EIDT6130: Program Evaluation – Program Analysis

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Stakeholders and Contextual Factors

Stakeholders include employers, the advisory committee, faculty, college administration, students, alumni, and the American Bar Association (Joint Committee Standards, 2011, pg. 113). Contextual factors include pressure to increase on-time graduation rates, lower student debt levels, and to increase the number of students graduating in fields providing gainful employment. Yet, multiple programs compete for shrinking resources. This competition prompts political maneuvering as programs try to influence resource allocation. Other contextual factors include: an unsupportive political climate for tuition or tax increases; declining enrollment; under-prepared students; lack of support services; lack of tracking and monitoring systems.

Goals

Goal 1: Graduates will possess and can effectively and ethically exercise the substantive legal knowledge, technological, and other practical skills sought by employers in the legal community

Goal 2: Graduates will possess the critical thinking and written communication skills, ethical awareness, and professionalism needed to work in a variety of legal employment settings

Goal 3: Graduates will possess the oral communication and teamwork skills needed to participate as valued members of the legal services team

Goal 4: Graduates will complete the program on-time and with the least amount of debt possible

Objectives

Objective 1: As part of a team, draft documents pursuant to the Rules of Civil Procedure for service on the opposing party; organize discovery items for use at trial

Objective 2: Conduct research and summarize results in a memorandum free of grammatical and mechanical error; cite authority pursuant to the adopted legal citation manual

Objective 3: Draft and review contracts incorporating the legally-required clauses

Objective 4: As part of a team, evaluate the ethical rules of professional responsibility applicable to a given scenario; orally present the findings and recommendations

Objective 5: Accomplish tasks commonly performed by legal professionals using industry-standard technology

Operations

- *Identifying* community and student needs, institutional and community resources, learning objectives, and program outcomes.
- *Designing* courses, workshops, support systems, and graduate transition plans
- *Developing* learning objectives, curriculum, faculty qualifications, assessment metrics, assessment methods, assessment instruments, and community linkages
- *Conducting* admissions workshops, financial aid counseling, college readiness workshops, academic planning sessions
- *Facilitating* substantive legal courses and skill-specific workshops
- *Assessing* needs, resources, objectives, activities, and outcomes

Outcomes

- Students complete their academic requirements on time
- Students exit with the least possible amount of debt
- Students obtain relevant career and life skills
- Students are qualified and confident to pursue gainful employment

Performance History

Program performance is based on the following metrics: number of degrees and certificates awarded each year; student scores on the critical thinking assessment *The Test of Everyday Reasoning* (2016), which is a nationally-normed and validated instrument; Student scores on the *Community College Survey of Student Engagement* (n.d.), which is nationally-normed and validated; number of graduates that pursue four-year degrees; course completion rates, and; pass rate on NALA's (2017) Certified Paralegal exam, which is nationally-normed and validated. In academic year 13-14, the Program's course success rate (students pass with a "C" or higher), was 85%, compared to 71% for the institution as a whole. For the same year, the Program awarded 55 degrees and 60 post-degree certificates. The pass rate for the Certified Paralegal Exam was 81% compared to 66% nationally. In fall 2013, the Program was reaccredit for another seven years. Post-graduation surveys indicate broad student satisfaction with the Program. Administration continues to express its satisfaction with the program and recently recommended the Program's operational funding be maintained at its current level. Administration recently authorized $500,000 in capital funds for relocation and renovation of the Program's facilities.

Ethical Challenges

One potential ethical pitfall is that the metrics used for this program may not present a fair comparison to other programs competing for resources. Ethical issue could also arise from the program evaluator's dual-role as the program director, his personal values, his interpersonal relationships with decision-makers, and his status within the organization as the co-chair of the influential Budget Review Committee. (Fitzpatrick, Sanders & Worthen, 2010, pgs. 96-102). These issues, and others, can be addressed by conforming the evaluation process to both the Joint Committee Standards (2011) and the AEA Guiding Principles (2004).

References

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EIDT6130: Program Evaluation Model Table, Rationale, and Evaluative Questions

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Evaluation Model Table

Evaluation Model	Advantages	Disadvantages
EXPERTISE-ORIENTED APPROACHES	Applicable to many areas. Emphasizes role of expert judgment; focuses on appropriate standards and transparency in rendering judgment.	Evaluator judgments may be unduly reflective of their own bias. Evaluators may be subject matter experts that lack evaluation expertise. May lack supporting documentation to support conclusions. Methodology may lack reliability, replicability.
CONSUMER-ORIENTED APPROACHES	Emphasizes the consumers' information needs. Can influence product/service developers. Focuses on cost-effectiveness and utility.	Potential lack of sponsors. May not provide opportunity for debate or "cross-examination."
PROGRAM-ORIENTED EVALUATION APPROACHES	Easy to follow and implement. Provides relevant data. Prompts reflection and clarification of program outcomes.	Myopic focus on objectives & measurement can miss other important outcomes. May neglect context and ignore the value of the objectives
DECISION-ORIENTED EVALUATION APPROACHES	Well-developed. Provide information that helps managers and policymakers make decisions.	May neglect stakeholders with less power. Social equity and equality are not explicitly addressed. Assumes the questions to ask and data needed to answer them can be identified in advance. Require decisive leadership to act on the results.
PARTICIPANT-ORIENTED EVALUATION APPROACHES	Includes stakeholders to improve validity and use of the evaluation. Stakeholders provide context, add knowledge, and lend perspective. Participants are more likely to use results they were involved in generating.	Feasibility/manageability of involving multiple stakeholders, particularly the most disadvantaged of them. Evaluators may lack interviewing, dialogue, communication, and other qualitative skills. Weakened credibility amongst those that did not participate.

Rationale for Model Choice

The selected model will synthesize the decision-, program-, and expertise-oriented approaches. Patton's utilization-focused evaluation (UFE) will provide the over-arching framework for this evaluation because its two assumptions are met: 1) the primary purpose of the evaluation is to inform decisions; and 2) key stakeholders care about the evaluation and are able to use the results.

Aspects of the program-oriented models will include the *Tylerian* approach because a major reason for conducting the evaluation is to determine the extent to which the objectives of the program are being achieved. Although described as a "discredited" approach of *evaluation* (Fitzpatrick, Sanders & Worth, 2010, pg. 155), it serves as a useful framework for formative learning *assessment*, or the "degree to which participants acquire the intended knowledge, skills, attitude, confidence and commitment based on their participation" in the program. (Kirkpatrick, n.d., para. 2).

Elements of both the logic model and theory-based model are also useful aspects of a program-oriented approach. The logic model facilitates evaluation of the inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes. The program-theory helps examine the reason for any program failure, such as whether it failed to be delivered as planned (not implemented correctly) or whether the planned delivery failed (implemented as planned, it was just an ineffective plan). (Fitzpatrick, Sanders & Worth, 2010, pg. 159-161).

From the expertise-oriented model will come the professional judgment of a team of experts in the field who can each lend insight into the substance and procedures of the program. (Fitzpatrick, Sanders & Worth, 2010, pg. 127).

Evaluative Questions

The evaluative questions were developed in consultation with stakeholders that include employers, the advisory committee, faculty, college administration, students, alumni, and the American Bar Association (ABA) (Joint Committee, 2011, pg. 113). Inclusion of a broad spectrum of stakeholders helps ensure the relevant, measurable questions are asked. (Fitzpatrick, Sanders & Worthen, 2010, pgs. 318-319). In turn, the program evaluation provides information to not only guide in-house decision making but also support the decisions of those stakeholders to commit their time and other resources to the program (Kanyongo, 2011). The development of the evaluative questions was also informed by conducting an environmental scan and needs analysis related to the employment market in the program's service area. Based on this input, the following evaluative questions were identified:

As a result of utilizing the resources, and engaging in the learning experiences, provided during attendance in the program:

1. Do students complete their academic requirements within 150% of on-time?
2. Do students graduate with the least possible amount of student loan debt?
3. Do students obtain relevant skills for their chosen field?
4. Do students feel confident to pursue gainful employment in the field?
5. Do students feel motivated to pursue advanced academic credentials?

These questions reflect a mix of both absolute and relative standards. For example, determining whether students graduate within 150% of on-time is a specific, numerical, absolute metric but is relative to a true "on-time" graduation time frame. Similarly, evaluating debt load includes comparing total debt assumed to direct costs (e.g., tuition, books) but also must account for varying circumstances necessitating students borrowing more than “the minimum”, which is an assessment made relative to an assumed norm. The standard for evaluating the attainment of relevant career skills are based on norms established for program learning outcomes, as evaluated by instructors using assignment rubrics. This evaluative question is also measured by assessment of student work samples taken from their portfolios. These portfolios are maintained throughout the program and contain a “key” assignment for each required course. The Program Director, faculty, and members of the Advisory Committee conduct annual reviews of student portfolios to determine if student skills are adequate for entry-level employment.

Student confidence to pursue employment and their motivation to pursue advanced academic credentials is measured through surveys. These surveys are administered to all students in their capstone class and again to graduates 90-180 days post-graduation.

The focus of the evaluative questions reflects pressures on, and the ethical responsibilities of, the program and the institution. There is mounting pressure to increase on-time graduation rates, lower student debt levels, and increase the number of graduates in fields providing gainful employment. At the same time, the political climate does not support tuition or tax increases, the institution is facing declining enrollment, and the percentage of under-prepared students enrolling is increasing. Thus, the institution needs to identify and prioritize programs that align with its mission and goals and then rebalance its allocation of resources amongst those prioritized programs. By engaging in a systematic, evidence-based, and structured evaluative process the institution can align the interests, goals, and expectations of the different stakeholder groups.

This evaluation will not focus on performance levels of individual instructors or staff members; such inquiries are part of established employment policies conducted as part of a broader framework of program and course review and assessment. Inquiring into such areas risks derailing the broader purpose of the evaluation. Additionally, information at that level does not advance one of the primary goals of the evaluation, which is to place evaluation results into an institutional context.

References

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Data Collection Design and Sampling Strategy
Audio Presentation

(Click the “Play” Arrow, below)

Reporting Strategy Table

Stakeholder	Reporting Strategy to Most Appropriately Communicate Findings	Potential Implications of the Report on Stakeholder	Stakeholder Involvement in the Reporting Process
Students/alumni	Reporting to students will be indirect, through updated program success and program cost metrics that are incorporated into program literature and on the program's website.	Through transparent use of results in program literature concerning what students will know and be able to do, the commitment required to succeed in the program and afterwards, and the investment of time and money needed, the report will help potential students make informed decisions before committing to the program. The results can provide a source of validation/confirmation and point of pride for alumni.	Students will not be directly involved in the reporting process other than as consumers of the information.
Faculty	Results for this faculty will be reported at faculty meetings, in detail, and in distinct, sub-discipline specific sub-groups. The program currently conducts faculty cohort meetings based on the faculty members' subject area, along with the program director. It is in these meetings that the results for the courses taught by each cohort that relate to specific evaluative questions will be reviewed. Additionally, a summary of the results will be made available to faculty as a Captivate presentation.	As a source of formative evaluation, the report provides feedback on the efficacy of, needed changes to, curriculum, course sequencing and prerequisites, pedagogy, and instructional design. These changes can help improve not only the directly learning outcomes but also improve the overall experience for students. The program design can become more effective and efficient, which can improve completion rates and lower student loan debt rates.	Not all faculty will be involved in the reporting process because not all of them are equally-invested or attend every meeting. But everyone will be given the opportunity to participate in review of the evaluation findings and planning how to use the results to improve student outcomes.
Advisory Committee	Reporting to this group will occur at its regular meeting with the Program. The report will consist of a high-level overview of the process with summary results tied directly to the program objectives. This overview provides an opportunity for further dialogue and input from these industry stakeholders. As with the faculty, a Captivate presentation summarizing results will be available.	Evaluation results inform this stakeholder group of the program's progress in achieving its goals and objectives. Positive results can encourage support by, and spread goodwill within, this community. Results showing less-than-positive outcomes, coupled with genuine dialogue for input and commitment to addressing the shortcomings, provides the program with credibility.	The advisory committee is comprised of experts and active practitioners in the community. Because they are external to the institution they will not be directly involved in the reporting process. They will, however, be provided with not only the high-level overview but also given the opportunity to provide input on how to respond to and use the results.
Administration	Report for administration will occur annually in the mandated annual program report and cyclically during the five-year program review cycle. Administration's chief interest is in knowing that programs have a rational evaluation plan, how the results have been used, and improvement in learning outcomes that are evidenced by	By communicating summative evaluation results, the report informs administration of students' knowledge and skill attainment level. It provides evidence of outcome and justification for resource allocation. It provides information to Academic Advisors and Financial Aid Counselors to help them better inform and guide students.	The level of involvement will depend on the administrator. The Directors of Research and Financial Aid will oversee the collection and analysis of data from their respective areas. These administrators will also review the portion of the report that incorporates

	that use. Reports to administration will contain a summary of the plan's objective-setting and design phase, along with summary results like those provided to the advisory committee. The summary presentation in Captivate provided to faculty and the Advisory Committee is also available to Administration.		their data to ensure it is accurately described. Administrators at higher levels, such as the Dean and Vice-President of Instruction, will review the entire report prior to publication. This preview is to give them the opportunity to provide input, offer suggestions, and give them advanced notice of information that may have political consequences.
American Bar Association (Program Accreditor)	The ABA's accrediting process prescribes specific report formats and data to supply at set intervals. This Evaluation plan, along with a summary of results, how the results were used and information on improvement in student learning has been observed since the results were put to use, will meet the reporting needs of the ABA.	There is no direct implication for the ABA. As an accrediting body, its role is to ensure the program adheres to the prescribed standards. Indirectly, however, the evaluation reports could influence this body's actions towards the program in the accreditation process. Additionally, the report results may provide the ABA with information for it to consider when it is setting accrediting standards and criteria for evaluating program compliance with those standards.	The ABA does not have a direct role in the reporting. Indirectly, the ABA prescribes the format for reports submitted to it and also determines the information to be reported.

Values, standards, and criteria to be used in interpreting the data to ensure openness and credibility:

Values

1. Deliberate transparency in the establishing the goals, methods, and processes of the evaluation
2. Consciences and proactive inclusion of multiple stakeholder perspectives
3. Scrupulous adherence to best practices for data integrity and confidentiality

Standards
Data reporting standards will conform to both the Joint Committee Standards and the AEA Guiding Principles.

Criteria
Data gathered will be evaluated against the following metrics: number of degrees and certificates awarded each year; student scores on the critical thinking assessment The Test of Everyday Reasoning, which is a nationally-normed and validated instrument; Student scores on the Community College Survey of Student Engagement, which is nationally-normed and validated; percentage of graduates that pursue, or plan to pursue, four-year degrees; course completion rates; pass rate on the Certified Paralegal exam, which is nationally-normed and validated, number of graduates working in a discipline-related field, and; employer satisfaction with graduates' entry-level skills. For all of these metrics, the program has historical data to use for benchmarking.

Potential ethical issues that may arise in reporting findings:
One potential ethical pitfall is that the metrics used for this program may not present a fair comparison to other programs competing for resources at the institution. Ethical issue could also arise from the program evaluator's dual-role as the program director, his personal values, his interpersonal relationships with decision-makers, and his status within the organization as the co-chair of the influential Budget Review Committee. These issues can be addressed by conforming the evaluation process to both the Joint Committee Standards and the AEA Guiding Principles. When reporting evaluation results the evaluator must also guard against bias. For example, the report should not omit relevant but unfavorable results. Similarly, favorable results need to be reported in an accurate context and not strategically emphasized. The evaluator must ensure the reported outcomes align with the stated goals and evaluative questions.