



Putting your Assessment Data to Work: Lessons from a Qualitative Study of Student Affairs Directors who use Data to Make Change

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Welcome!

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Let me tell you a story about Monday

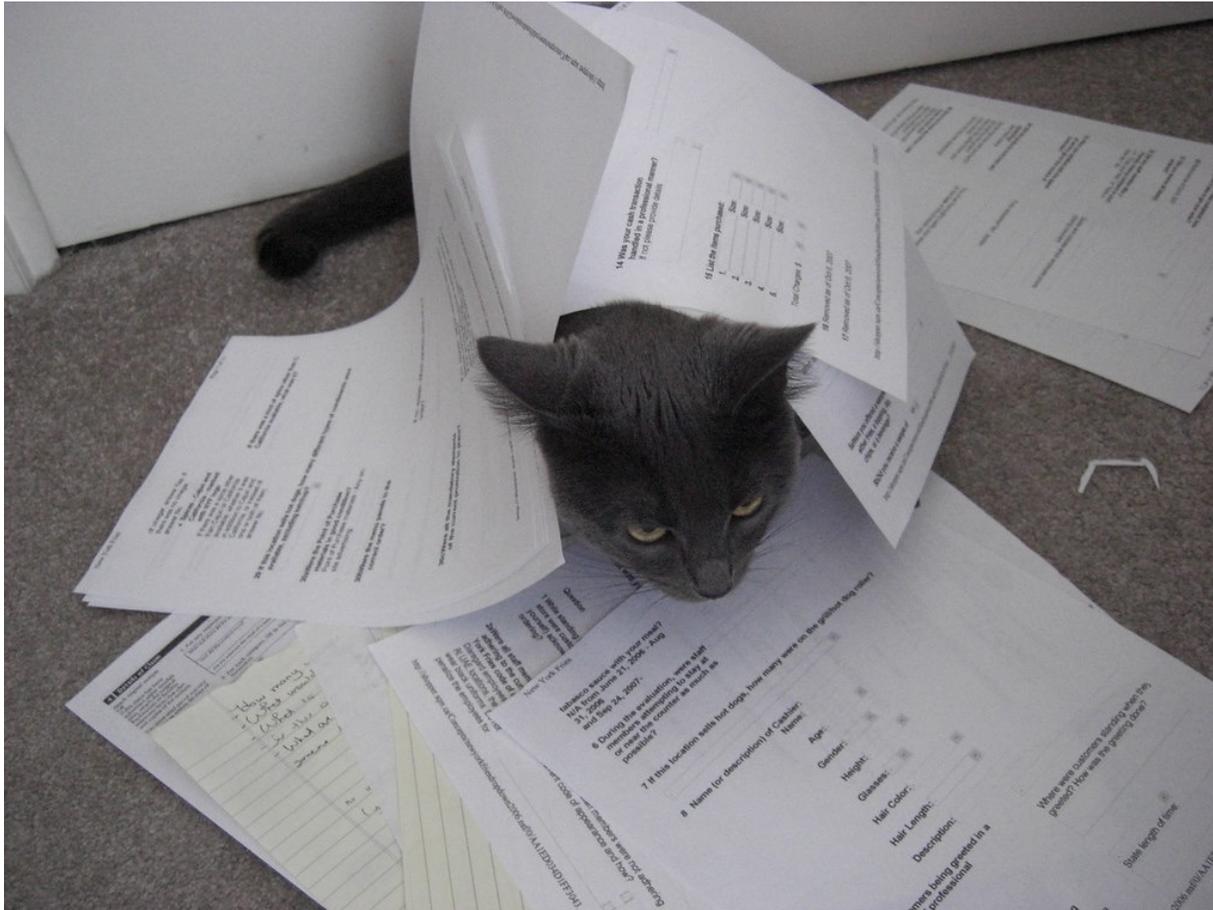


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Have you ever felt this way?



- Buried under data?
- Unsure what to do with it?
- Considering taking a nap instead of dealing with it?

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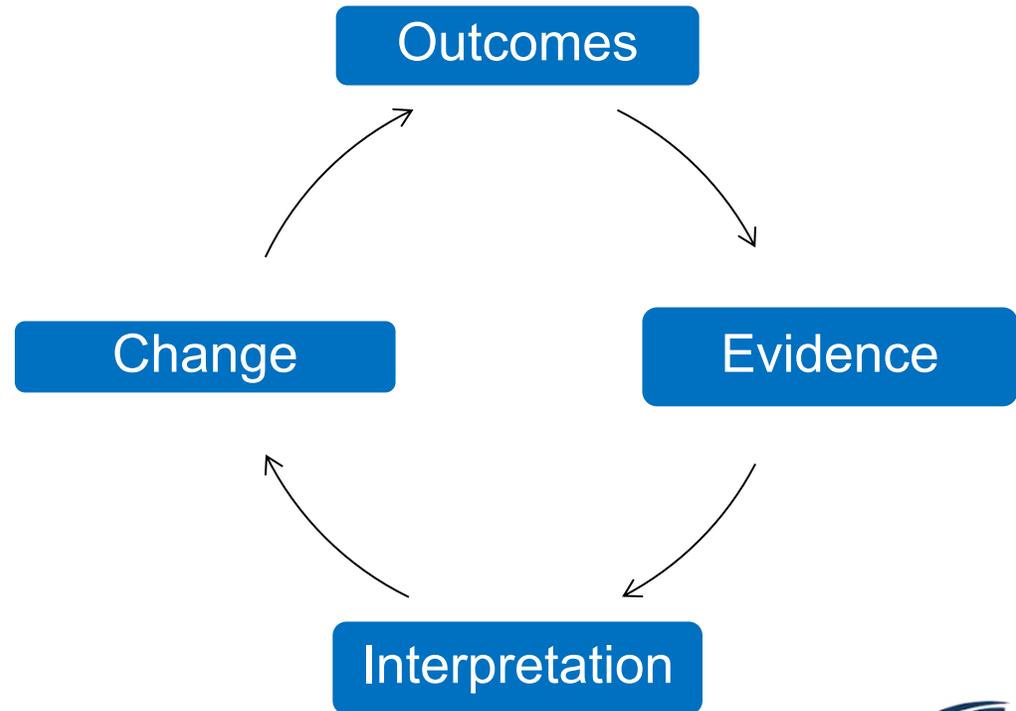


Fear of Assessment

- History of mathematical fears
- Not knowing what is important to collect
- Not knowing how to use the data that is collected
- Results being used to punish
- Results being manipulated
- Lack of examples of the “right” thing to do

Assessment: “Any effort to gather, analyze, and interpret evidence which describes institutional, divisional, or agency effectiveness” (Upcraft & Schuh, 1996, p. 18).

Assessment Cycle



Literature on Using Assessment Data

- “Closing the Loop”
- Prioritization of creating outcomes and methods for finding evidence in graduate level assessment classes
- Data is collected for the purpose of having it, not using it (Cox et al., 2017, McCaul, 2015)
- Leadership determines if data will be used (Green et al. 2008)
- Relationships between divisional staff determine if data will be used (Beshara-Blauth, 2018)

Research Questions

1. How do student affair directors use assessment data in their role to make changes?

Sampling Strategy: Exemplar Approach

- “The exemplar methodology is a sample selection technique that involves the intentional selection of individuals, groups, or entities that exemplify the construct of interest in a highly developed manner” (Bronk et al., 2013, p. 1).

Overview of Research Method

Sought nominations from Assessment Professionals

Assessment Professional submitted nomination form

Researcher invited exemplar director to interview

Researcher conducted interview with exemplar director

Researcher transcribed and completed member-checking with exemplar directors

Researcher collected documents

Researcher analyzed nominations, interviews, and documents

Considerations

- A person may be highly developed in one positive characteristic, they are not necessarily well developed in ***all*** characteristics, and may be normal or even considered deficient in certain areas (Bronk, 2012; Bronk et al., 2013; Smith, 2021).
- The criteria may be interpreted differently based on nominators' unique organizational context (Bronk et al., 2013).
- The nominated director may also not consider themselves to be exemplar or even sufficient at using data in their department.



Findings

Subtitle

How do student affair directors use assessment data in their role to make changes?

Theme 1: Planning to Use Assessment Data (n=10)

Theme 2: Normalizing the Assessment Process (n=9)

Theme 3: Leveraging Relationships to Use Data (n=10)

Theme 4: Telling our Story (n=10)

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- Determining metrics to measure against (CAS, prior years, peer institutions, national benchmark)
- Methods that fit
- Setting aside time to review data

I give them [student coaches] 10 minutes to read it [their data] over and I encourage them to annotate and to see what they notice what trends. - Aviva

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- Training staff how to use assessment as regular training
- Sharing data as a regular part of staff meeting
- Engaging Curiosity

“find something that's meaningful to you and start with that [assessment], because then when you get excited about it, you're going to explore other ways to tell the story”
-Liz

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- Intra-university Collaboration
- Connecting with Assessment people

The group would convene, like once a month, to keep them informed regularly about where we are with response rates, giving them information. We created data dashboards for all of the colleges so have that they could have access to their data, when they wanted it and how they needed it.--Hannah

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Student Affairs specifically, we use assessment and assessment data to tell the story of what we do because it's still so unknown to people. The whole adage of it's not just pizza parties and balloon animals.—Gary

I don't talk about it as assessment because that is a very triggering word for a lot of people. I talk about it as storytelling. How are we going to tell the story of our student's experience? ...And how are we actually going to show that it did what we hoped it did. --CJ

Lessons Learned

- Creating a plan to use data leads to using data to make change
- Simplifying assessment practices to focus on what you will use to make change
- Assessment as a regular part of Student Affairs culture removes some of the fear of assessment
- Assessment that comes from curiosity is powerful

Lessons Learned

- Collaboration or political allies may be essential for making changes based on assessment
- Assessment people are ready to help (SA Assessment, Institutional Research, Centers for Teaching and Learning, Professors on Campus, and more)
- Assessment isn't numbers, it's telling **our** story. It's a way to communicate our impact

Preventing a Cat-astrophe

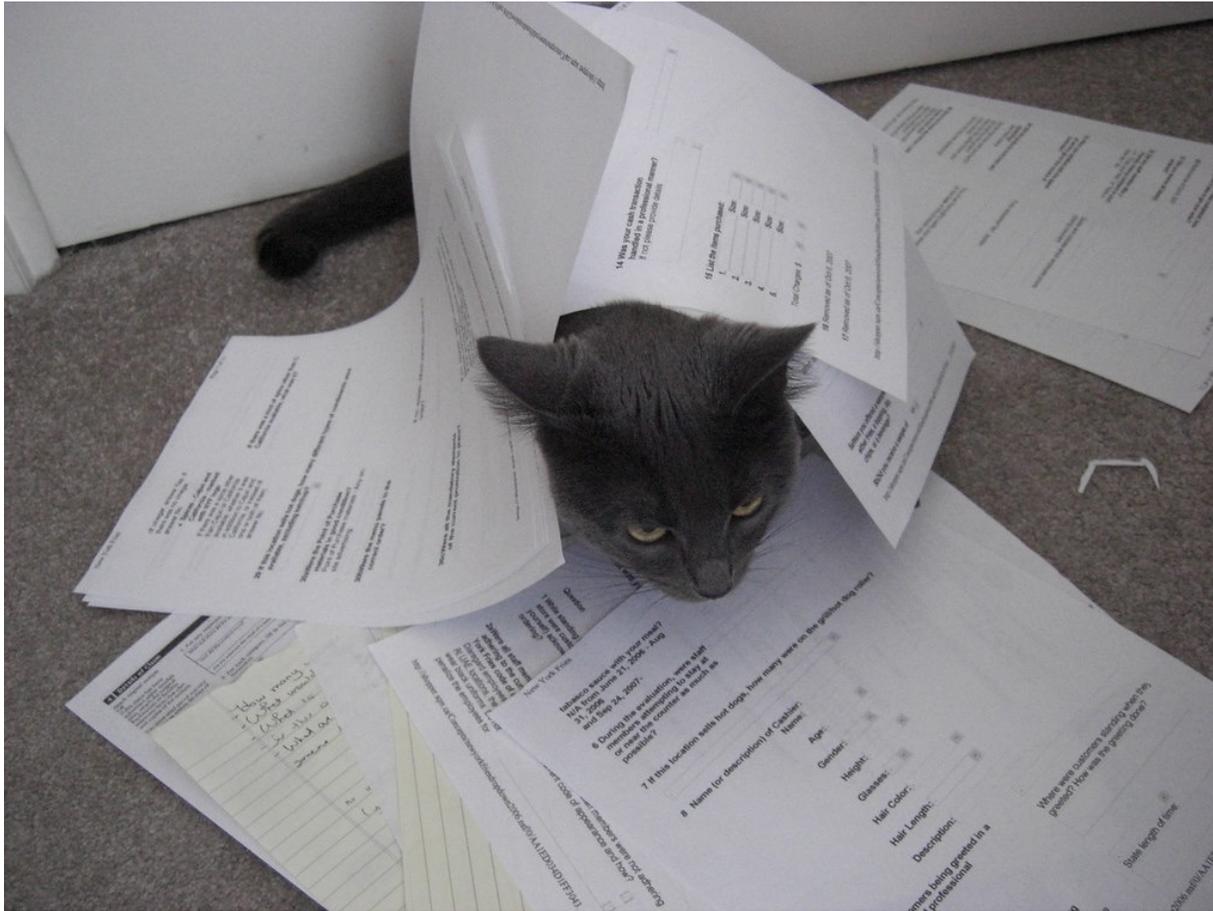


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Preventing a Cat-astrophe



- What is one strategy you could use to use your data to make change?
- What are other strategies you have seen work?

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Questions? Comments?



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Thank You

See you in New Orleans at #NASPA25!

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