

# The Welcomer

Collegiate Information and Visitor Services Association

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## Conference 2009!



COURTESY: BOSTON UNIVERSITY

There is less than one month until the 2009 conference begins at Boston University! The conference will span an amazing three days, filled with tours of Boston-area schools, information sessions, roundtable discussions, and a keynote presentation by Jeff Kallay of Target X Recruiting. We know that this tough economy means that many members are unable to join us this year, but we are hopeful that things will have improved by the 2010 conference in (*location TBA in June*). Remember to check the CIVSA Members-Only website after the conference for presentations and session handouts.

If you haven't yet made your Boston hotel reservations, don't forget that the special CIVSA rate of \$219/night plus tax is only valid until May 23. You can make your reservations for the Hyatt Regency-Cambridge online at <http://civsa.org/conference/> or by calling 800-233-1234.

# Research and Assessment: Designing an Assessment Project

by Denise Wellman, Ph.D.

This is the first in a series of articles that will be presented by the CIVSA Research & Assessment Committee to answer various questions about the topic of research and assessment. This series is intended to inform the membership on the topic and to stimulate thinking about a variety of assessment projects that are important to the field of information and visitor services.

## Part I: What is Assessment and Why Do We Assess?

It will be no surprise to anyone that assessment and learning outcomes are two of the new “buzz” words in higher education. This call for accountability and evidence-based learning is in part the result of the significant resources that are now invested in higher education - resources from both the public and private sector - which create a variety of forces that impact the higher education environment. Assessment is one way to respond to at least two of the prevailing forces that now exist in higher education, namely “... external demands for accountability and internal commitments to improvement” (Keeling, Wall, Underhile, & Dungy, 2008, p. 1).

Assessment has been defined as “...any effort to gather, analyze, and interpret evidence which describes institutional, divisional, or agency effectiveness...” (Upcraft and Schuh, 2001, p. 5). As educators we are innately concerned with learning, and assessment and feedback are thought to be crucial for helping people learn. Therefore, assessment is simply a means to improve learning as well as the quality and effectiveness of the services which we offer. In our field, we might use assessment to gather the information we need in an effort to enhance and/or change programs and services. Assessment might also be utilized to evaluate the perception of an office across the campus. From this perspective, assessment is both intentional and reflective; it does not happen without forethought and planning and should be considered an iterative or repeating process.

Theories and models provide a framework which supports the process of assessment. Theories offer “a systematic way of understanding events or situations” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2005), e.g. Bloom’s Taxonomy (1984) is often utilized when considering learning outcomes; and models are simply an arrangement of theories, which together paint a more complete picture of a situation being explored. While there are many models of assessment, each with their own unique approach to the process, they all share some common and essential elements:

1. **Plan! Set clearly defined goals and objectives** for the programs and services you want to assess. For instance, this step might start by reflecting on what you want your student workers to learn from a particular training program that you offer.
2. **Determine how you will assess** a program or service of interest. Following our same example, this step would involve asking yourself what aspects of the training program you want to assess. What types and how many student workers are needed to conduct the assessment? What method(s) (surveys, interviews, qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods) will you utilize to gather and then analyze the information you need to understand what your students learned from the training program?
3. **Implement or conduct** the assessment plan. When goals and objectives are clearly set and an assessment plan is in place, you can then gather data. This involves a consideration of the methods you will use to gather and then analyze the information; for instance, will you use surveys and/or conduct interviews to gather the information you need to answer the question(s) of interest? What statistics are appropriate to answer the research questions?
4. **Review the data and make inferences.** This step allows you to determine if the students learned what you planned for them to learn as a result of

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participating in the training program. Following a careful analysis, you then have the opportunity to **use the data** to make changes to your training program and/or to determine what, how much, or how well students learned what you planned them to learn. **The data then informs a review of goals and objectives**, and the iterative life cycle of assessment begins again.

The following diagram may help to illustrate these four steps.



This article will briefly address the first of these four steps.

### Step One: What's the Plan?

The first fundamental component of good assessment is to develop a plan. What are the intended outcomes of a particular program or service? From the perspective of information or visitor services, we might ask:

What knowledge and/or skill base do we want our student workers to learn from a particular training program?

What do we want our visitors to learn from a campus visit experience? An Open House?

Assessment therefore involves the intentional planning of programs and services that offer opportunities for our constituents to achieve (or learn) what we want them to achieve (or learn). Through this process, we not only define goals and objectives for a particular program or service, but we carefully plan the program with the end (the outcomes) in mind. Now keep in mind, we do not always get it right, but careful planning helps to ensure that we get the results that we intended.

Goals and objectives are distinct, yet closely related. They inform one another throughout the assessment process; however, they are different in their scope. Goals are generally broad statements of desired outcomes and explained in very general terms. Objectives tend to denote the specific skill, ability, value, or attitude that we hope will be learned. They also typically utilize action words that specify observable behaviors. Above all, objectives should be:

**Specific**  
**Measurable**  
**Achievable**  
**Realistic**  
**Timely**

Goals and objectives should furthermore be widely shared throughout the organization, most especially with the stakeholders who benefit from the programs and services you offer.

The following present some examples of goals and objectives that may be important to our work:

**Goal:** After completing a training program, campus tour guides will understand millennial students and the factors that influence college choice.

**Objective:** Student guides will be able to describe the characteristics of millennial students and explain how their expectations might impact their tours.

**Objective:** Student guides will be able to describe the factors that influence college choice among high school juniors and seniors.

# CIVSA Best Practices

## *Premier Parking at Northern Kentucky University*

by Maribeth Carskadon

In the midst of many campus renovations, the Office of Admissions at Northern Kentucky University opened a new Welcome Center this fall. This new center building has a presentation room that seats 65-80 students, two offices, a reception area and a conference room that seats 12. It is an ideal space for our individual and group visitors. A goal and priority of the Welcome Center is to make each guest's visit to the campus a memorable one.

The Welcome Center design includes reserved parking for guests. Located adjacent to the center, the parking lot consists of eighteen reserved spaces. The first eighteen prospective students who make a reservation to attend one of our visitation programs are each assigned a personal parking space we call a *Premier Parking Space*. A parking garage is located directly behind the Welcome Center for visitors who are not able to secure a *Premier Parking Space* (all parking stubs are validated by the Welcome Center staff).

Before the visitation program, a confirmation letter is sent to each of the eighteen students. This letter includes directions, a map of campus, and an enclosure congratulating the student on their *Premier Parking Space*.

The afternoon before the visit, the Welcome Center prints personal signs on gold paper to represent the school colors. These signs are then placed in the parking space holders at each of the eighteen spots to recognize the visitor who is to park there.



When the visitors arrive on the day of the program, they easily find their *Premier Parking Space* and can quickly focus on the campus instead of the hassle of where to park their car. Once the visit is concluded, *Premier Parking* recipients are then encouraged to take their sign with them as a keepsake. Students and parents alike have expressed what a special touch the *Premier Parking Spaces* have made to their visit.

The reserved spots are also used for individual appointments with Admissions Counselors. The counselor contacts the Welcome Center with the student's name and date of visit, and the same process follows.

*Premier Parking* has made parking hassle-free for guests and has left a lasting, memorable impression of NKU on all who visit.

*Maribeth Carskadon*  
*Northern Kentucky University*

# Welcome New Members!

Emily Archambeault  
George Mason University

Grace Arguijo  
George Mason University

Amanda Bentley Fessler  
Northern Kentucky University

Evelyn Betancourt-Martinez  
University of Texas, San Antonio

Erin Dennis  
Dallas Baptist University

Kate Duncan  
York University

Carol Gadd  
Bucknell University

Laurie Gaiser  
Tarleton State University

Jessica Hendrickson  
Tarleton State University

Karlene Kunigiel  
Skidmore College

Darlene Lemen  
Purdue University

Melissa Livengood  
Purdue University

Rebecca Lothringer  
University of North Texas

Alexa Maddox  
Howard Payne University

Sean McGee  
Savannah College of Art & Design

Jasiel Perez  
University of North Texas

Mike Piggott  
Purdue University

Wendi Rountree  
University of Arizona

Marisol Scheer  
University of Texas, San Antonio

Kim Schon  
Bucknell University

Tiffany Sciacca  
Colorado State University-Pueblo

Amy Stornello  
Rochester Institute of Technology/National  
Technical Institute for the Deaf



*The Welcomer* is a quarterly publication of the Collegiate Information and Visitor Services Association. Please send comments, suggestions, or photos to:

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# The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's New Visitor Center

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee is pleased to announce the new home of the UWM Visitor Center, Vogel Hall.

The Department of Recruitment and Outreach moved to the newly renovated Vogel Hall in late November 2008.

Expanded visitor services began in the new location in early December, with a few finishing touches

still in the works such as installation of audio/projection systems and automated tour registration and check-in processes.



*The outside of Vogel Hall*

“We are very excited to have a ‘front door’ to the campus,” shared long-time CIVSA member and Assistant Director for Visit Programs Kate Steinbach. “Our old office/visitor center was within a building located in the middle of campus – kind of hidden. Vogel is on the east border of campus off of a well-known street. Our new location makes it much easier for guests to find us.”

Vogel Hall was built in the late 1930s and has had many different uses as the campus has grown over the years. The brick and Lannon stone building most recently housed the Peck School of the Arts Inova Arts Gallery. In December 2008, the gallery was moved to its new home and renovation work began for the new Visitor Center.

“The most noticeable change for folks who knew the building as a gallery is that the beautiful leaded glass windows are no longer walled off,” stated Steinbach.

“The amount of natural light is amazing and really aids in providing a very warm, welcoming place for our campus guests to come for the start of their tour, to meet with staff or just stop in to ask a few questions or to pick up literature.”

The additional space allows for a reception room, presentation room and family meeting room for walk-in visitors who have more in-depth questions. Staff offices are primarily on the second floor and student work space, a conference room and plentiful storage space are on the lower level.

“I think the architect working on the renovations thought I was nuts when I got excited about how much storage we would have” joked Steinbach. “Our old office had very little space we could designate for storage, so it was not uncommon for boxes of materials to be out in the public’s eye and wedged into every possible corner. Obviously, we would rather keep that hidden.”

As part of the project, the campus has enhanced directional signage for visitors and provided four

short-term parking spaces right in front of Vogel Hall specifically for guests. The meters provide 15 minutes of free parking



*The Presentation Room*

allowing for that quick stop in or for tour guests to pick up a parking permit if one was not able to be mailed in time for a scheduled tour.

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# CIVSA Member Profile

*Kevin Kirk, Baylor University*

*In the recent CIVSA communication survey, several members suggested a “get-to-know-other-members” or “get-to-know-the-Board” feature for the newsletter. This is the third column in the series; look for more profiles of other members in future issues.*

**Job Title:** Director of Campus Visits, Baylor University (under the Enrollment Management division)

**How long have you been in the information/visitor services world?** 5 years in Campus Visits. Prior to that, 5 years in Admission Services (Associate Director). Prior to that, 3 years in Financial Aid (Grant Coordinator & Counselor) - all at Baylor University.

**When did you join CIVSA?** 3 years ago, when Troy [Selk, CIVSA Past President] wandered into my Visitors Center just to talk and to recruit me to the best organization ever! I just knew that there had to be people out there that did what I did and surely they had organized into an association.

**How many CIVSA conferences have you attended?** 3 (about to be 4!): Washington DC, Notre Dame, Pomona, CA, and Boston, MA...I wouldn't miss it!

**What are your major job responsibilities?** Daily Visits (individual visits, group visits, prof. appointments, class visits, etc.); Visit Events (open houses, special recruitment events, etc.); “Front Door” information center for the University; Transportation for campus conferences, meetings, etc. We will serve about 35,000 guests this year through all those different means.

**What is a typical day like at your job?** Typical!?!? What's that?!?! That is why I love it...because there is always something new. From the “behind the scenes” types of work and then jumping straight into the “in the spotlight” types of work, there are always new challenges that make it fun!

**What is your best piece of advice for other CIVSA members (about student training, customer service, unique traditions, your website, or anything!)?** Best piece of advice...hmmm...I guess this

should be something really profound...let's see...“Love on your folks.” If you are really trying to love and take care of your folks (those that work for you, those that work with you, those that you work for, those that work against you, and those that visit your campus) then things should be pretty awesome.

**What is the most fun thing that your office does?**

Besides giving group tours to hundreds of Junior High students?!?!?! I do really love it when we get out in my

boat on Lake Waco during the summer with our student staff and do some crazy stunts on the tubes and eat lots of fun food. Super Fun times!

**What is your favorite part of working in visitor/information services?** Definitely the students, both the ones that work in our office that we really get to build relationships with throughout their years at Baylor and the visiting students that we get to counsel and share with during a very critical decision point in their lives.

**How many items are on your current to-do list?**

Which list? The one I look to most often is currently at a somewhat-overwhelming 116 items. Whew! I better get back to work right NOW!!!



*Kevin and his oldest daughter, Lindsey*

**Goal:** After completing a 3-day orientation program, Information Center student staff will demonstrate strong analytical problem solving skills.

**Objective:** Student workers will identify potential risks involved in campus events.

**Objective:** Student workers will demonstrate appropriate campus risk management procedures.

Whether an institution becomes involved in assessment to prepare for reaccreditation, to justify the extent to which departmental programs support learning and align with institutional goals, or to document evidence of student learning, assessment is clearly here to stay and should be deeply embedded across the university. It is not an end in itself, nor should it simply be a response to the forces which place demands on the higher education environment. It is a continuous process of pursuing and disseminating knowledge to address issues important to society and our own institutions. Assessment, like learning, is indeed the business of the university itself (Keeling, Wall, Underhile, & Dungy, 2008).

The next article will address the second step in a good assessment model, that of developing assessment strategies. Please send your comments to the CIVSA Research & Assessment Committee at [denisen@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:denisen@mailbox.sc.edu).

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“We are very grateful that the campus chose us to be the new occupants of Vogel Hall. The renovations are fantastic. We are still getting used to our new space and the opportunities it will allow for broadening our services to both the on- and off-campus communities,” Steinbach stated.



*The Reception Room*

She adds, “On a personal note, I want to say thank you to all in CIVSA who have, over the years, provided ideas for service enhancements and shared building and renovation stories and ideas.”

*Submitted by the Department of Recruitment and Outreach  
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee*

# CIVSA Officers for 2008-2009

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Have a question for the entire Board?  
Reach us all at [exec@civsa.org](mailto:exec@civsa.org)

## Updated CAS Publications

CAS has announced it will suspend all sales of its old publications effective June 1, 2009, and will start taking orders for its new publications to be released on August 1. In the interim, if colleagues want to purchase current publications, they should realize the 6th Edition of the "CAS Professional Standards for Higher Education" will be replaced with a 7th Edition.

The 7th Edition contains the complete set of 39 functional area standards and guidelines. In addition, it contains the standards and guidelines for Masters Degree Student Affairs Preparation Programs.

Additions include standards and guidelines for: a) Auxiliary Services, b) Adult Learner Programs, c) Graduate and Professional Student Programs, d) Dining Services, and e) Undergraduate Research Programs.

The following functional area standards and guidelines have been updated from the previous edition of the Book of Standards: a) Assessment Services, b) Campus Activities, c) International Student Programs, d) TRIO and Other Educational Opportunity Programs, e) Registrar, f) Recreational Sports, and g) Learning Assistance Programs.

Each functional area has been updated to address technology programs and services to students. The technology standards provide the principles that will help institutions make effective decisions as they continue to address the rapid and ever-changing student technology services and programs. In addition, CAS has authored a Statement of Shared Ethics and the Characteristics of Individual Excellence to guide all professionals.

Version 4.0 of the CD that contains all the Self-Assessment Guides (SAGs) will also be released on August 1. In addition to containing all of the Self-Assessment Guides, the CD contains a PowerPoint for teaching about self-assessment as well as an e-learning course explaining how self-assessment is conducted for student learning and development.

Mailings to student affairs and other college and university officers and previous purchasers of CAS products will be made by CAS in early May and again in August notifying them of the changes.

## CAS Symposium

CAS has announced that it will hold a National Symposium on "CAS Standards, Self-Assessment, and Student Learning Outcomes in Higher Education," November 15-17, 2009, at the Crystal Gateway Marriott Hotel in Washington, DC. The goal of the national symposium is to strengthen the higher education community's understanding of the CAS standards and guidelines.

In addition to a pre-workshop on learning about "CAS Basics," nationally recognized speakers, and round table discussions, and "hands on" learning opportunities will be offered during the symposium: a) the new learning domains, b) finding the right assessment tool, c) training staff to conduct assessment, d) writing learning outcomes, and e) organizing a division-wide assessment. These and other programs are planned by the CAS National Symposium Committee.

For more information about the symposium and registration information, visit the CAS website: [www.cas.edu](http://www.cas.edu) or contact Phyllis Mable, CAS Executive Director, (202) 862-1400.

**NOTE:** In the pursuit of advancing the knowledge about the use of standards and self-assessment processes in enhancing programs and services to students and in developing designated student learning and developmental outcomes, CAS is offering research grants to selected proposals. Grants of up to \$3000 will be considered and proposals are due October 1, 2009. [This link](#) has more information.

