Guiding principles of data dissemination: Departmental users

1. At the department level, information is used to inform and direct policies, measure outcomes, and determine program needs. Practices that encourage data sharing are necessary for the promotion of assessment and program improvement. Information should be provided in response to specific policy questions asked by relevant stakeholders charged with responsibility for that program.

    ❖ *The assessment community should release data in an intentional, purposive, and controlled manner that (a) permits an appropriate level of disclosure, (b) ensures the timely receipt of data by interested parties, (c) enables accurate and meaningful interpretation and use, and (d) protects the confidentiality of faculty and students, and of Trinity College of Arts & Sciences (TCAS) and the university overall.*

2. The interests of data managers must be balanced with the university's support for program-driven assessment. Programs' access to data must be mediated by the need to safeguard data from possible misinterpretation.

    ❖ *The assessment community should promote and use a single source of data. The Office of Assessment, in collaboration with the office of the Director of Academic Services and Systems, should be the chief analysts and communicators of Trinity College-level data.*

    ❖ *The TCAS Assessment Working Group should evaluate the proposed dissemination of aggregate or itemized data and provide guidance to the Dean of Academic Affairs as to the personnel and/or organizations that may receive or access data.*

    ❖ *The assessment community should communicate to stakeholders its regular work cycles. Requests for data and/or analyses should be added to our work queue first-come, first-served, with the exception of those made by TCAS leadership.*

3. The Office of Assessment and the office of the Director of Academic Services and Systems recognize that much of the information we collect and use is of a fundamentally private nature. We make both implicit and explicit pledges of confidentiality to students and faculty.

    ❖ *No itemized data files including the following categories will be provided: ethnicity; grades, GPA, or rank; admissions markers (SAT, ACT, Reader Ratings); financial or financial aid data; and athletics data. The dissemination of aggregate reports using protected data categories necessitates special review by assessment personnel.*

    ❖ *Assessment personnel should communicate to departmental users any laws, regulations, IRB guidelines, or administrative procedures that might affect participation, responses, interpretation, publication, and/or uses of the resulting data.*

4. The Office of Assessment supports collaboration between and among the various university offices charged with the assessment of student learning outcomes or program evaluation. Assessment personnel are empowered to share data between offices, subject to standards of review listed below.

Procedures

1. A single liaison to SISS, the office of the Director of Academic Services and Systems, will disseminate data from the Student Information System (i.e., SISS queries) to designated users

    a. at established intervals,

    b. upon request by TCAS leadership, or

    c. when the TCAS Assessment Working Group approves a program- or committee-driven request for data.

2. Data requests should be routed through members of the TCAS Assessment Working Group, which will coordinate and provide guidance pertaining to data distribution, use, and interpretation.

    a. The TCAS Assessment Working Group suggests that the requesting individual or, preferably, committee communicates a clear mandate or charge so that their data needs can be evaluated and addressed properly.

    b. In the interest of expediting data requests, reviewers from the TCAS Assessment Working Group may evaluate and respond to requests via email without waiting until the next biweekly meeting. At least two members of the group, one of whom must be affiliated with the Office of Assessment or the office of the Director of Academic Services and Systems, should participate in the discussion. The full group should be made aware of the request and decision at the next biweekly meeting.

        In cases where the request includes sensitive or protected data, the TCAS Assessment Working Group may conduct a more comprehensive review at its next biweekly meeting.

    c. To streamline its work flow and to ensure that all stakeholders are involved in assessment-related decision-making, the TCAS Assessment Working Group will not provide data or analytical summaries to individuals working independently of or parallel to existing committees, unless requested to do so by TCAS leadership.

3. The dissemination of itemized data files and/or aggregated reports depends on the presence of protected categories of data.

a. If the requested data file does not contain any protected categories of data, assessment personnel or the office of the Director of Academic Services and Systems may provide any itemized query to the requester following a review by the TCAS Assessment Working Group.

b. If the requested data file uses any protected categories of data, assessment personnel or the office of the Director of Academic Services and Systems may provide aggregated reports only (i.e., no itemized data). In cases where the population or sample of students is small enough to make possible the identification of individual students, the assessment community may elect not to release the aggregation.

c. The College does not report actual GPAs. The only appropriate reporting of GPAs is relational values (e.g., magnitudes of difference from relevant comparison groups). Such requests should be evaluated by assessment personnel for usability.

4. Reports should be offered to TCAS leadership or designated officers for preliminary review.