Research and Assessment for Noncredit Colleges and Programs

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Background and Description
Background

This briefing and inquiry guide responds to the needs for improving noncredit student learning by:

- Addressing the complexities of gathering and measuring noncredit data.
- Focusing on current noncredit needs in assessing student learning and institutional effectiveness.
- Building a sound evidence-based infrastructure to help improve the quality and dissemination of actionable data and information.
- Creating evidence-based opportunities to improve teaching and learning.
Description

This briefing and inquiry guide will help to:

• Maximize the use of resources that are available within and outside of your institution that drive good practice,
• Use sound metrics to assess student success and progress,
• Solidify the structure and processes involved in conducting noncredit research, and
• Collaboratively use data to inform teaching and learning.
Research & Assessment Framework

- Evidence
- Data and Measurement Needs
- Infrastructure
- Implementation
Framework Components

Data and Measurement Needs
• Strategies for gathering and managing the quality and integrity of information

Evidence
• Strategies for satisfying research needs for student outcomes

Infrastructure
• Structures and processes to help build an evidence-based infrastructure

Implementation of Data
• Connections to the linkage of data between budget and planning
Guided Inquiry

INSTITUTIONAL SNAPSHOT

1. Which methods of data collection do you utilize, and what other methods could you utilize? Consider both homegrown and state-mandated assessments.

2. How does your noncredit college or program define student success?

3. How does data impact decision-making processes in your noncredit college or program?

4. Does student data contribute to your noncredit planning regarding student success?

5. How would you describe your data capability? (e.g. What are your procedures for requesting data? What processes guide noncredit research? Do your processes support collaborative inquiry?) If so, how?
Guided Inquiry

MOVING FORWARD

1. How could data be used to improve your work in noncredit?
2. In what way could research best benefit noncredit?
3. What noncredit measures would benefit teaching and learning? What measures could be redefined or repurposed?
Components and Strategies
Data and Measurement Needs

**Strategies to Increase Data Accuracy**
- Collect student data (i.e., SSNs) via in-class application or secure electronic keypads or website or promotional campaigns

**Strategies to Better Report Student Data**
- Identify and correct gaps in reporting (e.g., CB21)

**Collect Student Basic Data**
- Gather information on student demographics, employment, education goal, and support needs
Data and Measurement Needs

- Make Use of Surveys & Focus Groups
  - Gather information about student satisfaction and perception

- Use Multiple Measures
  - Fill in gaps in information and validate existing data

- Make Use of Outside Resources
  - Explore external licensed assessments or regional and statewide databases
Guided Inquiry

INSTITUTIONAL SNAPSHOT

1. What strategies does your noncredit college or program utilize to collect student identification data? How is the quality and integrity of this data managed?

2. Describe data collection methods that your college or program utilizes to explore student learning.
Guided Inquiry

MOVING FORWARD

1. What might your next steps be to maximize collection and quality of student identification data?

2. Of the data collection methods that you currently use, what additional collection methods might you explore to meet your data and measurement needs?

3. What would your next steps be to begin implementing a new data collection method, and who might be involved in each of the steps?
Sources of Evidence

Qualitative Measures
Have personal goals been achieved? How do students feel about a program or service that they have utilized? What other needs are not being met?

SLO Assessments
What should students do, know or value at the completion of a course, program, certificate or student service program experience?

Completion Indicators
Are students attaining their goals? Are there differences in goal attainment by age, ethnicity or gender?
Sources of Evidence

**Milestones**

Which goals are students meeting or failing to meet? At which points along the pathway to their goal are they advancing, stalling, or stopping out?

**Benchmarks**

How does performance of students who benefitted from a particular service compare to similar students who did not utilize that service?

**Longitudinal Tracking**

Where do students initially place and how do they progress through ESL, through CDCP courses and to credit programs and outcomes?
Guided Inquiry

INSTITUTIONAL SNAPSHOT

1. What in-house or external assessment strategies does your noncredit college or program currently utilize to measure student learning?

2. Who are the practitioners/groups involved in noncredit research and exploring the results?
Guided Inquiry

MOVING FORWARD

1. What additional assessment methods could your noncredit college or program use to improve measurement of student learning?

2. What might your next steps be in the development of sustainable assessment structures?

3. What resources would you need to support and maximize student learning measurement within your infrastructure?
Building Your Infrastructure

Research Committee Purpose

• Helps to prioritize ongoing and ad hoc requests
• Ensures data are linked to improving planning and budgeting
• Determines venues for discussing, contextualizing, evaluating data
• Represents the interests and needs of all constituency groups

Build Standard Procedures and Forms

• Clear instructions as to the avenue for requesting data
• Research request forms
• Guidelines regarding data security, use, and dissemination
• Investigator guidelines for human subjects
Guided Inquiry

INSTITUTIONAL SNAPSHOT

1. What processes and procedures do you currently have in place to manage ongoing noncredit research? How are ad hoc request handled?

2. How effective are these efforts? How widespread is the usage of these processes and procedures?
Guided Inquiry

MOVING FORWARD

1. What challenges exist to the integration of these infrastructural elements within noncredit?

2. Which infrastructural elements, processes or procedures could be implemented to better manage the use and dissemination of data?
Implementation of Data
What is a Research Agenda?

- A useful organizing strategy
- A descriptive map of a way forward
- A means to help balance and link research
- A powerful communication tool
- A mechanism for facilitating college-wide dialog and building a culture of inquiry
1. Identify a lead group to develop and implement agenda.

2. Review goals, strategies and priorities to measure.

3. Conduct needs assessment to identify gaps in existing and needed research.

4. Prioritize research and identify resources.

5. Establish and align indicators to goals and measures.

6. Link research to other college plans and initiatives.

7. Establish reporting cycle.

8. Share agenda with constituencies to obtain feedback and inform.
## Action Research Approach

### Developing the Research Agenda
- What and who will be researched?
- How is research tied to college plans, goals, initiatives and/or activities?
- How will information be used/by whom/how often?
- Which methodology or approach will be used?

### Turning Data into Information
- What do the data tell us?
- Which questions were fully answered by the research and which need more exploration?
- What are reasonable benchmarks based on the research?

### Taking Action on the Information
- What interventions or strategies do we need to deploy in order to move the needle?
- How should this information be shared and applied across?
Program Review Process

**Step 1**
- Select Programs

**Step 2**
- Select Indicators

**Step 3**
- Identify Cycle

**Step 4**
- Select Forms

**Step 5**
- Identify Program Review Committee
Guided Inquiry

INSTITUTIONAL SNAPSHOT

1. Which groups or initiatives might benefit from a research agenda?
2. What is the current climate on your campus toward action research?
3. What is your current noncredit program review process? Which programs and stakeholders are involved, and what is their role in the program review process? Has there been recent discussion surrounding expanding or re-evaluating your program review processes?
Guided Inquiry

MOVING FORWARD

1. Think of one group or initiative in particular that would benefit from a research agenda, how might you begin the process of implementing it?
2. What role can you play to strengthen action research and program review?
3. Which other constituency groups on campus might benefit from the action research approach?
4. How might you begin to integrate the program review process with the action research approach?
Evaluation
Evaluation

• Key stakeholders can work through the Guided Inquiry questions to identify strengths and opportunities, milestones and expected outcomes.

• Create an action plan to help execute strategies for researching and assessing the effectiveness of these efforts.

• Create a rubric to evaluate the implementation of strategies and activities outlined in the four components of the Research and Assessment Framework presented in this guide.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>BRIC TAP Inquiry Guide Series</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Assessing Student Learning Outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Using an Equity Lens to Assess Student Learning (CUE Module)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Assessing Strategic Intervention Points in Student Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. A Model for Building Information Capacity and Promoting a Culture of Inquiry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Assessing and Planning for Institutional Effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Assessing Basic Skills Outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Maximizing the Program Review Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Turning Data into Meaningful Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Research and Assessment for Noncredit Institutions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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