Other Indirect Assessment Method Program Level Options

Below you will find other recommended indirect methods for conduct program level assessment.

Other Recommended Indirect Methods

Focus Group Interviews: Focus groups consist of samples of students (usually 5 to 15 students in one focus group) chosen to explore perceptions of the student population. They are used to elicit qualitative responses from students that can provide more detailed information than surveys. Typically this type of interaction is developed and conducted by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. The interview material is developed in conjunction with the discipline faculty based on the purpose or goals of such an interview. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness, based on parameters set by the academic program, aggregates the results. The discipline can use these results for discussion, analysis, and improvement.

- **Advantages:**
  - Can provide more detailed and unexpected information than quantitative data.
  - Unlike surveys, potentially confusing questions can be clarified by the facilitator.
  - Allows the facilitator to explore unanticipated issues that may arise during conversation.
  - Results can be gathered in a quick amount of time.
  - Helpful to design surveys for future use.

- **Disadvantages:**
  - Topics must be restricted and carefully chosen to guide discussion.
  - The facilitator of the discussion must remain neutral during the discussion, so as to not bias results.
  - Results can be difficult to analyze.
  - Can generate “group think,” the tendency for people in a group to conform with the opinions and decisions of the most outspoken members of the group.
  - Groups can be difficult to assemble.
  - Generalizations from the sample to the population cannot be made.

- **Ways to reduce Disadvantages:**
  - Offer an incentive for students to participate.
  - Over-recruit students to participate in case some drop out.
  - Train moderators to ask questions in particular ways (e.g., utilize open-ended questions, probes, pauses)

Analysis of College or Departmental Records: The following types of data are referred to by LBCC as “achievement results”: Job placement rates, retention


studies, transfer rates, graduation rates, performance indicators disaggregated by diversity, course success rates, registration or course enrollment data (sequential), and program review data. This data can inform achievement of department goals.

- **Pros:**
  - Easily accessible data.
  - Does not require time from students or other groups.
  - Can easily provide current or longitudinal data.

- **Cons:**
  - Data can provide a picture of how successful students are, but does not provide much data that explains why they are or are not successful.
  - Availability of the data may discourage the development of other, more responsive measures or data sources.