Message from Barb Snyder, Vice President for Student Affairs

There are an abundance of exciting developments at the University of Utah, and Student Affairs lies at the heart of it all. During the past year, we have done a great job of aligning our work with our budget requests and, in turn, supporting President Pershing’s focus on undergraduate students. The University’s Four Big Goals have provided an excellent blueprint from which to frame our own strategies and initiatives.

As the University relies ever more heavily on data driven decision-making, the commitment we are making to assessment initiatives is not only appropriate but necessary. The divisional review currently being completed by Keeling & Associates will provide valuable insight that will assist us in charting our path for the next several years and beyond. While our service to students in not always easily measured, our commitment to their success is constant and unwavering. I am grateful and humble to work with our amazing colleagues in the Student Affairs Division and at the University of Utah.

University of Utah
Four Big Goals

1. Promote student success to transform lives
2. Develop and transfer new knowledge
3. Engage communities to improve health and quality of life
4. Ensure long-term viability of the university

To learn more, visit: http://president.utah.edu/universitystrategy/
Accreditation? What does assessment have to do with it?

Over the past year, preparation for our Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) Accreditation report and site visit has been underway (see accreditation.utah.edu). The accreditation standards have been revised now have a standard dedicated to assessment. Banta (1999) defines assessment as the “systematic collection, review and use of information about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning and development.” Because of your commitment to students, it was not hard to pull many fine examples of how each Student Affairs department use data in a meaningful way.

Many of you contributed to the development of your department’s key activities and focused assessment plans. While this process represented a major change and quite a bit of collective reflection, it has also allowed us to develop broader connections with assessment efforts across the division and develop division-level outcomes. It was another area that was highlighted within the accreditation report thanks to each of your efforts.

While assessment may at times feel like “one more thing” in addition to the direct service you provide to our campus, it does allow us to understand the impact of our work. In many ways, it is one of those vehicles that helps us to stop and consider what we are doing and why. We hope you will make some time to join us for an “Assessment Coffee Hour” to learn about the work of your colleagues and to appreciate the time and efforts of each of the departmental assessment liaisons. Thank you so much for being part of our assessment community and demonstrating excellence in all you do. We look forward to sharing assessment news and updates with you!

--Stacy Ackerlind

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Upcoming Events

**Fostering and Demonstrating Student Success Symposium**
- Sept. 29th
- 11am-3pm
- SAEC Auditorium

**Student Response Training (Campus Labs)**
- Sept. 23rd
- 10-11am
- OSH Rm 273

**Campus Labs Basics Training**
- Oct. 14th
- 10-11am
- Library 1009 PC Classroom

**The Accreditation Coffee Hour: A Conversation**
- Oct. 27
- 10-11am
- Union Den

**Accreditation Site Visit**
- Oct. 28-30
Assessment Cooperative

The Assessment Cooperative is a new initiative to enhance assessment within the Division of Student Affairs. The definition of a cooperative is “a jointly owned enterprise engaging in the production or distribution of goods or the supplying of services, operated by its members for their mutual benefit.”* Thus, the idea of the Assessment Cooperative is that the members (representatives from each unit within the Division) will take increased ownership of assessment within their department and for the Division. While the assessment liaisons have served as a link between individual departments and the Student Affairs Assessment, Evaluation and Research (AER), the Assessment Co-op will be a collaborative effort amongst departments.

The four areas of focus for the Assessment Co-op are as follows:

1. Division-level Assessment Agenda – This agenda includes larger assessment projects (like the Graduating Student Survey) and Division-level reporting needs.

2. Build capacity and a culture of assessment – Find ways to integrate assessment so that it is not something separate and time-consuming.

3. Build collaborative relationships across the Division – These relationships will strengthen assessment efforts, provide support for assessments, contribute to Division needs, and improve student services.

4. Individual professional development – By participating in the Assessment Co-op, representatives will gain valuable skills in the Student Affairs profession, particularly aligning with the NASPA / ACPA Professional Competencies.

The first meetings occurred over the summer, where AER provided some updates about accreditation, annual reporting, and new technology. Attendees also signed up for working groups to meet specific Division-level needs. We met again on September 17 for the “Assessment Beyond Surveys” seminar, in which we reviewed some assessment basics and talked about ways to answer assessment questions without conducting a survey. Stay tuned as the representative from your units (listed here on the left and on our website) continue to grow their expertise and bring back ideas and information!

Graduating Student Survey

The Graduating Student Survey (GSS) is administered to all students who apply for graduation during spring semester. This information is used to understand first-destination (career related outcomes) of students, information about students’ experience, engagement with campus activities, and examines personal and institutional factors that may have delayed graduation.

Over the years response rates have hovered around 30%. To increase response rates for Student Affairs Assessment, Evaluation & Research Office (AER) teamed up with ASUU and Career Services to develop a marketing plan to create awareness about the survey. The marketing plan included posters donated by ASUU, table toppers, lawn signs, and web graphics all featuring the “Graduates! Before You Go” slogan. As an incentive for students to complete the survey, a custom graduation decal was offered to students who visited Career Services. Students also had the option to enter in a drawing to win one of 50 $50 dollar Visa gift cards donated by Student Affairs / AER, Career Services, Office of Budget & Institutional Analysis, Undergraduate Studies, and the Graduate School.

Some interesting findings from the survey include the following:

Only 66% of students graduated as quickly as they had expected, and of those students who did not graduate when expected, 49% indicated that their delay in graduation was due to University factors with 75% indicating that they delay was due to personal factors.

Thirty-five (35%) of students indicated that they had changed majors.

Students and work: 54% of students reported working off campus, 11% of students reported working on campus, and 24% of students reported that they worked both on and off campus. Of the students who reported working while attending the U, the majority reported that they work to pay for some or all of their college/personal expenses.

- Student indicated that they paid for college using the following sources:
  - Personal earnings
  - Assistance from parents or other family
  - Student loans
  - Grants
  - Student scholarships
  - Personal savings
At the time of graduation, 59% of students reported that they were single with no children. 10% of female graduates reported being married/partnered with children, and 22% of male graduates reported being married/partnered with children.

The graduating student survey is an important outcome measure for the University of Utah. This is wonderful data that you can use to answer your assessment related questions—just ask us! We look forward continuing our collaborative efforts across campus to increase the response rate. Thank you to everyone who helped make this survey and marketing campaign happen. Including the Institutional Data Management and Visualization team for producing these images!