Documenting Learning Outside the Classroom: The Innovative Use of Direct Assessments

Rebecca Caldwell & Andy Mauk

University of North Carolina Wilmington

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SACS Annual Meeting
Testing the Clickers – Our Audience
Please identify the category which best describes you?

1. Institution President
2. Faculty
3. Student Affairs Administrator
4. Academic Affairs Administrator
5. Institutional Researcher (IR Officer)
6. Graduate Student
Historically, assessment in student affairs and other academic support units has often used indirect assessment.

Recently, there has been a profession-wide call to include more direct assessments.

This presentation will go over three separate programs at UNCW that have used direct assessments.
Presentation Objectives

As a result of attending this session, participants will be able to:

- Gain knowledge about how assessment has been utilized in Student Affairs
- Identify several key principles related to direct assessments
- Learn about three programs at UNCW that used direct assessments, which can then be compared and adapted for use at their own institutions
Participants in this session will have the opportunity to:

- Receive information on how such initiatives can be effectively designed, implemented, assessed, and applied.

- Ask questions and share best practices about direct assessments can be utilized in outside-the-classroom activities.
I understand the differences between direct and indirect assessment.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree
6. Don’t Know/Not Applicable
Which of the following is most likely to be a direct assessment?

1. Needs Assessment
2. Satisfaction Survey
3. Quiz given after a Workshop
4. Focus Group
5. None of the Above
6. Not Sure
Direct Assessment

- Direct assessments indicate what participants actually know or are able to do.
- Direct assessment can take many forms:
  - Quizzes
  - Commercial tests
  - Rubrics
  - Portfolios
- All direct assessments share a common element of demonstrating the students’ learning.
- Direct assessments are preferable for accountability and accreditation.
Student Affairs History

- Long use of indirect assessments
  - Satisfaction surveys
  - Usage Data
  - Perceptions and Opinions

- Recent decade has involved more use of student learning outcomes in educational activities
I am aware of a student affairs or academic support area or program at my institution which currently utilizes direct assessments.

1. Agree
2. Neither Agree nor Disagree
3. Disagree
4. Don’t Know/Not Applicable
I am aware of a student affairs or academic support area or program at my institution which could utilize direct assessments.

1. Agree
2. Neither Agree nor Disagree
3. Disagree
4. Don’t Know/Not Applicable
UNCW Direct Assessment Programs

Three student affairs offices have conducted large direct assessment initiatives:

- Housing and Residence Life
- CROSSROADS
  - Substance abuse prevention and education
- Leadership UNCW
  - Provides opportunities to become engaged, ethical citizens by promoting inclusivity and self-empowerment
Direct Assessment #1: Housing and Residence Life

- A series of quizzes as part of RA Training on topics:
  - Crisis response, programming knowledge, diversity education, and student conduct procedures, etc.

- 30 question test—four separate times—1) before the two-week training period; 2) immediately following the training period; 3) at end of fall-semester; 4) and at end of academic year.

- Use of multiple post-tests to gauge the RA’s retention of vital knowledge throughout the year.
Direct Assessment #1: Housing and Residence Life Results

The following results were observed:

- Scores increased by average of 22% to 31% from the pre-test to the initial post-test (various years)
- Subsequent post-tests scores remained high and consistent – indicating retention of knowledge
- Returning RA’s scored higher on the pre-test than new RA’s
- Average difference on all post-tests was very similar between new and returning RA’s
Direct Assessment #1: Housing and Residence Life Action Steps

- Outcomes from the direct assessment:
  - Results were used to redesign and strengthen Resident Assistant training by:
    - Focusing on improving individual training sessions, and providing feedback to returning presenters
    - Creating more consistent messages between full departmental training sessions and individual staff training sessions
    - Choosing better methods of instruction in some areas of training.
      - Online Training Modules
      - Differentiated Training for New and Returning RA’s
CROSSROADS is dedicated to a harm reduction approach. It uses assessment and collaboration with on and off-campus partners to address substance abuse from an environmental management perspective.

CROSSROADS hires students as peer educators to promote substance abuse prevention on campus through educational programming, service, and outreach.

These students develop and execute comprehensive educational programs, facilitate presentations for classes, residence halls, and student organizations, advocate for a healthy campus environment, and act as role models for other students.
Direct Assessment #2: CROSSROADS Assessments

- We evaluate the peer educators’ achievement of these goals through:
  - A direct assessment of content knowledge and behavior change
  - Presentation rubrics
  - Self-reports and peer rating of their skills
  - Observation and focus groups.
Direct Assessment #2: CROSSROADS

Overall Peer Educator Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group:</th>
<th>Campus Peers</th>
<th>College Mentors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>Post-training direct assessment of content &amp; behavioral assessment. Self-assessment of strengths to be discussed in one:one meeting.</td>
<td>Performance at Mock Training and Pre-Service Peer Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>UNI presentation rubric; peer feedback through 360 evaluation; observation.</td>
<td>Observations of performance in trainings and school-based programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>Paper survey &amp; focus group in April</td>
<td>Paper survey; Individual interviews in December; focus group in April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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Direct Assessment #2: CROSSROADS Rubrics

- A rubric is a “set of criteria and a scoring scale that is used to assess and evaluate students’ work” (Campbell, Melenyzer, Nettles, & Wyman, 2000).

- Rubrics can:
  - ensure fidelity to intervention design
  - formalize expectations for behavior
  - evaluate the intended learning outcomes for peer educators.

- Assesses facilitation skills, body language, non-judgmental approach, and content knowledge

- Used to assist in training peer educators, provide immediate feedback to individual presenters and to evaluate and reflect on their growth over the semester.
### Direct Assessment #2: CROSSROADS
Rubric for Facilitation Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Great</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Asks yes/no questions</td>
<td>• Asks open-ended questions</td>
<td>• Summarizes answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Asks questions that are too long or too complicated</td>
<td>• Gives class time to think/answer</td>
<td>• Makes connections to other students’ answers, video, previous discussion, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Doesn’t wait for class to think/answer</td>
<td>• Re-phrases questions as needed</td>
<td>• Asks relevant follow up questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Doesn’t repeat students’ answers</td>
<td>• Repeats students’ answers</td>
<td>• Asks follow-up questions which generate additional responses from audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Speaks too quietly</td>
<td>• Maintains audience’s attention</td>
<td>• Engages audience by asking questions to explain content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reads from outline</td>
<td>• Explains content (signs/symptoms, protective strategies, etc)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Direct Assessment #2: CROSSROADS
Rubric for Facilitation Skills

- Have new presenters watch a presentation and follow the rubric to understand expectations.

- Share feedback from rubric with presenters, highlighting strong & weaker points.
  - Ask presenter about how they felt they performed using the rubric.
  - Use a combination of peer and supervisor feedback.
Direct Assessment #2: CROSSROADS
Benefits of the Rubric

 Immediately:
- Prepare students to give and receive criticism
- Provide written feedback to peer educators
- Improve on-going training efforts and attend to specific areas that may need additional focus

Long Term:
- Assist peer educators in reflecting on their growth over the semester
- Inform the training program
- Affirm that students are improving their skills as a result of their experiences in this position
Direct Assessment #3: Leadership UNCW Overview

- The *Leadership UNCW* program provides intentional learning opportunities for students to become engaged, ethical citizens by promoting inclusivity and self-empowerment.

- Students have the choice to participate in one of over 25 different leadership workshops, or in a defined series of workshops, to work towards earning one of nine *Leadership UNCW* certificates.
Direct Assessment #3: Leadership UNCW

- Each workshop evaluation asked two direct assessment questions to specifically address the learning outcomes and key concepts of the workshop.
  - (e.g. Define social justice; Name 1 way you can create a more inclusive environment)
Overall, these questions yielded responses that closely aligned with the material presented in the workshop.

- Students were able to identify major themes

The only variations in the scoring appeared were a result of different facilitators. Scores were consistent within a specific workshop, but differed by the presenter.

- Students understood material as presented
Direct Assessment #3: Leadership UNCW Action Steps

- These findings led to changes for the program:
  
  - Address the inconsistencies in responses based on the presenter, to ensure that students are receiving a common message
    - Created a common set of presentations and curriculum
    - Improved training of facilitators
  
  - Improve the dissemination and completion of evaluations in each workshop
    - Needed a more streamlined way to collect assessments
I am aware of an area or program at my institution where I could incorporate direct assessment.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree
6. Don’t Know/Not Applicable
Lessons Learned

- More targeted assessment objectives
  - Demonstrating the achievement of student learning outcomes

- Better trained staff and participants

- Closing the loop by improving trainings and workshops as a result of the data collected.
Recommendations

- Introduce new concepts to “early adopters”
- Combine with other on-going assessments
  - Map out what to assess during program development & annual planning
- Expect some possible resistance
  - Misunderstood as elementary
  - Prepare staff & students for feedback
How many quizzes did UNCW’s Housing Department use in their RA Training?

1. Two
2. Four
3. Ten
4. I don’t know. I was too busy texting or looking ahead to the next session.
Recommendations

- Introduce new concepts to “early adopters”

- Combine with other on-going assessments
  - Map out what to assess during program development & annual planning

- Expect some possible resistance
  - Misunderstood as elementary
  - Prepare staff & students for feedback
In what other ways have you conducted direct assessments on your campus?

What are some possibilities that you have considered for other direct assessments?

How can student affairs professionals be encouraged to conduct more direct assessments?
Contact Information

- **Rebecca Caldwell**  
  Director, Substance Abuse & Violence Prevention  
  [caldwellr@uncw.edu](mailto:caldwellr@uncw.edu)  
  (910) 962-7360

- **Andy Mauk**  
  Director, Student Affairs Assessment, Research & Planning  
  [mauka@uncw.edu](mailto:mauka@uncw.edu)  
  (910) 962-7512
References


