

# Building a Culture of Evidence in Student Affairs

## *Establishing a Baseline*

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For use with **Module 2** in  
*Building a Culture of Evidence in Student Affairs:  
A Guide for Leaders and Practitioners*

# Why Build a Culture of Evidence?

- Accountability
- Accreditation
- Competition
- Political Climate
- Research
- Right Thing to Do

# What's in it for Student Affairs?

- Sharpens focus
- Creates an environment within student affairs that is outcomes-oriented and data-driven
- Reminds the college community that learning is a part of student affairs commitment to student development and success
- Creates opportunities for partnerships across the college

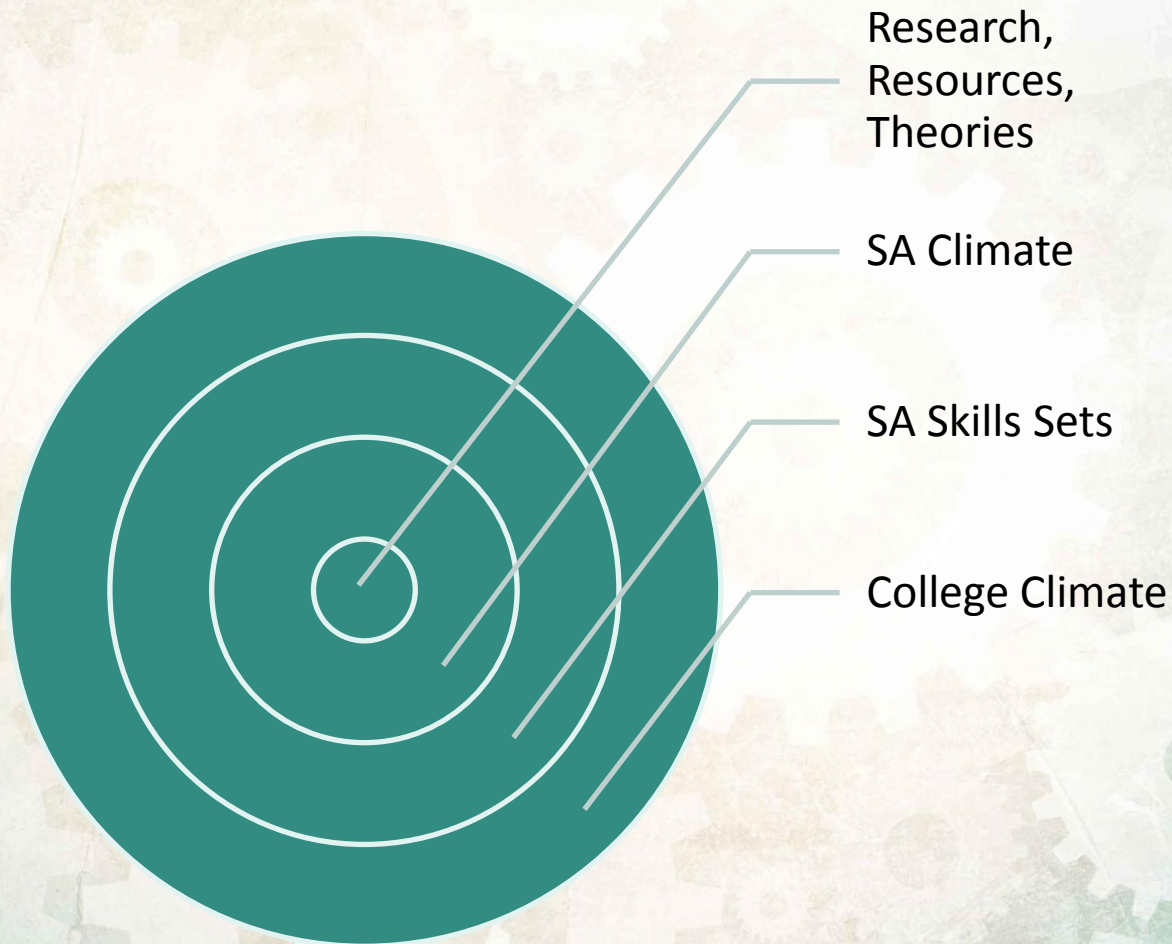
# What's in it for Student Affairs (Cont.)

- Makes it easier to arrive at and support decisions
  - Program creation, expansion, redirection, elimination
  - Budget requests
  - Allocation (and reallocation) of resources
  - The value of student affairs

# What's in it for Student Affairs (Cont.)

- Demonstrates to the institution that student affairs
  - Offers programs and services that increase student success, development, and graduation rates
  - Helps the institution fulfill its mission and achieve its goals
  - Prepares students to benefit from classroom instruction
  - Is staffed by competent professionals

# Start with Establishing Baselines



# Baseline #1: Essential Resources

- Build a foundation using five print resources
  - *Assessment Practice in Student Affairs: An Applications Manual* (Schuh & Upcraft, 2001)
  - *Assessment Reconsidered* (Keeling, Wall, Underhile, & Dungy, 2008)
  - *CAS Professional Standards for Higher Education* (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education)

# Baseline #1 (Cont.)

- Learning Reconsidered: A Campus-Wide Focus on the Student Experience (ACPA and NASPA)
- Learning Reconsidered 2: A Practical Guide to Implementing a Campus-Wide Focus on the Student Experience (ACPA, ACUHO-I, ACUI, NACA, NACADA, NASPA, and NIRSA)



## **Baseline #2: Evaluate the Strength of Student Affairs at Your Institution**

- Complete Exercise 2.2—Assessing Student Affairs at Your Institution (on page 30)
- Compare your responses to the responses of your colleagues
- Develop a snapshot of the strengths and weaknesses of student affairs
- Use the snapshot to strengthen student affairs before or during the culture of evidence implementation

## Baseline #2 (Cont.)

- Score of 11-14: Start (or continue) to build a culture of evidence in student affairs
- Score of 6-10: Leverage building a culture of evidence to strengthen student affairs
- Score of 1-5: Think about using the culture of evidence initiative to re-engineer student affairs at your institution

# Baseline #3: Assess Your Readiness to Implement a Culture of Evidence in Student Affairs

- Review your scores on the two assessment instruments completed in Module 1:
  - *Exercise 1.1—Checking the Foundation: Definitions & Resources* (on page 11)
  - *Exercise 1.2—Assessing Readiness to Implement a Culture of Evidence in Student Affairs That Includes Learning Outcomes* (on page 14)
- Develop a plan to address major knowledge gaps
- Identify strategies to build capacity within student affairs and partnerships/support across the college
- Design an implementation plan

# Baseline #4: Evaluate Capacity within Student Affairs

- Strengths?
- Weaknesses?
- Gaps and Patterns?
  - Among student affairs professionals and support staff
  - Within specific areas
  - Across the division
  - Which gaps and patterns really matter?

# Baseline #5: Develop Capacity

- Borrow or rent expertise
  - College or university faculty (current, retired)
  - Student affairs colleagues at other institutions
  - State and national consultants
  - Graduate students
- Participate in on-campus professional development activities, including webinars
- Attend state and national conferences
- Establish study groups within student affairs

# General Guidelines for Creating a Culture of Evidence in Student Affairs

- Overall goal is to demonstrate that student affairs programs and services
  - Are effective, efficient, and cost effective
  - Are data-based and outcomes-oriented
  - Support the college's missions and goals
  - Contribute to student development, learning, and success

# General Guidelines (Cont.)

- There is no one-size-fits all approach
  - Questions being asked and the culture within the college dictate the approach and the tools
  - Senior student affairs officers must weigh costs in relation to benefits, staff skill sets, and the institution's culture
  - Cultures of evidence in student affairs need to be tied to collegewide culture of evidence initiatives

# General Guidelines (Cont.)

- Student affairs professionals need assistance in borrowing and/or developing missing skill sets
- Student affairs professionals needs to start small. Select projects that
  - Fit skills, time available, and resources
  - Have fairly basic designs and goals
  - Focus initially on strong programs



# General Guidelines (Cont.)

- Use existing data bases, multiple assessment strategies, and sampling techniques
- Set aside time to review data within each student affairs area and at the leadership level
- Use results to support the decision-making process

# General Guidelines (Cont.)

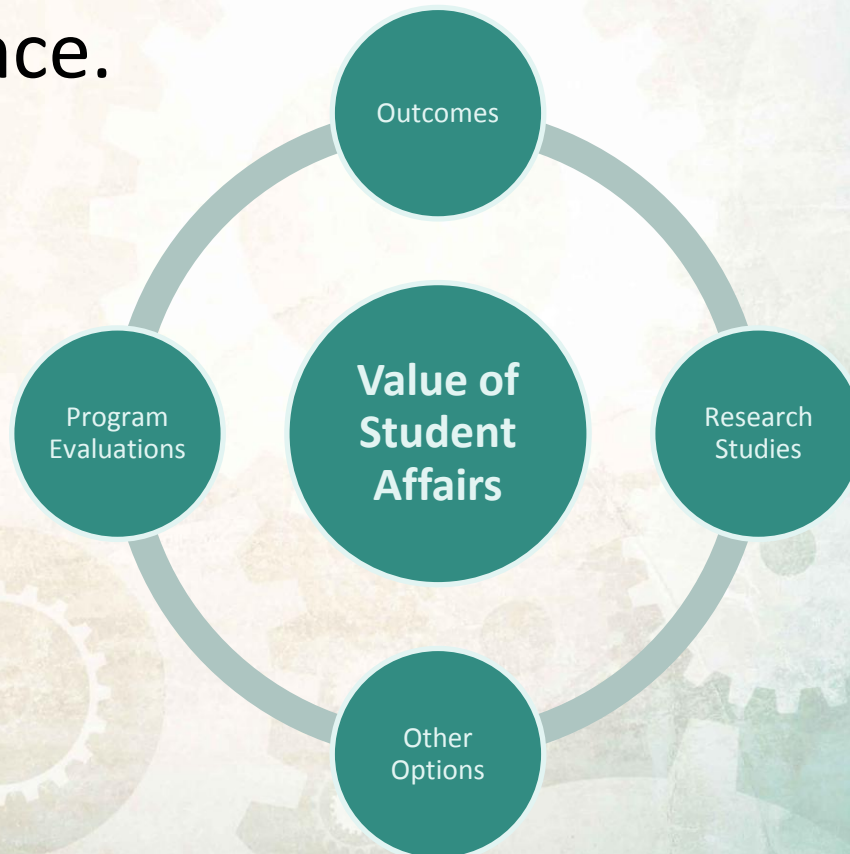
- Research conducted by NASPA (Culp, 2012) indicates that building an effective culture of evidence requires
  - Access to internal and external coaching assistance
  - Access to information about best practices and best processes at other institutions
  - Knowledge of the institution's culture
  - Time to plan and pilot test
  - Time/resources to provide staff with training and coaching
  - Support from the college

# Quick Tip #1

- Student affairs professionals can adapt many assessment techniques developed for college classrooms to assess what students are learning or how they are changing as a result of participating in programs and services offered by Student Affairs. Exercise 2.3 (on page 32) lists some of these assessment techniques and describes how to use them in student affairs

# Quick Tip #2

- Student Learning Outcomes are part of a culture of evidence, but they are not all of a culture of evidence.



## Quick Tip #3

- When developing assessment strategies to measure developmental, learning, or program outcomes, use a blend of traditional and authentic measures. Exercise 2.4 (on page 34) outlines some of the tools most often used in student affairs.

## Quick Tip #4

- Avoid the temptation to:
  - Offer only those programs and services whose effectiveness can be easily measured
  - Assess “everything that moves”
  - Rely exclusively on one assessment tool (surveys, for example)

# Follow-up Activities

- Check out Exercise 2.3 (on page 32) for a list of follow-up activities that will help you to:
  - Create a professional development plan
  - Build a portfolio
  - Use CAS Standards
  - Search the Internet for best practices/processes
  - Determine realistic next steps
  - Develop a template to guide the culture of evidence implementation at your institution

# Follow-up Activities (Cont.)

- Select an individual activity
- Collaborate with your colleagues on a team activity
- Get started on translating what you are learning into action plans for yourself, your area of responsibility, and student affairs



# E-Resources

- <http://www.lhup.edu/planning-and-assessment/assessment/resources.htm>
  - Assessment Resource Center
  - Learning Outcomes
  - Rubrics
  - Links to U of Wisconsin, Western Washington U, Ball State, NC State, Kansas State, U of Florida, and the CA State System

# E-Resources (Cont.)

- <http://www2.acs.ncsu/UPA/assmt/resource.htm>
  - Comprehensive site that offers links to outcomes assessment sites of national organizations as well as 46 colleges and universities
  - Provides information on writing student learning outcomes, developing rubrics, and assessing outcomes

# E-Resources (Cont.)

- <http://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org>
  - National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA)
  - Connects to a variety of data sources, reports, and articles
  - Contains some downloads from AIR (Association for Institutional Research)

# E-Resources (Cont.)

- <http://www.naspa.org/assessment/presentations.cfm>
  - Focused on student affairs
  - Contains major presentations from the 2008, 2009, and 2010 International Assessment Conferences sponsored by NASPA
  - Provides an overview of what is happening in SA in relation to SLOs and cultures of evidence

# Print Resources

- *Assessment Methods for Student Affairs* – Schuh and Associates, 2009 (Jossey-Bass)
- *Assessment Practices in Student Affairs* – Schuh, Upcraft and Associates, 2001 (Jossey-Bass)
- *Assessment Reconsidered* – NASPA, 2008
- CAS Professional Standards for Higher Education 2012(CAS in Higher Education)

# Print Resources (Cont.)

- *Learning Reconsidered* – ACPA & NASPA, 2004
- *Learning Reconsidered 2* – ACPA & NASPA, 2006
- Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Practitioners – ACPA & NASPA, 2010