Assessing the First-Year Experience: Using Results to Improve Student Development

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Special thanks to Brady Schwendeman
Recognize the purpose of our First-Year Advising Program at JMU

- Describe the rationale behind why we assess
- Identify the key components of the assessment cycle.
- Examine how assessment can inform programmatic changes
- Express value for the use of results.
Today’s Agenda

First-Year Advising (FYA)

1. History/Mission
2. Purpose
3. Rationale for Assessment

FYA Assessment

1. Assessment: What is it?
2. The Assessment Cycle applied to FYA
3. Projecting into the Future

Take Home Messages
FIRST YEAR ADVISING at JMU
Mission statement: First year advisors are committed to helping students make the transition from high school to college by assisting them in developing and pursuing academic goals and learning how to function successfully within the university.
First-Year advising will be able to:

- Enhance students' academic efficacy
- Ease students' academic transition from high school to college

Students who participate in first-year advising will be able to:

- Develop meaningful interactions with their First-Year Advisors
- Articulate the intent of the General Education program and how that fits into the liberal arts education
WHY WE DO IT?

ASSESSMENT

WHY WE DO IT?
Accountability

Improvement of student development or learning

Resource Allocation
ASSESSMENT
WHAT HINDERS THE PROCESS?
FIRST-YEAR ADVISING ASSESSMENT
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MAY</th>
<th>JUNE/JULY</th>
<th>AUGUST</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SUMMER orientation</td>
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<td>FALL orientation</td>
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<tr>
<td>GRADES &amp; enrollment</td>
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<td>PRE</td>
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<tr>
<td>OVERALL satisfaction</td>
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<td>PRE</td>
<td>POST</td>
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</table>
THE ASSESSMENT CYCLE
THE 1st YEAR
2015-2016

Specifying Student Learning Outcomes
Specifying Outcomes

• **OBJECTIVES**

  **Audience** – For whom the objective is intended (learners, students)

  **Behavior** – Specific observable action the learner is expected to exhibit

  **Conditions** – Relevant factors affecting the behavior/performance

  **Degree** – How well the behavior must be performed

• **The ABC's**

  A  Audience – For whom the objective is intended (learners, students)
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  C  Conditions – Relevant factors affecting the behavior/performance
  D  Degree – How well the behavior must be performed

• **Specific statements that specify an observable behavior**

  • Must be measurable (usually easier said than done)

• **Clearly convey the impact a program is supposed to have on participants**

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After going through the 1787 Orientation First-Year Advising programming students will increase:

- their knowledge of university academic requirements and deadlines
- their knowledge of resources associated with being academically successful
- their knowledge of behaviors associated with being academically successful
- the amount of value and the level of perceived control they report having over managing their time
Creating and Mapping Programming to Outcomes

The 1st Year
2015-2016
MAPPING PROGRAMMING TO OBJECTIVES
CAUTION: Ideally, objectives should be written before planning a program.
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Developmental Opportunity</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall Orientation</td>
<td>Knowledge of university academic requirements and deadlines</td>
<td>18, 39-43, 46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge of resources associated with being academically successful</td>
<td>12, 29-33, 38, 44, 45, 50, 51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge of behaviors associated with being academically successful</td>
<td>11, 13, 14, 15-17, 20, 22, 25-28, 38, 44, 45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Value and level of perceived control students report having over managing their time</td>
<td>Entire presentation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Selecting / Designing Instruments

THE 1st YEAR 2015-2016
SELECTING | DESIGNING INSTRUMENTS
Different kinds of measurement tools

- Cognitive (multiple choice, fill in the blank)
- Non-cognitive or attitudinal (Likert)
- Performance assessment (essay, speech, presentation)

- Commercial (proprietary) - copyrighted, $$$$, used in practice
- Non-commercial - free, used in research
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Existing</strong></td>
<td>• Easy and convenient</td>
<td>• Less than ideal alignment with the objective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Most instrument development work is done!</td>
<td>• Insufficient validity and reliability evidence (no factor analytic studies, different populations)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Efficient – can use the results right away</td>
<td>• Cost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Accumulate validity evidence for the scores</td>
<td>• Scoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Can compare findings to prior research</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Can tweak the existing measure to fit the specific need</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>New</strong></td>
<td>• High fidelity of assessment (potentially perfect match)</td>
<td>• Test development is a very long and involved process!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• A measure created for a new construct</td>
<td>• New validity evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Cannot compare results</td>
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</table>
The key is to have a MATCH between the objective & measure

Learning objectives usually call for some type of cognitive test, where there is a degree of “correctness” (right or wrong, scored using a rubric)

Developmental objectives usually call for some type of non-cognitive test focused on level or amount of some construct (anxiety, self efficacy, help seeking)
Objective: Students will increase their knowledge of resources associated with being academically successful.

Please rate the level of satisfaction you currently have toward the resources available to you through First-Year Advising:

- Summer Orientation
- Fall Orientation
- Weekly emails
- MyMadison
- First-Year Advising Meetings

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pay</td>
<td>Not at all Satisfied</td>
<td>Slightly Satisfied</td>
<td>Moderately Satisfied</td>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
<td>Extremely Satisfied</td>
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Objective: Students will increase their **knowledge of resources associated with being academically successful.**

JMU offers all of the following resources to help me be successful except:

a. Private tutor  
b. First-Year advisor  
c. Learning Centers  
d. MyMadison
ADVANTAGE

- Our questions perfectly matched with our objectives.

DISADVANTAGE

- Developing the survey took almost a year.
- Reliability and validity evidence is not available until after data collection.
# First-Year Advising

## MAPPING INSTRUMENTS to OBJECTIVES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Pre-test items</th>
<th>Post-test items</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Knowledge of university academic requirements and deadlines</td>
<td>12, 13, 14</td>
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<td>15, 16</td>
<td>7, 8</td>
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<td>17, 18, 19</td>
<td>4, 5, 6</td>
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<td>Value and the level of perceived control they report having over managing their time</td>
<td>20-25</td>
<td>9-14</td>
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THE 2nd YEAR 2016-2017
COLLECTING OUTCOMES INFORMATION
This is the step most people think of when they think of assessment, but it is only one step in the cycle!

What data collection method(s)/design do you want to use?

- Pre and post test?
- Single time point?
- Group comparisons?
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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**Collecting Outcomes Information**
Analyzing Data, Reporting Results, and Maintaining Information

The 2nd Year
2016-2017
ANALYZING DATA
REPORTING RESULTS
MAINTAINING INFORMATION
AND
First-Year Advising

Average Scores

- Objective 1
- Objective 2
- Objective 3
- Objective 4

Pre vs. Post
FYA RESULTS: COMPETENCIES

We found significant pre-post gains for:
- Objective 1
- Objective 2
- Objective 3

Objective 4 was not significant for pre-post gains:
- Pre-test scores were already high
Using Results for Program-Related Decisions

THE 3rd YEAR 2017-2018
USING RESULTS FOR PROGRAM-RELATED DECISIONS
Last, but most important, step in the cycle!

Often referred to as “closing the loop”

Requires institutions to “go beyond collecting evidence of student learning to actually using the results effectively.”

(Blaich & Wise, 2011)
but? WHY?

Reports get filed away and forgotten

Belief that the report itself is enough to prompt and enact action (...False)

Requires collaboration and conversation

“...but the communication must at some point move from talking about the data to talking about, and then enacting, changes. (Blaich & Wise, 2011)
ASSESSMENT: GOING BEYOND REPORTING

Use of Results to Improve Programming vs. Improving the Assessment Process

Note: these are two different practices, both aiding in the purpose of evaluating and improving student learning and development.
WHAT IF...

WE HAD "BAD" RESULTS?
First-Year Advising

Objective 1

Average Scores

Pre

Post
IMPROVING THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS
Update objectives?

Are our instruments reliable?

Are we implementing programming as planned?
OBJECTIVE

Intended program?

Intended program + other stuff?

MEASURED OUTCOME

Only part of intended program?

Nothing like intended program?

(Fisher, Smith, Finney, & Pinder, 2014)
IMPROVING THE PROGRAMMING
SUMMARY:
REVISITNG OUR OBJECTIVES
OBJECTIVES

RECOGNIZE THE PURPOSE OF OUR First-Year Advising Program at JMU

Describe the rationale behind why we assess

Identify the key components of the assessment cycle.

Examine how assessment can inform programmatic changes

Express value for the use of results.
Are there any questions?
Thank You!

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