Institutional Research & Assessment

Expected Outcome 1: Assessment Software
Auburn University faculty and staff will be satisfied with the assessment management software and assessment reporting.

Assessment Method 1: Survey of current Auburn users of assessment software

Assessment Method Description
The survey of current users of the homegrown assessment software was conducted during the period from February 4th to March 4th, 2013. Of 254 assessment software users invited to complete the survey, 78 responded to the survey for the response rate of 31%. A substantial proportion of responses came from university-wide non-academic units (32% or 25 responses) and from College of Liberal Arts (22% or 17 responses).

The topics covered by the survey include: the level of satisfaction with the current homegrown assessment management system; importance of different features of assessment software; the level of use of different software options that are licensed for use by Auburn University faculty and staff; and evaluation of different software options available for purchase. The survey instrument is available for review at https://s.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_e4ZTqpeczBpGHRz&Preview=Survey&BrandID=auburnoira.

Findings
The first question of the survey provided information on users’ satisfaction with the current Auburn University reporting system for outcomes, assessments, and improvements. About 31% of respondents indicated that they were either very dissatisfied or dissatisfied with the current assessment reporting system. Here are direct quotes from survey responses that provide reasons for this dissatisfaction with the current reporting system:

- Clunky interactions […]—one cannot see different parts at the same time.
- Aside from the obvious problems with truncating or eliminating text in the
current model, the flow in the reporting process does not allow for a "through-line" from identifying an outcome to describing how attainment of the outcome was measured and analyzed, to articulating how the results were used to effect change. Instead, all outcomes need to be listed, followed by methods for all outcomes, etc. While the software spits out a report that has a logical flow, it does not allow for entering information that mirrors that final output. It's also very frustrating to have to file reports on different sites for programmatic and core course assessment.

- Input boxes are cumbersome and limit number of characters and symbols.
- Unclear about submission process (when text entered and saved versus sent)
- Two features would much improve the system. One, we should be able to report for the core, programs, and writing in one place. Ideally, a program's writing outcomes will be included in the program's outcomes. Two, there is no good reason to start the report from scratch every year. I understand that programs will be tempted to simply use last year's assessment and change the date --they may do that anyway; it will simply take longer--but much will remain the same every year. We do not annually change our minds about what students should learn, for instance.
- It may be a pipe dream, but I'd love for all of the hard work that our engineering departments pour into our ABET assessments be seamlessly integrated into our AU reporting system. I realize this may be unrealistic since other colleges have different assessment requirements. But one can dream.
- I feel that the current instrument serves its purpose, but there are a few aspects of it which I found frustrating: (1) character limitation in free text fields and 2) seemed difficult navigate at times.

One should also note that there were few positive comments about an old system and a caveat about a new system potentially taking more faculty time to submit an assessment report:
- As with anything online, sometimes when we look for something better we find it, but sometimes we find things that take much more time to complete. This one does not take loads of time, but I think its structure, when done seriously, allows for assessment reporting in a straightforward way.
- As clunky as the existing system is (thinking specifically here of the one based in OIRA), it is clear, predictable, and generally easy to navigate. I have been to two different software trainings already in 2013 for new university systems and am not sure that the effort of transition to the new systems is matched by a comparable improvement in the usability or outcome of the systems adopted.

Of the features that are important in the new software, the following were most frequently selected: ease of use (99% of users felt that this feature is
very important or important); ability to upload and download documents, such as assessment instruments or data reports (92% of users felt that this feature is very important or important); ability to customize fields and assessment reports for a unit, department or college needs reports (92% of users felt that this feature is very important or important); customer support (91% of users felt that this feature is important or very important); ability to access the system via Auburn University portal (81% of users felt that this feature is very important or important); alignment with specialized or professional accreditation (80% of users felt that this feature is very important or important); and ability to file all assessment reports (programmatic, university core, writing plan, etc.) at one site (78% of respondents felt that this feature is important or very important).

Only 21% of respondents indicated that it is either very important or important to them that the new system adopted by Auburn University is already familiar to them. Respondents were also asked to evaluate some of the assessment management software options for Auburn University. Weave Online and Campus Labs received the highest evaluations, but the number of responses for were rather small (10 for Campus Labs and 3 for Weave Online).

**How did you use findings for improvement?**

Based on survey results, the subcommittee charged with selection of assessment software reviewed three software demonstrations:
- Weave Online demonstration was reviewed on February 27, 2013
- Campus Labs demonstration was reviewed on March 6, 2013
- Tk20 demonstration was reviewed on March 7, 2013

After reviewing the demonstrations, the subcommittee selected Campus Labs for Auburn University. Campus Labs was purchased and used for 2012-2013 assessment reporting cycle.

**Additional Comments**

**Assessment Method 2:** Pilot study

**Assessment Method Description**

In August-September 2013, 236 representatives of educational programs, administrative and educational support units were asked to participate in a pilot study and evaluate two reporting options offered by Campus Labs. After exploring different reporting options, participants were asked to provide feedback and select one of the two available reporting options. The feedback form is available at
Findings

The majority of pilot participants selected one form example.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>One Form Example</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Two Form Example</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>49</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional comments included:
• Although it appears to be user friendly, I would appreciate a training class on whichever model you select.
• I prefer the One Form example. Four assessment methods is enough for my reporting, and it is easier to use and to understand which assessment methods are linked to which outcomes than with the Two Form example.
• I think we need the most help in understanding what to report. A couple of group sessions of instruction with examples of good reports would help me.
• I very much prefer the one form example as the ease of use trumps the number of methods allowed as far as I'm concerned. I also feel the one form example gets closer to a narrative than the two form example which really resembles the system we're trying to replace in my view.
• The 2 form example seemed very confusing.
• No preference on the reporting option as long as there is training to help us complete whichever option is selected.
• I am choosing one form example but it seems like we have been using the 2 form example previously. It will be shorter using the one form example but i hope not confusing to know which assessment went with which results. I think this will take less time once you know how to do it the first time.
• I like the One form example. I think it will simplify our reporting.

How did you use findings for improvement?

One form example was selected for 2012-2013 assessment reporting. Four training sessions covering use of Campus Labs and one form example were provided in September of 2013.

Additional Comments
Expected Outcome 2: Assessment Training

At the completion of training sessions, Auburn University faculty and staff will report a greater understanding of SACS institutional effectiveness standard; designing expected outcomes; properties of good assessment techniques; documenting assessment methods, findings, and use of findings for improvement; and use of Compliance Assist from Campus Labs.

Assessment Method 1: Training evaluations

Assessment Method Description

In September 2013, the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment offered four training sessions to assist with assessment report preparation, with two equivalent sessions for educational programs and one session each for administrative and academic/student support units. 28 faculty members, 18 representatives of academic and student support units, and 15 representatives of administrative units attended these sessions. All participants were asked to complete an evaluation form. Preview of the form is available at https://s.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_d4OblfH1G1PX1z&Preview=Survey&BrandID=auburnoira. On the scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high), participants were asked to rate their knowledge of the following topics: SACS institutional effectiveness standard; designing expected outcomes; properties of good assessment techniques; documenting assessment methods, findings, and use of findings for improvement; and use of Compliance Assist from Campus Labs.

13 training participants--3 representatives of academic and student support units, 5 representatives of educational programs, 4 representatives of administrative units, and 1 respondent who preferred not to provide a type of unit she represents--provided evaluations.

Findings

The average ratings of knowledge were greater after the training session, see Table below. The participants reported the greatest gain in understanding of use of Compliance Assist from Campus Labs and SACS institutional effectiveness standard. Participants rated their understanding of other topics covered during the workshop higher before the training session.
When asked to rate the training session overall, one participant rated it as fair, 10 participants rated it as good, and two participants rated it as very good. No one rated the session as very poor or poor.

When asked to identify the most important thing they learned during the session, participants indicated SACS requirement, knowing how to improve assessment for next year, difference between goals and outcomes, Compliance Assist, and what is meant by use of findings for improvement.

When asked to provide suggestions on how to improve the session, several participants indicated that a session was a little short. Some suggested to divide the session into 2 sessions--one for reviewing assessment techniques and the other for system overview. Another comment was related to the fact that participants had different levels of understanding: "I thought some of the questions and comments people made suggested we were at very different levels of understanding. Having time to really work would have been more helpful to me. Others seemed to need more basic information about assessment and/or the need for a yearly report." It might be helpful to have individual meetings to address different levels of understanding of assessment processes. Several participants also indicated that having examples of good reports might be helpful.

When asked to suggest topics for additional assessment training, some participants suggested Qualtrics, examples of assessment, and training using their reports and pointing out specifically how to improve them.

**How did you use findings for improvement?**

1. Qualtrics training was provided by a representative of the Office of
Institutional Research and Assessment on November 11, 2013.
2. Feedback is provided to each unit and program on campus that submitted 2012-2013 report.

Additional Comments

Expected Outcome 3: Survey response rates

The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment will ensure satisfactory response rates for university-wide surveys: 20% for National Survey of Student Engagement; 20% for Alumni Survey; and 40% for Exit Survey.

Assessment Method 1: Analysis of response rates for Alumni Survey by type of survey distribution

Assessment Method Description

During all prior administrations of Alumni Survey, all respondents received the survey with magnets reminding them of the web site where they could access the survey. During the 2012-13 administration, part of respondents received the survey without magnets to estimate the effect of magnets on response rates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surveys Sent</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surveys Sent with No Magnets</td>
<td>683</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surveys Sent with Magnets</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Surveys Sent</td>
<td>3,683</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mail Returned with Address Problems</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surveys Sent with No Magnets</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surveys Sent with Magnets</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Surveys Returned</td>
<td>331</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Findings
The inclusion of the magnet was associated with a statistically significant increase in response rate for the first mailing; however, the effect wore off as reminders (without magnets) were sent out. There was no substantial difference in the response rates by the close of the survey.
A total of 4,041 degrees were awarded in 2009-2010 academic year. After controlling for multiple degrees, the total population number for first time individual undergraduates graduating from Auburn in the 2009-2010 period was 3,922. Addresses for 3,683 of those students were obtained and paper surveys were sent to those individuals (with an option to complete the survey online). Of those 3,683 addresses, 3,000 surveys were sent with magnet enclosures and the remaining 683 were sent without. Three hundred thirty one surveys were returned "no longer at this address" (90 from the no magnet subgroup and 241 with). Removing the bad addresses from the denominator, resulted in a 23.6% response rate for those who did not receive magnets versus 23.1% of those who did.

**How did you use findings for improvement?**

Because magnets were not associated with an overall increase in response rates, in fall of 2013 surveys were sent to 2010-2011 alumni without magnets.

**Additional Comments**

**Assessment Method 2:** Analysis of survey response rates for National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), Exit Survey, and Alumni Survey
Assessment Method Description

University-wide survey response rates have been compared over time. The years for comparison were: 2006-2013 for the Survey of Recent Bachelor’s Degree Recipients, 2003-2004 and 2008-2013 for the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), and 2010-2013 for the Graduating Senior Exit Survey.

Findings

Response rates for NSSE have declined over the years: 54% (56% for freshmen and 52% for seniors) in 2003; 36% (34% for freshmen and 37% for seniors) in 2004; 41% (39% for freshmen and 44% for seniors) in 2006; 39% (40% for freshmen and 38% for seniors) in 2007; 29% (27% for freshmen and 31% for seniors) in 2008; 26% (27% for freshmen and 26% for seniors) in 2009; 22% (21% for freshmen and 23% for seniors) in 2010; 20% (20% for freshmen and 20% for seniors) in 2011; 20% (19% for freshmen and 20% for seniors) in 2012; and 16% (14% for freshmen and 18% for seniors) in 2013.

Response rates for the Survey of Recent Bachelor’s Degree Recipients were: 21% in 2006-2007; 17% in 2007-2008; 16% in 2008-2009; 15% in 2009-2010; 17% in 2010-2011; 19% in 2011-2012; and 23% in 2012-2013. An increase in response rate in 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 could be attributed to use of a paper version of the survey. An increase in response rate for 2012-2013 could be attributed to an adjustment for bad addresses.

Response rates for the Graduating Senior Exit Survey were: 33% in 2008-2009; 43% in 2009-2010; 35% for 2010-2011; 43% for 2011-2012; and 51% for 2012-2013. The increase in response rates for 2012-2013 could be attributed to an increased number of reminders—from one in prior years to two in 2012-2013.

How did you use findings for improvement?

Because an increase of response rates for the Survey of Recent Bachelor’s Degree Recipients during the past two years could be attributed to the paper option, the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment continued using a paper version of the survey for 2013-2014. We will also continue to request the return service to monitor bad addresses. This year we also made monitor bad email addresses to make sure that our adjustments for incorrect addresses are accurate.

To address low responses for NSSE, we will request assistance from Student Affairs prior to survey administration.