

**Occidental College
Division of Student Affairs
Assessment Handbook
2014-15**



Occidental College
Division of

**STUDENT
AFFAIRS**

*the oxy student
fully engaged*

respect. responsibility.

Table of Contents

PART I	3
Assessment 101	3
What is it?	3
Purpose Statement	3
Cycle	4
PART II	6
Common Theme: Oxy Student Fully Engaged	7
2014-15: Focus on Leadership	7
PART III	8
Implementation	8
Assessment Plan	8
Map	11
PART IV	13
Assessment Tools	
Writing Learning Outcomes Worksheet	14
Bloom's Revised Taxonomy Wheel	15
Qualtrics	16
Methods of data collection	16
PART V	17
Assessment Timeline	17
End of the Year Report	17
PART VI	19
Examples	19

PART I

Assessment 101

What is Assessment?

Assessment is the work we are already doing; it is telling our story. It is an ongoing process designed to improve student learning and program effectiveness. Assessment links ideas to actions, justifies changes, and encourages innovation. It is data-driven decision making.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of academic assessment at Occidental College is to improve the overall educational experience of our students. This is achieved through assessment activities based on institutional values that aim to produce relevant and functional data for aligning curricular design, course content, pedagogical approaches, and student services with the college's mission and values.

Guiding Principles

Assessment at Occidental College is guided by the following principles:

1. Assessment is mission-centered. Assessment activities will be based on each program's mission, purpose, and educational values, which are closely aligned with those of the institutional as a whole. When this is the case, assessment results will be more relevant, meaningful, and ultimately more useful for the aim of improving the program under study.
2. Assessment addresses the complex nature of learning. The approach to assessment takes into account the different backgrounds and learning styles of the student population, the multitude of learning opportunities both inside and outside the classroom, and looks at student values and attitudes together with knowledge and skills.
3. Assessment is integrated into the life of the college. The results of assessment are shared not only among faculty, but also with administrators, student affairs personnel, and students whenever appropriate. In addition, results are regularly reviewed and referenced in curricular, financial, space, and strategic planning.

In all assessment activities faculty and staff endeavor to take full consideration of the different educational and cultural backgrounds of our diverse student population. Faculty and staff are also encouraged to take advantage of both curricular and co-curricular learning assessment opportunities, and to address not only knowledge and skill, but values and beliefs as well.

Assessment Cycle



Develop Outcomes (first stage of the cycle)

Before you start, get a snapshot or overview of the program, event, or process. Collect any baseline data that may be relevant to the assessment process. Taking the baseline data, develop outcomes that address what the student/participant is learning from the program/event. There are four steps to this process.

Planning the process (second stage of the cycle)

Using the outcomes, plan your program/event/activity.

Gather Evidence (third stage of the cycle)

Throughout the program/event, students/participants will create resources for us to use as direct evidence. Direct evidence is any type of work created by the student/participant while engaged in the program/event. It can include anything from reflection papers, art work, group projects, collages, journals, photographs, etc. Any type of work that shows how the students/participants are learning. Throughout this process, we also want to be creating outcomes-based assessment. In other words, we want students/participants to be able to articulate what the outcome is.

Analyze (fourth stage of the cycle)

This is the process of coding the data. Coding is finding similar ideas or themes throughout the provided direct data. This can take some time, but utilizing direct data can have a much bigger impact on the changes we make to the programs/events.

Close the Loop (fifth stage of the cycle)

In the fifth stage, we look ahead to the next program/event. We take the coded data from the previous stage, and start the process of making changes and planning for the next program/event, explicitly linking the data to programmatic changes; a justification of why we are allocating funds to certain programs.

PART II

College Wide Student Learning Goals

Occidental College understands its educational goals as an evolving dynamic commitment: they are the basis for assessment, subject to constant re-evaluation and re-imagining. Within this culture of self-aware and rigorous critique, our interdisciplinary approach to the liberal arts promotes student achievement of five college-wide learning goals. These include:

1. Synthesis of ideas across broad areas of knowledge within the liberal arts
2. Linkage of theory and practice within group and self-directed research leading to intellectual or creative contributions
3. Mastery of essential content, methods, concepts and technical aspects of an academic discipline
4. Development of key intellectual skills:
 - Analytic inquiry and problem solving
 - Communication through writing, oral presentation, and creative expression
 - Critical reading, writing, and thinking
 - Critical Self-Awareness
 - Ethical Reasoning
 - Analysis of media and images
 - Quantitative reasoning
 - Scientific methodology
5. Capacity for active intellectual community engagement:
 - Community learning, participation, and service
 - Ethical reasoning and action
 - Global, intercultural and socio-political awareness
 - Leadership and collaboration
 - Personal well-being
 - Respectful engagement with diverse perspectives

Mission & Values for the Department of Student Affairs

The Division of Student Affairs goals are aligned with the College's learning outcomes. Each unit within the division should also be aligned with the division and College goals. The division targets are as follows:

Vision

The Occidental student fully engaged.

Mission

Student Affairs challenges students to engage in all aspects of learning and supports their development as socially responsible members of their communities.

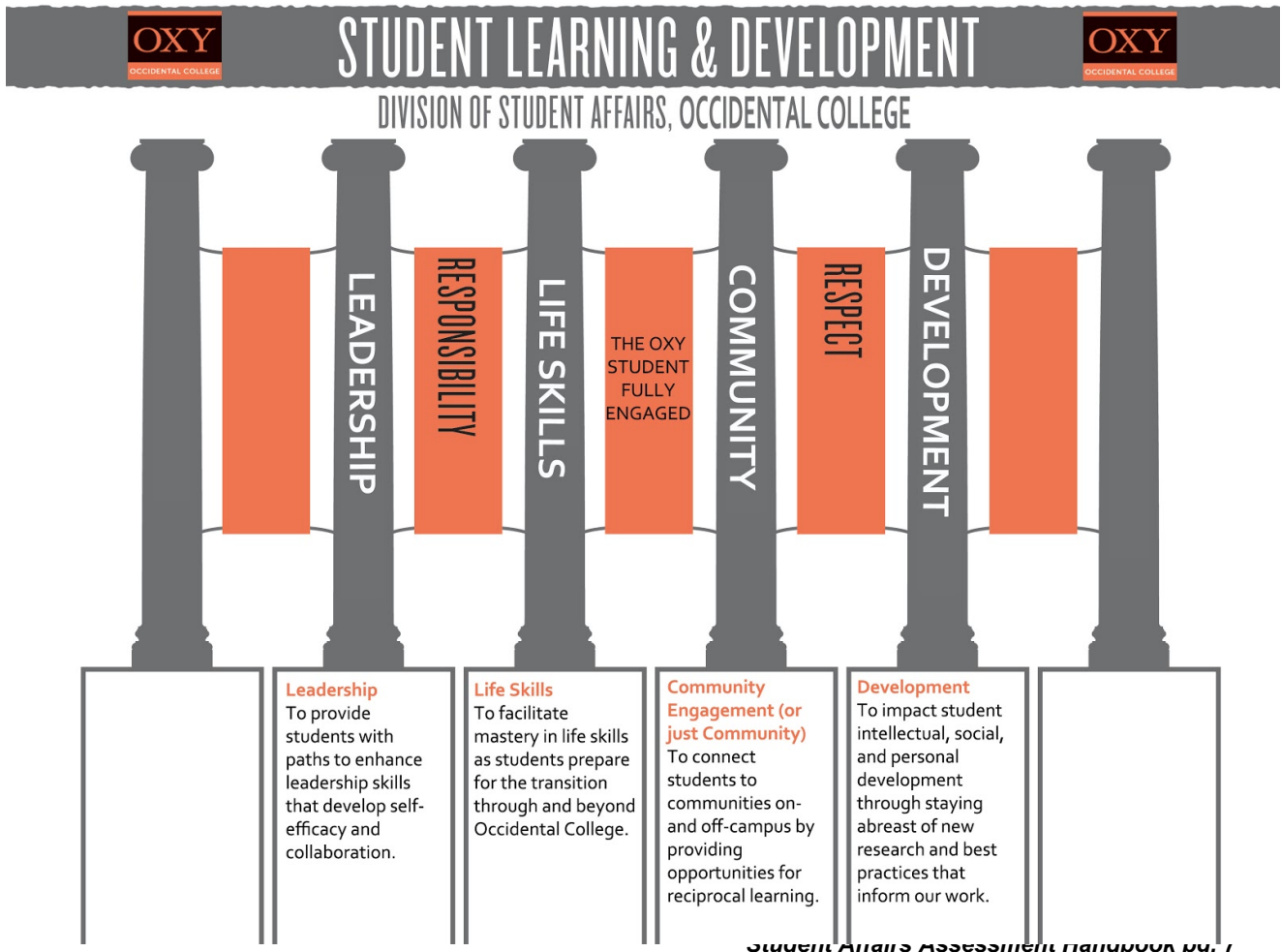
Values

- Responsibility: To be accountable to another for our actions and beliefs. This means that we can also be held accountable for what we say and do.
- Respect: To hold positive regard for others' traditions, beliefs, and goals, even if we personally disagree with them.

Goals

- *To provide students with paths to enhance leadership skills that develop self-efficacy and collaboration.*
- To facilitate mastery in life skills as students prepare for the transition through and beyond Occidental College.
- To connect students to communities on- and off-campus by providing opportunities for reciprocal learning.
- To impact student intellectual, social, and personal development through staying abreast of new research and best practices that inform our work.

Common Theme: Oxy Student Fully Engaged
2014-15: Focus on LEADERSHIP



PART III

Implementation

Assessment Plan (adapted from [Institutional Research, Assessment Handbook 2013](#))

The Program Assessment Plan is designed to assist programs in articulating their mission, goals, and learning outcomes in order to clarify the criterion for success for student achievement. Programmatic quality assurance requires planning and preparation, and the assessment plan will assist departments in developing a strategy to systematically explore student achievement for all of its stated learning goals. In addition, the plan specifies how the program's mission, goals, and learning outcomes are integrated into the curriculum, how they will be measured, and how data will be collected, reported, and used in planning decisions. Although the plan will serve as a guiding document for the program, it is intended to be flexible and current, and programs are encouraged to update it as needed.

Our primary method of assessing student learning should be through direct assessment. Indirect assessments, such as surveys and interviews, can also be used and is extremely informative, but their data is more suitably used to supplement the data generated from direct learning assessments. The most efficient and effective way to design a direct learning assessment is to assess the work produced by students as a result of the program or activity that is based on your program's learning outcomes.

Relationship to Program Review

Each program should have a Program Assessment Plan in place prior to entering the Program Review process. The plan will also be used as a basis for completing annual Program Assessment Reports, which in turn will be compiled for use in Program Review. In this way the Program Assessment Plan, annual Program Assessment Reports, and Academic Program Reviews are closely linked.

Elements of the Plan

I. Heading

State the program name, current director, all other relevant authors or contributors, and the date of completion.

II. Mission

Provide a condensed 1-3 sentence statement describing the overall purpose and basic function of the program. In a second paragraph (or bulleted list) provide the educational philosophy, values, and/or guiding principles of the program. Each program's mission should be closely aligned with the College mission and its cornerstones. Note also that the program mission statement should appear consistently in all publications and web pages describing the program.

III. Learning Goals and Outcomes

Provide 3-5 primary goals, and as many supporting learning outcomes as needed under each goal. Goals should reflect the general knowledge, skills, and attitudes that students will develop during the time they are partaking in the activity or program. Outcomes should clearly state what students will do or produce to demonstrate their learning within a specific time frame, such as a semester, an academic year, etc.

Resulting Evidence refers to the work that students produce to demonstrate their learning, such as reflection pieces, presentations, performances, portfolios, works of art, etc. An important clarification should be made when writing learning outcomes regarding whether the evidence will provide absolute or value added achievement. For instance, a learning outcome could be written in this way: “Students will apply the scientific method” (absolute); or in this way: “Students will improve their understanding of the scientific method” (value added). The distinction is important to keep in mind when writing outcomes in order to use language that clearly states the expectations.

The behaviors in the formula should be associated with the appropriate learning level. The depth-of-processing theory most typically used to develop learning outcomes comes from the cognitive domain in Bloom’s Taxonomy. (see attached chart in Assessment Tools section). According to Bloom’s theory the cognitive domain is grounded in *knowledge* and ascends multiple learning levels, eventually developing into evaluation:

- **knowledge**: to know specific facts, terms, concepts, principles or theories
- **comprehension**: to understand, interpret, compare, contrast, and explain
- **application**: to apply knowledge to new situations, to solve problems
- **analysis**: to identify the organizational structures of something; to identify parts, relationships and organizational principles
- **synthesis**: to create something, to integrate ideas into a solution, to propose an action plan, to formulate a new classification scheme
- **evaluation**: to judge the quality of something based on its adequacy, value, logic, or use.

The theory has been revised since 1956 by other learning theorists, but it continues to stand a useful starting point for developing cognitive learning outcomes. Outcomes for basic knowledge acquisition, for instance, might use actions like “find”, “describe”, or “list”; outcomes requiring comprehension might use “explain”, “distinguish”, or “compare”; outcomes for the application of knowledge might use “illustrate”, “solve”, or “use”; and so on. The chart below shows some common behaviors associated with each level. (see attached chart in Assessment Tools section)

It is important to keep in mind, however, that the cognitive domain is only one of three learning domains laid out by Bloom. The others are the psychomotor domain and the affective domain. Although not traditionally part of the learning that is assessed in higher education, there is growing interest in using these domains to help us assess the total educational experience. The psychomotor domain can be considered in developing learning outcomes, for example, to

assess student ability in using tools in the creation of art or lab equipment in the sciences. And the affective domain can be considered in developing learning outcomes to assess student self awareness or value development.

For clarity in the assessment plan, goals and outcomes should be presented accordingly:

Goal 1:

- Outcome 1.1
- Outcome 1.2
- etc.

Goal 2:

- Outcome 2.1
- Outcome 2.2
- etc.

EXAMPLE:

Goal 1: Critical Thinking: Students should learn how to engage in critical, evidence based thinking.

- Outcome 1.1: Students will analyze the strengths and weaknesses of empirical research and theories in kinesiology.
- Outcome 1.2: Students will locate (via library and internet), critically examine, and evaluate primary literature.

IV. Alignment with College Wide Learning Goals

The goals of the academic department need to be aligned to the approved set of college-wide student learning goals. (see: <https://www.oxy.edu/academics/college-wide-learning-goals>).

Example from REHS

Residential Education and Housing Services

Mission Statement:

The department of Residential Education and Housing services fosters safe, inclusive and educational residential environments. It intentionally challenges and supports students to embrace global citizenship, civility, and self-accountability both on and off campus. Through engaging events and meaningful interactions, REHS promotes the holistic development of all students from the perspective of a liberal arts education.

Goals:

1. To foster inclusive living learning communities, both micro and macro, within the residence halls.
2. To provide avenues for learning life skills and abilities that prepare students for lifelong learning in a global society.
3. To encourage the appreciation and understanding of Occidental's unique location in an urban city that promote the development of the entire student.
4. To provide and maintain safe and clean housing environments which promote individual responsibility and community accountability.
5. To effectively recruit, train, develop and support a diverse team of staff members who strive to meet and exceed student needs and expectations.
6. To encourage the holistic development and wellness of students by intentionally challenging and supporting them.

Time of year	Activity	Goal 1	Goal 2	Goal 3	Goal 4	Goal 5	Goal 6
August/ January	Opening	x	x		x		
December/ May	Closing		x		x		
August/ January	RCRs		x		x		
Twice a semester	Hall Spreads	x	x		x		x
as needed	Ordering Supplies				x	x	
	Educational Programming	x	x	x			x
Late-night Weekend	Insomnia	x	x	x			x

Part IV
Assessment Tools

(These can also be found in the Google Drive Folder under Assessment called "[Resources](#)")

Writing Learning Outcomes Worksheet

Step 1: Decide What Student Learning Outcome You Want to Measure

Step 2: Think Through Your Student Learning Outcome. Include the Following:

- A. Who Will Be Assessed
- B. Active Verb
- C. Program/Project/Service Being Assessed
- D. How Being Measured
- E. Timeline For Measurement

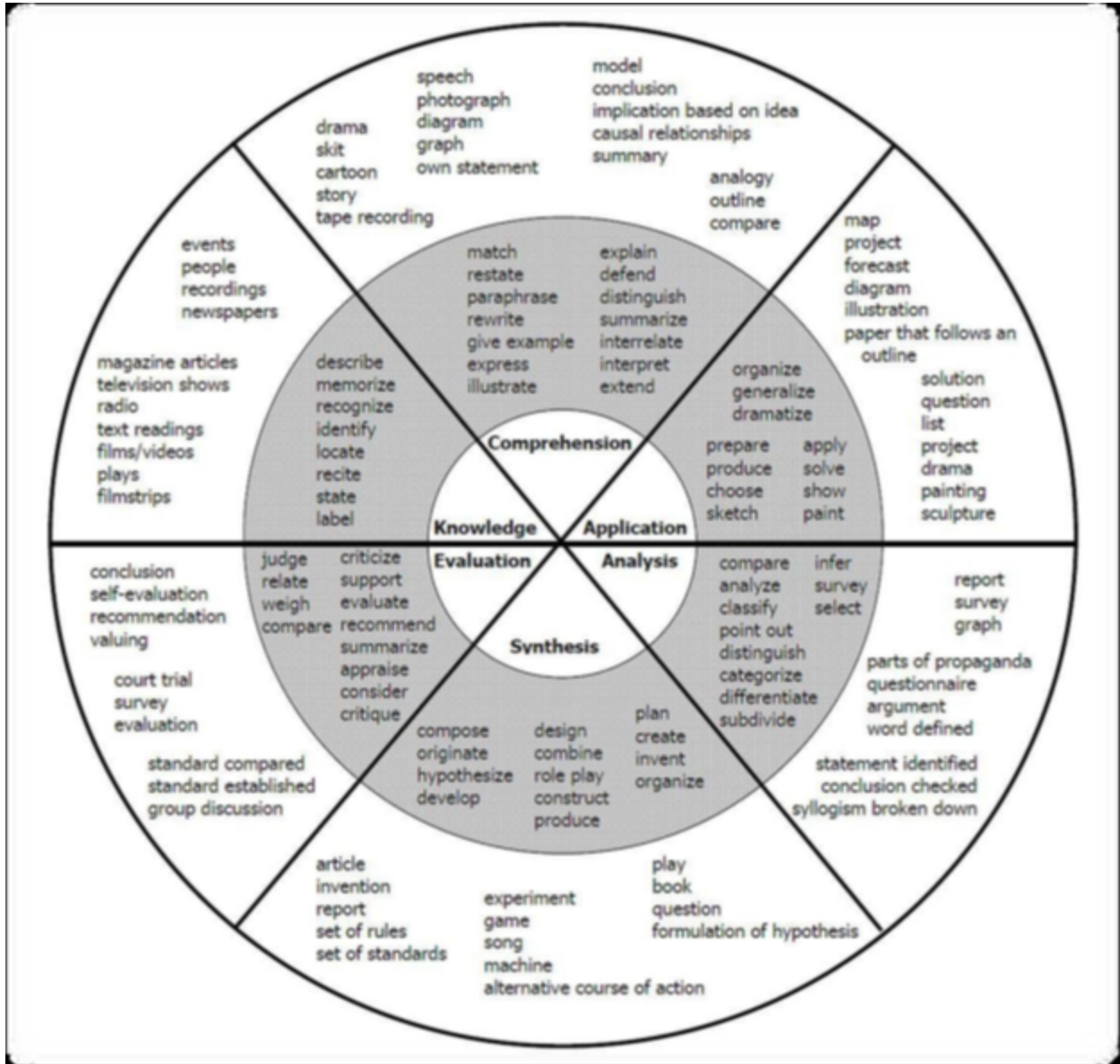
Step 3: Write Your Student Learning Outcome:

Step 4: After Writing Your Student Learning Outcome, Evaluate The Learning Outcome By Asking These Questions:

	Yes/No	
1. Does the outcome support the program objective?	Y	N
2. Does the outcome describe what the program intends for students to know (cognitive), think (affective, attitudinal), or do (behavioral, performance)?	Y	N
3. Is the outcome important/worthwhile?	Y	N
4. Is the outcome:		
a. Detailed & specific?	Y	N
b. Measurable/identifiable?	Y	N
5. Can you create an activity to enable students to learn the desired outcome?	Y	N
6. Can the outcome be used to make decisions on how to improve the program?	Y	N

Bloom's Revised Taxonomy Wheel

Utilize this wheel to identify words that describe the behaviors that you are expecting your audience to be able to perform as a result of participation in your program/service. The wheel can also be utilized to identify a method of directly measuring the learning you are trying to capture



Qualtrics

The College has an account with Qualtrics, a survey development tool. Information and training videos can be obtained here:

<http://www.oxy.edu/irap/institutional-research/oxy-resources>

Methods of Data Collection

¹Direct Assessment

involves looking at student performance by examining samples of student work. This assessment may examine student outcomes from a given course, from a degree program or from the overall University (as in achieving University General Education Goals). Examples include exams/tests, papers, projects, presentations, portfolios, performances, etc. Because direct measures capture what students can actually do, they are considered best for measuring levels of achievement of student learning on specific outcomes.

Indirect Assessment

is gathering information about student learning by looking at indicators of learning other than student work output. This assessment approach is intended to find out about the quality of the learning process by getting feedback from the student or other persons who may provide relevant information. Examples include surveys, interviews, course evaluations, and reports on retention, graduation, and placement, etc. Indirect measures are best situated at program or university level assessment. These measures are commonly in conjunction with direct measures of student learning.

Examples of Direct and Indirect Measures

Direct	Indirect
Capstone projects, senior theses, exhibits, or performances	Focus group interviews with students, faculty members, or employers
Pass rates or scores on licensure, certification, or subject area tests	Registration or course enrollment information
Student publications or conference presentations	Department or program review data
Employer and internship supervisor ratings of students' performance	Employer or alumni surveys
	Student perception surveys

PART V

¹ adapted from <http://wp.missouristate.edu/assessment/3122.htm>

Assessment Timeline

Summer

- Gather data from year
- Close loop
- Write assessment report
- Division wide theme chosen for coming AY

Fall

- Assessment report due late October
- AY Assessment plan due in early December
- Begin collecting data

Spring

- Continue collecting data

Adapted from Occidental College Assessment Handbook)

The purpose of the Assessment Report is to document the findings of assessments undertaken by academic programs to study their current curriculum and pedagogy in the interim years within the program review cycle. Findings will be used to make academic planning decisions, and to enhance the program's faculty, staff, and student understanding of its essential mission and values.

Reporting Process

The Assessment Report should be done on an annual basis. The report is a concise 1-3 page document (appendices as needed) focusing on an assessment study undertaken during the academic year. The learning goals and outcomes that are assessed, the criterion for success, and the evaluation methods used should be based on the program's approved Assessment Plan. Summaries of successive years of Assessment Reports should then be compiled to generate the assessment section of the self study for Program Review. And finally, the findings presented in the Assessment Report should be discussed with program faculty, staff, and students (if appropriate) to determine if action is required. Actions taken should be included in the follow-up reports, and the Program Review self study.

Elements of the Report

I. Heading

State the program name, current director, all other relevant authors or contributors, and the date of completion. In addition, list any specific goals and learning outcomes that were assessed, and the courses in which the assessments took place.

II. Summary Findings

Present an executive summary of the findings. Present only the most relevant information, and use graphs and tables as appropriate. Comprehensive data can be included as an appendix. Be sure to state whether the findings were anticipated or surprising, and more importantly, whether they were considered good enough for what your department expects from our students. Conclusions about causal relationships do not need to be made, but insight regarding potential causes might be discussed.

III. Methodology

Describe the tools that were used (rubrics, e-portfolios, pre/post tests, course evaluations, analysis of assignments or exams, etc.), the focus of the assessments (student learning outcomes, program goals, teaching effectiveness, relevance of course content, course/objective alignment, etc.), and the methods that were used for evaluation (did more than one staff member participate in the evaluation, was an outside staff member consulted, etc.)

IV. Use of the Findings

Describe how the assessment results were discussed with program faculty, staff, and students. Explain any actions taken as a result of the assessments (e.g., changes to: programs, the departmental assessment plan, mission statement, etc.). If there are unresolved issues, explain how the program will follow up, and provide a realistic timeframe to do so. Finally, if appropriate, explain any insight the assessment results might have for other areas of the college.

V. Appendix

Attach any worksheets, survey data, graphs, tables, or raw data (if needed) that were used in the final analysis; specifically, those presented in the Summary of Findings section.

PART VI Examples

Senior Week RA Training Assessment Plan

Residential Education and Housing Services Mission Statement:

The department of Residential Education and Housing services fosters safe, inclusive and educational residential environments. It intentionally challenges and supports students to embrace global citizenship, civility, and self-accountability both on and off campus. Through engaging events and meaningful interactions, REHS promotes the holistic development of all students from the perspective of a liberal arts education.

REHS Goals:

1. To foster inclusive living learning communities, both micro and macro, within the residence halls.
2. To provide avenues for learning life skills and abilities that prepares students for lifelong learning in a global society.
3. To encourage the appreciation and understanding of Occidental's unique location in an urban city that promotes the development of the entire student.
4. To provide and maintain safe and clean housing environments which promote individual responsibility and community accountability.
5. To effectively recruit, train, develop and support a diverse team of staff members who strive to meet and exceed student needs and expectations.
6. Intentionally challenge and support students to encourage their holistic development and wellness.

Senior Week Vision

Senior week occurs the week after finals before graduation. During Senior Week all student leaders come together to participate in a 2 ½ day long leadership training. After 2 ½ days, the Resident Advisors continue with their leadership training for 1 ½ days more. The purpose of this day and a half of Senior Week RA Training is to begin the process of meeting goals 5 and 6 (listed above). As RA training progresses over the summer, into the fall and throughout the year, we come closer to fully accomplishing these goals.

There are four focuses within RA Senior Week, these include creating opportunities where the RA's learn about where REHS has been and where we are going (mission and vision), developing the entire REHS team (teambuilding), helping RA's understand the expectations of the summer (expectations) and finally, leadership development for the returning RA's.

Mission and Vision

1) Resident Advisors will be able to explain the mission, vision, and goals of the REHS department.

Assessment: RAs will work on building staffs to create a music video/movie trailer explaining what the mission, vision, and goals of REHS are while incorporating that year's training theme.

Teambuilding

1) Resident Advisors will be able to identify all the RA's on their respective building staff's as well as their area staffs.

Assessment: Do a final name game with area staff to decipher names of each RA.

2) Resident Advisors will be able to identify one another's strengths that they bring to their respective building staffs while also completing initial planning for the upcoming year.

Assessment: Building staffs will have an agreed upon theme for the building as well as a plan for how they will communicate with one another throughout the summer.

Expectations

1) Resident Advisors will recognize the expectations of summer responsibilities in relation to the modules and fall training.

Assessment: Resident Advisors will complete all assigned modules and arrive on time to August Training.

Leadership Development

1) Returning RA's will be able to practice leadership through planning and leading group training sessions.

Assessment: Returning RA's will participate and successfully lead the "Words of Wisdom from Veterans" session. Returning RA's will each be assigned two sessions to lead for fall training.

Returning RA's will submit an outline of each session by July 15th to be reviewed by their respective GHC.

Examples from Other Schools

University of the Pacific -

<http://www.pacific.edu/About-Pacific/AdministrationOffices/Division-of-Student-Life/Student-Life-Assessment.html>

Loyola Marymount University -

<http://studentaffairs.lmu.edu/administration/osvpsa/researchassessment/>

University of Redlands - They have a pdf handbook that is locked down, but viewable. Go to www.redlands.edu and type in "Student Affairs Assessment". The pdf document will be the first item that appears.

University of San Diego -

http://www.sandiego.edu/studentaffairs/documents/AssessmentResourceGuide_002.pdf