

Reflecting on Assessment Planning

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Author Note

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Introduction

Prior to starting the course, I had already completed a year-long graduate assistantship in divisional assessment at UC San Diego and in many ways I was excited to learn more about the theory behind the practice of assessment. While I was excited to fill in the gaps of knowledge that could exist, I was also a little scared to notice shortfalls in my practice throughout the past year. In other words, I was slightly worried about the reconciliation of information between the practice I had done and the theory I would learn. What made this entire experience more comforting, however, was knowing that my former graduate assistantship supervisor would become my faculty member in the second year.

Throughout the entire semester, it was comforting to see elements of my learning reinforce the practice that I had already completed. Through the course, however, I was able to further understand the theoretical aspects of assessment and understand the applicability of assessment at institutions different from UC San Diego. I was also able to better understand assessment in settings that were outside of student affairs, either in non-profit or in academic affairs settings (PLO 1,4, 5, 6, 7). A particular assignment that has helped shape this learning is the assessment report. Engaging with my cohort members has allowed me to engage in assessing from a program-level, instead of from a divisional level (PLO 6), and also work collaboratively with a team filled with members that came from diverse in backgrounds and experiences (PLO 8). Further, because of the multiple feelings I had towards the class, by going through the course, I've learned to better deal with ambiguity (personal goal 4) and learn my personality as a professional (professional goal 2).

Links to Program Learning Outcomes

Through the assessment plan assignment, I had the opportunity to assess the graduate

assistantship program with a group that I was not previously familiar with. In assessing it, I was afforded an opportunity to engage in outcomes-based assessment in a fashion that I was not previously familiar with, which supported PLO 6. While I had received extensive training on unit- and program-level assessment in my assistantship, I had mostly provided training to staff members in student affairs but had not actually engaged in assessment myself. Further, in assessing the graduate assistantship program, I was able to look at assessment from the lens of the academic affairs, as the program is largely aligned with the master's program, which is different from the typical student affairs program.

The team members I worked with also ended up with a group where all the members worked full time, and the only member who had graduate assistantships also worked a full-time load between two assistantships. This created its own unique challenges between scheduling group meeting times and the separation of group work. While everyone was more than enthusiastic to take on tasks and have a high amount of initiative, we had to be diligent in meeting deadlines, especially when new tasks were dependent on the completion of other tasks. Further, given our unique backgrounds, some in community college, and others with an international background, it was important to be extremely detailed in our communication to make sure everyone was on the same page, thus supporting PLO 8.

Links to Personal and Professional Goals

Assessing the graduate assistantship program proved its own set of challenges in dealing with ambiguity. As the program is less than ten years old, it was still going through a process of development. When starting the project, our group members realized that the assistantship program lacked a mission, outcomes, or other elements traditionally associated with programs developed with program theory. Further, we noticed that it lacked the traditional structure that many student affairs programs contained. In doing so, we had to be careful in our application of

learning to creating an assessment plan to make sure that we developed a plan that actually made sense. This process created dissonance in my previous understanding of assessment, as I had to navigate the teaching of two separate professors and reconcile them into information that made sense to me.

Further, in working with the diverse group members of the assessment team, I've also developed a better understanding how I work with other professionals in the field. While I had reflected on my previous experience working in a group environment, when my group was filled with peers that were full-time, I found myself wanting to be more professional and careful in my interactions with them. Also, given my experience with assessment, I found myself thinking about my role in the group and how I could facilitate conversations on the application of assessment that we had learned in class to our project, as well as everyone else's work outside of class. This taught me that I care about facilitating conversations in a group setting and encouraging conversations in group settings in the workplace as well.

Conclusion

Through the assessment course, I've had the opportunity to practice the assessment skills I've acquired in my previous assistantship and to learn to bridge it with the new information that I've learned in class. I've particularly enjoyed facilitating conversations in my group and developing an understanding of how this applies to non-student affairs settings as well as to institutions other than ones that I'm familiar with. As I progress throughout the next year, I look forward to continuing to work with my group and refining my assessment skills. I am excited about assessing the first years' experience as graduate assistants and learn about their growth as well.