

Student Pulse

a publication of the Office of Student Affairs Assessment
Division of Student Affairs • University of Georgia

OFFICE OF
Student Affairs Assessment
Division of Student Affairs • University of Georgia
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EXCITING TIMES FOR THE DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS AND ASSESSMENT

This year marks the beginning of a new tradition for the Office of Student Affairs Assessment (OSAA). Beginning in early September, 10 members representing different departments within the Division will come together for assessment training.

BY JOEL H. SCOTT

Affectionately known as the “A-team,” this cohort will be the first of its kind for UGA Student Affairs Assessment. The group will meet for a series of foundational sessions on assessment practice this fall and will continue to meet throughout the spring to develop their assessment competencies. The intent of this program is to present assessment in a practitioner-friendly manner with two learning outcomes in mind: 1) participants will demonstrate an understanding of assessment language and literature through session facilitation and small group processing, and 2) as a product of their understanding, each participant will create a comprehensive assessment project for their department. By creating a support system, we hope that A-team members will become assessment advocates and resources within their department and area of responsibility. These outcomes were intentionally designed with OSAA and the Division of Student Affairs’ strategic goals in mind, specifically the goal of increasing assessment practice within the Division. (See Practitioner’s Corner & Tips on aligning assessment outcomes). Members of the first A-team cohort were nominated by their directors to serve as department representatives. This year’s A-team members are:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Mandy Branch-Friar, Student Financial Aid | Marisela Martinez, Intercultural Affairs |
| Jill Courson, Campus Life | Carla Topp, Disability Resource Center |
| Brandon Frye, Student Support Services | Gloria Varley, University Health Center |
| Dale Gibson, Disability Resource Center | J.D. White, University Housing |
| Matthew Hackett, Recreational Sports | Patti Zettek, Testing Services |

“I want our people to see assessment as a tool to help them become experts in their area, to help them know in advance what questions they need to ask, why asking those questions is important, and what to do with the answers.”

— Rodney Bennett,
VP for Student Affairs

“If Student Affairs departments do not do assessment, they will be unable to measure their effectiveness or determine what students are getting out of their programs and services.”

— Culture of Assessment
Survey Response

The *Student Pulse* serves to introduce the University community to the unique research being conducted on college students both at UGA and in the field of Student Affairs as well as to increase the Division’s exposure to, knowledge of, and experience with assessment principles.

INSIDE THIS EDITION . . .

You will read how assessment is being addressed throughout the Division. Recreational Sports, the Office of Disability Services, and Technical Services weigh-in with articles representing a broad range of assessment stages and outcomes. In addition, you will read about one graduate student’s experience as an intern in the Office of Student Affairs Assessment this summer. Wrapping up this edition is an executive summary of the Culture of Assessment Survey, highlighting practitioners’ viewpoints on assessment practice and understanding within the Division.

EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RECREATIONAL SPORTS EMPLOYMENT AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS

This is an exploratory study to examine if there is a relationship between part-time employment in a Student Affairs based recreational sports department and academic success as measured by grade point averages (GPA) and credit hours enrolled. All 330 undergraduate recreational sports student staff members were compared to a random sample of 350 undergraduate students. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) on the two groups indicated a statistically significant relationship for GPA, $F(3,14)=3.12, p<.05$, based on year in school and group affiliation.

BY MATTHEW HACKETT

Purpose

The existing research has primarily focused on participants and the benefits they receive from involvement in activities offered by recreational sports departments. Participation in recreational sports programs has been shown to have a number of positive contributions and correlates with student outcomes, such as higher GPAs, higher rates of persistence, and increased satisfaction with the overall collegiate experience. However, it is unclear as to whether any of the benefits that participants receive are extended to students that are employed within recreational sports departments. Part-time student employment is intended to be a team-oriented, developmental learning experience for students while providing opportunities to acquire critical workplace skills such as customer service, time management, communication, collaboration and leadership. The purpose of this study was to determine if student staff members experienced any academic benefits from employment.

Design & Steps

A quantitative exploratory study was utilized to determine if any differences in GPA and credit hours enrolled existed between two groups of undergraduate students. The two groups being compared were the entire population of student staff members in a recreational sports department and a comparably sized random sample from the general student body. Data on student staff was collected by reviewing the employment records of all student staff members and creating a list of student identification numbers. The Registrar's Office utilized the list of student identification numbers to create a matrix including gender, class, spring semester grade point average and spring credit hours enrolled. For the purposes of this study, the data was then sorted by year (class) in order to select only undergraduates. The OSSA office also provided a data matrix including gender, class, spring semester grade point average and spring credit hours enrolled for 350 randomly selected undergraduate students. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was utilized to search for relationships between GPA and the following factors: 1) group affiliation, 2) year in school and, 3) gender. An ANOVA test was also run for credit hours enrolled using the same three fixed factors. A *t* test was then used to further analyze areas where differences were identified.

Findings

All 680 participants in this study were undergraduate students enrolled at the University of Georgia. The recreational sports

student staff consisted of all undergraduate students employed during the fall semester 2005 or spring semester 2006. The students worked in fitness, outdoor, intramurals, aquatics and facilities and averaged 14.8 hours of work per week (see Table 1). A total of 330 individuals were employed. Four staff members had incomplete data records. The comparative group consisted of 350 students randomly selected from the general student population. Fourteen individuals had incomplete data records in the comparative group.

TABLE 1

Class Totals for General Students and Recreation Staff		
	<u>General Students</u>	<u>Recreation Staff</u>
1st year	18	38
2nd year	81	68
3rd year	82	113
4th year	155	107
TOTAL	336	316

There was a positive connection between employment with the recreational sports department and academic success in some instances. Specific years in school (classes) of recreational sports staff members had higher GPAs than the general student population. However, working with the recreational sports department did not have an effect on the number of credit hours enrolled.

The ANOVA based on GPAs indicated a significant relationship between year in school and group affiliation, $F(3,14)=3.12, p<.05$, along with year in school individually, $F(3,14)=4.12, p<.05$. The difference was statistically significant at the .05 level. A *t* test was then used to further examine the relationships of the year in school and group affiliation to the GPA variable. The mean scores of the GPAs for the recreational sports staff member group and the general student population group were computed (see Table 2 on page 6). The freshmen recreational sports staff members were found to have statistically significant higher GPAs than their counterparts in the general student population sample, $t(54)=2.78, p<.05$, as did the junior staff members $t(193)=2.05, p<.05$. The difference was statistically significant at the .05 level. No statistically significant differences were found for sophomores or juniors.

In analysis guided by the second research question, the ANOVA based on credit hours enrolled indicated no connection between recreational sports employment and credit hours enrolled. There was a statistically significant connection between credit hours enrolled and year in school $F(3,14)=4.23, p<.05$. The difference was statistically significant at the .05 level.

What's Next: Putting the Data into Action

The study was designed to identify only if a general relationship between recreational sports employment and academic success existed. The study should not be used to make specific statements

(Continued on page 6)

DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTER: PROGRAM ASSESSMENT IN ACTION

The current concept of assessment in Student Affairs rose to the forefront through attention on accountability and quality in higher education. In times of decreasing funds, the ability to demonstrate the efficacy of services is key to maintaining program operation.

BY GERRI WOLFE

Program assessment is a way to objectively examine Student Affairs programs and to provide evidence to senior professionals that the investment of resources in the department is worthwhile. However, program assessment is more than accountability. It increases the quality of services by equipping administrators with the knowledge needed to make informed decisions about program development. Additional reasons to conduct program evaluation include affordability of programs, strategic planning, policy development, and accreditation.

Student Affairs personnel need to embrace program assessment as it demonstrates a commitment to quality, standards, and provides a foundation for program expansion. Most professionals are unsure how to begin to develop an assessment plan that is incorporated into everyday work. Four years ago, the Disability Resource Center (DRC) placed a priority on program evaluation and formulated a comprehensive evaluation plan. The plan was developed with input from the DRC staff, current research, and past strategic plans and has evolved over the years to become an integral part of the office operation. Student Affairs personnel must determine for themselves what type of evaluation process best meets their needs since no one approach will be effective in all settings. An individualized approach to planning allows for the identification of goals and concerns that are unique to a specific program's mission, stakeholders, and campus culture. These goals must also support the mission of Student Affairs and the University. See Table 1 for an excerpt from the DRC's evaluation plan.

Note that the plan takes into consideration the focus of assessment, method of assessment, time frame, and staff responsible for conducting the assessment. Although the DRC has a single staff member responsible for the coordination of the assessment plan, the coordinator is not the only person responsible for conducting assessments. All staff participate and assessment activities are incorporated into the everyday activities of the staff.

About the Practitioner

Dr. Gerri Wolfe, Associate Director of the DRC, joined the University of Georgia in August 2002 and brings over 16 years experience in postsecondary disability services and student affairs administration. She specializes in grant writing, research activities, alternative media, and working with students with disabilities. Dr. Wolfe earned her doctorate in Rehabilitation and Special Education from Auburn University and was instrumental in organizing the Alabama state organization for disability service providers. She is published in peer reviewed journals and presents at the local and national levels.

This type of structure uses the expertise of staff members and involves staff in determining future goals. An example of assessment in action can be seen in the following example. The supervisor in the DRC's Alternative Media area conducted a focus group with students who have print disabilities. The purpose of the focus group was to investigate the effectiveness of the alternative text service and areas where improvements can be made. Students stated they were pleased with the staff and the quality of the alternative text. In general, students reported they did not like to use the 4-track tapes because the equipment is cumbersome and the information is difficult to navigate. The students preferred a digital format including a CD or MP3's. Recommendations from the students included more portable listening equipment and the production of digital talking books. Based on the results of this assessment, the DRC researched and purchased new software that will produce digital talking books and digital book readers. Beginning fall 2006, the DRC will be producing digital talking books. Additional follow-up assessments are planned in order to measure efficiency of production and student satisfaction.

As professionals in the field of Student Affairs, program assessment is generally not the first priority. However, developing programs based on sound assessment information can have a positive impact on the campus experiences of students. Student Affairs professionals are encouraged to examine their programs and apply assessment measures to their own settings.

TABLE 1

Focus of Evaluation	Method of Assessment	Personnel Responsible	Time Frame
<i>Mission Statement & Goals</i>	- Review at annual staff retreat or team meetings - Administrative Review - Satisfaction Survey	Karen, Gerri Leadership Team Geri, Grad. Asst.	Summer Summer Spring
Program Components			
<i>Provide Auxiliary Aids</i>	- Assessment of testing services & numbers served - Assessment of Alternative Text & numbers served - Assessment of Closed Captioning & videos captioned. - Assessment of note-taking services & numbers served - Assessment of interpreting services	Allan, Patti Marti, Amy Marti, Amy Gerri, Eileen Kevin	Each semester Summer Summer Spring Summer
Long Term Evaluation			
<i>DRC Program</i>	- Outside Evaluator	Leadership Team	Every 5 years

FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE: A SUMMER IN THE OFFICE OF STUDENT AFFAIRS ASSESSMENT

As a graduate student in the College Student Affairs Administration program, assessment practice has been discussed often. Two of my classes focused specifically on research, assessment, and evaluation, but the topic was spoken of often in other classes. The idea of assessing student outcomes was new to me, and I wanted to know how I could incorporate assessment into my role as coordinator of the Event Management Office. Because our program curriculum requires internship hours, I approached Dr. Jan Davis Barham, Assistant to the Vice President for Assessment and Staff Development, about working in the Office of Student Affairs Assessment (OSSA). During my internship, I was able to read literature pertaining to assessment and research, serve as the lead consultant for an assessment project, and develop a survey for Event Management customers.

Assessment is becoming an integral part of my role as a Student Affairs professional. Upcraft (2003) lists assessment and evaluation as competencies student affairs professionals must possess. Survival, quality, cost effectiveness, strategic planning, policy development, politics, and accreditation are several of the reasons why assessment needs to be valued in our profession (Schuh & Upcraft, 2001). Over the course of my internship, I developed a greater understanding of assessment and evaluation and how I need these skills to further develop as a student affairs professional. One of my internship learning outcomes was to complete and disseminate a survey for the Event Management Office. The purpose of the survey was threefold: 1) to help our office learn more about our customers; 2) to assess customer planning; and 3) to develop ways to improve our services. I designed a survey instrument that aligned with the purpose of my study; therefore, I chose to do a needs and satisfaction assessment. The survey was sent to approximately 270 people who used our facilities between April 1, 2006 and July 16, 2006. The survey yielded over 80 responses. Feedback was gathered from customers on ways to enhance their event experience. Suggestions that emerged include: discounting rates for student organization, updating website, access to outdoor electrical outlets, optional technician, online form submission, quicker turnaround on invoices and problem resolutions, and better decorating options. These comments, as well as others, are instrumental to assessing the what, where, and how we can improve our services.

In the future, I anticipate benchmarking our services through semester surveys that will be derived from the initial survey created this past summer. My hope is that these mini-assessments will continue to enhance and improve various areas of customer service. Within the next 2-3 years, I would like to incorporate an assessment created by the Council for the

About the Practitioner

Cara Simmons is a spring 2003 graduate of the University of Georgia. She received a B.A. in History and double minors in Religion and Sociology. In the fall of 2004, Cara enrolled in the College Student Affairs Administration Masters program and will graduate in May 2007.

In August 2003, Cara began working in the Department of Campus Life as an Operations Specialist supervising the Information Desk and Building Managers. Currently, she is the Coordinator of the Campus Life Event Management Office. Her job responsibilities include managing the day-to-day operations of the office, supervising professional staff and student assistants, and assisting with special events.

Advancement of Standards (CAS) in Higher Education. CAS (2003) provides a set of standards that various traditional and non-traditional Student Affairs departments use to guide both practice and preparation.

I learned many lessons throughout my internship. First, assessment is a way for our customers to have a voice. Assessment allows customers to give critical feedback which affords our office an opportunity to evaluate make improvements to enhance our customers' service experience. Second, developing an assessment instrument is not an easy task. It requires time and thoughtful questions that reflect the purpose of the assessment. Third, the use of assessment in our profession is increasing. According to Schuh and Upcraft (2001), institutions use assessment in varying ways. Needs, cost analysis, program effectiveness, and student outcomes are just a few of the assessment designs being used in Student Affairs today.

Overall, my internship was a positive experience. My passion for Student Affairs increased as I was able to work with individuals committed to student learning, development, and service. Through my experiences this summer, I came to believe that assessment practice enhances the holistic experience of our students and is truly a way to put theory into practice.

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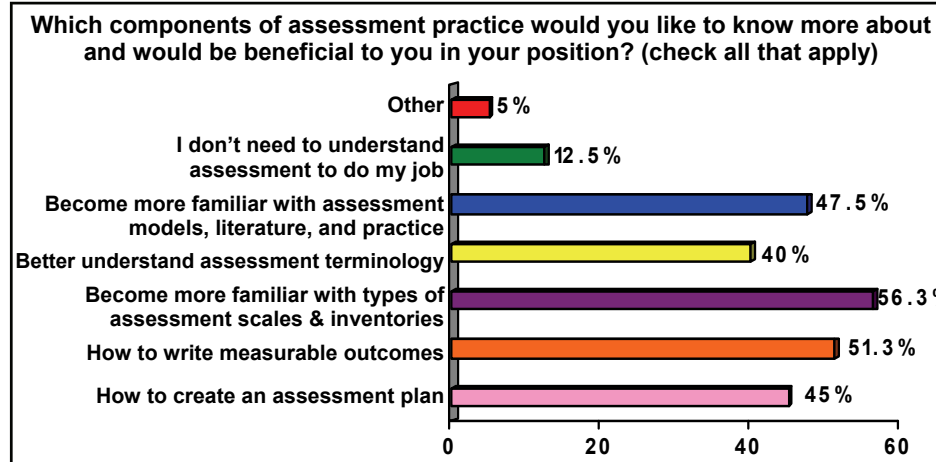
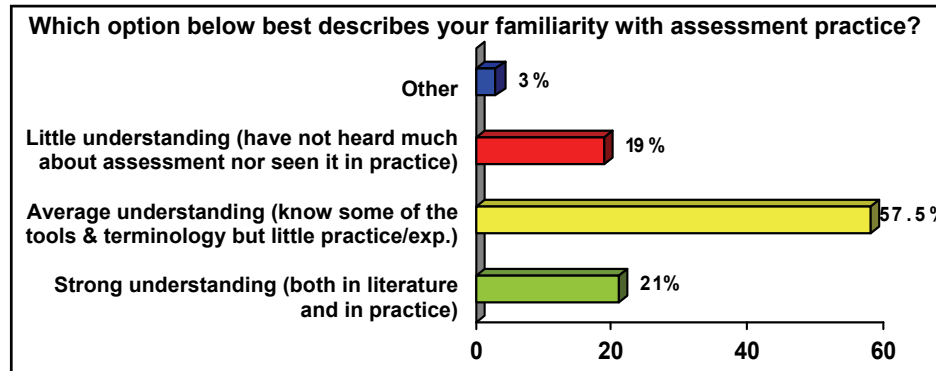
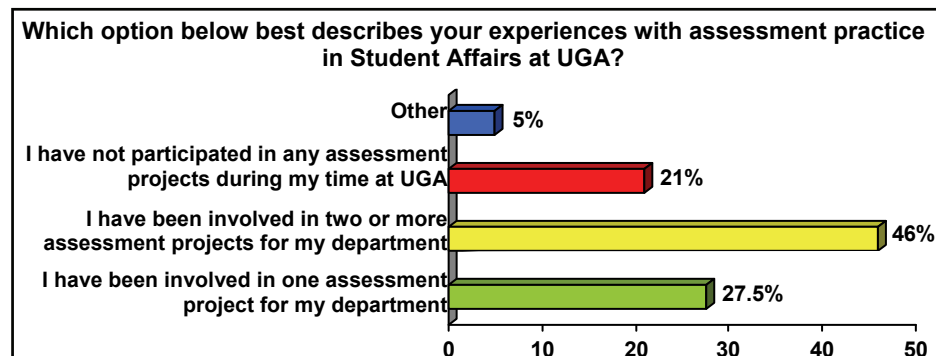
CULTURE OF ASSESSMENT SURVEY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This past July, the Division of Students Affairs was invited to participate in the Culture of Assessment survey created by the Office of Student Affairs Assessment. The purpose of this questionnaire was to better understand practitioners' knowledge and current practice of assessment in order to prepare for assessment training sessions this fall. The questionnaire included structured and open-ended questions. The invitation was sent to all members of the Division Listserv. For more details on responses see the tables below.

BY JOEL H. SCOTT

Which option best describes your experiences with assessment practice in Student Affairs at UGA?

Of the 80 responses, over 70% described themselves as having participated in at least one assessment project for their department.



Which option best describes your familiarity with assessment practice?

57.5% described themselves as having average understanding, such as knowledge of some tools and terminology, but little practice experience. Almost 20% of participants said they had little understanding or have not heard much about assessment nor seen it in practice.

What challenges does your department currently face when you consider assessing student services or programs?

Several themes emerged from this open-ended question:

Time: Assessment takes time; not only time to create a plan, but to implement, analyze, and evaluate for future improvements or considerations. Several responses spoke to the struggle of balancing the busyness of daily work with the perceived notion that assessment requires too much time to implement. *"Time to develop an assessment, collate the data, analyze, and act."*

Resources: Need for technological resources, funding, and staff members who understand assessment. *"Technology access and related issues, broad understanding by all staff."*

Participation: Prior experiences with low student participation. Getting staff buy-in and involvement in assessment planning and participation was also noted as well as participatory support from supervisors. *"Winning strong participation from students." "It is usually the same group of students responding so the results are skewed to that population."*

Perceived Fears: Fears that assessment will bring about undesired changes or reveal negative things about departments. Assessment was described as an elusive, time consuming, and complex process; thus, an intimidating process. *"I think the primary challenge is getting people past the notion that assessment is some incredibly complicated process that no one could possibly have adequate time to do."*

Just Getting Started: Where to begin? What do you do? There was general confusion reported on how to start an assessment project or what to do early on to prepare an assessment plan. *"For those who realize the importance of assessment, the challenge is where to begin/ what to assess first." "I think people don't know where to begin"*

Data Saturation: Responses related to gathering so much information already, but lacking time or ability to analyze the data or how to implement changes. *"Sometimes it feels like information is going to be collected only to sit in some report on a shelf." "We conduct assessments but then do not use the data effectively. I believe we need more summative assessments to STOP doing some things. We never stop, we just continue to add more."*

(continued on page 6)

EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

TABLE 2

Means and Standard Deviations for GPAs of General Student and Recreation Staff					
Class	<u>General Students</u>		<u>Recreation Staff</u>		p
	M	SD	M	SD	
1st year	2.64	.477	3.18	.617	.007*
2nd year	3.21	.642	3.05	.701	.149
3rd year	3.17	.663	3.34	.533	.042*
4th year	3.26	.654	3.17	.646	.391
TOTAL	3.19	.656	3.20	.626	.816
* <i>p</i> <.05					

about the nature of the relationship between recreational sports employment and academic success. There are a number of factors that can affect academic success to varying degrees. This study only focused on one of those factors at one particular point in time. The results of the study are to be used as the starting point for a longitudinal study of recreational sports student staff members and academic success. The findings of only certain classes of staff members having higher GPAs than their counterparts in the general student population will be used as a basis to develop some intervention mechanisms for the unaffected classes. A similar study will be conducted in future years to identify if patterns materialize in the results and if the intervention mechanisms have any effect.

Lessons Learned

Like most Student Affairs professionals, I have a passion for working with students and creating developmental opportunities that enhance the college student experience. Although our department has approached the student employment experience as much more than teaching job related tasks, we did not have any means of determining if student staff members were receiving any additional career or academic benefits from employment with us. The establishment of the Office of Student Affairs Assessment (OSAA) sparked my interest in finding a way to gather and analyze information relating to our student employees.

After taking 25 years off since my last research project, I was very apprehensive about attempting to carry out a study and prepare an article for publication. I was fortunate to become involved with the Student Affairs Writing Group, which was facilitated by Dr. Diane Cooper. Without instruction about writing projects and ongoing support from Dr. Jan Davis Barham and OSAA, this study would not have been possible. Receiving the raw data was the most exciting part of the project because it marked the end of the planning phase and the beginning of the action phase. It was hard for me to put the project down once the analysis phase began. I found that the one hour time blocks for three days a week to work on the project were not well suited for the analysis phase. Four to five hour time blocks on consecutive

days ended up being a more productive approach. I had to pause a few times during the analysis phase to re-educate myself concerning the different types of statistical tests that would be utilized. It would have been better to have reviewed all of the statistical components during the planning phase of the project. Overall, the research project was an energizing learning experience that yielded useful assessment information about our program. I am looking forward to initiating additional assessment projects in the future.

About the Practitioner

Matthew Hackett is the Associate Director of Recreational Sports & the Ramsey Student Center at the University of Georgia. He has been employed at UGA since 1995. During the past 22 years, he has been instrumental in the growth and development of recreational facilities and programs at the University of Virginia, the University of North Carolina-Greensboro, and the University of Georgia. Matthew is a fourth generation educator and earned a B.A. in Economics from the University of Michigan and a M.A. in Sports Management from The Ohio State University. His primary professional interests include student development, program management, and facility operations.

A CULTURE OF ASSESSMENT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

Which components of assessment practice would you like to know more about and would be beneficial to your position?

Of the participants, 56.3% in this check all that apply question felt that becoming more familiar with types of assessment scales and inventories would be beneficial, while 51.3% reported how to write measurable outcomes and 47.5% become more familiar with models, literature and practices were important components to understand in their position. The top three responses point toward the need and benefit of assessment training this fall.

Lastly, almost 90% of those surveyed believed assessment was important to Student Affairs at UGA. The importance of proving worth or **efficacy, presenting cost-effectiveness, demonstrating credibility, achieving goals and outcomes**, and other related values were shared. *"How do we know that what we do is effective if we don't assess it?"*

Further conversations about the Culture of Assessment Survey will continue in our A-team fall training sessions. For a complete report of the raw data from the Culture of Assessment Survey, go to the OSSA website at <http://www.uga.edu/studentaffairs/assess> and click on Research Projects-Project Reports.

RECOGNIZING THE NEED FOR ASSESSMENT IN TECHNICAL SERVICES

Currently, Technical Services is working with the Office of Student Affairs Assessment to create a customer service needs and evaluation survey as a tool to enhance service effectiveness and improvement. One of the main goals of Technical Services is to provide audio-visual (A/V) support for educational and entertainment programs for Campus Life and the campus community in general.

BY RIC WALLACE

Our Mission in Action

Our student workers filled approximately 300 service orders for A/V support in and around the Tate Student Center last year as PowerPoint system operators, sound board operators, performance lighting-control operators and Legion Field managers. They also act as stagehands and truck loaders for all major entertainment events. We support Freshman Orientation for the Office of Admissions as well as operate the sound and run spotlights for the Athletic Association at all the Men’s and Women’s Basketball games and Gymnastic Events in Stegeman Coliseum. Technical Services also provide audio support for events that range from Spring Commencement in Sanford Stadium for 30,000 to a dinner party for 200 at the President’s house. This past year, we provided the technical design, support, and operation for events as diverse as the Archway to Excellence program at the Georgia World Congress Center, and the University System of Georgia’s Board of Regents Awards held at the Georgia Aquarium.

Why Do We Need To Assess Our Services?

Along with my assistant director, our student employees, make up Technical Services located in the Tate Student Center. Currently, Technical Services operates at 95% capacity for service and labor. It can be somewhat challenging to consider ways to do our job better. Can we do more? Should we do more? If you look at it from a student perspective, I think the answer to both questions is we could and we should.

First of all, assessments can show where we can improve our services. They can also answer, from our users’ perspectives, what specific areas within Technical Services could be enhanced. Current anecdotal information shows that there may be a need for more staff resources and staff training. My

About the Practitioner

Ric Wallace is the Technical Director for Campus Life which is located in the Event Management Office on the second floor of the Tate Student Center. He’s been working at UGA for 12 years. Prior to coming to UGA, Ric was a Rock ‘n Roll tour professional for 14 years with bands such as Smokey Robinson. Ric and his wife, Annelie, have a 9-year-old son, Clayton.

assistant and I supervise anywhere from 20-30 student workers during any given semester. From a training standpoint, we constantly struggle to find the time to hold the necessary sessions; however, student training is essential to the service we provide.

Another point I hope to examine through our assessment process is how current we are with the technology trends and needs. The demand for technical services continues to grow at a phenomenal rate. With the \$40 million Tate Student Center expansion coming online in the next three years, I am certain that demand for our services will grow extensively. If we are to keep pace with campus growth, we will have to invest in hardware, training and staff to provide premier services. The quality of our services certainly plays a huge role in how the larger community gauges our effectiveness. Cutting-edge technology and well trained student operators will be essential to keep pace.

Assessing the performance of Technical Services will have an impact on several different areas of Campus Life. The assessment process will provide the data to reinforce or negate much of our current information. Regardless, the assessment will improve our performance by illustrating the desires and expectations of the community we support.

Student Pulse

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Assessment is important to all parts of UGA, not just Student Affairs. Through assessment we can determine if we are meeting the goals that we have set forth for our students.



- Culture of Assessment Survey Response

Developing Outcomes

Is the outcome measurable? Can you actually assess this outcome and understand it?

Is it meaningful? Like objectives, will the outcome be important to all constituents involved?

Is it manageable? When creating outcomes, it is important to focus on one or two areas at a time in order to manage your data and understand it clearly.

Aligning Outcomes with Mission & Strategic Goals

One of the foundational procedures in assessment practice is to align your intended outcomes with the mission and/or strategic goals of your governing organization. In doing so, the outcome(s) for assessment and evaluation are already on target and grounded in what is important.

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