, Colleagues)
- ❑ Informal Report
- ❑ Formal Summary
- ❑ Fall Semester Newsletter
- ❑ Workshop Request Advertisement
- ❑ Incorporate Results into Publicity
- ❑ Orientation Presentation
- ❑ Welcome Week Presentation
- ❑ Admission Open House Presentations

External Audience (Parents, Employers, Colleagues)
- ❑ Report Available on Web
- ❑ Conference Presentations

Using Quick & Easy Assessments

- These ideas can jumpstart your assessment
- Simple ideas are great for gathering; great for personal anecdotes; great for laying groundwork
- Use these items to figure out what to most appropriately include on a more formal survey
- Combine direct & indirect measurements; use both anecdotes (qualitative) and numbers (quantitative)
- Use them for formative (shape / modify) rather than summative (to identify improvements or report out) assessment

Online Resources

- NILOA: www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/
  - Links to articles, monthly featured website, resource library
- Internet Resources for Higher Education Outcomes Assessment: www.assessmentcommons.org/
- UCONN's Assessment Website: http://assessment.uconn.edu/what/index.html
- Center for the Study of Student Life at The Ohio State University: http://cssl.osu.edu/cssl-reports/reports-by-topic-area/student-learning/

Did I Achieve The Outcomes?

- Increased comfort / awareness? (Show of Hands)

- Experience creating an assessment? (Thumbs)

- Developing an assessment that isn't a survey? (Smile or Frown)

- Three tools / resources? (Fingers)

Featured Print Resources

- Dodge, J. (2009). *25 quick formative assessments for a differentiated classroom*. New York: Scholastic.
- Angelo, T. A., & Cross, K. P. (1993). *Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers*.