MEASURING STUDENT SUCCESS: *Best Practices & Opportunities*

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Agenda

- Measuring student success
- Strategies for data collection
- Opportunities with the Assessment Office
- Practices to consider

Measuring student success

Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE), Standard V.2:

Institutions should engage in "**organized and systematic assessments**, conducted by faculty and/or appropriate professionals**, evaluating the extent of student achievement** of institutional and degree/program goals. Institutions should:

a**. define meaningful curricular goals** with defensible standards for evaluating whether students are achieving those goals;

b. **articulate how they prepare students in a manner consistent with their mission for successful careers, meaningful lives, and, where appropriate, further education**. They should collect and provide data on the extent to which they are meeting these goals;

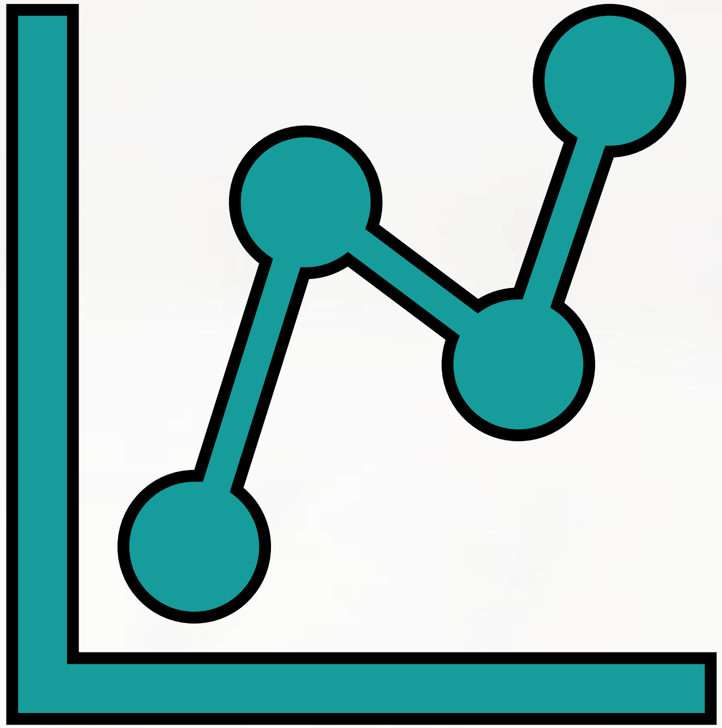
c. **support and sustain assessment of student achievement** and **communicate the results of this assessment to stakeholders**."

In other words…

Programs should systematically assess the extent of student achievement in and beyond the classroom and communicate those findings to their community members.

A few data collection strategies

- In-house surveys: surveys designed/distributed by the program/department directly to students (Set up a free Qualtrics account using your Howard SSO)
  - Research activity survey (*described in a few slides*)
- Other surveys: surveys designed/distributed by other entities (like the Assessment Office) for which the program/department can request data
  - Examples: Graduating Student Exit Survey (GSES), Alumni Survey
- Focus groups: small group discussions that can help the researcher gather qualitative data insights
  - Especially useful when collecting sensitive feedback students might not want to put in writing



Important reminders

- IRB approval is needed to conduct most kinds of academic research
- However, data collected *for assessment purposes* in the manners outlined in the previous slide do not require IRB approval.

It's still critical to integrate good data collection practices:

- Always ensure students can opt out of providing data/feedback within the instrument or process.
- Never share data points without anonymizing any identifiable information and aggregating data.
- Password protect files and limit who can access data sets.
- **Prioritize student privacy** above all else.
- Make an appointment with the Assessment Office if you have any questions or concerns.

An example

A department director is attending a conference when she sees some of her students' names on the program. She attends their session and tells them, "I wish you would have known you were presenting!"

She starts brainstorming ways to...

a) Figure out in what kinds of professional development and research activities her students are engaging

b) Determine how much the program has or hasn't supported the students in achieving those opportunities or producing that research

c) Identify which students may need program/department-level support to access those opportunities

How might she go about this?

Assessment in Action

- The director can work with the Assessment Office to distribute a Research Activity survey that asks students to disclose their publications, presentations, internships, etc. from the last year
  - In the survey, she can ask if they independently found their opportunity or was encouraged by someone affiliated with the program.
  - She can also ask if their research was based off of research or writing from a specific class in the program.
  - To increase student participation, she can ask all senior seminar students to show completion of the survey (either by taking it or opting out of the survey) as an 'exit ticket' at the end of a class.
- Once the data is in front of her, she can look for information that jumps out:
  - *Are students publishing articles but not presenting?*
  - *What percent of students receiving internships in the field?*
  - *Do students report admittance to graduate school or post-grad employment?*
- From this juncture, she can consider modifying her program's HAAP plan to assess some of these metrics over time while implementing strategies to increase those metrics:
  - **Example Measure target:** 85% of seniors in the program will present at one conference during the time in the program.
  - **Example strategies**: Conference Proposal workshop; Sharing CFPs with students and offering extra credit to submit a paper; identifying funding opportunities for students to attend conferences

Surprise!

- The Assessment Office already has a template version of the research activity survey described in the example!
- Email us (assessment@howard.edu) to have us customize it for your program/department.
- Schedule a meeting if you'd like help with deployment strategies.

Another useful resource

- Every semester, the Assessment Office distributes the Graduating Student Exit Survey to all graduating students.
- The survey asks them not only for feedback on their experience, but also for comprehensive data on their next steps, including employment and grad school.
- You can easily request this data for your program or department by emailing us at assessment@howard.edu

But!

The best way to get meaningful data from the GSES is for YOU to encourage your students to complete it.

Other opportunities with our Office

- Beyond the surveys previously mentioned, our office can consult on data collection practices and brainstorm with your program how to measure certain ‘hard to measure’ metrics of success – like effectiveness, achievement, and preparedness.
- When drafting learning outcomes, we often encourage you to envision: **what does a fantastic graduate of your program know? What are they able to do?**
  - The same logic applies for creating success outcomes: what are your best students up to today? Are there any links between what they did as a student and what they are doing now?
  - This process is not always straightforward but we’re here to help!

A few practices to consider

- Engage in effective data storage practices.
  - Ensure that survey instruments, data sets, notes, and assessment documents are securely stored, but also make sure that they will be accessible if you step down as assessment chair, are on medical leave, or go on sabbatical.
  - We encourage setting up a program-level SharePoint and password protecting these files within it.
- Make this process transparent to students. Help them understand why you want this information and how you intend to use it.
  - And then, make sure you present your findings (in aggregate) to students!
- Ask graduating students to share a permanent email address if they feel comfortable doing so.
  - Follow up with them 6 months, 1 year, and 5 years post-graduation.
  - Encourage them to reach out to the program with any feedback, concerns, or announcements.

Questions, comments, or feedback?

Or, email assessment@howard.edu if you'd like to contact us directly or make an appointment.

Also, join IDEAS!

Next meeting: Feb 27 from 1-2pm