

## Summary of General Comments and Themes

International Assessment Conference  
St. Louis, Missouri  
June 8-10, 2007

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There is now a general willingness to recognize that students learn both in, and outside the classroom. Therefore, it is important to document and assess student learning that takes place in the student affairs sector. Consequently, this conference brought together members from both AAHE (American Association of Higher Education) and NASPA (National Association of Student Personnel Administrators).

The use of portfolios was a hot topic. Based on experience, many believe that portfolios are the best method of assessing students over time.

Most colleges and universities began to address the assessment issue in the mid-1990s, and developed outcomes and measurements by the late 1990s. As a result, most have between 5-10 years of data and experience dealing with the various issues.

Everyone believes there will be new "accountability" standards, but no one is sure what they will involve, or who will require them (i.e. federal government, states, or regional accrediting organizations, etc.). Right now, most bets are on the regional accrediting agencies under continued pressure from the Federal government and state legislators.

Some evidence would suggest that traditional standardized metrics are beginning to fall apart; particularly at the state funding level.

States are beginning to ask more qualitative questions, and universities continue to respond with the same old quantitative data. There should be a thorough review of current institutional research offices and the types of data they collect

More time and money needs to be spent by programs on marketing their expectations and outcomes.

Embrace the ambiguity.

Try not to be prescriptive with expectations.

There are no "best practices" if you are always improving.

Effectiveness and sustainability are the two critical elements of program assessment and review.

University of South Florida academic advisors all have "lap tops will travel" and they go to locations where students will be (e.g. recreation centers, sports complex, dining halls, etc.)

Departments should have 2-5 outcomes, and programs should have 8-10.

Each syllabus should reflect all learning outcomes (for the program) with those from this particular class highlighted.

It's very important to find out who is teaching what outcomes; don't assume that someone else is doing it.

You should have a "college assessment review committee" evaluate assessment plans for each program; programs should have a 3 year plan.

Assessment should be practical, not a significant research undertaking.

Build the capacity for everyone to get involved (in assessment).

If you are tired, then retire.