

Cornell College
Departmental / Program Assessment Project
Progress Report

Department / Program:	Civic Engagement
Person Submitting this Form:	Kara Trebil
Date:	June 12, 2012

Brief Overview of the Assessment Project: *(refer to original Assessment Project Outline)*

- *Outcomes you're assessing.*
- *Questions your project is attempting to answer.*

Outcome:

As a result of their experience, Civic Engagement Office staff members will be able to identify the leadership, communication, and career-related skills they've developed through this experience and articulate how those transfer to the world of work.

Questions:

1. What skills are students developing as a result of their role in the Civic Engagement Office?
2. How are they developing those skills? (i.e. through what training, responsibilities, etc.)

Brief Project Update:

- *What have you accomplished on your assessment project this year?*

Accomplishments:

1. I narrowed my focus to make the task more manageable. At one point I was assessing multiple outcomes, and now I have chosen one.
2. We created a list of leadership skills including definitions to focus on. This has helped us to use common language with our students during the assessment process, and to really narrow down the number of terms and skills we're using.
3. To accompany the list of skills, we also created a rubric that would help to evaluate where students are in their leadership development.
4. After utilizing the list and rubric, we decided to focus our attention on three particular skills which would again help narrow our focus and simplify the process. We continued to use the entire list as it was beneficial for us and our students, but know that our results can be focused primarily on those three skills.
5. It is not as tangible, but an accomplishment I feel worth noting is that we utilized the skills/rubric in conversations around the leadership development program, and also plan to use it when structuring new staff training next year. It was created for the assessment project but is getting lots of use elsewhere as well.

Evidence Gathered:

- *Please outline in detail the information gathered for your assessment project.*
- *This information may include student work, surveys, focus groups, existing enrollment information, etc. Include any information gathered that will inform your assessment work.*

Evidence Gathered:

1. In the fall we asked the students to rank their skills by giving themselves a 1, 2, or 3 for each one. From there we asked them to choose three they wanted to focus on for the year (not necessarily based on their weaknesses). This was good in theory, but they wanted to keep their skills and I didn't think ahead enough so I only recorded the skills they wanted to work on, rather than what their rankings were. I'm not sure that information will be as helpful given the direction we took the rest of the year.
2. In a staff meeting in February, we asked them to look at the skills they had chosen to work on and talk about what they had done to develop those skills. They were looking at their rubrics so some conversation shifted to skills others than those they had identified previously.
3. We chose three skills to focus our attention which were team development, maintaining integrity, and communication. This was based somewhat on the skills the students chose to work on, and we felt it was a good variety in terms of the "type" of skill. In a staff meeting in March, we asked the students to talk about what work/office activities contributed to each of them.
4. During our last staff meeting in May, we gave the students a list of the 13 skills and asked them to rank them 1-13 three times. The first was to rank the skills they felt were necessary for their role in the Civic Engagement Office. The second was to rank the skills they felt they developed as a result of their role in the Civic Engagement office. The third was to rank themselves (1 being the skill they feel they are most proficient in, and 13 being the least proficient.)
5. It may or may not be used in this particular assessment cycle, but we used the rubric in our new staff retreat and had the new staff members rate themselves on each skill as well.

Year Three - Interpreting Evidence / Crafting a Plan:

The goal for Year Three of the College's assessment cycle is to analyze and interpret the evidence gathered for purposes of enhancing educational practice. What are your plans for the coming year? Please include plans for ongoing data collection as well as analysis, interpretation, and plans for using your assessment results.

I plan to utilize the summer assessment time to determine the best way to analyze the data we have gathered. This is the area I thought the least about and feel like we have good information, but am not quite sure where to go with it at this point.

In terms of next year's staff, we are utilizing the information from their self-evaluation (using the rubrics) to determine our training/leadership development priorities for the year. That means we also hope to capture the impact of those initiatives and determine whether or not we were able to improve the skills the students felt they needed to work on.

I have thought about contacting alums (those who graduated in May) mid-year to gather information from them after they have had the opportunity to apply (or not apply...) what they learned from their Civic Engagement Office experiences to life after college. I'm not sure what this would look like, and/or if it's feasible, but it's a consideration.

Currently, our most pressing need is to demonstrate the impact of civic engagement on Cornell students to help us make the case for additional resources and staffing after the VISTA grant ends. This will be our primary use for the assessment results. Of course, we also plan to utilize the information when planning staff training/leadership development.

Involvement:

- *Who has been involved in this project?*
- *How well informed and involved are members of the department/office?*

Collin Paschall, our AmeriCorps VISTA has been very involved with this project. He does not always see the big picture of what I am trying to accomplish with the assessment project, but I think that's more to do with the ongoing nature of it and that I also lose sight of that quite frequently. That being said, he created the list of leadership skills and the rubric, so he's been very involved and has a good understanding of that part of the process.

The students we worked with were also fairly informed of the project, particularly those who were here during the summer and attended our assessment meetings for their own educational purposes.

My supervisor is not very informed of the assessment project, but I'm anticipating will become a lot more interested after we have some results to share. I also anticipate him having thoughts as to how that information should be communicated and utilized.

Challenges / Assistance:

- *What challenges has your department/office encountered to date with your assessment project?*
- *What assistance/support do you need? From whom?*

My biggest challenge to date is staying focused and not letting the process get too overwhelming (because it's not!). It's very easy to do one thing, then put it away in the folder and not think about it for a month or two. Then when I get back on track, it takes me longer to implement the next step because I have to go back and remember what I've already done, where we are in the process, etc. However, after doing it once, I'm hoping (and fairly confident) it will become a little more second-nature.

I would really like for us to continue to meet over the summer, as that is really the time I got most things done last year and it really helped to keep us on track. I also would like to continue this process after year three. We've gained a lot from this experience outside of just getting useful information, and I want to keep doing that.

As long as Becki keeps doing what she's doing, I will feel supported!

Feel free to add additional comments or supporting documents to this report. Upon completion, please submit the report to Becki Elkins, Box 2628.

Kara Trebil	6/12/12
_____ Your Signature	_____ Date
Kara Trebil	6/12/12
_____ Department Chair Signature	_____ Date