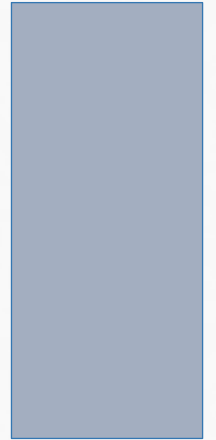


CHALLENGES IN ASSESSMENT

CONDUCTING ASSESSMENT IN STUDENT AFFAIRS
SESSION SIX



WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?

- Several areas of additional information identified at last session
 - Longitudinal design—ways of tracking change
 - Pros and cons of interview/focus group versus survey
 - More on focus group facilitation (last hour of session)
- Small group discussions of individual projects and challenges with a SAIRO staff facilitator
 - Assess own work against the rubric
 - Discuss your “sticking points”

REVISITING MEASURES OF QUALITY

- **Qualitative**

- Results are context-bound, not generalizable
- Trustworthiness
 - Effort to make biases explicit – and how they shape the study
- Reflexivity
 - “Natural history” on the development of the evidence

- **Quantitative**

- Generalizable findings
- Reliability
 - Instrument used can be applied to subsequent studies
 - Repeatability of results or observations suggests a reliable instrument
- Validity
 - Extent to which the research measures what it is intended to measure

FOCUS GROUP VS. SURVEY

Focus Group

PROS

- Capture perceptions, opinions, beliefs and attitudes on a deeper level
- Rich data
- Beyond the checkbox
- Good for exploratory stage
- Opportunity to further probe for more information

CONS

- Findings vary on the dynamic of the group
- More expensive
- Difficult to reach out to more participants
- Difficult to ask sensitive information in a group setting

Survey

PROS

- Cheaper
- Easier to report in numbers
- Bigger N, therefore, higher generalizability
- Can reach out to more participants
- Set questions with set responses
- Easier for the participants
- Objective as it can be anonymous
- Findings does not depend on the group and facilitator

CONS

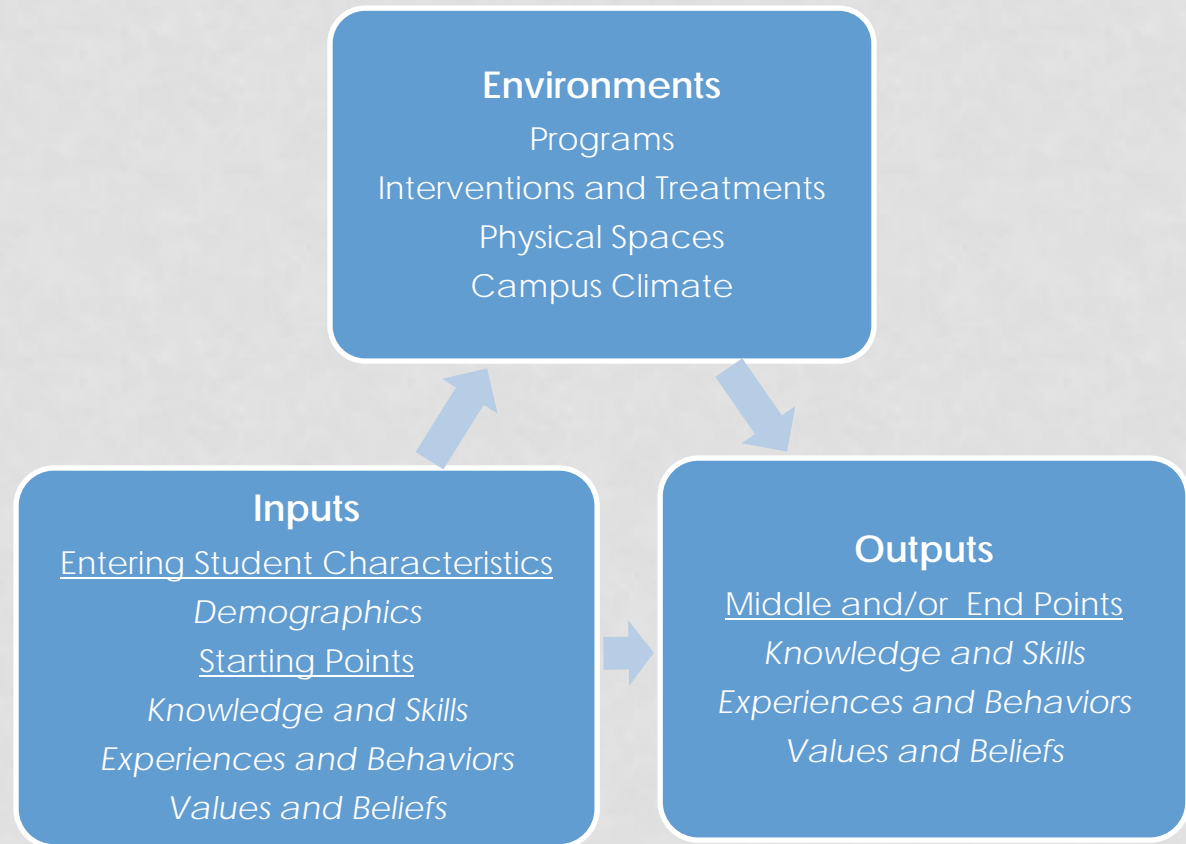
- Cannot capture rich information
- No opportunity for in-depth Dialog that can lead to an understanding of underlying attitudes beliefs and motivations.

MEASURING CHANGE: STUDY DESIGN

Assessing Effectiveness and Learning

- Usually requires data from at least two different points in time
- Starting point or baseline data
- End point data
- Same individuals or groups
- Used to measure impact of programs, instruction, or climate on learning and developmental outcomes

Astin's I-E-O Model



MEASURING CHANGE: STUDY DESIGNS

Longitudinal	Cross-Sectional	Self-Assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least two time points • Same individuals or groups over time • Matched items on survey instruments • Same/similar questions in focus groups and interviews <p>Study design:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRE- and POST- "tests" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single time period • Across cross-section of population <p>Study sample:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reference or "PRE-" Group (freshman, first-time participants, new enrollees) • Target or "POST-" Group (seniors, long-term participants, past users) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single time-point • Measures individuals' self-perceptions of change <p>Questions like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "How much have you changed since...?" • "Rate your own ability THEN and NOW."
<p>PROS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measures differences by establishing a baseline • Best survey method for tracking change in <i>particular</i> individuals and groups <p>CONS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time-consuming to implement • Survey fatigue and drop-out 	<p>PROS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Shortcut" that saves time and money • Good for looking at aggregates and environments <p>CONS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not generally considered as rigorous for research 	<p>PROS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easiest to implement and analyze • Strong way to track subjective measures <p>CONS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overestimation of change • Social desirability bias

“WORKSHOPPING” YOUR ASSESSMENT PLAN

- What areas have been the most difficult to complete? Why?
- Are there specific questions you already have regarding your project? Areas where you'd like feedback?
- How would you rate your plan against the rubric?
- How can we help you?

FANTASTIC FACILITATORS

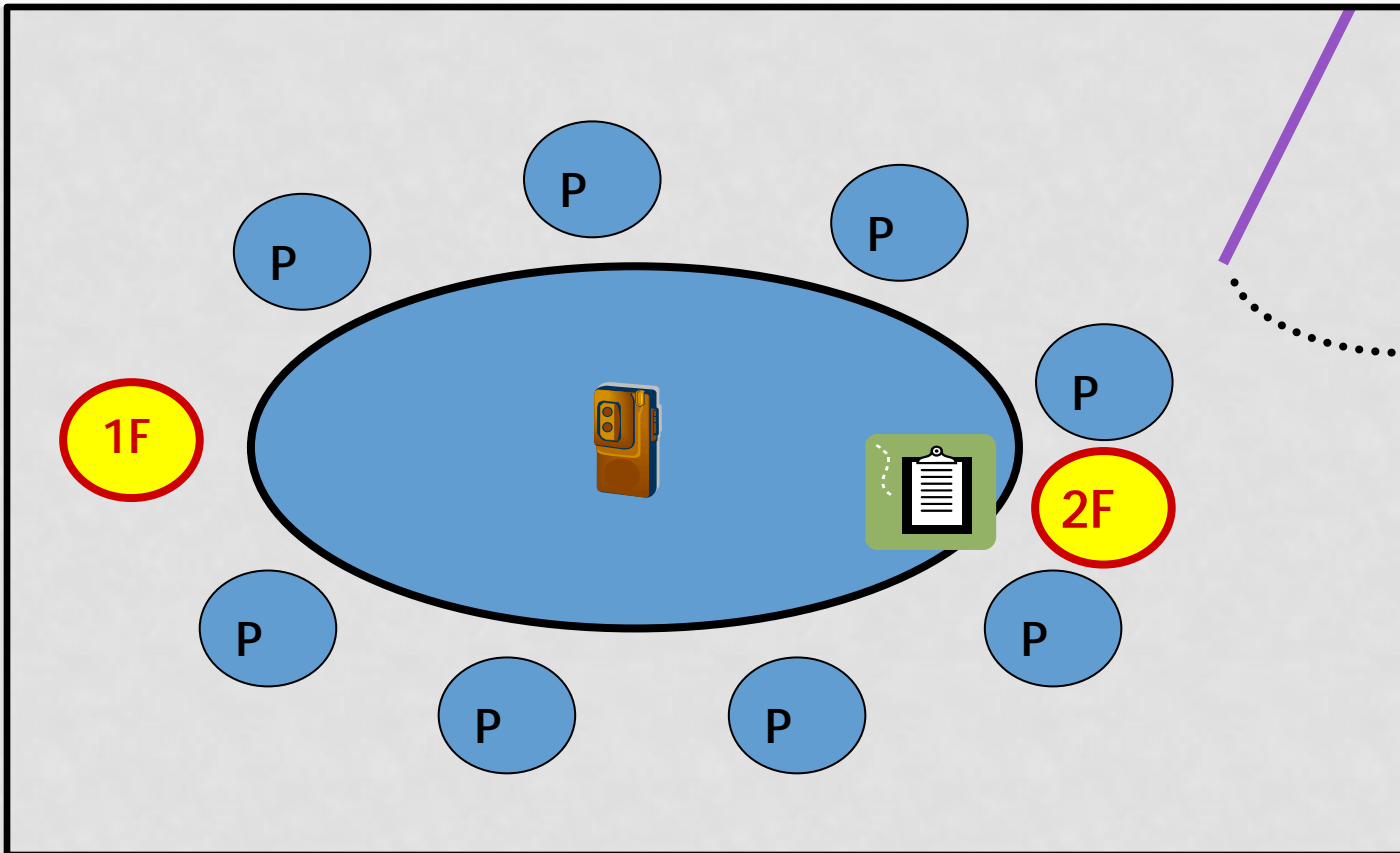
Adapted/borrowed from session
developed by Angela Baldesare at
University of Arizona

Fantastic Facilitators
of Student Affairs

USES OF FOCUS GROUPS IN ASSESSMENT

- **Qualitative information on its own** to inform direct practices for a small, specific group
- As a **pre-study**, ensuring more accurate questions and phrasing to collect the desired data
- As a **post-study** activity, gathering more information about unanswered questions
- **Test assumptions of data analysis** and results
- **Test recommendations**

ANATOMY OF A FOCUS GROUP



- Quiet, private location
- Comfortable setting
- Refreshments


- 1 Primary facilitator
- Secondary facilitator/ note taker
- 6-8 participants
- Recording device
- Script
- Questions
- Consent

RULES FOR THE GROUP



- There are no right or wrong answers
- Different points of view are okay
- You may respond to one another
- Be respectful of one another
- Give everyone an opportunity to talk
- Try not to talk over each other
- First names only
- Honor the confidentiality of the group
- Silence all cellular phones and pagers

GUIDELINES ON QUESTIONS



Icebreaker questions

Warming up to topic

Getting to the heart of the matter

Clarifying and expanding

Summarizing and closing

- Limit to 3-5 questions total
- Questions should follow a logical sequence
- Start general, moving gradually toward more specific questions
- Warm up and closing questions are helpful
- Never start or finish on a sensitive question
- Know which questions you can omit if short on time

NEUTRAL FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS AND PROBES

- Why is that?
- Can you tell me more?
- Can you give an example of that?
- Please explain what you mean.
- Can you describe what that is/was like?
- How did that happen?
- How do you feel about that?
- **Sometimes silence is the best probe of all.**

EXPLAINING CONFIDENTIALITY TO PARTICIPANTS

Confidentiality:

- Results will not be linked to individuals
- Individuals will not be identified
- "What happens here, stays here."

There are limits to confidentiality:

- No guarantee that other participants will keep focus group proceedings confidential
- If someone threatens to harm self or others, it must be reported
- Neglect or abuse of children must be reported



EXPECTATIONS OF MODERATORS

Moderator should typically be a neutral party

Before the focus group:

- Practice your introduction and questions
- Familiarize yourself with the project/topic
- Coordinate with other facilitators and staff
- Arrive early
- Determine seating around table
- Check recording equipment
- Make sure room setup is appropriate

EXPECTATIONS OF MODERATORS

During the focus group:

- Welcome people and make small talk
- Explain confidentiality and consent
- Explain ground rules
- Begin and end on-time
- Make sure everyone gets to participate
- Rephrasing questions is okay
- Hold back your opinions and reactions
- Avoid answering questions
- Use pauses and probes to get information
- Summarize key points
- "Have we missed anything?"

Use
good
active
listening
skills

EXPECTATIONS OF MODERATORS

After the focus group:

- Thank your participants
- Offer incentives (if applicable)
- Debrief with the secondary facilitator
 - High points?
 - Most important concepts discussed?
 - Quotes to remember?
 - Unexpected statements?
 - How might this group be different or similar to other groups?



COMMON CHALLENGES

- Varied participation
- Dominant talker, shy, rambler
- Too many questions
- Linear or rigid facilitator
- Questions not of interest/concern to participants
- Group doesn't want to talk
- Questions either too short (Y/N) or too abstract/rational (Why?)

MANAGING THE CONVERSATION



- Practice
- Be prepared
- Be willing to let silence work for you
- Be willing to direct the conversation