

# Measuring the Impact of Student Engagement

May 24, 2005

# Challenges

- Differing definitions of student engagement
- Which is more important: measurement of the quantity and quality of student engagement or measurement of institutional effectiveness in providing high-quality experiences that impact students and the community?
- Co-curricular engagement may be as important as curricular engagement
- Many measures of student engagement quality and impact can be measured only indirectly or long after the fact.

# Measures for Evaluating Quantity and Quality of Student Engagement

- Number of students, number of hours, number of classes, number of external organizations served
- Grades in co-ops, internships, service-learning courses, practica, field placements, etc.
- Community/agency evaluations of student quantity and quality of engagement
- Student transcripts of service/engagement
- Pre- and post-tests or testing of engaged students versus control groups
- Testing of student learning, mastery of content, and analytical sophistication; surveying of student attitudes

# Measures for Evaluating Quantity and Quality of Student Engagement

- Student engagement journals
- Student self-evaluation of engagement experiences  
Student responses to the National Survey of Student Engagement national and local questions
- Electronic portfolios of student engagement reflecting ideas, attitudes, and degrees of sophistication in considering civic issues
- Civic engagement narratives by graduating students considering the relationship between their education and their relationship with the community.
- Open-ended interviews, focus groups, exit interviews

# Measures for Evaluating Quantity and Quality of Student Engagement

- Student body analysis based on dividing the student body into sub-groups and assessing characteristics of each group at a given time and over time. (University of Alaska, Anchorage)
- Longitudinal studies of former students for continuing engagement, community leadership, civic orientation
- Qualitative stories/anecdotes
- Research on experiential education

# Ensuring Comparability across Measures

- Outcomes vary by project and discipline. Greatest comparability will be of student engagement experiences in comparable departments or curricula at similar universities, not between one or more universities' student engagement work across the board.
- Divide the student bodies of multiple universities into like cohorts and compare these similar cohorts.
- Seek comparability via commonalities among universities' missions and goals for students/ graduates.

# Measuring the Impact of Student Engagement on Student Learning and the Community

- Some impacts on students and the community can be measured directly; most require indirect means and viewing over time.
  - Attitudinal surveys as students and alumni
  - Numbers, size, and strength of campus organizations organized around service—service fraternities, Habitat for Humanity, etc.
  - Number of available service-learning opportunities and cooperating community/agency partners

# Measuring the Impact of Student Engagement on Student Learning and the Community

- Measures of institution-community trust, engagement, reciprocity
- Percentage of students participating in engagement activities
- Sustainability of university partnerships
- Citizenship outcomes: number/percentage of alumni involved in community service and leadership