As I reflect back to the large graduating class in the spring and the large incoming class of fall 2017, I want to thank each of you for the tremendous work you do to support our students. Many of you have been involved in our strategic planning process which has provided insight from many different vantage points of our division. At a national and more local scale, many changes are happening within higher education. The research shows that every dollar spent on services to students has a greater impact on retention and graduation outcomes than dollars spent elsewhere. I am committed to demonstrating the value of our work both within our division as well as beyond it. Your work to strengthen the connection between assessment and departmental budgeting is critical to this effort. As we prepare for the new semester, I appreciate the difference you make in students’ lives and the contributions you make to our campus community.

*Assessment & Budget Boot Camp Recap
*Message from the Vice President of Student Affairs
*Student Affairs Assessment Model
*Utilization Data Collection
*Assessment Liaison Spotlight-Julian Gomez, Campus Rec
*Upcoming Events for Fall 2017

Thanks to all of the departments who were able to join us for Assessment and Budget Bootcamp in June! In our work providing data for the budget process and development of the Student Affairs Strategic Plan, we have come to understand how critical it is that these processes are integrated. After all, we should be able to demonstrate the success of our services and programs through assessment as well as understand the costs involved in the program. Putting these pieces together allows us to understand how we can improve our service delivery to impact a greater number of students. Our key area of focus for this year is to implement utilization data collection strategies, which will allow us to understand how increased enrollment impacts our service provision, as well as providing information about who we are actually serving and who we are not. These data are foundational to show the impact of the work we do in Student Affairs to support student success.

Message from the Vice President for Student Affairs
Dr. Barb Snyder

As I reflect back to the large graduating class in the spring and the large incoming class of fall 2017, I want to thank each of you for the tremendous work you do to support our students. Many of you have been involved in our strategic planning process which has provided insight from many different vantage points of our division. At a national and more local scale, many changes are happening within higher education. The research shows that every dollar spent on services to students has a greater impact on retention and graduation outcomes than dollars spent elsewhere. I am committed to demonstrating the value of our work both within our division as well as beyond it. Your work to strengthen the connection between assessment and departmental budgeting is critical to this effort. As we prepare for the new semester, I appreciate the difference you make in students’ lives and the contributions you make to our campus community.
The Student Affairs Assessment Model (SAAM) was developed to provide a robust framework to understand the impact of our services on the student life cycle. This model is used by the AER team to guide our efforts in our work with each of your departments as well as for the Division. We have worked diligently to shift our time to conduct more data analysis to support your efforts, rather than focusing on project development. I started development of this model to support the Student Affairs Strategic Plan that was implemented in 2009. As a relatively new director, I quickly learned that some data, such as utilization data (who uses a program or service), were very hard to obtain, because of the number of systems that did not communicate with each other. Thanks to the help from Marie Larsen in the Registrar’s Office and from ACS, we developed a strategy that was clunky but did begin to provide this data type. Unfortunately, it was a not scalable as a division-level initiative nor sustainable. I started to map out all of the data we had and what we needed. Figuring out how to obtain utilization data was the most complex and most challenging piece of this puzzle within our institution. . .while my peers at other institutions were having other struggles that we did not have (i.e. they had huge amounts of utilization data but no ability to survey students). Therefore, it became very clear that our data was bloated in the area of general outcomes, mainly survey data because we could more easily obtain this.

Over the years, I worked to develop a framework of what our desired “data state” would be as well as the personnel needed to accomplish this goal. Simultaneously other changes were happening at the University of Utah. Career Services started using a program for their large events that was more reliable than the cobbled together utilization strategies we attempted. Through the tremendous work of the Registrar’s Office with the Student Data Warehouse, many new possibilities for using data opened up. I started using the Student Affairs Assessment Model (Ackerlind, 2013; Ackerlind & Duszak, 2017) to advocate for the data that we would need to show the impact of our work, which required more personnel within AER as well as stronger connections with each office through establishing Assessment Liaisons. The Student Affairs Leadership Team saw the value of increasing our capacity as this model aligned with broader efforts happening within the institution. This work has now become a team effort. With the addition of Elizabeth Duszak as the Assistant Director for AER (who had previously served as a Graduate Assistant for AER and knew our data challenges well), our team began to increase capacity for analysis. Chuck Masoka joined our team to expand our utilization data capacity for the Division. Our partnership with the Business Intelligence Team under Tom Howa and continued collaboration with Tim Ebner has changed the nature of our work—surveys are one piece of our profile as they contribute to larger scale analysis. With increased ability to provide in-depth data analysis, gather utilization data consistently, and present these findings visually through the use of more sophisticated tools, we can finally establish a firm foundation for a scalable assessment approach that demonstrates our impact at both the departmental and divisional level.

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The model builds upon basic assessment questions: How many students use our programs and services? Who do we serve and who does not utilize our services? Are we staffed effectively? Once these questions are addressed, other questions become more meaningful. Specifically, do our services meet students’ needs? Do students feel a sense of belonging and valued when they interact with us? What do they learn through involvement in our programs and services? And finally, to the big question: What impact does our work have on students from early outreach to employment? I am excited that finally, our team can provide a scalable view of departments and the division to inform our work and gauge the success of our efforts. On behalf of our team, we look forward to working with each of your departments to implement this model to demonstrate the impact you have on supporting students throughout their journey.

Upcoming Events

Assessment Coffee Hour
Tuesday, September 19, 2017, 10:00 AM, Union Den
Thursday, November 9, 2017, 10:00 AM, Union Den

For more information on events please email us at: assessment@sa.utah.edu
Preparing to Capture Utilization Data
Chuck Masoka

Summertime means planning across the division. As offices start their planning processes for the coming academic year, the AER team is willing and able to assist in discussing your plan for capturing student utilization data.

At its core, utilization data is really gathering information about the students that use your offices and services the most. In considering the updated Student Affairs Assessment model, the base being utilization data, you can see the increased importance of this type of information about who we serve. Over time, AER has developed a consistent list of student characteristics to provide uniform data that addresses broad questions. It is important to take consideration of not just the individual visits of students but also the frequency with which they use services. Once we aggregate all of the student use data for a department, we start to get a clearer picture of which students are being served and how frequently. Looking at these characteristics can help your office make some decisions, such as targeted marketing to populations that are underrepresented in your programs, or creation of new programs or initiatives to specifically target those populations that are underserved. Understanding the characteristics of students that are actively using your services are only half of the story, as those that are underrepresented also illustrate the changing needs of our student body. As our student body is anticipated to be the largest it’s ever been, it’s more important than ever to understand the characteristics of those seeking out services from all of our offices. Having this data provides a better understanding of when your teams are the busiest, what student populations are you serving and how your resources are being leveraged in accordance with the increased student traffic that we anticipate for the coming academic year.

So with all of this in mind, the next question is usually, “how do we start?” The best place to start is to set up a meeting with AER! As AER has been consulting, we’re finding more and more that many offices are already collecting utilization data and some just need some help with analyzing or expressing the data. We can also streamline the process as we are developing best practices based on successes in other areas. We look forward to meeting with you to support your efforts. We’ve found that there’s usually a way to combine forces and form our own Super Friends of utilization data!
I started in Campus Recreation Services and Student Affairs as a student in 1998; that’s almost 19 years, but who’s counting... aside from the assessment people I suppose. I walked in one day looking for a racquetball team and was told we didn’t have one but I could start one; I did and the rest, as they say, is history.

As a marketing & communications professional, I’ve always understood the importance of assessment and the role it plays (or should play) in organizational decisions. When the role of Assessment Liaison was introduced, I had already been through the early days of Student Voice and Campus Labs training and was not only happy to assume the responsibility, but felt it was a natural fit for my position.

Having graduated as a department from the Field House and HPER Complex to the Eccles Student Life Center, our methods for capturing and analyzing utilization, satisfaction, and outcomes data have also transitioned. Gone are the days (mostly) of hard copy surveys with manual inputs into excel, and we’ve moved to tap access points, handheld devices and email links; more accurate and efficient methods I’m sure are on the horizon as we all push to grow and improve our programs.

The models utilization, satisfaction, and outcomes data provide us about whom we serve, in what capacity, and who needs outreach is invaluable. In a dynamic world with fluid objectives and increasing accountability, it’s essential to our programs to know the answers to these questions. Our mission in Campus Recreation Services, Student Affairs, and the University of Utah as a whole truly depends on it.

I like to look at the data as if it were part of a final exam after our work has been completed; where did we shine, what needs work, and where are the outliers in the bell curve? Without the utilization, satisfaction, and outcomes data, we may have an idea of where we stand but that’s just a some-what educated guess; and we’re in the business of educating, not some-what educating.

In short, I truly enjoy data and the stories it tells us; stories we should all listen to and ensure student success.

To see some of Julian’s fabulous marketing videos please visit these links:
https://youtu.be/p19sJasA-KY
https://youtu.be/N2n9cRzoQsY