Assessment Report for the Department of International Student Affairs
2014-15 External Program Review

Assessment Plan

The department of international student affairs developed three learning outcomes that are linked to the Student Life Learning Domains (SLLD). The department is charged to assess 3-5 outcomes on an annual basis and include assessment results and an action plan in its annual program review report. An external review is conducted every four years. The external review consists of assessment of student learning, professional standards, and general operations. The four learning outcomes for 2014-15 are included below:

Domain 1: Knowledge Acquisition

“As a result of participating in the new international student orientation program, students will be able to identify campus resources that will assist them upon arrival to campus and during their adjustment into the campus community.”

Domain 2: Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Development

“As a result of participating in the culture shock workshop, students will be able to identify symptoms of culture shock, cope with those symptoms, and be able to seek appropriate resources when needed.”

Domain 5: Integrate and Apply Knowledge and Skills

“As a result of participating in the program, conversation leaders will learn to identify and use effective communication skills.”

Assessment Activities

- International students that participated in orientation program were asked to complete a survey created by the department. The survey addressed the learning outcomes associated with the program, student satisfaction, and other operational items.
- Students serving as conversation leaders were observed while holding meetings with the international students that they were assigned to work with. The director assessed each student with a list of pre-determined skills.
- The director also conducted focus groups with the students serving as conversation leaders and the students benefiting from the service.

Orientation Survey

44 new international students were offered the online orientation survey upon program completion. During the fall 2014 semester, a total of 26 out of 27 students took the survey for a completion rate of 96%. During the spring 2015 semester, a total of 14 out of 17 students took the survey for a completion rate of 82%. Examples of survey results can be found below.
• 100% of participants reported having their pre-matriculation questions answered as a result of orientation.
• 66% of participants felt familiar with the campus as a result of the orientation tour and activities.
• 59% reported having a solid understanding of the student health program.
• 73% felt the information learned about immigration law and student responsibilities was helpful.
• 73% also felt a stronger connection to campus and the campus community as a result of orientation.
• 100% of participants were introduced to campus services such as health & counseling services, residence life, campus safety, registrar’s office, academic advisors, learning commons, etc.
• In the open ended questions, students reported obtaining a better understanding of American culture, Thiel College support services, cultural adjustment issues, community resources, etc.

Conversation Leader Observation

A total of 11 out of 14 conversation leaders were observed (78% participation rate). During the leader-to-student observations the director wrote narratives based on her observations. This feedback was then shared, confidentially, with each of the leaders after his or her observation was completed.

During the leader observations the director was looking for the application of numerous communication skills including, but not limited to:

• rapport with the international students
• use of open-ended questions
• active listening skills
• modalities of learning
• sharing resources to help communication between the leader and international student

As a result of the leader observations, the director felt that all of the conversation leaders established a solid rapport with each of his or her assigned student(s). Eight of eleven (8/11) students were effective in utilizing open-ended questions. Eight (8/11) leaders successfully demonstrated active listening skills while interacting with his or her student(s). Six (6/11) leaders introduced various resources to educate their students about customs, holidays, cultural norms, etc. Examples of such resources include online tools, photos, websites, literature, etc.

Upon completion of the observations, the director held individual meetings with the leaders to offer feedback about their performance. Students were provided guidance related to the use of active listening skills, open-ended questions, use of resources, etc.
International Student/Conversation Leader Survey

18 of 34 international students participating in the conversation leader program completed the survey (53% completion rate). The survey was designed to measure the development of communication skills, and student satisfaction with the program. A five point Likert scale was used to measure results. The following are the average Likert scales for verbal, writing, and overall confidence in English skills.

- Verbal English Skills (4.16/5.00)
- Written English Skills (4.33/5.00)
- Overall Confidence in English Skills (4.5/5.00)

As part of the open-ended questions, overall students found the program to be very beneficial both educationally and socially. There was also some feedback on the lack of social interaction with American students outside the program as well. This suggests that overall population may need more cultural programming and/or experiences.

Student Learning Action Items/Reflections

- Assessment of the orientation program suggests a need for a more engaging program that accommodates the varying learning styles of the participants. Although the program included a large quantity of information about the campus and support services, the students did not seem to retain that information as much as desired. So the director will develop strategies for delivering the information in ways that address different learning styles, and that hopefully create more engagement amongst the participants.
  
  o The director also plans to incorporate some follow up training as an extension to the orientation program in order to achieve better results and allow for more retention of information.
- Based on feedback from conversation leaders, student participants, and information collected through direct observations of the program, the director plans to develop a more comprehensive training program for conversation leaders. The program will focus on educating conversation leaders about how to better engage the participants, enhanced cultural training, and practical communication skills to further develop the student leaders. Although most conversation leaders demonstrated various interpersonal competencies, the director recognizes the need for more training.
- In addition to the identified learning outcomes, the director also plans to continue to collaborate with other departments in order to increase cultural awareness and cultural experiences for the broader campus community (as suggested through the external review process and survey statements from the international students). International students reported a lack of interaction with domestic students outside the formal structure of the conversation program.
- In terms of assessment practices, the director identified new strategies for better assessment of learning outcomes. For example, the director will develop and implement
rubrics for programmatic learning outcomes and assess the student using those rubrics. The rubrics will be utilized throughout the orientation process, general programming, and as part of the observation process of conversation leaders. The department will also collect more baseline information to strengthen the assessment process.