

Arkansas Tech University

Professional Development Grant Final Report – 2015

A National Study of Student Affairs Graduate Preparation Programs:

Practical Guidance for Co-curricular Assessment to Meet Updated HLC Criteria

Presentation for Higher Learning Commission Regional Conference

Chicago, IL

March 29 – 31, 2015:

Christine E. Austin

Associate Professor of College Student Personnel

*This final report outlines the results of a professional development grant that funded travel, lodging, and meals during travel to the HLC regional conference from March 29 – 31, 2015. The grant was approved in support of my attendance, where a colleague and I delivered a 60 minute presentation to over 200 participants of the 2015 Higher Learning Commission Regional Conference. A copy of the program page on which this presentation appeared is included at the end of this report.*

### **B. Restatement of professional enhancement opportunity**

This faculty member traveled to the regional HLC conference in order to co-present a program entitled, “Practical Guidance for Co-curricular Assessment to Meet Updated HLC Criteria” at the Higher Learning Commission Regional Conference. Drawing on the presenters’ practical experience in both administration and assessment, the session provided a model for co-curricular assessment that included all elements of an assessment cycle including: constructing a shared purpose (functional mission in keeping with the institutional mission), establishing meaningful outcomes, providing quality programs/services aligned with the outcomes, measuring the extent to which the outcomes were accomplished, and using the results to make improvements (closing the loop).

The session provided practical suggestions for implementing an effective model and participants left with specific strategies that can be used immediately to implement and/or enhance their own co-curricular assessment efforts. Although the session began with a brief overview of the HLC criteria as they relate to co-curricular programs and services, the primary focus of the session was on practical strategies for creating or enhancing co-curricular assessment activities.

Outcomes of the presentation for the attendees included the following:

- Develop an understanding of the HLC accreditation criteria as it relates to co-curricular programs and services;
- Identify ways in which co-curricular programs/services contribute to student learning;
- Understand the various types of assessment and how outcome-based assessment is critical to successfully meeting HLC criteria and,
- Develop strategies (methods) for assessing student learning resulting from co-curricular activities.
- Participants will be invited to share elements of their co-curricular programs that work, and to ask questions about how to improve those elements that are not working.

### **C. Brief review of the professional enhancement opportunity**

The presentation allowed the presenter to build upon professional skills and networking opportunities that are key to keeping current in the student affairs field. Understanding how to build appropriate student services to meet the demand of the online student demographic is vital to the continued success of the Arkansas Tech University, College Student Personnel program since it is a predominantly online degree and this presentation details the work that the program faculty undertake daily to engage with their students. The presentation served to create strong networks for future research projects, bring Arkansas Tech University into a supportive network

of schools of character, and offered opportunities to highlight Arkansas Tech University's assessment initiatives and reputation at a regional accreditation conference.

#### **D. Summary of experiences**

This presentation was selected as one of a select number. This successful presentation sparked conversations among participants about the place of co-curricular assessment in the accreditation process. The presenters have received one request to provide tailored training based on this presentation to the division of student affairs at an institution in Illinois. It also served to place Arkansas Tech University as a best practice example in co-curricular assessment methods.

A copy of the mobile app program listing is provided at the end of this report.

#### **E. Conclusions and Recommendations**

The presentation served to create strong networks for future research and collaborative projects, to bring Arkansas Tech University into a supportive network of schools of character, and to offer opportunities to highlight Arkansas Tech University's assessment initiatives and reputation within the region. I offer my extreme gratitude to the Professional Development committee and to the Office of Academic Affairs of ATU for providing opportunities for my professional growth as well as enabling me to set up future opportunities with other professionals in my field.

APPENDIX

The screenshot displays a mobile application interface for a session. The top status bar shows AT&T, 10:44 AM, and 90% battery. The app header includes 'All Events' and a user profile 'Christin...'. The main content area is titled 'Session' and shows the following details:

- Event:** 2015 HLC Annual Conference
- Date/Time:** Sun, March 29, 9:00 AM - 9:45 AM
- Session Title:** Practical Guidance for Co-curricular Assessment to Meet Updated HLC Criteria
- Category:** Planning
- Location:** Regency Ballroom D, Gold Level, West Tower
- Description:** The current HLC Criteria emphasize quality, effectiveness (student learning), and student persistence. Two student affairs faculty, recently trained as program reviewers, will provide an engaging and interactive presentation to review relevant requirements and facilitate development of practical strategies to meet the criteria for co-curricular assessment.
- Presenters:**
  - Christine Austin**, Associate Professor, Arkansas Tech University, Primary Presenter
  - Susan Underwood**, Associate Professor, Arkansas Tech University, Co-Presenter
- Documents:**
  - Practical-Guidance-for-Co-curricular-Assessment-to-Meet-Updated-HLC-Criteria-Christine\_Austin\_Presentation.pdf (1.43 MB)
  - Practical-Guidance-for-Co-curricular-Assessment-to-Meet-Updated-HLC-Criteria-Christine\_Austin.pdf (0.16 MB)

The left sidebar menu includes: Event Info, Schedule, Presenters, Exhibit..., and Maps. A notification at the bottom states: 'This event has ended. Your smart feed is still active. Built with CrowdCompass by Cvent'.