Direct and Indirect Measures of Assessment

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Ways to Assess Student Learning?

• Direct Measures
  – Means of assessing student learning which require students to display their knowledge, skills, or thought processes in an observable or tangible way.

• Indirect Measures
  – Means of assessing student learning which ask students to reflect on or self-assess their own knowledge, skills, thought processes. For example, survey questions generally entail self-reflection.

Palomba and Banta, 1999
Direct Measures

Evaluations of student learning based on **observable displays** of knowledge or skills.

How do we **observe** knowledge or skills?

- Presentations
- **Document Analysis** (Reports, Blogs, Journals, 1 Minute-Paper, Photos, Videos)
- Short Answer Quizzes & Pre-test/Post-test
- Role Plays, Mock Scenarios, Case Studies, Interviews*
- Portfolios, Projects, and Work Samples
- Rubrics
Direct Measures

• **Strengths**
  - Provide rich information in terms of depth and detail
  - Multidimensional (students can demonstrate competence in different ways)
  - Can be unobtrusive
  - Some data is readily available
  - Avoids survey fatigue
  - Can be difficult to quantify or norm data (rubrics)
  - Application is integrated with assessment
  - Process affords both teaching & learning opportunities

• **Challenges**
  - Requires fair amount of planning ahead (outcomes, criteria, rubrics, training)
  - Consistency (who is/are evaluators, timeframe, training)
  - Can take significant time to gather information and analyze
  - Capacity building (writing learning outcomes, constructing/using rubrics)
Indirect Measures

Evaluations of student learning based on students’ own perceptions of their knowledge or skills.

• Surveys or questionnaires that focus on students’ perceptions of their own learning.
  – Students select a response from a scale. (e.g., strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree)

• Focus groups or interviews* in which students’ reflect on their own learning.
Indirect Measures

• **Strengths**
  – data relatively quick to collect & analyze
  – can use existing data or piggyback
  – can potentially access large samples
  – minimal resources are needed
  – helpful in understanding perceptions, beliefs, thought processes

• **Challenges**
  – survey fatigue & low response rates
  – limited in terms of what you can measure
  – requires capacity building in survey/question design/data analysis
  – can incur significant costs (testing services)
  – data relatively lacking in depth or detail
  – does not provide information regarding real world application skills
Activity #1

Direct or Indirect Measure?
This image is a poll’s place holder.
Enter slide show mode (F5) to view your live poll.

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Examples of Direct Measures in Student Affairs

Direct

- NSCPP- Retrospective Analysis- Student Leader Training, Journaling, and Performance Review

- Carolina Union Project Union- Supervisor feedback from Rubric

- University Career Services – Pre and Post Assessment for EDUC 131
Examples of Direct Measures in Student Affairs

- RHA HeelPrint Training Assessment
- RHA – One minute paper
- EDUC 318 Peer Leadership Course – Rubrics
- Multicultural Advisors – Pre and Post Tests
Examples of Indirect Measures in Student Affairs

Indirect

• CHS – focus groups and satisfaction survey

• Campus Recreation- Campus Impact Study (Benchmarking)

• Project Union – Event Evaluation from participants, team evaluation and a post project survey after each event, and individual reflections.

• HRE- Needs assessment of re-contracting of upper-class students on south campus

• HRE- Consortium for Resident Life (Benchmarking)
Examples of Indirect Measures in Student Affairs

• NSCPP - The New Student Experience: Review and Analysis across Four Years

• DOS- tracking categories of students served, student issues, etc.

• Student Wellness – National Collegiate Health Assessment (Benchmarking)

• Accessibility Resources – Satisfaction with Test Proctoring by students and faculty
Examples of Indirect Measures in Student Affairs

• CAPS- Bounce Back Program

• Campus Recreation – Program evaluations

• FSLCI – Recruitment feedback

• Interactive Theater Evaluations

• One Act and Haven Training Post Assessment

• LeaderShape Post Assessment
Selecting a Method

Is your outcome...

manageable, meaningful, and measureable?
Before Choosing a Method

Make sure you have a program that can actually deliver the outcome.

Think about what meeting the outcome looks like.

Describe how your program is delivering the outcome.

Think about collecting data.
Choosing an Assessment Tool/Measurement

It is important to choose tools based on what you are trying to assess, not on what tool is most appealing to you i.e. survey!

Consider what will provide you with information to make decisions.

Be able to justify your choice of tool and method.
Choosing an Instrument

• What outcomes are you measuring?

• What criteria will determine if the outcome is met?

• Who is being assessed? How often do I have access to them? Do I know who they are?

• What is my budget? Timeline?

• What type of data is most meaningful to me: direct/indirect and qualitative/quantitative?

• Who will analyze the data and how?
Activity #2
Choose an Outcome & Work through the Process

• How is this outcome delivered? (program)
• What does a student who meets this outcome look or act like? What does a student who meets this outcome able to know or do? How will you know when the outcome has been reached?
• How will the outcome be measured? (method)
  – Are their opportunities during the program to capture data?
  – Direct, Indirect, Qualitative, Quantitative
  – Rubrics, Surveys, Pre/Posttest, Focus Groups, Minute Papers, etc.
• Will this data demonstrate student learning? And that I have met my outcome?
• Will this kind of evidence help me make the decisions I need to make?
Take Away Messages

• You do not have to assess everything you do every year.

• You don’t have to do everything at once-start with 2 or 3 learning outcomes.

• Think baby steps.

• Be flexible.

• Acknowledge and use what you have already done.

• Borrow examples from other institutions to modify as appropriate.