Closing the Loop on 2011-2012
Celebrating and Using Assessment Results for Improvement
Division of Student Affairs Assessment, Research and Retention
East Carolina University
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report serves to highlight and “close the loop” on 2011-2012 assessment activities in the Division of Student Affairs. The organizational components represent what is known as the “scholarship of assessment” (Banta & Associates, 2002), all of which contribute to East Carolina University’s institutional effectiveness. This report will offer examples of the transformation underway in which the Division, as a whole, is becoming a dynamic learning organization creating a culture of evidence and improvement. Student Affairs educators’ engagement in the scholarship of assessment represents a shared reflective practice that is systemic, coherent, and integrated. The annual assessment cycles are ongoing, aligned with mission, anchored by theory and research, embedded in day-to-day practice, and organized with quality enhancement as an end. In summary, this report “celebrates” how the Division of Student Affairs is using assessment results for improvement.

Accreditation: SACS and Departmental

A total of nine Student Affairs Educators provided leadership in support of ECU’s preparation for re-affirmation of accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), including representation on the Academic and Student Support Services Working Group, Compliance Certification Council, Institutional Effectiveness Council, and Quality Enhancement Plan. This leadership engagement has provided opportunities to highlight Student Affair’s distinctive contributions to ECU’s institutional effectiveness as well as build infrastructure supportive of monitoring and measuring processes that will advance assessment sustainability.

Student Health Services successfully completed their on-site review and affirmation of accreditation during summer 2011 per the Accreditation Association of Ambulatory Health Care.

During 2011-2012, Counseling and Student Development prepared for their September 2012 on-site visit by the International Association of Counseling Services. The letter of accreditation is expected by end of 2012.

NEW Strategic Plan for Division of Student Affairs

Student Affairs reverted to being a Division in August 2011, thereby leading to development of a new strategic plan. The strategic plan was completed in fall 2011 after a collaborative process featuring café conversations, meta-data reviews and benchmarking, and priority work teams; then officially launched in spring 2012. The new plan is designed to align with ECU’s strategic directions, sustain a culture of collaboration and transparent decision making, and be data driven in pursuit of demonstrating effectiveness and continuous improvement.

The plan features five priorities accompanied by 14 major goals and 50 objectives operationalized across nine strategic plan reporting units (major clusters of departments). Priorities include:

1. Enhance Inclusion and Success for All Students
2. Advance Leadership Development
3. Foster Student Development through Innovative Programs and Services
4. Strengthen Professional and Personal Development
5. Increase and Responsibly Manage Resources for Sustainability

Examples of quality enhancements completed in the first year of plan implementation are highlighted in the body of the full report within the framework of five priorities and 14 major goals.
External Program Reviews

During 2008-2009, 15 departments in the Division of Student Affairs underwent external program reviews. The review process is largely informed by functional standards outlined by the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS). The exceptions to this process include Transit, Student Legal Services, and Disability Support Services, which are informed by federal laws or professional standards of practice. In total, 148 improvement recommendations were generated through the external review process.

2011-2012 served as the third year of recommendation implementation with a summary of progress to date as follows:
- 56 improvement recommendations were completed/closed out (38%);
- 85 improvement recommendations are in progress or nearing completion (57.5%);
- 7 improvement recommendations have been declined or no action has been taken largely due to resource limitations (4.5%).

Examples of recommendation improvements completed in each of the 15 departments during 2011-2012 are highlighted in the body of the full report. Improvements encompass organizational restructuring, leadership personnel hiring, new technology enhancements, facility upgrades, and new program development.

Research Initiatives

During 2011-2012, the following research initiatives were conducted in association with the Division’s assessment processes in provide information for improving programs and services as well as increasing knowledge about our current student population:
- Student Success, Leadership Development, Identity Development white papers; African American Male Success Inquiry: Student Affairs Assessment, Research and Retention
- Leadership Development Pilot Studies: Campus Recreation and Wellness
- Secret Shopper Study: Campus Recreation and Wellness
- Attitudes About Hazing and Pledging in Fraternities and Sororities: Greek Life
- First Year Student Time Study: Campus Living and Dining

The Student Affairs Executive Council in collaboration with Institutional Research initiated the development of a common data needs plan that serves to create “real time” institutional data sets providing information about student characteristics and indirect outcomes in relation to engagement in Student Affairs programs and activities. The pilot data set was completed for Greek Life in spring 2012, thereby providing benchmarks for annual performance goals related to academic achievement, retention, and graduation as well as information to inform program planning and policy development.

Dr. Hardy, Vice Chancellor, convened a Student Affairs – Faculty Collaborations gathering in April 2012 to profile current and prospective research collaborations. This event served as a catalyst for new collaborations and projects: team leadership and social change, W-curve first year adjustment, Living-Learning Community outcomes, and African American Male Mentoring Program outcomes.
Departmental/Unit Outcomes Assessment

During 2011-2012, there were 27 assessment units within the Division of Student Affairs. In aggregate, these units defined 100 outcomes and 105 corresponding measures leading to results for improvement action steps.

Outcome categories represented both operational and student development outcomes. Innovative assessment projects of note included:

- Campus Recreation and Wellness’ Club Sport Economic Impact demonstrating $462,067 revenue generation for the Greenville area. The assessment formula will be adapted to other unit programs in the Division.
- Student Health launched a Fast Track Service the saved 99.75 clinic hours, thereby adding 399 appointment slots for students.
- Campus Living and Dining with Aramark conducted a Dining Styles Market Match thereby establishing a long term master plan for next generation changes in meal plans, services, hours, and venues.

Examples of improvement actions for each of the 27 assessment units are highlighted in the body of the full report. Improvements encompass.

2012-2013 Continuous Improvement Action Steps

The Division’s strategic plan implementation will progress through assessment of key performance measures and development of a dashboard system. A new Strategic Plan Working Group has also been convened to assure a seamless transition between the current plan and next generation development associated with ECU’s 2013-2018 strategic plan.

Planning will begin for the second generation of external program reviews for the original 15 departments as well as departments new to the review process. Special consideration is needed for timing of reviews and resource support for the process.

Improvement of Assessment, Evaluation, and Research capacity and competencies will continue to be a focus through intentional professional development activities and leadership development. Examples include restructuring the Student Affairs Assessment Team, launching the Student Affairs Focus Group Team, deepening student learning outcomes assessment, and diversifying methods of data collection and analysis.

Use of results for improvement will be further expanded through a variety of communication vehicles, such as social media, user friendly briefings, and a common website access. The focus of “You’ve Been Heard” messaging will reinforce and acknowledge use of results.

Full report is available at: www.ecu.edu/studentaffairs/saassessment

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Reference: