Student Affairs Culture of Assessment

A special thanks to all of the Assessment Liaisons for their outstanding work at the inaugural Student Affairs Assessment Poster Session, as part of the Staff Retreat. Through their leadership, each department presented one key activity and associated assessment project. For many people the terms “poster session” and “assessment” do not elicit the possibility of creativity. However, this was not the case with the Student Affairs Assessment Liaisons, who not only presented data clearly, but also the culture of their department on 20” by 30” space! My initial fear with the poster session was that staff would not have interest in sharing assessment data. To my great surprise, the greater challenge was limiting each department to one key activity and a standard-size poster board! We even had some requests for two poster boards! In the evaluation of the retreat, staff commented that it provided them with an opportunity to learn more about other departments, the chance to see connections between departments in a different way, and that there was a lot of information to digest in a relatively short amount of time. As we continue to work with each department to enrich our culture of assessment within Student Affairs, we look forward to more opportunities to make visible the important work each of you do to support our students and the University of Utah. Thanks again for your active participation in this event!

—Stacy Ackerlind
My name is Chuck Masoka and I’m here to help. I’m the new Information Coordinator for the offices of Assessment, Evaluation and Research as well as Career Services. I’m excited to join both teams and to enter my new role of working with Symplicity, a program that I know will be useful to all of Student Affairs.

I’m originally from Northern Virginia, but I’ve most recently called Las Vegas, Nevada home while working at the College of Southern Nevada (CSN). During my time at CSN, I wore many hats and titles, including Recruitment/Retention Specialist, Success Coach, Ambassador Manager, and Coordinator. As my work changed, so did the technologies we used to help students succeed. I’ve lived through the growing and shifting technology changes in higher education, from learning styles assessments, occupational interest assessments, degree auditing software, to our own student information systems. I love it. I love working with new software, figuring it out and showing others what its capabilities are. I bring this love with me here to the University of Utah. It’s exciting and I hope to share that with you all.

While I was working at CSN, the college became a member of Achieving the Dream (ATD), a national initiative of consultants and coaches that help community colleges increase retention and graduation rates. A huge component of working with ATD was the implementation of evidence-based decision making. With this in mind, assessment became crucial to every department within the college. We all started looking at the types of data that we were collecting and what exactly we were doing with it. It took a new way of looking at how we provide services to our students and, in turn, how we were providing ourselves with the data needed to assure that our efforts were working. My goal is help all within the division of Student Affairs to glean the best data and help you use it to make great decisions.

Although my positions and titles changed, my commitment to student success and my teams working with students directly will always remain my priority. I look forward to working with you all.

— Chuck
Tricia West
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I recently began working very closely with Student Affairs’ Assessment, Evaluation and Research (AER) Office after accepting the role of Executive Assistant for Student Development in August. My new position provides support for their department, which has opened up a whole new reality for me!

This is such an exciting opportunity, as I actually have a strong interest in assessment. I just graduated in May with my Bachelor’s in Economics and also completed an internship with a market research company called Emperitas Services Group. I held a Project Executive role while working for Emperitas, where I led research for two separate projects. As the project lead, I gained experience in conducting focus groups, task management, report creation, presenting, survey building, and data analysis through SPSS and R Studio. While my internship provided me with excellent experience in making data driven decisions, I look forward to working closely with AER to further learn and development my assessment skills.

— Tricia

Upcoming Events

Assessment Coffee Hour: A time to highlight assessment projects, foster collaboration, and facilitate discussion about assessment best practices for Student Affairs Staff.

Coffee Hour: Graduating Student Survey
- January 26th
- 11-12pm
- Union Den

Coffee Hour: National Student Financial Wellness Study
- February 16th
- 11-12pm
- Union Den

Coffee Hour: Resident Satisfaction Survey
- March 29th
- 11-12pm
- Union Den

Training: Student Response
- March 10th
- 2-3pm
- LIB 1009

Training: Campus Labs Basics
- March 17th
- 2-3pm
- LIB 1009

Have you been chosen?
For the National College Health Assessment

You may be selected to participate in a campus-wide survey that helps determine health programs and services for our students. If selected via email, please fill out the survey.

Once completed, you will be entered into a drawing for a Visa gift card. The first 200 students to take the survey will also get a cool, free tumbler!

Marketing image for the NCHA. See page 4 for details.
National College Health Assessment

Every two years, 5,000 students from the University of Utah are randomly selected to take the National College Health Assessment (NCHA), which provides the Center for Student Wellness and the University of Utah with a wealth of knowledge about our students’ physical, mental, and sexual health. The NCHA was developed by the American College Health Association (ACHA), and many other colleges and universities across the country participate in this assessment.

During the most recent administration at the U, there was a large discrepancy between what students perceive their classmates to be doing and what their classmates are actually doing. For example 92% of students think that their classmates have used alcohol in the last 30 days, but only 41% of students reported actually using alcohol. Students also thought that 81% of their classmates had used marijuana in the last 30 days when in reality, only 11% reported doing so. While self-reported data has some limitations, this discrepancy suggests some opportunities to have conversations with students about perceptions versus reality. The NCHA showed that 40% of students at the U had “felt so depressed it was difficult to function.” In a recent Assessment Coffee Hour, the Center for Student Wellness stated that the NCHA is “not just stats... the numbers are students,” and urged attendees to think about how results from the NCHA might impact their offices and programming.

Each administration, the NCHA data provides information about the top ten academic impacts about what health-related issues. Creating awareness about these issues, we can better help students to manage them.

For students who are struggling with any of these issues, offices such as the Counseling Center, Center for Student Wellness, Personal Money Management Center, and the Student Health Center are great places to refer students. We are grateful to the Center for Student Wellness for presenting these results and creating awareness about student health and wellness.

— Emery Vigil

### Mental Health Concerns in last 12 months

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concern</th>
<th>Actual</th>
<th>Perceived</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intentionally injured self</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempted suicide</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seriously considered suicide</td>
<td></td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt overwhelming anger</td>
<td></td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt overwhelming anxiety</td>
<td></td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt so depressed that it was difficult to...</td>
<td></td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt very sad</td>
<td></td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt very lonely</td>
<td></td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt exhausted (not from physical activity)</td>
<td></td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt overwhelmed by all you had to do</td>
<td></td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt things were hopeless</td>
<td></td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Top Ten Academic Impacts

1. Stress
2. Anxiety
3. Sleep Difficulties
4. Work
5. Depression
6. Cold/Flu/ Sore Throat
7. Internet Use/Computer Games
8. Concern for a Troubled Friend or Family Member
9. Finances
10. Participation in Extracurricular Activities
Cats, Potter, Food. An assessment of my life would confirm that these three words describe my personality and weekends. I assess my happiness on the amount of times I work the subject of Harry Potter into my day, or how cute the cat video was I watched. I have fun with assessment; I can assess Katie’s productivity by the amount of times she interrupted me to talk about puppies, I can assess Marty’s mood by his level of hunger. Assessment is invaluable. We use it on a daily basis and it’s key to what we do.

The health and wellness of our community at the University of Utah is integral. To me wellness equals retention, success, and happiness among our students. Assessment is how we, at the Center for Students Wellness (CSW), encourage the campus to invest in wellness. Take for example data from the National College Health Assessment (NCHA), a national assessment that we and other institutions disseminate. NCHA gives us a generalizable sample of health behaviors, habits, and perceptions of students at the University of Utah. From this survey, I know that 89.2% of our students reported that they felt overwhelmed by all they had to do at some point in the last 12 months. That’s not just a statistic. To me – that’s the student you’re helping write a resume. The one you are encouraging to sign up for a leadership summit. It’s the student who has questions about their financial aid application or the one I talk to at free STD/HIV testing. This assessment gem represents an opportunity for us all to check in, connect, and ensure our students are accessing resources and achieving their goals. For me, that’s the foundation of Student Affairs. And it’s based in assessment.

Assessment should be intentional. I must think about how I use it and what my strategy behind it is. I rely on assessment to tell me if CSW programs and our interactions are having their desired effect. Am I reaching students the way I am intending? It provides me the opportunity to improve, get creative and listen to students. They know what they need and want. We just have to ask. Assessment is how we do that. So here’s to happy assessing and healthy students!

Kassy Keen, MPH
Health Educator
Center for Student Wellness