In September of 2015, ASUU and AER launched an engagement survey to the student body to get a better idea of how students are currently engaging in ASUU sponsored activities/events, and how to get more students to attend. The survey appeared in students’ Umail accounts and the first 200 students to complete the survey received a pair of U of U socks! Erica Anderson, ASUU Programing Advisor and Assessment Liaison, summarized the findings from this initiative:

This assessment was useful in gathering student input on ASUU’s current events, services, and potential future initiatives. While our response rate was less than 10%, students did have the opportunity to provide feedback (over 2,500 responded). The data gave us insight as to how students want to hear about ASUU events and services (IE: text messages, email, posters, etc.). We learned that the majority of our respondents have not visited the ASUU website within the past 12 months, or used the resources offered there. Instead the majority of respondents indicated that they currently find out about ASUU events through posters, word of mouth, banners, and the @theU e-newsletter, good insight for our Marketing Board.

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The top three ways students who responded indicated that they would like to find out about ASUU events included posters, @theU e-newsletter, and banners. It is interesting that social media was not a top preference. In terms of events that students want to see, the majority of respondents indicated that they would most like to attend concerts, speakers, and movies on campus. Interestingly, most who responded indicated (67%) have not actually attended an ASUU concert. Findings suggest that more marketing would be helpful in promoting the events. Students also suggested that weekend concerts would increase their likelihood of attending. Interest in various types of music, performing arts, films, and speakers ranged across the board. Gaining a greater understanding about who does and does not attend ASUU events is an assessment priority.

Another important focus of this survey was to understand civic engagement. We received helpful feedback on initiatives that ASUU could take to increase the likelihood of students voting in local and national elections. We also learned that education, air quality, and economy, and job growth are the issues most important to students (in our respondent pool), in this past mayoral race.

—Emery Vigil

Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) Accreditation Update

The accreditation of the University of Utah was reaffirmed by the NWCCU in January, 2016. Many thanks to Student Affairs staff for their active participation in the process. During the staff meeting with the NWCCU site team, the entire Division of Student Affairs was well represented and highly visible. The collective commitment of our Division to assessment (which really is a commitment to ensuring quality educational experiences) through your efforts were clearly demonstrated. Notably:

- A commendation was given to Enrollment Management for the implementation of holistic admissions.
- Learning communities across the institution, including Housing and Residential Education, were cited as a strength.

Across the institution continued focus on learning outcomes was encouraged. Student Affairs demonstrated a commitment to this and we will continue to work with each of your areas to further strengthen this focus. With the establishment of the University of Utah’s Four Big Goals, we look forward to working with each department and the Division as a whole to continue to align our efforts within our institution. For further information about the University of Utah’s NWCCU Accreditation, please visit: http://accreditation.utah.edu/

—Stacy Ackerlind
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My name is Parul Acharya. I am the new Assessment Analyst for the Office of Assessment, Evaluation & Research. I am thrilled to join the team and will be primarily working with providing data analytics support to Enrollment Management and to other departments as well which will be useful to all of Student Affairs.

I come from the beautiful city of Orlando, Florida where I completed Ph.D. in quantitative research methods, psychometrics, and data mining from the University of Central Florida (UCF). I have a multi-disciplinary academic background with an MBA (Management & Business Statistics) and degrees in Health Sciences (Biostatistics). I completed SAS Data Mining Certificate from the statistics department at UCF during the Ph.D. program. The common thread between the degrees that I have is my experience working on research projects where I had to interpret data and write-up results for publications in journals and conferences. As part of my graduate assistantship, I also worked as a teaching assistant where I taught business statistics to senior-level students.

When I interviewed for this position, I learned that many of our students work full-time while completing their degrees. I could relate to this because I am aware of the challenges students face while managing both school and work. I simultaneously worked full-time as an Analyst in the PK-12 system for three years in the state of Florida where I was involved within the Assessment, Accountability and Program Evaluation Department in school districts. I was involved in analyzing student, faculty, and staff information queried from multiple databases by utilizing various kinds of statistical tools and techniques to assist administrators in making data-driven decisions for improving student achievement. I was also responsible in evaluating educational programs related to classroom instruction and teacher professional development which would ultimately impact student performance in state-wide standardized assessments. I worked with staff spanning multiple academic departments and belonging to different work backgrounds.

I plan to bring my knowledge, skills and experience to the Division of Student Affairs by looking at student data from different perspectives and linking the information with other databases to derive meaningful trends and patterns. These interconnections could be effectively utilized to make strategic decisions that benefits students and improves enrollment. I am transitioning from a school system to an institute of higher education. The transition comes with a big learning curve. I would hope to learn the goals and functions of each department by building transparent communication channels and collaborative work relationships with all my colleagues and staff members within Student Affairs. My commitment to student achievement through working with numbers and statistics will always be my goal. I look forward to working with you all.

-Parul
I was recently asked what a typical day is like in my role as the Programming Advisor for the Associated Students of the University of Utah (ASUU). More often than not, a common assumption is that I am a technology genius and that I write code as a computer “programmer”. As much as I would love to claim that skillset, I’m not quite there yet! A more accurate depiction of what I do entails starting my morning with the occasional early morning spin class or rubbing the belly of my energetic tuxedo cat, pouring myself a large cup of coffee, and getting energized with some good music… which for me includes a unique playlist with songs by Michael Franti and Kygo. As an advisor in our student government office, I have the pleasure of working with student leaders who are doing amazing things and as I like to say, “learning to fly”. As students are engaging with me in their decisions of what type of concert to plan, which speaker to invite to campus, what films to screen, what type of conference format will be most accessible to learn about social justice, or how to raise $20,000.00 for local non-profits, my goal is serve as a resource for them and provide them with the perfect balance of challenge and support to empower them to “fly solo” (with an advisor parachute of course).

I have a fun job. From teaching students how to negotiate with agencies in the performing arts for visiting talent to dancing all night at a 10 hour event to raise funds for cancer research, not only do I get to wear a lot of hats but I am able to facilitate growth and learning throughout that planning process. In the process of planning and executing both small and large scale events, it can be easy to get caught up in logistics. While of course logistics are important, it is even more important to ensure that the process of planning that event and working our way through those logistics is educational and developmental. Sometimes, an easy way for us to stay on track is for me to ask students, “what is one skillset you’re looking to build in this process?” and additionally, “what is it that you’d like for your peers to get out of this experience?” These are informal strategies I employ to understand their goals, where they are at in their own personal development, and embrace intentionality in students serving students. In the future, this is a process I aim to formalize so that ASUU has data to share about how we are aiding in leadership and development through these experiences. Continued on page 6
When I began working with the students planning this year’s spring concert, we knew that the event would be a two day music festival. Our options for this were to program on a Thursday and Friday, or a Friday and Saturday. In our Next Steps survey ASUU asked students if they had ever attended an ASUU Concert (Redfest, or The Grand Kerfuffle). Out of those that replied “No”, we asked what ASUU could pursue to increase the likelihood of their attending an ASUU Concert.

We learned that a weekend concert would be a game changer for 60% of our respondents, and that services like subsidized childcare would increase accessibility. As such, when the time came to decide when to hold this two day festival, the ability to make an informed decision with student feedback made my students feel much more comfortable in selecting the Friday-Saturday option. Additional data that we’ve collected has given us insight in the goal of increasing students who vote in local and national elections. Knowing that 44% of our respondents would like the ability to drop off voting ballots on campus gave our current director of Government Relations a great project to work on with the Salt Lake County Clerk’s Office. In sum, assessment is the tool that often allows for my students to engage in intentional and relevant programming. Thanks to Stacy, Elizabeth, Emery, and Chuck for providing ASUU with the opportunity to receive feedback on our programs and events, this has been essential in strategizing our Next Steps!

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Programming Advisor, Associated Students of the University of Utah
Student Leadership & Involvement