

St. Philip's College
Institutional Planning, Research, and Effectiveness
San Antonio, TX

June 2023
Volume 1, Issue 5



ALAMO
COLLEGES
DISTRICT

St. Philip's College

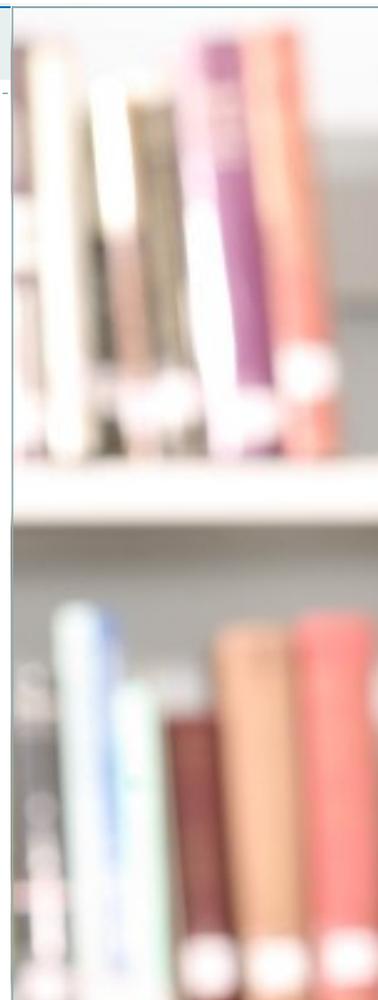
Assessment Quarterly

FIFTH EDITION

The Assessment Quarterly is a quarterly look at how assessment integrates into the St. Philip's College culture to create a holistic approach to supporting student learning at all levels. The Assessment Quarterly focuses on the language of assessment, key concepts in assessing student and programmatic outcomes, and ideas for sharing with faculty and staff to improve the overall student experience. Future Assessment Quarterlies will focus on signpost/signature assignments, how to establish Assessment Work Groups, and using indirect assessment measures.

JUNE 2023 QUARTERLY FOCUS

In the June 2023 edition, the focus is on seeking improvement, including documentation and evidence of the process, strategies employed, and results gathered.



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Key Terms in Assessment	2
Celebrating Success.....	2
Using Evidence to Improve.....	3
Ways to Use Evidence	4
Sustaining a Culture of Betterment.....	5

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- Using Evidence
- Best Practices



KEY TERMS IN ASSESSMENT

New to assessment? Each month we will feature key terms in assessment to help you learn the common vocabulary used in assessment.

Closing the Loop, Continuous Improvement, and Continuous Quality Improvement

Closing the loop flows from the work of W. Edward Deming (2000), who promoted an ongoing four-step quality improvement cycle that is often referred to as *continuous improvement, continu-*

ous quality improvement, or total quality management. The cycle can be applied to a college as follows:

- 1) Set goals and plan strategies to achieve them.
- 2) Implement programs, services, or initiatives to achieve these goals.
- 3) Collect evidence on how well those programs, services, or initiatives are achieving those goals.
- 4) Use that evidence to identify ways to improve the steps of the cycle...which closes the cycle or loop.

“Move from sharing to action.”
(Suskie, 2018)

USING STUDENT LEARNING EVIDENCE TO RECOGNIZE AND CELEBRATE SUCCESSES

Since the fundamental purpose of assessment is improvement, it is easy to focus on problems and not see—or celebrate—successful outcomes. We in higher education are self-critical and can always find something that needs to be changed or modified.

However, when standards and targets are met, celebrate!

While good outcomes should be celebrated, recognize and celebrate rather than reward. *Recognize and honor* assessment efforts through praise and mention at department meetings.

RECOGNIZE AND CELEBRATE, BUT AVOID REWARDS

Examples of why rewards should be avoided:

- Rewards can tempt faculty and staff to twist or distort their evidence.
- Rewards may force faculty and staff to compete against one another.
- Rewards may simply recognize the status quo.

While good outcomes should be celebrated, even more recognition should go to commendable assessment *efforts*.

After the celebration is over, in *the spirit of continuous improvement*, it is time to use the results to seek further improvement, even if the target was met.



USE EVIDENCE FOR IMPROVEMENT

Examples of using evidence for improvement:

- Rethink curricula
- Rethink teaching methods or grading approaches
- Rethink learning goals
- Rethink support systems and co-curricula
- Use student learning evidence to make informed decisions on resource allocations
- Use student learning evidence to inform program reviews
- Use student learning evidence to inform performance evaluations

USING EVIDENCE

1. **USE EVIDENCE TO ADVANCE ACADEMIC QUALITY AND INSTRUCTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS.**
2. **USE EVIDENCE TO DEPLOY RESOURCES PRUDENTLY.**
3. **USE EVIDENCE TO REFINE COURSE OR PROGRAM GOALS AND TARGETS.**
4. **USE EVIDENCE FAIRLY, ETHICALLY, AND RESPONSIBLY.**
5. **USE EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES.**

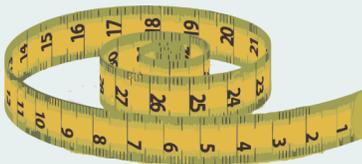


THINGS TO KNOW:

SACSCOC 8.2.

THE INSTITUTION IDENTIFIES EXPECTED OUTCOMES, **ASSESSES THE EXTENT TO WHICH IT ACHIEVES THESE OUTCOMES**, AND PROVIDES EVIDENCE OF SEEKING IMPROVEMENT BASED ON ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS IN THE AREAS BELOW:

- a. Student learning outcomes for each of its educational programs.
(Student outcomes: educational programs)
- b. Student learning outcomes for collegiate-level general education competencies of its undergraduate degree programs.
(Student outcomes: general education)
- c. Academic and student services that support student success. (Student outcomes: academic and student services)



USE EVIDENCE TO ADVANCE QUALITY AND EFFECTIVENESS

Uses

- The most common use of evidence is to make minor tweaks
- This kind of fine-tuning is low-cost and requires the consensus of a small number of faculty, but the effort does not lead to substantive changes
- Using evidence to make broader or more substantive changes is more difficult, but it can be done and sometimes should be done based on what evidence exists

USE EVIDENCE TO DEPLOY RESOURCES PRUDENTLY

Best Practices

- Meaningful advancements in instructional quality and effectiveness require resource investments
- One of the characteristics of good stewardship is that evidence is used to inform resource deployment decisions
- Include student learning evidence in the mix of evidence used to request resources
- Use external as well as internal evidence
- Prepare for a time lag while decisions and resource allocations are made

USE EVIDENCE TO REFINE INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS AND TARGETS

- Sometimes, what needs attention is not your programs, services, and activities but your instructional goals and targets.
- Before you cut back on what seems to be an overly ambitious goal, consider this: often the reason for falling short is not that your goal is too ambitious but that you have too many goals, causing the faculty and staff to lose focus and diffuse energies.
- Ask yourself, what can the faculty scale back on or put on hold, freeing up time and resources to focus on critical program goals?

USE EVIDENCE FAIRLY, ETHICALLY, AND RESPONSIBLY

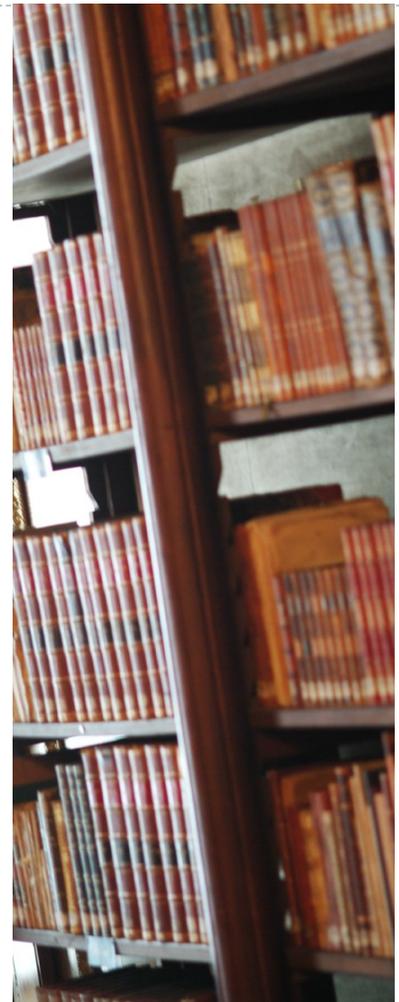
- Evidence should not make decisions for us: evidence should only advise us as we use our professional judgment to make decisions about curriculum and instruction
- Do not base a major decision on only one piece of evidence
- Do not use evidence punitively: past punitive use of evidence affects people's willingness to participate in gathering and using evidence
- Be careful how we recognize and honor evidence of success: it is tempting to reward evidence of success, but rewards can also backfire



“Evidence is not something cranked out only when needed to keep an accreditor happy. It is a habit, a way of life.”
Linda Suskie

SUSTAINING A CULTURE OF BETTERMENT

- Foster a culture of community: empower faculty oversight of student learning assessment to improve courses
- Value efforts to change, improve, and innovate: use innovation as a source of improvement
- The perfect is the enemy of the good: there is no perfect measure of quality. Do the best you can, measure results, and try again to show improvement
- Do not collect more evidence than needed or you can handle
- Document evidence
- Recoup and reflect



LOOKING AHEAD

Our next Assessment Quarterly will discuss the evolution of Assessment Day at St. Philip's College.