Implementing a Student Assessment Scholar Program: Students Engaging in Continuous Improvement

Presenters: Nicholas P. Truncale, Elizabeth Chalk, Caitlin Pellegrino, and Jesse Kemmerling
Session Learning Outcomes

- Participants will review an example of a student assessment scholar program by interpreting a program blueprint showcased by the presenters.
- Participants will discuss summary results of a real focus group, develop recommendations to the project stakeholder, and compare your conclusions to that of a student assessment scholar.

Session Agenda

- How did you create your Assessment Scholars program?
- How do you recruit student scholars to join the program?
- How do you train and prepare your scholars?
- How do you implement a project?
- What is your project methodology?
- How do you acquire student focus group participants and what benefits do they receive?
- What direct and indirect benefits do the student scholars receive?
- How does the University benefit from the program?
- Assessment of challenges and highlights?
- Project Simulation and Discussion
How did you create your Assessment Scholars program?

• “Hey Nick, I think you should go to this Wabash thing…”
• Student Engaging Students Workshop¹
• The Provost Assessment Scholars (PAS)
  • …student scholars in the program aid The University of Scranton in continuous improvement by collecting viewpoints and the ideas of other students and tendering suggestions to stakeholders in the university community…

¹http://www.liberalarts.wabash.edu/focus-group-workshop-2016/
How do you recruit student scholars to join the program?

• The Originals!

• Email from Dean of Students - Sophomores and Juniors only

• Research Fair

• Table sit

• Word of mouth

• Provost Assessment Scholars

AY 2016-2017 Demographics

• 15 Student Scholars

• 10 Sophomore/5 Juniors

• 7 women/8 men

• Across our 3 Colleges
How do you **train** and **prepare** your scholars?

- Two days
- Training sessions
- Teamwork sessions
How do you **implement** a project?

- **Project Lifecycle**

  - **Final Stakeholder Meeting to Present Results** (May)
  - **Design Project/Questions** (October/November)
  - **Design Approval/IRB Process** (December)
  - **Rally up Participants** (January/February)
  - **Conduct Focus Group Sessions** (February/March)
  - **Find a new Stakeholder**
  - **Stakeholder Meeting Approves Questions** (November)
  - **Summer before AY**
  - **Advertise to Stakeholders**
  - **Stakeholder Holdover**
  - **Analyze Data and Create Summary Report** (March/April)
  - **Recruitment Creation**
  - **Preparation Implement**
What is your project methodology?

- The program employs a descriptive qualitative research approach to simply answer the general question “What is the experience of a particular group?”

Evidence Triangulation

- Document decisions made and employ identical process across all projects
- Findings are a product of the focus group discussion and do not reflect investigator or stakeholder bias.
- Setting and characteristics (no identifying info.) of participants
- Results contain “extracts”
- Member checks

**Evidence Triangulation**

- Student Learning or Program Improvement
- Quantitative Evidence (Surveys, Assessment of Student Work)
- Qualitative Evidence (Focus Groups)

---

How do you acquire student focus group participants and what benefits do they receive?

• How do you get your participants?
  • Stakeholders
  • Word of mouth
  • Table sits

• Participant benefits?
  • Voices heard
  • Pizza!
What direct and indirect **benefits** do the student **scholars** receive?

**Direct Benefits**
- Qualitative Research experience
- Non-credit Transcript recognition

**Indirect Benefits**
- Report writing skills
- Project management experience
- Time management, Critical thinking, Teamwork
- Working along side students from other majors
- Something unique on their resume and transcript
How does the University benefit from the program?

- Provides indirect evidence and qualitative assessment data to stakeholders
- University-wide improvements
- Aid in the task of building a Culture of Assessment on campus
- Student Perspectives
Assessment of **challenges** and **highlights**?

**Challenges**
- Convincing people that we could do this, and do it well
- Logistics
- Focus group participants
- Sensitive nature of data / IRB

**Highlights**
- Successful First Year
- Scholar Retention
- Unexpected Outcomes
- No issues filling our calendar with projects this second year
Project Simulation and Discussion

• First Year Oral Communication (FYOC) Assessment Project

Background

• Instructions:
  • In groups, read through and discuss the Questions by Question summary results of the focus groups from the FYOC project.
  
  • What recommendations would you give the stakeholder?
  • What could be some of the ramifications for making those recommendations?

• We will come back as a group to compare what your recommendations versus what the scholars recommended
Project **Simulation** and **Discussion**

**Continue to Gradually Increase Presentation Difficulty**

FYOC Students reported that they perceived their confidence levels to be highest when there was a gradual progression of presentation difficulty.

**Continue Major Specific FYOC Courses with Added Outcomes**

Major specific FYOC courses were found to be beneficial to the student's overall enjoyment of the course. The students felt it made individual and group work more enjoyable because they were pursuing similar career paths and interests as their peers.

**Create an Open and Comfortable Environment**

FYOC Students reported that initially they were more overwhelmed by their nerves than they were by the actual course material. Creating and ensuring an open and comfortable environment may help to alleviate their initial nervous feelings, enabling them to continue to grow as confident public speakers.

**Allow Topic Flexibility**

FYOC students reported that the more flexibility they had in picking their topic, the more confident they felt because they felt more comfortable and interested in the topic.
Conclusion and Questions?

http://provostscholars.wordpress.com