UCLA Student Affairs

Organizational Effectiveness Initiative

ASSESSMENT GUIDE

UCLA | **Student Affairs**

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Assessment Guide

The Organizational Effectiveness initiative aims to better align Student Affairs with the UCLA Strategic Plan and the Student Affairs Mission and Key Priorities, emphasizing a commitment to continuous improvement.

Assessment and Impact is one of the six key areas of the Organizational Effectiveness initiative. This area focuses on leveraging data to drive decision-making and demonstrates the impact, scope and effectiveness of our efforts.

A Change Management framework can provide a structured approach to facilitating transformational changes and support continuous improvement.

The change management process involves five essential steps:

1. **Preparing the organization for change** by helping people understand the need for change.
2. **Developing a vision and plan** that is realistic and comprehensive.
3. **Implementing changes** by empowering employees to take ownership of the process, anticipating any challenges or roadblocks, and continuously communicating the vision throughout the implementation process.
4. **Embedding changes** within the organization's culture and practices
5. **Reviewing progress and analyzing results** post-completion to understand whether changes are successful.

Although change management is primarily implemented at the organizational level, its strategies can also be adapted at both the divisional and departmental levels.

Source: Business Insights. 5 Critical Steps in the Change Management Process.
https://online.hbs.edu/blog/post/change-management-process

Our Mission and Priorities

Our Mission

Student Affairs supports the academic success of all UCLA students, fosters their intellectual, personal, social and professional development in preparation for the entirety of their lives and contributes to enhancing the quality of campus life, the educational environment and our students' relationship with the broader UCLA family, including alumni.

Student Affairs Key Priorities

I. Commitment to Academic Persistence and Excellence

Student Affairs engages the whole student in multiple dimensions of campus life at UCLA, harnessing the curiosity, intrigue and discovery that occurs within the many environments that promote teaching and learning.

II. Pursuit of Life-long Learning and Innovation

Learning is a continuing process, and is embodied in all aspects of UCLA before, during and after class. Student Affairs is a conduit and a platform for students to explore and transform their passions into life-long commitments to creative problem solving, entrepreneurialism and service.

III. Cultivate Inclusive Communities

Fostering a sense of belonging is critical for every Bruin. Student Affairs aims to empower all Bruins to play their own important role in building this diverse and inclusive campus community where the richness of our diversity is honored and where each and every student can thrive at UCLA.

IV. Champion Health and Wellbeing

In order for Bruins to succeed in any of the other priorities, they first must secure a sense of wellbeing. Caring for oneself and others transcends individual wellbeing to cultivate a culture of positive and meaningful purpose. Therefore, we foster a robust, vibrant and healthy campus.

V. Leadership for Transformative Impact
While each generation of Bruins may differ, UCLA Student Affairs provides students the opportunities to lead, challenge the status quo and create transformative impact.

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Why Assessment Matters

Assessment and data empower us to align our organizational effectiveness initiatives, inspire philanthropy, influence strategic resource and workforce planning and enhance effective communication.

A data-based assessment process highlights our area's contributions to student learning in complement to the classroom, guides us in enhancing existing programs and helps determine priorities for developing programming to support and promote a sense of belonging, life-long learning, holistic development and well-being.

Equity-Minded Assessments

The assessment cycle is a continuous process that involves planning and identifying outcomes, collecting data, engaging in sense-making/analysis, implementing improvement strategies and evaluating progress.

The National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA) recommends that practitioners take the following actions when creating assessments:

- **Check biases and ask reflective questions** throughout the assessment process to address assumptions and positions of privilege.

- **Use multiple sources of evidence** appropriate for assessment effort.

- **Include student perspectives** and determine next steps with these perspectives in mind.

- **Increase transparency** in assessment results and actions taken.

- **Ensure collected data** can be meaningfully disaggregated and interrogated.

- **Make evidence-based changes** that address opportunity gaps that are context-specific.

Source: National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment. Equity in Assessment.
https://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/equity/

Plan and Identify Outcomes

Determine outcomes through preliminary views of high-level data, such as a review of University of California Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES). Developing outcomes should involve Student Affairs professionals, administrators and students to ensure a holistic approach and a consideration of diverse needs and perspectives. As your team brainstorms outcomes, consider linking the outcomes back to one or more of the Student Affairs priorities (see Outcomes and Departmental Plan Template). Remember to assess outcomes regularly (recommendation: review annually and more comprehensively every 5 years).

There are two types of outcomes you should consider identifying for your area: Program-level and Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs). Program Outcomes and SLOs help explain how the mission of the program is put into action and/or operationalized.

	WHAT IT IS	EXAMPLE
Program Outcomes	Examine what a program is to accomplish for improvement – usually driven by needs/satisfaction.	Decrease the percentage of students experiencing stress, depression and anxiety by x% within the next [timeframe].
Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)	Examine what a student is to do or learn as a result of program or service and describe observable measureable actions.	Students practice mindfulness, exercise, time management and relaxation.

All outcomes should be SMART (Strategic/Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-Bound).
So, what does this mean?

	WHAT IT IS	GUIDING QUESTIONS
Strategic/Specific	Reflects on important dimensions of what your area seeks to accomplish (i.e., programmatic or capacity-building priorities).	What does your program/area hope to accomplish?
Measurable	Includes a standard or benchmark to be met.	Did you establish benchmarks? Have you set measurable standards?
Achievable	Is challenging enough that achievement would mean significant progress—a "stretch" for the organization.	Does your program/area have the capacity/resources to achieve this goal?
Realistic	Is not overly challenging and takes resources, capacity, and execution into consideration; it is possible to track progress and worth the time and energy to do so.	Is the goal (and plan for achieving it) realistic? Does your objective reflect the population of focus?
Time bound	Includes a clear timeline/deadline	Did you establish a deadline or timeframe?

Collecting Data

Data use starts with developing goals that are concrete, measurable and aligned with UCLA's Strategic Plan and Student Affairs key priorities (see the Plan and Identify Outcomes section). When starting the data collection stage, collect baseline data (i.e., data about how things currently stand) for each outcome to have a comparison point to measure progress.

Types of Data

Knowing the different data types can help identify what information should be collected to enhance understanding of student experiences.

	PURPOSE:	SOURCE EXAMPLES:
Quantitative Data	Provide numeric data about experiences that are representative of a population.	Surveys, student counts, utilization counts, student records.
Qualitative Data	Provide rich, descriptive information that allows you to uncover the nuances, details and insights – meanings and details of experiences.	Focus groups, interviews (one-on-one, structured or semi-structured), observations, open-ended survey questions, analysis of written feedback.

Student Affairs assessment often involves quantitative data (e.g., utilization rates, numerical data points from surveys, etc.) or qualitative data (e.g., student testimonies, student anecdotes, etc.). A mixed methods approach can provide a richer understanding of student experiences since quantitative data can show trends and reveal opportunity gaps within services, and qualitative data can provide the "why" something may be happening.

Collecting Existing Data

The Student Affairs Information & Research Office (SAIRO) administers a variety of surveys aimed at understanding the experiences, demographics and outcomes of the UCLA student population, such as:

- **University of California Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES)** offers an in-depth examination of the undergraduate experience, including educational experiences, student well-being, plans and aspirations, satisfaction with campus culture, time use, participation in community service, involvement in academic activities, student life and development, access to courses and services, and most recently, housing and food insecurity.

- **First Destination Survey (FDS)** is administered at UCLA every year. This survey provides comprehensive data that can be used to inform and shape career expectations of current undergraduate, new alumni and prospective students on information about post-graduate plans for employment and continuing education, quality of post-graduate readiness, Career Center utilization and internship placement.

- **National College Health Assessment (NCHA)** collects data on attitudes, beliefs and health behaviors of a random sample of UCLA students with content on health and wellness, campus health behavior, safety, preventive care and insurance behavior, mental wellness and sexual behavior. The survey is anonymous and does not collect students' personally identifiable information or University ID.

- **Entering Student Survey (ESS)** provides baseline data about our new student population and includes topics on past activities and engagement, anticipated activities and engagement, skills and abilities, interaction with others, health and wellbeing, campus climate, finances/basic needs, background and characteristics. The Transfer Success Team has used the Entering Student Survey to understand the needs of current transfer student population and identify the resources that are prioritized for the year. Additionally, they have used this data to decide which collaborations to prioritize for programming at the Transfer Student Center.

Example of how institutional surveys have informed decision-making in Student Affairs:

Case Study: UCLA Recreation

In 2019, UCLA Recreation partnered with SAIRO to analyze data linking facility usage with UCUES survey responses by matching Fusion data (card swipe entries to Recreation facilities) to UCUES questions.

They found that students who frequently use Recreation facilities report significantly better mental health and wellbeing, feeling less hindered by stress and depression. Visiting Recreation facilities at least 42 times strongly predicts positive mental health outcomes.

This insight has been pivotal for UCLA Recreation in shaping its mission and vision. They have embraced a holistic approach to wellbeing and health equity, reflected in their updated mission statement: "To create inclusive and accessible spaces and experiences where all are empowered to pursue their wellbeing," and their vision of achieving health equity for all Bruins.

Their commitment extends to enhancing support for proactive student mental health through initiatives encouraging exercise and nutrition and promoting social engagement through their co-leadership of the Healthy Campus Initiative's Engage Well pod. They continuously assess how their facilities and programs impact the wellbeing of UCLA students to understand and enhance the positive impact of their programs on student wellbeing.

Surveys have been pivotal for UCLA Recreation in shaping its mission and vision. They have embraced a holistic approach to wellbeing and health equity, and updated their mission statement as a result.

Additional resources are available via our campus partners and the UC Information Center.

[Academic Budget and Planning (APB)](#) provides undergraduate admissions, enrollment, degrees and program completion data.

[UCLA Graduate Education](#) website provides a snapshot of graduate admissions, enrollment and student outcomes.

[UC Information Center](#) provides system-wide data on topics such as Basic Needs, undergraduate and graduate student experience, admissions and transfers and student financial support.
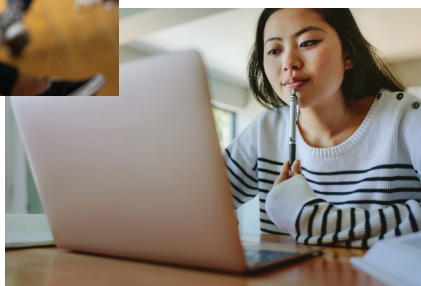
Assessment support can be requested using SAIRO's [Assessment Plan form.](#)

Department/Program-Level Assessment

Department/Program-level data can be collected via focus groups, interviews, surveys, Questions Wall method, etc., to understand student experiences accessing services. While most of the data collection at the department level may be to assess students' experiences accessing the service, something to consider may be to capture the experiences of those those who have yet to access the service.

Common Data Collection Methods in Student Affairs

Surveys	Allows for a larger outreach of students. Qualitative information is captured through open-ended, free-form questions that allow students to type in their thoughts and experiences rather than having to select from a pre-determined set of answers.
Focus Groups	Facilitated discussion with small groups (generally 5-6 students) that explore a topic in detail, providing insights into shared experiences and perspectives.
Interviews	Direct one-on-one conversations to gather in-depth information about student experiences, perspectives and opinions about specific topics. This method is best used for hard-to-reach and/or vulnerable student populations or sensitive issues.
Questions Wall method	Involves creating a physical wall where students can write down their questions, ideas, etc., or respond to specific topics or inquiries.
Analysis of Student Records	Analyzing student records involves assessing demographic information and student characteristics, student success data, etc., to identify gaps or areas of concern.
Systematic Observations	Involves observing student behavior and interactions in various settings in a structured way to reduce bias and increase the reliability of data collection. Systematic observation provides information about student engagement and participation. Please fill out SAIRO's Assessment Plan form for assistance with this method.

Available survey tools:

MyUCLA — Best for: Collecting small amounts of data and for non-complex surveys.	
Pros: • Allows for the collection of UIDs and UCLA emails without having to ask students to input the information. • Behind secure, internal site.	Cons: • Not ideal for anonymous data collection. • Output often requires additional cleaning compared to other survey tools. • Does not have great respondent management features or streamlined survey experience.
Google/Microsoft Forms — Best for: Collecting small amounts of data and for non-complex- surveys.	
Pros: • Requires minimal training to use because of its simple interface. • Offers a good variety of survey question types. • It has great collaboration features.	Cons: • It is difficult to customize questions to respondent answers (i.e., limited branching logic). • Limited options for controlling types of access.
Qualtrics — Best for: Enhanced survey management and analysis; creating customizable surveys to reduce survey fatigue.	
Pros: • Streamlined survey experience (i.e., logic branching that allows customization of the questions students see). • Improved respondent management (i.e., sending reminders, tracking response rates, etc.). • Allows for data analysis within the tool (i.e., text analysis, statistical tools, etc.). • Reporting capabilities. • More advanced collaborative features, such as detailed control over user permissions/data sharing.	Cons: • Has a learning curve (SAIRO team is available to assist with survey design).

Questions to Consider Before Conducting an Assessment

- Does this information already exist within the institution?
- What specific outcomes related to student experience and success are you trying to accomplish?
- How do you plan to analyze the data about student experiences and outcomes?
- What timeline do you have for conducting this assessment?
- What methods will you use to collect the data and why (e.g., surveys, focus groups, interviews)?
- What resources (time, personnel, etc.) are required to conduct this assessment effectively?
- How will you take action based on the results to improve student support services?
- How will you communicate the results to community stakeholders, including students and staff?

Analyzing Data

Identifying Opportunity Gaps

When analyzing student data, a primary focus should be identifying disparities between student groups (for example, Pell recipients compared to non-Pell recipients) based on one or more outcomes, such as access to support services. The process by which you examine outcomes by student groups is known as data disaggregation. Disaggregated data allows you to identify between-group differences.

System-level data and trends provide a birds-eye view of the impacts of systemic/structural inequities. UCOP's UC 2030 aims to close equity gaps among low-income, first-generation, Black, Latinx and Native American students. As of 2023, at UCLA, 4-year graduation rates (Goal 2) for underrepresented groups, i.e., Black, Latinx and Native American students, (79%), first-generation (81%) and Pell recipients (83%) trailed behind compared to UCLA's overall student population (85%).

Since graduation rates are a lagging indicator (reflecting past success outcomes), UCOP recommends using first-year retention rates as a leading indicator (early signal) to represent a ceiling of a cohort's eventual graduation rate since students who stop out are less likely to return to campus. As of 2022, retention rates were 95% for both first-year underrepresented students and Pell recipients, compared to 96% for UCLA students overall. So, what other factors are contributing to disparities in graduation rates?

The work within Student Affairs at UCLA is critical to supporting student success by identifying factors contributing to these opportunity gaps and enhancing student support. Departmental and program-level opportunity gaps can be identified by ensuring that the data you are reviewing is disaggregated (or can be disaggregated via UIDs) and critically interrogating data. For example, in your data analysis, you find that your service may not reach first-generation students. There may be something in how services are advertised (or even a process/practice) in place that affects outreach, so the next step is figure out why.

Equity-Minded Sensemaking

Review data to determine areas where the program or service must adapt to achieve your desired outcomes. Consider using Equity-Minded Sensemaking when in the analyzing stage. Equity-Minded Sensemaking goes beyond identifying opportunity gaps to interpreting them as indicators of ineffective practices (McNair, Bensimon, Malcolm-Piquex, 2020, p. 61). When reviewing data disaggregated by various student groups, consider the following:

- **What patterns do you see in the data?**
- **Which student groups are experiencing disadvantage?**
- **What might be contributing to the equity gaps?**
- **What additional information is needed to better understand opportunity gaps?**
- **What questions might you ask for a deeper understanding?**
- **How might you use this information to inform goal setting?**

Interpreting data in this way allows us to understand situations through a critical lens. It helps us identify gaps in our services. It is essential to keep in mind that students occupy different identities throughout the sensemaking process, and one identity may be more salient than another, depending on situational experiences. It is important to capture this aspect in the assessment processs.

Technique to Dig Deeper: Root Cause Analysis

	Purpose:	How to:
5 Whys	An iterative interrogative technique is used to explore cause-and-effect relationships and reach the fundamental reasons behind disparities instead of addressing immediate problems/individual cases.	Most effective when used in a group with varied perspectives and knowledge: 1. Create a focused problem statement and ensure group consensus. 2. Unpack root causes 3. Have the group write a problem statement and write sub-problems (or causes) underneath. 4. Ask, "Why does this happen?" for each cause until they get to a root cause. Generally, there are five "why" questions before reaching the "root cause."

As you engage in this exercise, it is also important to anticipate unintended challenges that occur throughout the academic year. Discussing with your team and planning potential solutions to these challenges may be helpful.

Resource: Organizational Process Improvement. 5 Whys Exercise. https://media.wcwpds.wisc.edu/PDSA%20Online%20Toolkit/Plan_Problem%20Exploration_Test%20Selection/5%20Whys%20Exercise.pdf

Implementing Changes

Creating a thorough plan can aid with the implementation of changes. A comprehensive plan should include the desired outcomes that were developed in earlier stages of the assessment process, details about who will lead the task of implementing changes and what action steps will be taken to meet the department's goal (see Outcomes and Departmental Plan Template). Once you have identified any service gaps, developed your area outcomes and created a plan, you can implement the necessary changes to help your program meet student needs. Ideally, any adjustments to programming should be informed by the assessment process results.

Assessing Impact of Change

The objective of assessment is continuous improvement, so once these changes have been implemented, the assessment cycle begins again. After developing outcomes (which are your indicators to measure success) and collecting baseline data for the outcome you intend to measure, you can then assess whether the intervention had positive or negative effects. Successful changes are shown when you have met your outcome goal, whether closing opportunity gaps in access or increasing success outcomes for a specific population.

For additional questions about the assessment process, please contact SAIRO at sairo@saonet.ucla.edu.