



THE UNIVERSITY OF
KANSAS

The Truth About Assessment: Debunking Widespread Misconceptions

Kevin W. Joseph, Ph.D.
Student Affairs

Cynthia Goudeau, Ph.D.
Undergraduate Studies
& Student Affairs

Presentation Overview

- Foundations of General Assessment Practice in Student Affairs & Undergraduate Studies
- Overview and Orientation to Assessment Practice at KU
- Assessment Misconceptions and Tips
- Conclusion
- Q&A





Today's Learning Outcomes

After participating in today's session, participants will be able to...

- Explain the differences between research, assessment, and evaluation.
- Explain the process of choosing the best tool for your assessment.
- Describe the different types of assessment.
- Recognize the advantages and disadvantages of a pre-test/post-test design.
- Apply discussed tips and strategies in future assessment projects.

The University of Kansas

■ Facts & Figures

- Major public research and teaching institution of 28,000 students and 2,600 faculty on five campuses (Lawrence, Kansas City, Overland Park, Wichita, & Salina)
- Comprised of 13 schools, including the only schools of pharmacy and medicine in the state
- 70% undergraduate students





The University of Kansas

Undergraduate Studies

- Academic Achievement and Access Center
- Center for Service Learning
- Center for Undergraduate Research
- Experiential Learning
- KU Writing Center
- Lt. Gen. William K. Jones Military-Affiliated Student Center
- Office of First-Year Experience
- Undergraduate Advising Center
- University Career Center
- Strategic Initiatives

Student Affairs

- KU Recreation Services
- Counseling & Psychological Services
- KU Student Housing
- Watkins Health Services
- Student Conduct & Community Standards
- Hilltop Child Development Center
- Sexual Assault Prevention and Education Center
- KU Memorial Union
- Legal Services for Students
- Student Money Management Services
- Student Involvement and Leadership Center



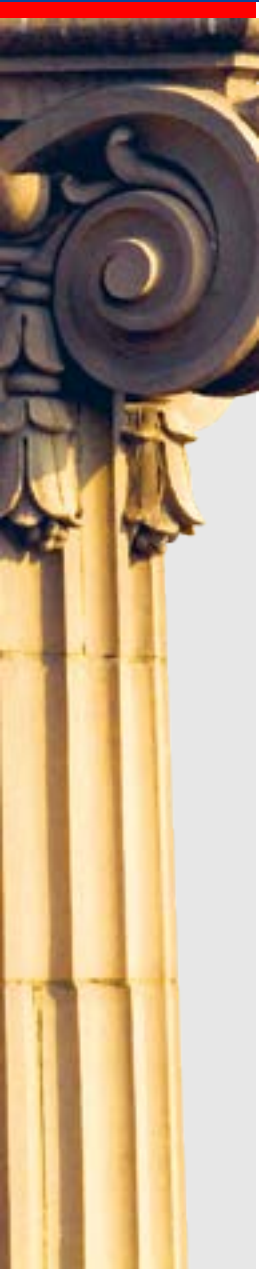
KU Undergraduate Studies

- New Assessment Specialist for Undergraduate Studies hired in July 2016
- Involved Parties
 - Undergraduate Studies Assessment Committee & Undergraduate Studies Leadership Team
- Key Highlights
 - Assessment Committee Formation and Implementation
 - Student Learning Outcomes Development
 - Division-level, department-level, and course-/program-level
 - Assessment Planning & Reporting
 - All 10 Undergraduate Studies departments are directly and indirectly measuring student learning
 - Communication of Assessment Efforts
 - Newsletter highlights, All-Staff meetings, UGS website

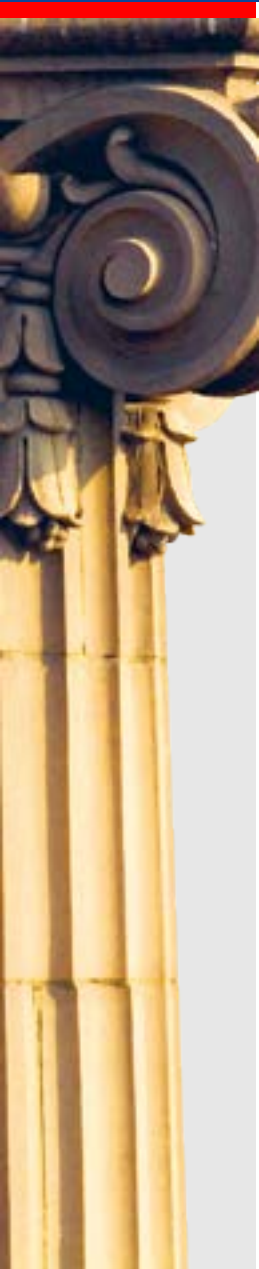


KU Student Affairs

- New Director of Student Affairs Assessment hired July 2015
- Involved Parties
 - Student Affairs Assessment Committee, Student Affairs Leadership Team, & Student Affairs Staff
- Key Highlights
 - Student Learning Outcomes Alignment
 - KU SLOs ➡ SA SLOs ➡ Department SLOs ➡ Program/Service SLOs
 - Student Learning Outcomes Projects Implemented
 - All 11 Student Affairs departments are measuring student learning
 - Assessment Plan & Report Templates
 - Used to document assessment projects
 - Communication of Assessment Efforts
 - Annual Report, Monthly Updates



What are some of the misconceptions you witness in relation to assessment on your campus?



Misconception #1:
Assessment projects are not of any *real*
value to me or my department.



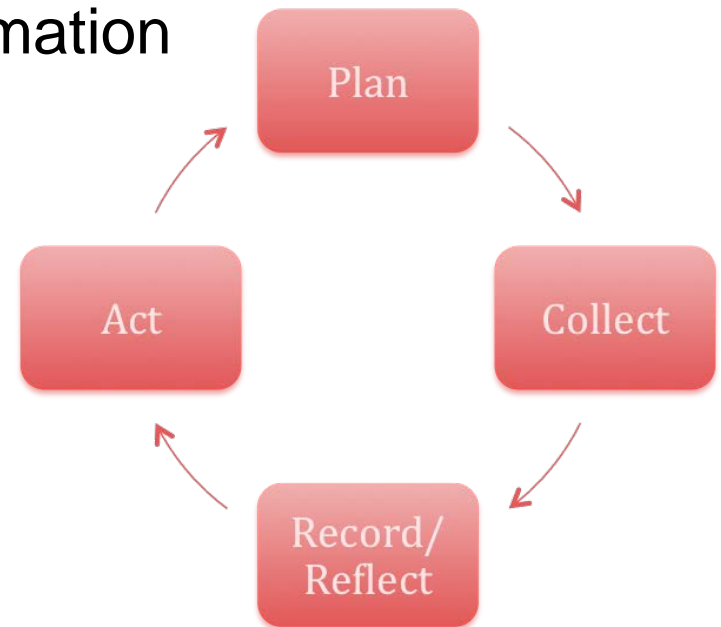
Valuable Assessment

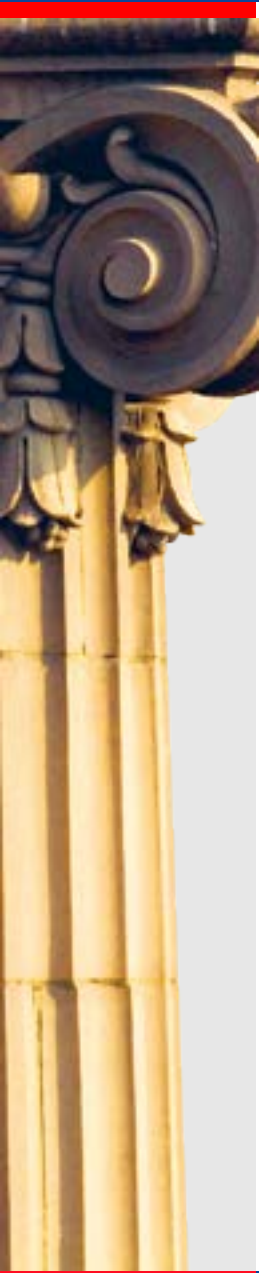
- **The goal of assessment is to optimize student success by**
 - Improving program quality (through self-reflection)
 - Adjust co-curricular services
 - Celebrate success
 - Plan interventions
 - Informing students
 - Introduce learning outcomes
 - Encourage active participation in the learning process
 - Informing parents
 - Highlight the effectiveness of educational services
 - Providing accountability to stakeholders
 - Exhibit student achievement or lack thereof

Valuable Assessment

■ **Designing valuable assessments:**

- Consider the purpose
- Consider the best method
- Construct your tool
- Utilize the data and information
 - Close the loop





Misconception #2:
Assessment, research, and evaluation are
all the same thing.



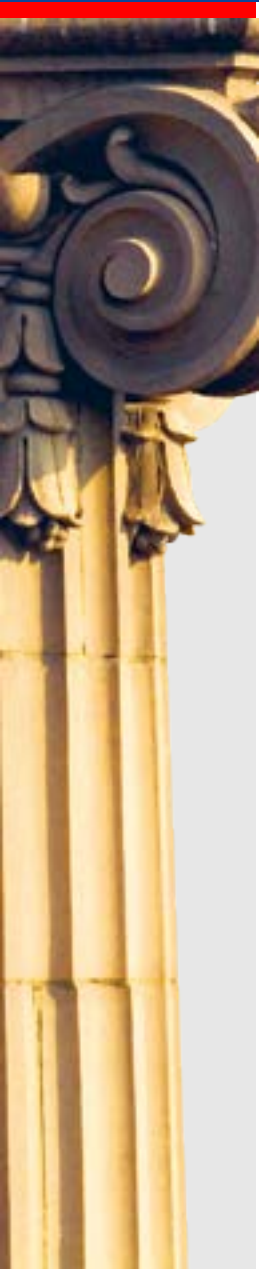
Assessment, Research, & Evaluation

■ Commonalities:

- Based on pertinent questions
- Include collection of data
- Include analysis of data
- May utilize qualitative, quantitative, and/or mixed methodologies

Assessment, Research, & Evaluation

	Assessment	Research	Evaluation
Purpose	Continuous improvement	Advance broad knowledge and theory	Determine value or merit
Focus	Educational progression	Intellectual curiosities	Strengths and weaknesses
Primary Audience	Internal stakeholders	Researchers and scholars	External stakeholders
Timeframe	Ongoing	Varies	Provides a snapshot
Generalizability	Applies to a targeted population	Generalizable to larger populations	Specific to a program



Misconception #3:
Surveys are always the best tool for my
assessment projects.

Assessment Tools

■ Survey Definition

- Data collection tool used to gather information about a group of people within a target population

■ Appropriate Use of Surveys

- Addressing certain outcomes
 - Attitudes, beliefs, and values
 - Satisfaction/perception
- Lacking data
- Capacity to share results/findings

■ Survey Issues

- Survey fatigue
- Failure to utilize data
- Meaningless questions



Assessment Tools

■ What is the best tool for my assessment?

- The tool that measures your outcome in an effective and efficient manner while providing meaningful data.

Evidence Type	Examples of Non-Survey Assessment Tools
Knowledge or comprehension	Quizzes/tests, concept maps, essays, portfolios, or projects
Skills, abilities, or behaviors	Rubrics, checklists, or simulators
Attitudes, values, or beliefs	Reflective writing, focus groups, or interviews
Satisfaction, engagement, or perceptions	Focus groups or interviews
Usage or participation levels	Institutional data

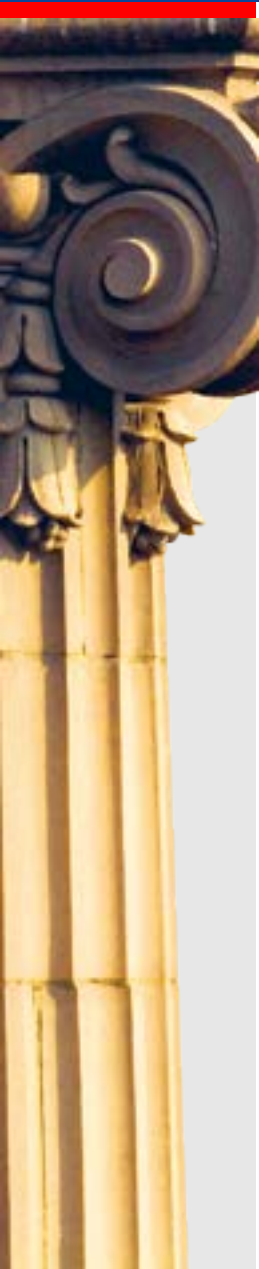
Assessment Tools

- **Additional Considerations**

Population/
Sample Size

Assessment
Frequency

Various Time
Constraints



Misconception #4:
Learning outcomes are required for all
assessment projects.



Assessment Types

- **Student Learning Outcomes**

- *Measures what students learn from their participation in offered services, programs, and activities*

- **Tracking Use of Services, Programs & Facilities**

- *Monitors how many students are using our services, programs, and facilities (i.e. raw numbers, frequency, age, class standing, gender, race/ethnicity, etc.)*

- **Student Needs Assessment**

- *Identifies students' needs and monitors how they change over time.*

- **Student Satisfaction**

- *Measures the level of student satisfaction with services, programs, and facilities.*



Assessment Types

- **Campus Climate**

- *Identifies how various groups of students experience the university.*

- **Outcomes Assessment**

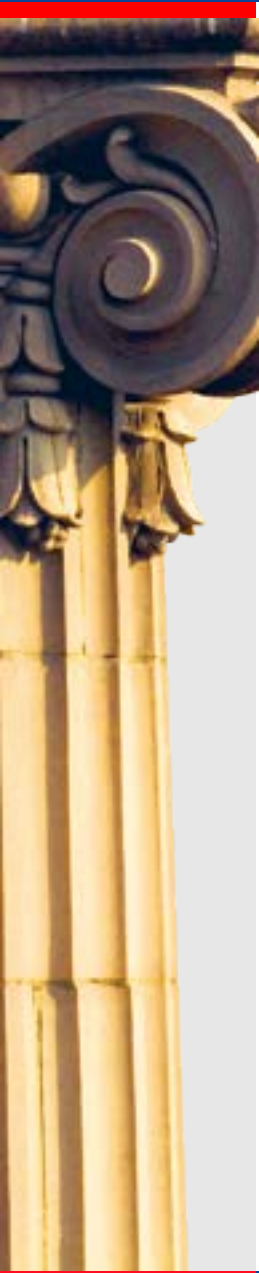
- *Measures outcomes associated with higher education— not necessarily focused on a specific program or service.*

- **Benchmarking**

- *Compares the quality of and student satisfaction with services, programs, and facilities with peer institutions.*

- **Professional Standards**

- *Measures how services, programs and facilities compare to accepted national standards.*



Misconception #5:
A pre-test/post-test design is necessary to
measure impact of my program on student
learning.



Pre-test/Post-test Design

Same/similar tests or instruments are administered to assess an individual's command of knowledge or skills before and after a learning experience.

Advantages:

- Multiple data points provide a point of comparison from beginning to end
- Easily determine any improvement from beginning to end
- Useful for determining where knowledge and skill deficiencies exist and where they are most frequently developed
- May provide guidance for future activities

Disadvantages:

- Time consuming for all!
- Hard to determine if positive change is actually due to learning experience
- Meaningful comparisons require pre-test and post-test paired responses
- Prior level of knowledge impacts ability to properly judge baseline
- Tendency to teach to the post-test



Pre-test/Post-test Design Alternatives

- **Provide Specific Question Prompts**

- **Survey**

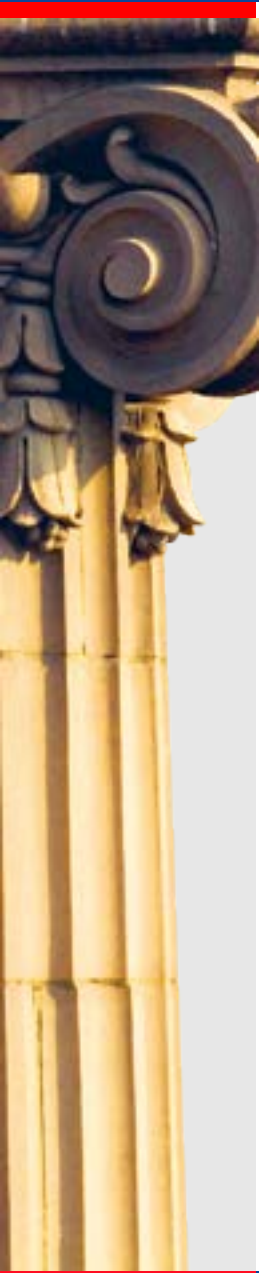
- **Example:** Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements. “As a result of participating in today’s session, I am able to...”
 - Explain the differences between research, assessment, and evaluation.
 - Describe the different types of assessment.
 - Etc.

- **Notecard Assessment**

- **Example:** Student Money Management Workshop Assessment
 - Please list at least one money management concept learned during today’s workshop presentation.

- **Reflection Paper**

- **Example:** Fraternity & Sorority Life- NPHC/MGC IMPACT Retreat
 - Please name one thing you’ve learned this weekend and explain how you plan to use this knowledge to effect change in your chapter.



Misconception #6:
Student learning can be measured using
the same instrument for all services and
programs.



Measuring Student Learning

- **Student learning outcomes should...**
 - Specifically address the program, service, event, and/or activity being assessed
 - *Example: “Students participating in Enroll-a-thon...”*
 - Clearly define what students will gain from the specific program, service, event and/or activity
 - *Example: “...will be able to identify at least one campus resource they can use to overcome future advising holds”*
- **Create instruments that assess specific programs, services, events and/or activities**
 - Define the program/service/event/activity
 - Think about what students can/should learn from the program/service/event/activity
 - Draft learning outcomes
- **Some standard questions may exist on all instruments**
 - Demographics, satisfaction, marketing-related, etc.



Conclusion

- **In summary:**

- When done properly, assessment serves as a mechanism for continuous improvement and accountability.
- Assessment, research, and evaluation have similarities, but differ in terms of their overall purpose.
- When choosing an assessment tool, consider the type of evidence and size of your population.
- Student learning outcomes are only necessary for student learning projects.
- Before you utilize a pre-test/post-test design, consider alternative ways to collect information of interest.
- Create instruments that assess specific programs, services, events, and/or activities.

Questions

