

## **“I Have a Few Questions”: Reframing Assessment Practice as Asking and Answering Questions That Matter**

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*Abstract:* Student affairs educators are asked fundamental questions about programming and its effectiveness. Stakeholders (e.g., students, parents, accreditors) ask *what* programming (e.g., activities, strategies, curriculum) is offered, *why* it is offered, and *who* benefits in terms of learning and development (e.g., Carpenter, 2001; US Department of Education, 2006). Given these questions are typical and expected, I illustrate how outcomes assessment can be represented as a process of answering common and pertinent questions that matter in higher education. In turn, the assessment process is presented as a valued activity to student affairs educators, not something novel or an add-on. Moreover, a question-answering approach has been shown to be less controlling than direct appeals (Walton & Wilson, 2018), prompting subsequent task engagement (Wood et al., 2016). Therefore, processing assessment-related questions should prompt engagement in outcomes assessment.

*Keywords:* outcomes assessment, question-behavior effect, behavioral intention

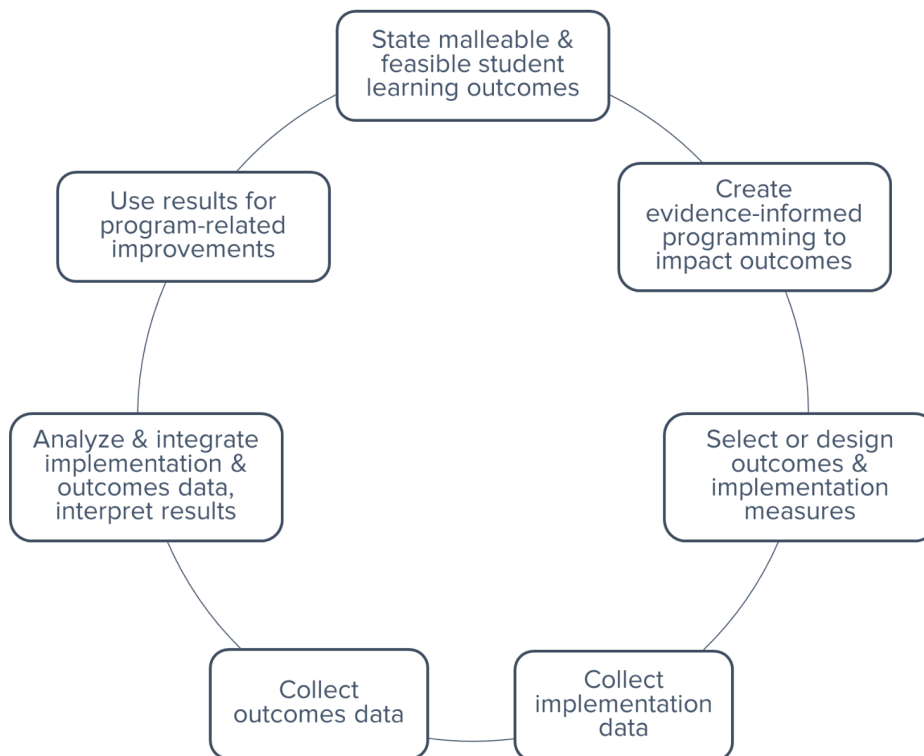
High-quality outcomes assessment can provide evidence of the impact of programming on student learning and development (Evans et al., 2018; Finney et al., 2021; Roohr et al., 2021), which can inform educational programming changes (Ewell, 2009; Fulcher et al., 2014) and policy changes (e.g., changing approaches to roommate matching in housing; Blimling, 2013). One widely noted description of outcomes assessment comes from Suskie (2018, p. 8):

1. Establish clear, observable expected *goals* for student learning.
2. Ensure that students have sufficient *opportunities* to achieve those goals.
3. Systematically gather, analyze, and interpret *evidence* of how well student learning meets those goals.
4. Use the resulting information to understand and *improve* student learning.

This description is often further specified figuratively, as demonstrated in Figure 1.

This assessment process may be perceived as difficult or ambiguous to student affairs educators (Bresciani, 2010; Carpenter, 2001). Moreover, the description and figure may not feel personally relevant to student affairs educators. Thus, they may have difficulty understanding, and therefore communicating, how assessment applies to their work or may perceive assessment as an unnecessary add-on (Blimling, 2013), resulting in resistance (Elkins, 2015) or lack of motivation (Levy, 2020) to engage in assessment. In contrast to Figure 1, Table 1 provides questions fundamental to being an educator; thus, these assessment-related questions may be perceived as logical and incredibly relevant to student affairs educators.

**Figure 1.** Student Learning and Development Outcomes Assessment Cycle.



### **Asking Instead of Telling:**

#### **Understanding and Motivating Assessment via Questions**

Research on meaning making suggests a questions-based approach to outcomes assessment will have great utility for navigating the outcomes assessment process while building value, motivation, and meaning for this work. An individual's behavior is driven by how they interpret or make meaning of a situation (Walton & Wilson, 2018). Two individuals experiencing the same situation (e.g., expectation to engage in outcomes assessment) may make sense of it differently and thus react to it differently. To predict the behavioral reaction, it is necessary to know how people make meaning of their actions and environments.

The meaning one makes of a situation is influenced by the need to fulfill three motives: the need to understand (e.g., make sense of things), the need for self-integrity (e.g., perceive oneself positively, as competent and moral), and the need for belonging (e.g., feel accepted, connected, and valued by others; Walton & Wilson, 2018). Thus, approaches to influence meaning making and, in turn, behavior center on changing people's understanding, sense of self-integrity, and connection with others. In this article, I focus on one technique to influence meaning making: asking questions. Asking questions provides a way of thinking about a concept, process, or situation without imposing meaning, which can feel controlling.

Framing assessment through asking questions is relevant for a variety of reasons. First, working through questions that align with the assessment process allows student affairs educators to explicitly ask why programming is important or if programming is needed

(Eggleston, 2020; Hill & Stitt-Bergh, 2021). Second, asking questions avoids potentially off-putting jargon when learning about the outcomes assessment cycle. Third, by answering fundamental questions about the purpose, design, and effectiveness of educational programming, student affairs educators relay the value of their work, which helps stakeholders understand how intentional programming enhances student development and learning (Bresciani, 2012; Carpenter, 2001). Fourth, by sharing the answers to these questions, educational programming can be better advertised to students and coherently sequenced to address student need (i.e., curricular approach to programming).

In short, conceptualizing outcomes assessment as a mechanism to answer relevant questions guards against assessment being viewed as controlling busywork that is an “add-on” to an already demanding schedule. Because the questions are framed as an enactment of the self (Bryan et al., 2011), student affairs educators should perceive greater utility-value for outcomes assessment (Levy, 2020). As a result, they should feel more in control and motivated to engage in assessment.

### **Research-Informed Questioning to Motivate Engagement in Assessment**

The way a question is structured impacts an individual’s motivation to complete the task (Miller & Rollnick, 2009). Below, I outline characteristics of questions that encourage engagement in a task and share questions with these characteristics that align with outcomes assessment. Hill and Stitt-Bergh (2021) shared questions to connect assessment and teaching for faculty. The questions I share (Table 1) were developed prior to reading their questions, are relevant to the work of student affairs educators, and were intentionally created to incorporate the characteristics of motivating questions explained below.

#### **Questions Should Be Framed as an Enactment of the Self**

Asking questions that place a person at the center of an important action can invoke positive behaviors according to the action. People want to be perceived as competent; thus, they will take action if they mentally position themselves as the enactor of a positive action (Bryan et al., 2011; Walton & Wilson, 2018). For example, asking a question about “being a voter” resulted in greater voting behavior than asking a question framed as “voting in an election”. Noun words (“voter”) lead people to see attributes as more representative of a person’s essential qualities than action verbs (“voting”). As Bryan et al. (2011) explained, “being the kind of person who votes may be seen as a way to build and maintain a positive image of the self—to claim a desired and socially valued identity” (p. 12653). Using noun-based wording to frame future behavior allows individuals to assume the identity of a competent, valued person (“a voter”) by performing the behavior.

Just as being a voter may be a way to claim a desired and valued identity, being an educator or curriculum designer may be a mechanism for student affairs professionals to perceive themselves as competent and valued in this context. Thus, the questions incorporate valued identities versus actions: “educator” versus “teaching”; “curriculum designer” versus “creating curriculum”. This framing of questions as an enactment of self is particularly important for actions that are not publicly recognized. For example, voting is a

private activity. Voters receive little or no recognition from others for voting, which may be why many citizens do not vote (Bryan et al., 2011). However, the noun wording offers an incentive to vote: positive self-regard. Like voting, assessment activities are often not formally acknowledged (e.g., Hutchings, 2010); thus, student affairs educators may feel unrecognized for this work. Structuring questions in the context of enactors of outcomes assessment should help student affairs professionals frame themselves as agents of student learning and development.

### **Questions Should Prompt Respondents to Form Opinions about Utility-Value**

Many assessment professionals offer workshops or courses preaching the value and importance of assessment to student affairs professionals untrained or not confident in assessment. The goal to increase the utility-value (i.e., importance or usefulness) of a task is sensible given that higher utility-value is associated with greater engagement in the task (e.g., Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Lazowski & Hulleman, 2016; Soicher & Becker-Blease, in press). However, a pontificating approach is not likely to increase the perceived utility-value of assessment. Why? Directly communicated utility-value information on its own undermines performance and interest in a domain for which individuals lack confidence (Canning & Harackiewicz, 2015). However, self-generated utility-value messages have positive effects (e.g., Canning & Harackiewicz, 2015; Soicher & Becker-Blease, in press). Well-structured open-ended questions can prompt student affairs educators to generate their own utility-value messages.

The question approach has two avenues for increasing utility-value. The process described below can be guided by a facilitator. If there is not a facilitator, the Appendix provides a process that can be completed alone or in a small group. For the purposes of this article, I assume a facilitator is guiding the process. First, before providing the questions mapped to the assessment cycle (see Table 1), the facilitator asks student affairs educators to articulate personally-relevant questions that they believe can be answered via outcomes assessment (Step 1 of the professional development activity outlined in the Appendix). This activity makes explicit the self-generated perceived value of assessment. This activity mimics studies where students wrote down their perceived utility-value of mathematics in their own lives. Students who self-generated the utility-value of math had higher gains between pre- and post-intervention math test scores than students who were directly told the value of math (Canning & Harackiewicz, 2015). These findings suggest that having student affairs educators self-generate important questions they believe outcomes assessment can answer will result in self-motivating engagement in assessment. Moreover, student affairs educators can then share their answers with others. By explaining the value and relevance of assessment to others, they are actively engaging in the powerful “saying is believing” strategy, which further internalizes these ideas and motivates behavior (Yeager et al., 2013).

Second, after student affairs educators have articulated their questions, the facilitator provides them with the questions mapped to the assessment cycle (Step 2 in the Appendix). There will likely be substantial overlap between these two sets of questions, which reinforces educators’ self-generated messaging. Next, the facilitator asks student affairs educators to answer these fundamental questions regarding their educational

programming. By answering the questions outlined in Table 1, they must think about their own work. The act of thinking about personal applications when learning about assessment makes the concepts more appealing and engaging, leading to more interest (Canning & Harackiewicz, 2015). When working through the questions in Table 1, many student affairs educators will struggle to provide answers; however, this struggle underscores the usefulness of the assessment process to provide these answers.

### **Questions Should Prompt Abstract Responses**

A third characteristic of motivating questions is that they prompt abstract responses. Open-ended questions allow the respondent to articulate a reasoning process, whereas closed-ended questions encourage one-word deterministic answers (Husain et al., 2012). A question that prompts abstract exploration leads to a deeper understanding of self and the personal relation to the question. An example of prompting abstract responses may be helpful before applying this strategy to outcomes assessment. Abstract and concrete questions were compared regarding their utility to raise self-efficacy in romantic relationships after receiving compliments from a partner. To prompt abstract responses, a group of individuals were asked to explain why their partner admired them and how the compliment was important to the relationship. To prompt a concrete response, another group of individuals were asked to simply describe the compliment and its context. The former group showed greater romantic self-esteem (Marigold et al., 2007; 2010).

Thus, the main questions in Table 1 ask “what” or “how”. “What” and “how” questions prompt answers in the form of a list or a line of logic (Groenendijk & Stokhof, 1984). The sub-questions that support each main question were designed to stimulate further processing and communication of the reasoning underlying their answer to the main question. The sub-questions are primarily formed as “why” and “how” questions because these words prompt respondents to form a rationale for their original answer (Bromberger, 1966; Groenendijk & Stokhof, 1984).

### **Assessment-Related Questions to Answer**

By asking questions that (a) are framed as an enactment of the self, (b) promote utility-value, and (c) prompt abstract responses, student affairs educators should become more motivated to engage in outcomes assessment. Table 1 lists such questions. Each step of the assessment cycle aligns with one main question, followed by a series of sub-questions. An explanation follows as to why these questions matter. Answering this set of questions results in professionals working through the typical assessment cycle, but the relevance of assessment to their work and their professional identity should be enhanced. This enhanced relevance of assessment in turn motivates educators to engage in assessment (Levy, 2020).

In addition to Table 1, the Appendix incorporates the main questions. Specifically, the activity begins by prompting student affairs educators to generate their own utility-value of assessment by writing questions they believe assessment can answer to support their work. In Steps 2 and 3, they process the questions in Table 1 and explain how their

**Table 1.** Main and Sub-questions and Their Relationship with the Assessment Cycle.

<b>Step of Assessment Cycle</b>	<b>Questions</b> <i>(Main Question in Italics)</i>	<b>Explanation</b>
1. State malleable and feasible student learning outcomes	<p data-bbox="533 344 1122 408"><i>As an educator, what do you believe your students should know, think, or be able to do?</i></p> <ul data-bbox="546 416 1122 730" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="546 416 1122 552">● What knowledge, attitudes, or skills should students possess as a result of your programming (e.g., curriculum, activities, strategies, pedagogy)?</li> <li data-bbox="546 560 1122 663">● How malleable is each outcome? Is the outcome differentially malleable across different student groups?</li> <li data-bbox="546 671 1122 730">● How feasible is each outcome given the resources you have (e.g., time, expertise)?</li> </ul>	<p data-bbox="1155 344 2018 624">Stating specific student learning and development outcomes that are malleable and feasible begins the outcomes assessment process (Finney et al., 2021). It is from these outcomes that the remainder of the assessment process evolves (e.g., Bresciani, 2013; Sharp et al., 2011). Answering these questions often demands a great deal of time and thought. It is time well spent, as outcomes assessment data have little utility for evaluating program effectiveness if the outcomes are unknown or are vague.</p>
2. Create evidence-informed programming to impact outcomes	<p data-bbox="533 767 1122 871"><i>What programming would you, the curriculum designer, create to foster the desired learning and development?</i></p> <ul data-bbox="546 879 1122 1190" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="546 879 1122 983">● Why should this programming (e.g., curriculum, activities, strategies, pedagogy) impact the intended outcomes?</li> <li data-bbox="546 991 1122 1094">● What evidence (e.g., research, theory) supports the effectiveness of the programming?</li> <li data-bbox="546 1102 1122 1190">● For whom is this programming effective? Should this programming be equally effective for all students? Why?</li> </ul>	<p data-bbox="1155 767 2018 1370">Educators create and map programming to the intended outcomes. Careful thought should be given to evidence-informed programming that should promote the desired student learning and development (e.g., Pope et al., 2019; Smith &amp; Finney, 2020). Assessment data have little utility for program improvement if programming is not intentionally developed to impact intended outcomes. If educators cannot answer why the programming should impact intended outcomes, it signals the need for more attention to this fundamental question. Particular strategies, activities, pedagogy may be less effective for some students (e.g., first-generation, part-time), which suggests potential equity and inclusion issues. Thus, program rationale should be communicated. Moreover, I strongly recommend indicating your confidence in program effectiveness before implementing it. I often ask, “Would you bet your car that the programming will ‘work’—that the programming will impact the intended outcomes?” For many educators, the value of our car is equal or less than the cost of students’ tuition. If</p>

Step of Assessment Cycle	Questions <i>(Main Question in Italics)</i>	Explanation
3. Select or design outcome measures	<p data-bbox="528 619 1128 683"><i>As an educator, how would you measure the student learning and development outcomes?</i></p> <ul data-bbox="544 691 1128 1075" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="544 691 1128 754">● What evidence exists that the measure will accurately reflect the intended outcome?</li> <li data-bbox="544 762 1128 826">● How does the outcome measure function for different groups of students?</li> <li data-bbox="544 834 1128 938">● Is the measure sensitive to program impact? Is it of sufficient difficulty or extremeness to reflect program impact?</li> <li data-bbox="544 946 1128 1075">● What evidence exists that the measure produces scores that are reliable and foster valid inferences about student learning or development?</li> </ul>	<p data-bbox="1151 304 2020 584">educators answer they would not bet their car, they get immediate self-generated feedback on their perceived confidence in the programming, which often results in researching what programming has been effective (Finney &amp; Buchanan, 2021) and, in turn, would result in betting the car. Spending time, money, and energy assessing ill-conceived programming based on hunches and good intentions can result in years of gathering unused outcomes data and a negative perception of assessment.</p> <p data-bbox="1151 619 2020 1042">Inferences about student learning and development, and, in turn, programming effectiveness will be drawn from data gathered using outcome measures. Thus, careful attention must be paid to how well measures align with intended outcomes, along with the measures' sensitivity to program impact (Bandalos, 2018; Suskie, 2018). To what degree is the outcome measure instructionally sensitive and instructionally actionable? An outcome measure (e.g., test, inventory, rubric, observational protocol) can be selected from previously created measures (Finney et al., 2021) or can be newly designed. I recommend first searching for existing high-quality measures given the amount of time needed to construct high-quality measures.</p>

Step of Assessment Cycle	Questions <i>(Main Question in Italics)</i>	Explanation
4. Collect implementation fidelity data	<p><i>What evidence would you, the curriculum designer, gather to describe the programming the students actually experienced?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● How is the designed programming being implemented?</li> <li>● How aligned is the designed programming (activities, strategies, curriculum) with the implemented programming?</li> <li>● Are all students being reached as intended? Why would some students receive the intended programming but not others?</li> <li>● Which parts of your designed programming were implemented well? Which were not? Why?</li> <li>● Which students were fully engaged in the programming and which were not?</li> </ul>	<p>Implementation fidelity is the systematic observation about whether the designed programming is being implemented as intended (Gerstner &amp; Finney, 2013). As stated by Suskie (2018), educators must ensure “that students have sufficient <i>opportunities</i> to achieve those goals” (p. 8). It may be that students did not learn or develop because the designed programming was not fully implemented (Fisher et al., 2014). Prior to making claims about program effectiveness, educators must have evidence that students received programming and had the opportunity to learn (Smith et al., 2017, 2019). Implementation fidelity uncovers potential equality issues if all intended students are not offered the same quality of programming. In short, implementation fidelity data are necessary to draw accurate inferences about program impact on student learning and development (Finney &amp; Smith, 2016; Swain et al., 2013).</p>
5. Collect outcomes data	<p><i>As an educator, how and when would you collect outcomes data to best understand student learning and development?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● How is the data being collected (e.g., pencil-and-paper, computer)?</li> <li>● Why is the data being collected at particular points in time?</li> <li>● How does the data collection design (e.g., pretest and posttest, comparison group) align with the claims you hope to make about student outcomes and programming effectiveness?</li> </ul>	<p>The data collection plan impacts the claims one can make about program effectiveness (Horst, et al., 2021; Roohr et al., 2021; Shadish et al., 2002). Educators determine the mechanism of data collection, such as paper-and-pencil, computer, or rater observation (Suskie, 2018). The data collection environment should be structured to minimize construct-irrelevant variance, such as students expending low effort when completing a measure (Finney et al., 2016). When and from whom the data are collected (only students experiencing the programming or also from students who do not experience programming) directly impacts the claims educators can make about program effectiveness.</p>



<b>Step of Assessment Cycle</b>	<b>Questions</b> <i>(Main Question in Italics)</i>	<b>Explanation</b>
6. Analyze and integrate outcomes and implementation data; interpret results	<p data-bbox="517 296 1137 400"><i>As an evidence-informed educator, how would you analyze student learning and development data and interpret the results?</i></p> <ul data-bbox="517 400 1137 730" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="517 400 1137 472">● How will you integrate implementation fidelity data and outcomes data?</li> <li data-bbox="517 472 1137 544">● Why will this approach best communicate students' learning and development?</li> <li data-bbox="517 544 1137 730">● To what extent can changes in student learning and development be attributed to the implemented program? Can you make inferences about program effectiveness given the data collected? Why or why not?</li> </ul>	<p data-bbox="1137 296 2033 730">The student learning outcomes and the data collection design are the primary drivers of how data are analyzed (Roohr et al., 2021; Shadish et al., 2002; Suskie, 2018). After choosing and conducting analyses (i.e., quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods), results are interpreted. Interpretations must incorporate threats to the trustworthiness of inferences (Shadish et al., 2002). Often the data collected will not afford causal interpretations such as “The programming was (in)effective”. Causal statements require particular data collection designs and analyses (Horst et al., 2021). Carefully consider and clearly communicate what you can infer about program effectiveness given how the implementation fidelity and outcomes data were collected and analyzed.</p>
7. Use results for program-related decisions	<p data-bbox="517 754 1137 890"><i>As a designer of learning and development opportunities, how would you use the assessment results to improve your programming?</i></p> <ul data-bbox="517 890 1137 1321" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="517 890 1137 1002">● To what extent do the assessment results inform your understanding of programming effectiveness? Why?</li> <li data-bbox="517 1002 1137 1106">● What evidence indicates problems with implementation, suggesting attention to instructor/facilitator training?</li> <li data-bbox="517 1106 1137 1249">● What evidence indicates high-quality implementation but low outcomes achievement, suggesting revision to programming?</li> <li data-bbox="517 1249 1137 1321">● How can the results be used to address equity issues related to the programming?</li> </ul>	<p data-bbox="1137 754 2033 1362">The purpose of outcomes assessment is to make evidence-informed programming modifications that improve student learning (Fulcher et al., 2014). Improvements can be stalled by low-quality outcomes data or the inability to understand results (Blaich &amp; Wise, 2011). Given quality outcomes data, attention turns to implementation fidelity data. Poor implementation fidelity implies that planned programming was not experienced and thus was not assessed. In turn, the outcomes data should not be used to modify the planned programming. Instead, attention should focus on why planned programming was not implemented as designed. When implementation fidelity is high but outcomes data indicate that intended outcomes were not achieved, educators should consider modifications to programming that should (based on theory and research) result in students achieving the intended outcomes. When making modifications to programming, educators should explain the rationale for the new programming, evidence of its potential effectiveness, and alignment with intended outcomes (Fulcher &amp; Prendergast, 2021).</p>

self-generated questions relate to questions that are posed. In Step 4, they provide abstract responses to the self-focused questions in Table 1 so they internalize that assessment is integral to their work.

In Step 5, a rhetorical question is used to persuade engagement in outcomes assessment. Rhetorical questions, where the answer is implicit within the question, are used to focus a person's attention on the message of the argument. Used often in marketing, studies showed that when rhetorical questions were used sparingly and strategically in ads, consumers were more persuaded to purchase a product (e.g., Ahluwalia & Burnkrant, 2004). Asking a rhetorical question after working through the questions and explanations in Table 1 will help student affairs educators internalize the message that outcomes assessment is important (Evans et al., 2018). Research supports the use of one rhetorical question (e.g., Ahluwalia & Burnkrant, 2004) such as, "Assessment is helpful for your work as an educator, isn't it?"

After processing the rhetorical question, I recommend engaging in one last strategy of questioning. Answering questions about future behavior positively impacts the likelihood of engaging in that behavior (Spangenberg et al., 2016). Taking advantage of this phenomenon called the question-behavior effect (Wilding et al., 2016), seven self-prediction questions about engaging in assessment in the future are shared in the Appendix. These questions incorporate characteristics found to best prompt the intended behavior: self-prediction in nature ("Do you predict you will state student learning outcomes?"), a dichotomous response scale (yes or no), and no specification of time to perform the activity (Armitage et al., 2015; Wood et al., 2016).

### **Conclusion**

Hill and Stitt-Bergh (2021) call for faculty to continuously ask "questions that matter" (p. 2) about student learning and program impact. I echo this call and direct it to student affairs educators. Using research showcasing the power of well-constructed questions, I offered a series of questions that matter regarding student learning and program impact. These resources should increase student affairs educators' perceived utility-value of outcomes assessment and engagement in assessment for improvement. By framing outcomes assessment as a process of asking and answering professionally-relevant questions, student affairs educators may opt into assessment-related skill-building workshops to answer these relevant questions.

Further, these resources I share address the following issues I experience when offering professional development in outcomes assessment to student affairs educators.

1. A common concern during professional development workshops is how an educator can communicate the steps of the assessment process to others in their office. I find that when I phrase the assessment cycle as a series of questions, the otherwise dry or vague set of steps become more meaningful and easier for student affairs educators to share with others.

2. Educators (student affairs or faculty) may express frustration or anger about needing to engage in assessment. I find that it becomes more difficult to rage against assessment when framed as answering fundamental questions about how to support student learning and development (the underlying goal of our work as educators).
3. When educators are asked to engage in assessment efforts for improvement, it may be perceived as a transition from their “regular work” (Bresciani, 2011; Hutchings, 2010, p. 13). During transitions, asking questions can change one’s personal narrative about who they are in the context of their surroundings, including their professional work (Walton & Wilson, 2018). Redeveloping personal narratives about oneself is particularly important for student affairs educators who are asked to take on assessment-related roles early in their careers. Early-career professionals may have no or very limited perceptions about outcomes assessment and its relevance to their work (Bresciani, 2010; Denecke et al., 2011); thus, their conception of the utility-value of assessment is especially malleable. A questions-based approach to engaging in outcomes assessment should facilitate positive meaning-making on the relevance of outcomes assessment to their identity as an educator, therefore increasing engagement (Levy, 2020).
4. Some student affairs professionals may have little interest in facilitating and assessing student learning and development. Answering these questions allows reflection on their personal commitment to student learning and development in higher education. Put simply, it is not for everyone. By asking these questions and answering them honestly, student affairs professionals may realize they are not invested in promoting student learning, designing curriculum, providing opportunity to learn, and improving programming. Their interests may be more aligned with marketing, recruitment, event planning, grant writing, research, among other interests. If so, answering these questions may provide an opportunity to better understand one’s place in the profession.

Although this article was directed to student affairs educators, this approach to increasing understanding and engagement in assessment should be effective for faculty as well. Moreover, the resources can be incorporated into workshops on assessment, guidance when engaging in assessment activities, or courses on assessment. A limitation of this work is the focus on assessment for learning improvement. Although assessment for learning improvement and assessment for accreditation mandates can overlap to some extent, they also differ in scope, difficulty, and ultimate goals (Finney & Horst, 2019). Other questions may be relevant if the focus of assessment is primarily for institutional accountability mandates.

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## Appendix

### *Using Questions to Increase Value and Understanding of Outcomes Assessment*

Instructions: If working alone, simply work through each step. If you are facilitating this activity for a group, read the instructions at the step aloud, allow participants time to process their answers individually, then guide discussion of responses. The steps in this activity can be embedded in a multi-day or multi-week study of outcomes assessment for improvement.

STEP 1: Write down at least one question that can be answered by engaging in outcomes assessment. Explain why that question (or those questions) are relevant to work as an educator.

STEP 2: Read through the questions below and compare the questions you generated in Step 1 to the questions stated here. These are the main questions in Table 1.

- As an educator, what do you believe your students should know, think, or be able to do?
- What programming would you, the curriculum designer, create to foster the desired learning and development?
- As an educator, how would you measure the student learning and development outcomes?
- What evidence would you, the curriculum designer, gather to describe the programming the students actually experienced?
- As an educator, how and when would you collect outcomes data to best understand student learning and development?
- As an evidence-informed educator, how would you analyze student learning and development data and interpret the results?
- As a designer of learning and development opportunities, how would you use the assessment results to improve your programming?

STEP 3: Explain how your questions from Step 1 relate to the questions above. How are they similar? How are they different?

STEP 4: Think of programming you designed, are currently designing, or have implemented. Draft answers to the 7 questions stated in Step 2. Use the sub-questions in Table 1 to clarify your responses. It is typical for this step to take time and effort. It is difficult, and worthwhile. You are articulating a plan to understand your impact on student learning and development. You will update your initial responses as you engage in the outcomes assessment process. At this point, what is most important is to begin processing and answering these questions.

STEP 5: Answer the following: Assessment is helpful for your work as an educator, isn't it?

STEP 6: Answer the following questions about engaging in specific assessment-related actions in the future. Respond by simply writing "yes" or "no" for each question.

- Do you predict you will articulate malleable and feasible student learning or development outcomes?
- Do you predict you will use evidence to create effective programming?
- Do you predict you will establish a way to measure your student learning or development outcomes?
- Do you predict you will collect implementation fidelity data?
- Do you predict you will collect outcomes data?
- Do you predict you will analyze and interpret implementation fidelity and outcomes data?
- Do you predict you will use results to make changes to programming?