



# Not another survey!

Approaches for evaluating your  
department's services


# Evaluation

- ◆ Judges the merit and worth of a course of action
- ◆ Is an ongoing, cyclical process
- ◆ Involves systematic investigation
- ◆ Is a collaborative undertaking
- ◆ Helps make decisions

# Assessment

- ◆ A general term for the procedures and tools used to collect and analyze data or information about the performance of individuals or groups

# Where to start

- 
- ◆ **Think** about what you're trying to do
  - ◆ **Plan:** Make an evaluation blueprint
  - ◆ **Gather** the data
  - ◆ **Analyze** the results
  - ◆ **Communicate** your conclusions
  - ◆ **Start again** at the top

# Think 1: What do you want to evaluate?

It's easy to skip over this question and just assume that you know what you mean, or to say "Everything".

Be clear -- write down what is and what is not part of the work you are about to do.

# Think 2:

## Why are you doing this?

- ◆ Just trolling
- ◆ Gathering ammunition
- ◆ Building up bragging rights
- ◆ Evaluating a service or program
- ◆ Evaluating the effects of a change in a service or process

# Think 3:

## How will the findings be used?

- ◆ Who will see the results? You? Your department or team? Your vice president? President's Council? What will be done with them?
- ◆ Will you share the results with your customers or the public?
- ◆ Will the underlying data be kept confidential?

# Think 4: What questions do you want to answer?

(Not, 'what questions do you want to ask?')

- ◆ Instead of trying to answer general questions like, 'did it work?' or 'how can we make it work better?', specify what you mean by 'work'.
- ◆ Describe what behavior you expect to see or what you expect to have happen.

# Think 5:

## What data do you need?

- ◆ For each of the specific questions you want to answer, what data do you need?
- ◆ Do you already have it? (Or, is it available, either on campus or from public information?)
- ◆ Do you need to gather it?
- ◆ What will it cost to get the information you need? (in money, time, aggravation, goodwill, ...)

# Think 6: Which questions are most important to you?

- ◆ Set priorities. Choose to work on those questions that are most important while keeping the costs reasonable.
- ◆ There are often trade-offs between precision and cost
- ◆ Get more of what you care about by collaborating with others. (Shared data collection, national projects, modifying your question ...)

# Plan

- ◆ For each specific question you are trying to answer:
  - Identify the data needed to answer the question
  - Choose a method to gather the data
  - Make someone responsible
  - Set a completion date

# Gather the data 1: Informal methods

- ◆ Ask yourselves
  - Bug lists
- ◆ Ask your peers
  - There's always a buzz
- ◆ Ask your student workers

# Gather the data 2:

## Existing data

- ◆ Institutional Research survey program
- ◆ Professional organizations
- ◆ Consortia
- ◆ National surveys
- ◆ Public data
- ◆ Data you can buy

# Gather the data 3: Use your systems

- ◆ Banner and other transactional databases
- ◆ Email
- ◆ Phone system
- ◆ The Web

# Gather the data 4:

## Ask an expert

- ◆ Visiting teams, process audits, professional organizations
- ◆ Peers from within the college -- invite a team of Wheaton people from outside your area to do an audit or review
- ◆ Consultants, auditors

# Gather the data 5: Talk to your customers

## ◆ Chats

- Invite people in to talk
- Value may depend greatly on how much they trust you

## ◆ Interviews

- Neutral interviewer
- Clearly defined questions

## ◆ Real focus groups

- Neutral leader, not you
- Focused discussion
- Clearly defined questions

# Gather the data 6:

## Point of service data gathering

- ◆ Collect data from the customer
  - Suggestion boxes, visitor log books, response cards
- ◆ Have the service provider collect data
  - Log sheets and tick marks
  - ‘Did you find everything you came for today?’

# Gather the data 7:

## Do a survey

- ◆ A sample or the whole population?
- ◆ Question design
  - Carefully consider the questions you are trying to answer and construct survey questions that will get you the answers you need. Know exactly how your survey questions are related to your objective.
  - Ask clear questions with unambiguous answers
  - Ask only one question per question
  - Test every question, and then test again
- ◆ Bias

# Gather the data 8:

## Do a survey

- ◆ Administration
  - Paper, Web, phone
- ◆ Length
- ◆ Response rates
- ◆ Incentives
- ◆ Survey overload

# Compile the data

- ◆ Hand tabulation
- ◆ Scanning

# Analyze the results

## ◆ Think then analyze

- For each question you are trying to answer, think through the responses you might anticipate. Only then look at the data to see if it supports or rejects.

## ◆ Tools

- Stickies and clusters
- Spreadsheets
- Statistical software

# Communicate your conclusions

- ◆ To your group or department
- ◆ To others you collaborated with
- ◆ To the people you collected the data from
- ◆ To your customers, and potential customers
- ◆ Up the hierarchy
- ◆ Nationally



# Start over at the beginning

Evaluation is an ongoing, cyclical  
**process**