


# Student Pulse

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

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| OFFICE OF<br><b>Student Affairs Assessment</b><br>Division of Student Affairs • University of Georgia |    |  |
| Volume I, Issue III<br>Spring 2006  |    |  |
| Greek Recruitment Study .....   | 2  |  |
| SGA Poll Data Summary .....   | 6  |  |
| Student Affairs Staff Development .....   | 9  |  |
| Practitioner's Corner .....   | 10 |  |



Rodney Bennett  
Vice President and Associate Provost for  
Student Affairs and Dean of Students

*“Assessment helps us determine the needs of our students...that is what makes us a premier Division... meeting and hopefully exceeding our students’ needs and expectations.”*

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.

## ASSESSMENT IN STUDENT AFFAIRS: AN INTERVIEW WITH VP RODNEY BENNETT

**BY JOEL SCOTT**

I recently had the privilege of sitting down with Dr. Rodney Bennett, Vice President for Student Affairs, for a candid conversation about his viewpoints on assessment as it relates to daily practice within Student Affairs. After reading the five year strategic plan for Student Affairs, I was eager to hear Dr. Bennett articulate how assessment will help the Division become “premier.” Dr. Bennett spoke with a confidence reflective of his alacrity and pride for the Division, the student body, and the university community. He stressed the importance of understanding “premier” as the Division’s potential rather than comparative prestige. “Assessment helps us 1) determine the needs of our students and 2) make decisions as to how we can best meet those needs. That is what makes us a ‘premier’ Division...meeting and hopefully exceeding our students’ needs and expectations.” Within our pursuit of becoming “premier,” Dr. Bennett also emphasized, “One of the things that is really important to me as it relates to assessment and becoming ‘premier’ is helping people in our Division not stress over assessment or becoming a ‘premier’ Division.”

Dr. Bennett’s belief that becoming “premier” is a natural outcome of the continued assessment of students was evident throughout our conversation. It is imperative, according to Dr. Bennett, that when it comes to assessment, the needs, service, development, and learning of students are considered.

*continued on page 3*

## A NEW COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT MODEL FOR UGA STUDENT AFFAIRS

The intention of this article is to give a cursory overview of a proposed model for assessment created by the Office of Student Affairs Assessment. This article will briefly outline how the model was developed, why it is important, and component (step) descriptions of the model. Subsequent training sessions and future articles will outline the details of this model in practice. You can also check out the newly updated assessment page at [www.uga.edu/studentaffairs/assess](http://www.uga.edu/studentaffairs/assess) for more assessment resources and information.

**BY JOEL SCOTT &  
JAN DAVIS BARHAM**

### The Development of the Model

The comprehensive assessment model for the Division of Student Affairs was born from a series of discussions centered around the question: What should be the assessment model for a division of student affairs at a Research I institution

*continued on page 4*

## A GLIMPSE INTO OSAA: GREEK RECRUITMENT STUDY SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to find out what type of Greek recruitment systems are being utilized at the University of Georgia's peer and aspirational institutions, particularly the viability of deferred recruitment\* processes. A multi-phase approach was used. First, the researcher began by examining web sites of the University of Georgia's peer and aspirational schools as indicated on the web site of the UGA Office of Institutional Research. Information was gathered through the Greek Life department or similar areas (i.e. IFC, Dean of Students). To verify gathered information and probe for more specifics, we placed phone calls to respective Greek Life offices. It is important to note that in spite of multiple attempts, only half of the Greek Life offices were contacted.

**BY MATT EDWARDS**

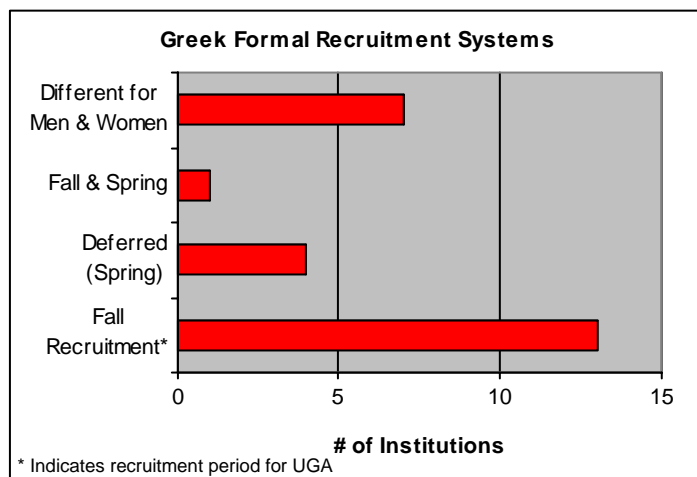
Literature review on deferred recruitment processes consisted of journal articles, University and Greek web sites, student newspaper web sites, doctoral dissertations, and Student Affairs textbooks.

\*Operational definition for *deferred recruitment*: The recruitment process begins anytime after the first month of school has passed.

### Summary of Results

The following is a brief summary of all information gathered in this study and provides a general overview of the findings.

- Five out of twenty-eight peer & aspirational schools were found to have a distinct and defined deferred recruitment system for fraternities and sororities. These were mainly aspirational schools and include University of Virginia, Northwestern University, Duke University, Cornell University, and University of Maryland – College Park.
- Nine peer institutions have differing recruitment time periods for men and women; these periods ranged from summer to early in the spring semester to no formal period at all.
- Four institutions (26.7%) (of the fifteen contacted by phone) reported plans to change the timing of their recruitment process.
- The length of time allowed for formal recruitment spanned as short as three days and as long as several weeks, depending on the institution. In some instances, fraternity and sorority recruitment periods were distinctly different within the same institution.
- Of 800 colleges and universities, 160 have a deferred rush system (20%), according to a recent membership survey by The North-American Interfraternity Confer-



rence (NIC) (Farrell, 2005). Based on a phone interview with NIC Executive Vice-President, Jon Williamson, the majority of the 160 were private institutions.

### Common Concerns of Deferred Recruitment

This section illustrates some of the common concerns and issues facing Greek leaders and college administrators when considering changing to a deferred rush system. Most of this information was drawn from student newspaper articles and Greek organization web sites, and task force reports.

*Concerns of Greek students opposed to deferred recruitment:*

- Money: there will be less chapter income (dues).
- Less student interest.
- Pushing it back could become viewed as an opportunity to put the Greeks "out of business" (conspiracy theory).
- "Dirty rush" (underground).
- Infringement on rights of organizations (perception of university telling students what to do).
- In many cases, alums react stronger against it.

*Concerns of administration considering deferred recruitment:*

- Involving students in the decision-making process is important.
- Even when students are involved, they may still perceive the change as a mandate from the university.
- The Greek alumni base is likely to oppose the change.
- Having a definitive and logical reason for the change is necessary.

### Conclusion

The overall findings reveal that Greek recruitment processes differ greatly among UGA's peer and aspirational institutions. While some schools are strong supporters of continuing a deferred recruitment process, others have

*continued on page 8*

# ASSESSMENT IN STUDENT AFFAIRS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

As a doctoral intern for the Office of Student Affairs Assessment (OSAA), I understand that our main charge is to create a culture of assessment within the Division. Naturally, I was curious to know what Dr. Bennett thought this culture should look like. He talked about a climate where practitioners challenge one another to learn more about their practice because they are passionate about what they do; and it's this passion which leads to the what, why, and how of meaningful improvement. "When we are doing things that we enjoy doing; when we are doing things that reflect our passion or things which we are called to do, wanting to continually improve is something that comes naturally. Wanting to learn as much as we can is something that we are eager to do." Dr. Bennett also considered departmental leadership in assessment as essential to creating a culture of assessment practice. "I hope that our department heads and practitioners, who come in every day and work really hard and are doing a good job, want to learn more about this area [assessment] and want to participate in this practice." For Dr. Bennett, creating a culture of assessment is to understand its iterative nature as well. "I hope assessment will become normalized in the very operations so that practitioners can talk about it with ease and really begin to be creative with ways in which their areas can be assessed."

*"When we're doing things that we enjoy doing...that reflect our passion...wanting to continually improve is something that comes naturally."*

Within this culture of assessment, I asked Dr. Bennett about what he thought were some of the nuts and bolts of assessment. "I do believe that assessment requires at least a two or three pronged approach. It is more than just conducting assessment; it's also about being able to interpret the findings. You must also be able to implement what you have found. Then, the critical portion is looking to see whether or not all the pieces of the puzzle have come together the way that you and your students had hoped they would." In assessment literature, what Dr. Bennett is emphasizing is the importance of understanding the difference between assessment and evaluation and its comprehensive nature (Bresciani, Zelna, & Anderson, 2004). (For more information on assessment practice, read the article, "A New Comprehensive Assessment Model for UGA Student Affairs" on pg. 1).

Dr. Bennett also spoke about his hopes and expectations for assessment practice. "I think people have

heard me say this before, but I really want our people to become the experts...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."

My conversation with Dr. Bennett led me to a couple of conclusions about assessment practice: First, Dr. Bennett is one hundred percent supportive of helping this Division grow in the practice of assessment. I was impressed by Dr. Bennett's definition of "premier" and how it relates to the unique potential of this Division. Dr. Bennett recognizes that the University of Georgia is a special place, with unique students, and a unique Student Affairs Division; therefore, our mission, our objectives and outcomes, and our practice of assessment must also take this into account. I also learned from my time with Dr. Bennett that he has an exciting and realistic expectation for how practitioners can begin the conversation of assessment. So much of starting a new culture or new practice within an organization hinges on a leader who is supportive, realistic, and willing to model.

It is evident that this Division has a leader who encompasses these characteristics and shares a pragmatic vision for assessment. With a supportive leader, an office dedicated to helping implement assessment practice, and gifted practitioners and departmental directors, indeed, the future looks "premier" for the Division of Student Affairs.

#### References

Bresciani, M. J., Zelna, C. L., & Anderson, J. A. (2004). *Assessing student learning and development*. Washington, D.C.: NASPA.

## *Practitioner's Tip:* *Examples of Objectives*

Reduce student misconduct through a variety of educational programs.

Promote student learning and development through health and wellness interventions.

Provide an academic and social setting for residents.

# A NEW COMPREHENSIVE MODEL FOR ASSESSMENT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

seeking to become “premier”? Two themes emerged in our responses and subsequent review of the literature. First, the model should be comprehensive. Though the history of the field has progressed through three distinct philosophies: student service, student development, and student learning (American Council on Education [ACE], 1937; American Council on Education [ACE], 1949; American College Personnel Association [ACPA], 1996; National Association of Student Personnel Administrators [NASPA] & ACPA, 2004), we contend that the promotion of holistic education (mind, body, and soul) is still at the heart of Student Affairs and thus warrants an assessment model that will comprehensively integrate all three philosophies. Further, we contend that each philosophy is equally important to the field and should be addressed and assessed with equal rigor in order to meet the growing demands of our student population. Second, the model should be intentional and systematic in guiding practitioners to realistic and relevant student outcomes. A strong assessment model should provide a step-by-step sequential process in order to ensure accuracy and success of implementation by practitioners. Embedded in the systematic approach is the model’s iterative nature, which is affirmed in assessment literature (Bresciani, Zeld, & Anderson, 2004; Schuh & Upcraft, 2001).

## Why the Model is Important

Assessment is not a new concept for the field of Student Affairs. Assessment emphasis and language are found in some of our earliest historical documents (ACE, 1937; ACE, 1949) and point toward an intentional connection between understanding practice and improving practice. Because this model is comprehensive, it will give practitioners a point of commonality and direction to pursue assessment together as a Division. In the past, assessment practice has often been viewed as sporadic, endemic to particular departments or practiced through student satisfaction only. In order to infuse a culture of assessment and enact a useful and accurate practice, a comprehensive assessment model is needed.

Upcraft and Schuh (1996) also point towards the comprehensive nature of assessment as they outline several reasons for its importance to the Division of Student Affairs. They contend that assessment is important to survival and demonstration of worth, to the quality of programs, to cost effectiveness, to strategic planning and

policy development, and to accreditation. At UGA, the model will help position the Division of Student Affairs to respond to the multitude of questions from stakeholders and administrators. Questions include, how does Student Affairs contribute to learning? Is Student Affairs competitive with industry standards? What are students gaining from programs and services?

Taking a comprehensive approach to assessment by ensuring that all the dimensions of our practice, service, development, and learning, are represented will facilitate the process of becoming “premier.”

## The New Comprehensive Assessment Model for the Division of Student Affairs

When reading about the different components of the proposed model (See pg. 5, Table 1.1) you must understand that assessment, as defined within this model, is considered an iterative process which involves creating outcomes, testing them, evaluating the findings and seeing how they connect with student service, student development, and student learning. At the heart of this model is a belief that each philosophy of Student Affairs is integral and interdependently influence each other towards the greater student experience.

### Foundation

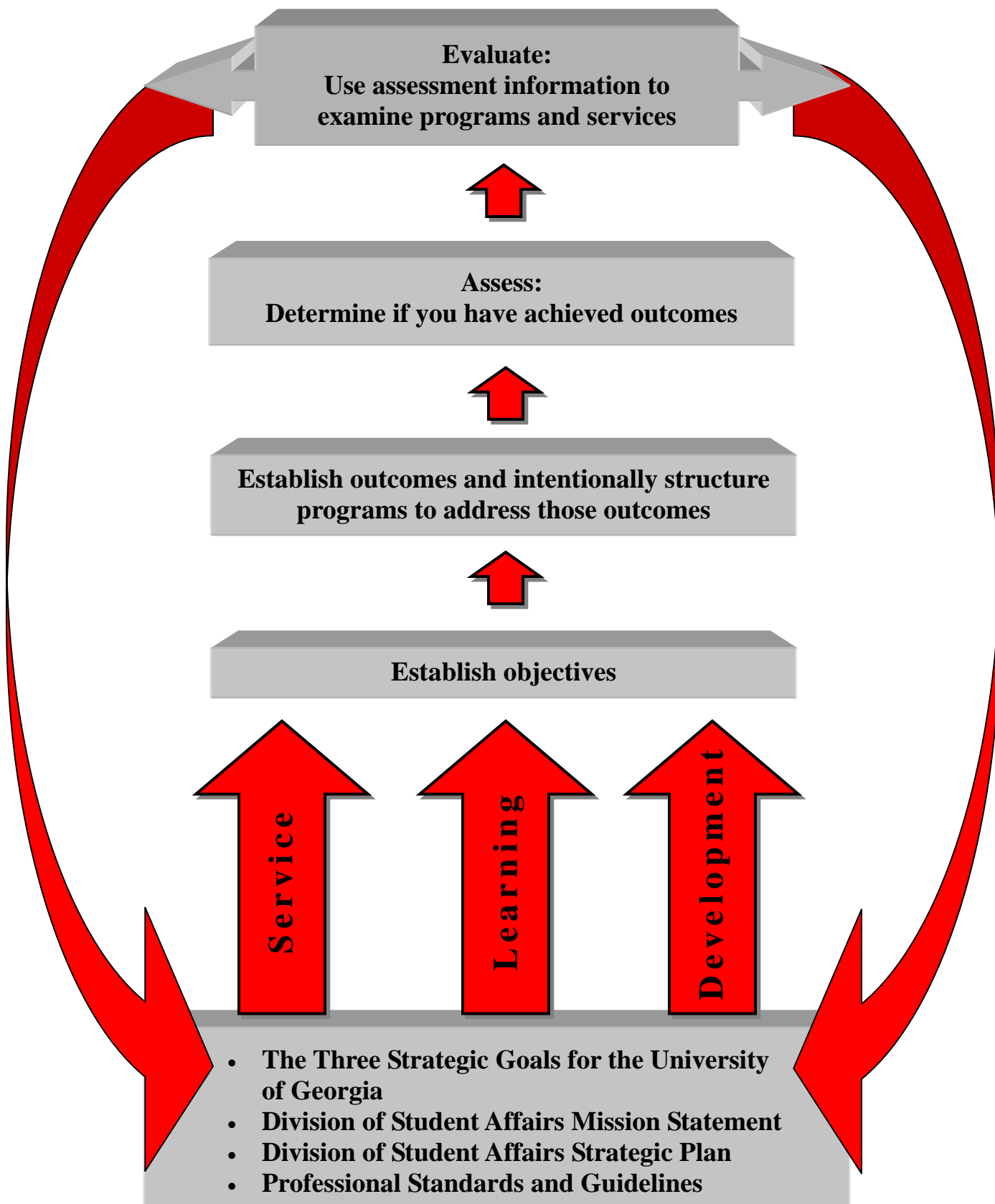
The base or foundation of the model heralds the mission of the University, the mission of Student Affairs and the Division’s five-year strategic plan (See pg. 6, Table 1.2). Within this foundation, although unlisted, are each department’s interrelated mission and objectives. The model’s fluidity hinges on the cohesiveness of the foundation. As departments consider their mission and objectives, it is critical that each department be fully aligned with the missions (the University, the Division, and department) before engaging in assessment. If a department moves forward with assessment and is unaware or unsure of its place in the foundation, the model and the outcomes measured are fundamentally misguided.

### The Arrows

As you move beyond the foundation of the model, the three philosophies of service, development, and learning—as designated by arrows—point upward, signifying the importance of their connection to the building blocks of assessment, as well as pointing upward towards a seamless and continuous process. Assessment is constant

*continued on page 7*

**TABLE 1.1**  
**NEW COMPREHENSIVE MODEL FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS ASSESSMENT**



\*Model created by Jan Davis Barham and Joel Scott

## A GLIMPSE INTO OSAA: SGA POLL DATA SUMMARY

Over the past year, the Student Government Association (SGA), with the assistance of the Office of Student Affairs

**BY LESLIE ATCHLEY**

Assessment, has conducted several convenience sample polls through the UGA Web portal to gauge student opinion on academic and student life issues. Open-ended questions asking students what concerns they would like their Senators to address and what questions they would like to see included in future polls prompted over 200 thoughtful responses. The poll results present qualitative data that faculty, administrators, and student affairs practitioners may find helpful when assessing student learning, needs, and satisfaction.

Responses to the open-ended questions were reviewed using content analysis and were assigned thematic codes. Though these messages are not representative of the student body as a whole, they are nonetheless meaningful suggestions to be contemplated in future conversations. The following is a sample list of several themes that emerged as points of interest and merit our attention:

### Plus/Minus Grading System

A convenience sample poll of 547 students in fall 2005 asked students if they believed a plus/minus grading system would show better grade differentiation and provide a more challenging learning environment. Nine percent (n=49) had no opinion, 53.4% (n=292) answered no, and 37.7% (n=206) answered yes. Responses to the open-ended questions, however, indicate a lack of understanding of the plus/minus system's structure and the impact it will have on grade point averages (GPAs). Student misconceptions include a belief that they will receive number grades instead of letter grades, fear that they will be penalized for taking harder courses, and concern that the lack of an A+ option makes the system unfair. In considering these responses, we conclude that given the impending shift to plus/minus grading, students should be educated both inside and outside the classroom about the purpose behind the change and the effects they can anticipate in their academic lives.

### Commuter Issues

A number of commuter students expressed frustration with everyday experiences that are made more challenging by the restricted hours they can be on-campus. Specific concerns include the lack of a reduced or commuter meal plan, difficulty accessing professors, and the parking assignments priority system.

### Academics and Football

Students voiced their concerns about access to the University on game days, specifically speaking against reduced hours or closing of the library. The individuals who commented on this issue believe the University should always put academics before athletics in policy and practice.

### Conclusion

Challenging student leaders to base their initiatives on quantitative and qualitative evidence of the needs of the student body promotes a more accountable and effective SGA. The information collected from past and future polls can serve as a common starting point for SGA to work with administrators to create common goals and plans of action to improve quality of student life.

## TABLE 1.2 MISSION & STRATEGIC GOALS

### Mission Statement

The Division of Student Affairs' mission is to enhance the learning environment for students at the University of Georgia. We accomplish this by stimulating the learning process, integrating the in-class and out-of-class experiences, promoting an environment conducive to growth and discovery, and facilitating intellectual, spiritual, social, occupational, physical, cultural, and emotional development.

The Division promotes a campus environment that provides quality services and increases student retention and success, attains and exceeds compliance with national standards, and serves as an educational laboratory for graduate students in higher education.

Ultimately, we work to enhance the overall quality of campus life, establish a sense of community, and enable all students to realize their fullest potential.

### Strategic Goals 2005-2010

- **Goal 1:** *Meeting the Needs of Students*
- **Goal 2:** *Enhance the University's Learning Environment*
- **Goal 3:** *Committing Ourselves to a Diverse Environment*
- **Goal 4:** *Building a Culture of Support Within and Among Division Staff*
- **Goal 5:** *Continue to Build Professional Credibility for the Division of Student Affairs*
- **Goal 6:** *Increase Accountability Within the Division*

A comprehensive explanation of each goal is provided in the Strategic Plan, which is available at <http://www.uga.edu/studentaffairs/about/pdf/strategicplan2005.pdf>.

# A COMPREHENSIVE MODEL FOR ASSESSMENT

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Student Affairs practitioners know that service, development, and learning are not “one-shot” deals with students, but are a continuous and evolving part of their college experience. Assessment should be considered in that same light (ACPA, 1996; American Association of Higher Education [AAHE], 1991; NASPA & ACPA, 2004).

## Step One: Objectives

The arrows or philosophies of what we do in Student Affairs connect to the first step of assessment within the comprehensive model, which is the establishment of objectives. According to North Carolina State’s Committee on Undergraduate Program Review, objectives are “broad, general statements of [1] what the program wants students to be able to do and to know, or [2] what the program will do to ensure what students will be able to do and to know” (CUPR, 2001). Thus, these objectives describe what the program hopes to accomplish and bring to life: the mission of the department and division. When creating objectives, you must step back and reflectively examine if your objectives are truly connected to your department’s mission. Are the objectives broad enough to capture what the program would like students to experience? Is it important and meaningful not only to students, but is it significant to other Student Affairs and higher education stakeholders (Bresciani, Zelna, & Anderson, 2004)? The objectives step, like all other subsequent steps in the model, acts as the first check-point to ensure that the program being created is truly connected to the mission, purposes, and objectives of the division.

## Step Two: Outcomes

Creating outcomes which measure the end result of objectives is the second step in the model. Outcomes are more specific statements derived from objectives. When creating outcomes, “think with the end in mind.” What do you hope students learn or gain from your program? The use of active verbs such as identify, solve, or demonstrate, to name a few, give the specificity needed for outcomes to be measurable. Careful attention to avoid vague words that are open for interpretation is a critical aspect of outcome construction (Palomba & Banta, 1999). Though outcomes are specific by nature, they cover a broad scope of territory, from program outcomes, to student learning and development outcomes, to faculty and staff outcomes (Bresciani, 2003). Collaboration with your team or those involved in the design of the program is essential in

structuring your program to address the outcomes (See the Practitioner’s Tip on pg. 3 for more on developing outcomes).

## Step Three: Assessment

The third step of the model involves testing and measuring the intended outcomes of your program. Assessment is defined as “any effort to gather, analyze, and interpret evidence which describes institutional, divisional or agency effectiveness” (Upcraft & Schuh, 1996). Indicative of its definition, assessment can employ several techniques. The trick is choosing a technique or combination of techniques which can truly measure your intended outcomes. Further expansion of choosing techniques will be explored in future editions and departmental training.

## Step Four: Evaluation

The fourth step of the model is the evaluation of intended outcomes. Evaluation is defined as “any effort to use assessment evidence to improve institutional, divisional, or agency effectiveness” (Upcraft & Schuh, 1996). This step is often the most difficult part of assessment because it requires a critical look at program effectiveness. The purpose of evaluation is for program improvement, as well as recognition of meaningful work. Evaluation is situated at the pinnacle of the model because it is at this point that the model loops back and the process begins again. The hope is that the information gained through the evaluation will be put to use in improving future program outcomes as well as confirming that the programs in place are meeting the stated outcomes. Doing assessment is not enough; we have to “close the loop” and use data to improve all that we do (Palomba & Banta, 1999). The evaluation step should provide a time to consider improvements as well as to celebrate the discoveries that your intended outcomes are contributing to student success and growth.

## Conclusion

In closing, it is critical to remember why this model is important to our Division. The model systematically connects the mission of the Division with individual departments’ objectives and outcomes; therefore, practitioners should be able to integrate this model in a relevant, pragmatic manner. Though comprehensive, the model provides a simple, sequential step process to measurable outcomes and opportunities to “close the loop,” whether

*continued on page 8*

## Practitioner's Tip: Developing Outcomes

1. Is the outcome measurable? Can you actually assess this outcome and understand it?
2. Is it meaningful? Like objectives, will the outcome be important to all constituents involved?
3. 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.

Bresciani, M. J., Zelna, C. L., & Anderson, J. A. (2004). *Assessing student learning and development*. Washington D.C.: NASPA.

## GREEK RECRUITMENT STUDY CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

researched the issue and oppose the idea. In synthesizing the texts studied, most researchers seem to agree that national statistics and studies concerning Greeks are not generalizable and that local, community specific studies would elicit much more accurate results. Schaffer (1983) sums up this position well: "A review of research pertaining to fraternities and sororities tells the reader just one thing – local factors and conditions are the most significant in determining the quality of the fraternal experience" (as cited in Rentz & Saddlemire, 1988, p. 276).

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## A COMPREHENSIVE MODEL FOR ASSESSMENT CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

it is outcomes related to student service, development, or learning. This article was intended to be an introduction to the new comprehensive assessment practice within Student Affairs. Future training sessions and editions will highlight the nuts and bolts of assessment as well as implementation practice utilizing the new model. For further assessment resources and information, check out our new web site at: [www.uga.edu/studentaffairs/assess](http://www.uga.edu/studentaffairs/assess).

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## A GLIMPSE INTO OSAA: STAFF DEVELOPEMENT SURVEY SUMMARY

In an effort to better understand and plan for the needs of Division of Student Affairs employees, the Staff Development Committee administered a short survey in both paper and web formats to over 500 staff in fall 2005. Some questions allowed for multiple responses while others were limited to one response.

**BY HEATHER NEWBERRY**

administered a short survey in both paper and web formats to over 500 staff in fall 2005. Some questions allowed for multiple responses while others were limited to one response.

Once all responses were received, the data was analyzed using SPSS statistical software. A summary of the data was compiled and distributed to the members of the Staff Development Committee. A selection of the results follows. For further information regarding the results of this survey, visit the Office of Student Affairs Assessment web site.

### Overall Results Summary (n=227)

Seventy-three percent of those surveyed indicated that they participated in one or more staff development activities in the previous year. When asked what types of activities they would be willing to attend, the top five responses were community service, job training, family friendly activities, healthy living programs, and leadership training.

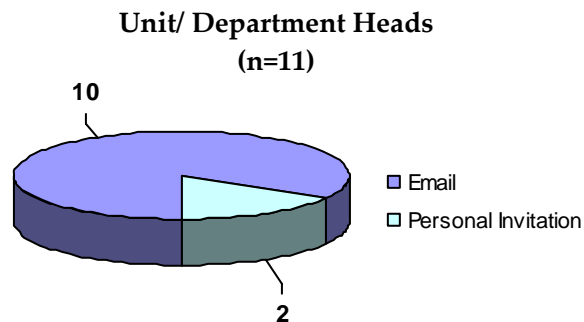
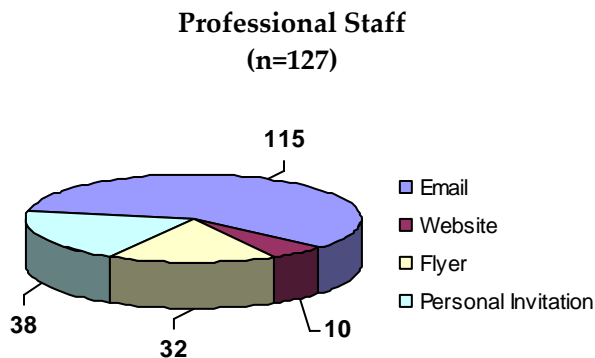
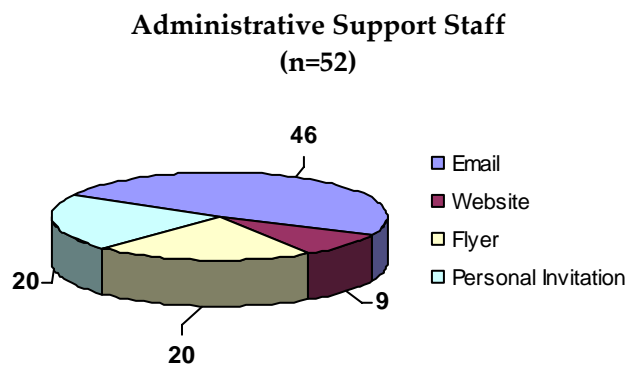
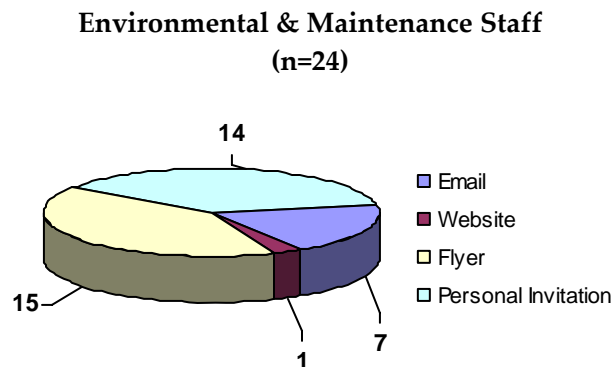
The overwhelming majority indicated they were most likely to participate in activities in the months of October, November, February, and June, and were available to come to activities on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. Forty-one percent of respondents indicated they were most likely to participate between the hours of 8-11 a.m., and thirty-three percent indicated that they would participate between 1-4 p.m.

Perhaps the most interesting finding was the preferred method of being contacted/informed about upcoming events. Respondents were able to choose multiple methods of contact (See Table 1.3). When the data was broken down by staff type, e-mail was the preferred method of contact for a majority of the Division's staff; however, there were groups who indicated that they preferred other methods. Additionally, findings showed that some staff do not have access to e-mail; therefore, it is clear that if e-mail becomes the sole method of contact, many staff would be uninformed of important events and information.

### Conclusion

Learning what activities Division staff are most interested in attending and when they want to attend those events as well as how to communicate with staff is critical to the success of the Staff Development Committee and the Division of Student Affairs. The data have not only been beneficial to the work and purpose of the Committee, but it can also assist the campus community in developing events and activities specifically targeting staff.

**TABLE 1.3  
PREFERRED METHODS OF CONTACT**



## ASSESSMENT FROM THE BEGINNING: A LOOK AT THE BIRTH OF THE LGBT CENTER

The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Resource Center is in its infancy at the University of Georgia. Although there is not a bad time to start developing an assessment plan, the Resource Center is in position to make assessment a key component of its strategic plan. Even though this is a new department in the Division, any program or department can step back and re-examine itself to create positive change. Here are some of the points that are being considered as the foundation is being laid for the Resource Center.

The starting place for the Resource Center is to establish a mission, vision, and a strategic plan that is built upon the mission of the University and the Division of Student Affairs. We must also recognize that every program and service provided will contribute to the learning environment, as the Division's five year plan clearly states. We should be asking this about all of our programs and services, new and old.

As a new department, the Resource Center will examine what programs and services to offer. One of the challenges here is to navigate successfully through competing voices. Students may want one thing, administrators may want another, and you may feel as if something needs to be something totally different. Where do you start? The Book of Professional Standards for Higher Education developed by the Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS), is a great resource for examining standard practice within a particular area of student affairs. The book contains standards that you can use to set a baseline for where you want

to be. There are standards for most areas within Student Affairs ranging from housing to LGBT services and other student programs.

Another important aspect of assessment is outcomes. You may develop wonderful programs and services for your students, but how do you know if they are accomplishing what you think they should? For example, you may spend countless resources on a program which many students attend, but what was the outcome? What would you report to your supervisor? The key is to create outcomes during the design of your program or service. A great question to ask while considering a new program or evaluating a current service is, "How does this program or service contribute to the mission of the University, Division, the department and to student learning?"

The LGBT Resource Center considers outcomes when it plans programs such as Safe Space. One important outcome of this program is to increase participants' awareness and knowledge of issues facing the LGBT community, enabling participants to support our LGBT students and create a positive environment for them to learn. This outcome fits into the mission of the Division by increasing student retention and success, and the University's mission by creating a learning environment dedicated to serve a diverse and well-prepared student body.

This may already feel like a lot of work when you are trying to establish an assessment plan; however, it is important to remember that you should not feel as if you have to do it alone. The Resource Center is creating an advisory committee that will assist in this process. You do not always need a formal advisory committee, but a small group may help move the process forward in a thoughtful way. When considering bringing people together for this purpose, remember to include individuals with different talents and perspectives. Also, utilize the Office of Student Affairs Assessment. This office was established to assist each department in understanding the nuts and bolts of assessment.

Finally, do not try to go too fast. I struggled as a new professional trying to finish projects in terms of semesters rather than months or years. Look at the big picture and give yourself enough time. When we rush into assessment, we typically end up with products that are not as helpful to us as they could have been. Pace yourself and remember: we are utilizing assessment not only to improve our work but also to celebrate what we are doing well.

### *About the Practitioner*

Michael D. Shutt is the Assistant Dean of Students for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Resource Center. He was an Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Health Educator at the University of Georgia Health Center for five years prior to taking his current position. Michael is also a doctoral candidate in the Department of Counseling and Human Development with research interests in first-year student alcohol and other drug use and parental involvement in prevention. He received his BS in Physiology and his MPA from Michigan State University.

To learn more about the LGBT Resource Center, visit <http://www.uga.edu/lgbtcenter>.

## ASSESSING STUDENT STAFF TRAINING IN UNIVERSITY HOUSING

One of the goals of the Department of University Housing is to provide intentional opportunities for personal growth and academic success of residents, including student staff. Each year, this department spends a significant amount of time training undergraduate staff members prior to the residence halls opening. Several years ago, learning outcomes were created and implemented to guide the student staff training process. In order to maximize the quality of undergraduate staff training, a committee was created to assess the department's learning outcomes for fall training.

The committee began by looking at previous undergraduate training evaluations and learning outcomes in order to better gauge if expectations were being met. In the past, evaluations at the end of training were focused more on training content than learning outcomes. Additionally, the assessment tool sought to understand whether or not learning outcomes were accomplished and if further insight could be gained for future training sessions.

A pre-training and a post-training survey on WebCT was chosen to operationalize the assessment. Conducting a pre and post survey helped identify staff understanding prior to training and measured staff learning after training. Once all of the data were collected, the committee compared the average mean scores from both surveys.

### About the Practitioners

Scott Nelson is currently in his third year as a Residence Hall Director in Oglethorpe House. Prior to coming to UGA, Scott received his Bachelor of Science Degree in Resource Management/Geography from the University of Wisconsin - Eau Claire in 1996. In 2003, Scott received his Master of Science Degree in College Student Personnel Administration from Central Missouri State University. Scott is originally from Brookfield, Wisconsin.

Dianne Timm is currently completing her Ph.D. in College Student Affairs Administration, while working as a Doctoral Assistant for Assessment in the Department of University Housing. She completed her master's degree at the University of Nebraska at Kearney and her bachelor's at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh. Dianne is originally from Stoughton, Wisconsin.

This was the first year to implement the study, and it was piloted in one area with 27 student staff members. The results revealed an overall positive shift in mean scores from the pre-test to the post-test. Some mean scores had a very slight shift, which was followed by conversations about how and why we address this topic during training. The averages for some questions, however, had a negative shift, which led to important discussions about why this may have happened. An "additional training" option after each question allowed each student staff member to ask for more training in a given area, providing us with information for follow-up training sessions throughout the year.

This assessment tool helped the Department of University Housing identify where we were meeting our training goals and where we needed to make improvements. By setting very clear learning outcomes in the beginning, we were able to assess in a way that provided us with information that we continually refer to as we move through the academic year. Our plan is to conduct this same survey again next summer with all 150 student staff members. We believe this type of assessment will help the department provide further quality training programs, as well as support the undergraduate staff in meeting the needs of their residents.

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# OSAA on the WEB

<http://www.uga.edu/studentaffairs/assess>

The OSAA web site serves as a resource for practitioners who would like to learn more about assessment.

The site offers a variety of information about OSAA including:

- A list of selected projects
- Reports from selected projects
- Consulting services and processes
- Training materials
- Examples such as IRB forms

You can also access general assessment and research information including:

- A glossary of assessment terminology
- A list of available research grant and funding sources
- Links to other assessment related organizations



If you have any questions about the OSAA or the web site, contact us at (706) 542-3564 or [osaamail@uga.edu](mailto:osaamail@uga.edu).



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