



USING AND SHARING ASSESSMENT FINDINGS: Turning Data into Interfaith Action

This resource explains strategies for using your assessment findings and identifying audiences who could benefit from these insights. The information that follows will help you:

- Explain different types of decisions on campus that could be informed by your assessment findings
- Identify specific audiences who could benefit from your assessment findings and various modalities for sharing your insights

The central purpose of assessment is to collect information that informs decisions on our campuses. You may have collected information from students—for example, through a survey, reflection narrative, or a course assignment—about what they learned from participating in an interfaith learning opportunity. Perhaps you gathered information from students and employees—for instance, by administering a campus-wide survey or offering focus groups—about how they view their campus climate for religious diversity. In either case, the information you collected provides opportunities to gain important insights about students' learning or your campus climate and identify potential changes or improvements.

Using Assessment Findings

Assessment findings do not speak for themselves. We need to interpret the evidence we gather in order to make informed decisions about our interfaith learning opportunities and campus climates. Your assessment findings can inform a variety of decisions such as the following:

Making changes to interfaith programs and courses

Do your assessment findings suggest lower levels of learning/development? If so, consider:

- Identifying whether there are sufficient learning opportunities to actualize the program/course learning outcomes
- Making specific refinements to the program or course design, content, and/or delivery to better align with learning outcomes
- Understanding whether students' learning and development are lower across particular student groups and exploring possible reasons

Setting priorities for the institution, division, and program

Use your assessment findings to determine priorities and goals by:

- Identifying assessment findings that suggest lower levels of learning, development, and campus climate perceptions to focus on in strategic planning efforts
- Understanding where higher levels of learning, development, and campus climate perceptions are happening and capitalizing on these areas
- Identifying new spaces on campus where interaction across religious difference can be prioritized (e.g., new student orientation, residential education, existing diversity efforts)
- Informing decisions about resource allocation, including fiscal, physical, personnel, technological, and knowledge/skill resources (e.g., training and professional development)
- Revisiting institutional policies related to religious diversity (e.g., accommodations, housing, student organizations, curricular requirements)
- Identifying assessment findings that can be used to report progress or improvements related to any goals or objectives outlined in strategic planning processes

Institutional, divisional, or program-level reporting

Use your assessment findings for:

- Reporting on the effectiveness of particular programs, courses, or initiatives at their conclusion
- Including evidence as part of your institutional accreditation efforts, as accreditation processes want evidence of the systematic collection of information AND the utilization of findings to make improvements
- Sharing information with off-campus partners (e.g., service-learning or community-based learning sites) who contribute toward students' development

Retention and engagement efforts

Gain important insights related to your students and employees by:

- Identifying specific areas of need for various student or employee groups
- Making informed improvements to the campus climate that welcome and support diverse groups

Sharing Assessment Findings

It's important to share assessment results with others for a few reasons. First, if we seek to do assessment for purposes of understanding and improving our interfaith programs, courses, and campus climates, sharing assessment findings with others often allows for different perspectives on how to best make improvements. Second, in terms of accountability and transparency, assessment findings provide important information for others to understand your program/course, its purposes, its effectiveness, and areas of opportunity and how you might address those. Interfaith assessment is a powerful way to tell the story of your students' learning and your campus environment.

Who are your audiences for sharing assessment findings? It is important to consider various audiences so that your assessment findings are communicated in the most useful way possible. You should customize how you share assessment results based on the various audiences with whom you anticipate sharing your results.



Students: Students provide much of the information collected on campuses about interfaith learning and the campus climate for religious diversity. Identify important snippets about your findings and—most importantly—explain how your campus plans to respond.

Staff: We often collaborate with campus partners to create interfaith learning opportunities. Identify the assessment findings that could inform other areas on campus. Staff members whose work also relates to civic, leadership, and intercultural outcomes, for instance, could benefit from insights related to students interfaith learning and development or the campus climate for religious diversity.

Faculty: In considering their own course design, content, delivery, and assessment, faculty stand to benefit from insights related to students' learning and their perception of the campus climate. Identify faculty teaching general education and/or religious/interfaith studies courses, and share insights from your interfaith assessment.

Administrators: Those in leadership roles on our campuses can also benefit from our interfaith assessment findings. These individuals can find it useful to understand where (and to what extent) interfaith learning and development is happening on campus. They also stand to benefit from understanding student and employee perceptions of their campus climate for religious diversity. Insights from these types of assessments can inform campus policies and priorities.

Off-campus partners: Some interfaith work happens off campus. For instance, students develop interfaith-related skills through interactions with community members, at service sites, in local congregations, in internships, or through volunteer work. If your interfaith learning opportunities involve such community stakeholders, share the insights you gained through your interfaith assessment with site staff, community members, and/or employers.

Once you identify audiences who could benefit from your assessment findings, develop a strategy to share your results by considering:

- What are the most important implications of your findings as they relate to these specific audiences?
- What actions can various audiences take with your assessment findings?
- What level of communication is appropriate for particular audiences, and how does that influence what we share?

What are useful methods for sharing assessment findings? Once you have understood the importance of sharing your assessment results and with whom you will share your findings, consider how to share your information. Different methods of sharing your information are more appropriate for particular audiences. Consider the following in thinking through how you will report your findings:

Assessment Reports

- Organize and synthesize a lot of useful information for different audiences.
- Prepare reports with specific audiences in mind such as an executive summary for administrative leadership in your area or report on findings that speaks to community efforts for off-campus partners.
- Consider comprehensive reports as well as brief and focused versions for particular audiences.

Presentations

- Discuss your findings with your own colleagues, broader divisional staff, faculty, and even colleagues at other institutions.
- Deliver the information in a more interactive format than reports, but still consider your different audiences.
- Emphasize the actions various audiences can take as a result of your assessment findings.

Web/Virtual Spaces

- Post your assessment findings to various institutional websites for easy access.
- Use interactive features on websites that allow visitors to learn about the assessment findings of most interest.
- Use social media to communicate brief snippets related to your assessment findings, namely to students.
- Use infographics as a way to explain your assessment findings more visually.

Other Modes

- Reach staff, faculty, students, alumni, and/or the general public through newsletters, newspapers, and institutional magazines.
- Highlight assessment in action through institutional assessment summits, conferences, or other events.
- Communicate insights via poster campaigns or table tents, particularly for student audiences.

Conclusion

Educators should regularly collect information from students and employees about interfaith learning and the campus climate for worldview diversity. The information we collect has the potential to inform a variety of decisions on campus and influence diverse audiences. Carefully considering the various uses of assessment findings and who could benefit from understanding the data helps inform interfaith learning opportunities and policies and practices related to inclusive, educative campus learning contexts.

