

Worked Example

C: An evaluation plan for a study skills support centre

This example is taken from Colorado State University's campus-wide continuous improvement system known as PRISM (Plan for Researching Improvement and Supporting Mission), which is used by both academic and student affairs units. As well as demonstrating how impact evaluations are undertaken, it shows how PRISM emphasises the linkages of the goals of specific service areas, which are being evaluated, with those of the wider department's and the university's mission.

University mission:	How does the work of the centre 'fit' with the university's mission? For example, The centre provides fair and equal learning opportunities that are accessible to all applicants with the ability to succeed irrespective of background.
Strategic plan:	How does the work of the centre 'fit' with the university's strategic plan? For example, The centre supports the learning and development of low income, first generation and disabled students.
Student Services strategy:	How does the work of the centre 'fit' with the overall strategy of the Student Services department? For example, The centre supports the department's strategy by providing services/ programmes integral to the academic mission of the university that prepare students to maximise their university experience, integrate learning and personal development, and encourage independence and social responsibility.
Centre's purpose:	The centre aims to increase the retention and graduation rates of eligible students and foster a university environment that is supportive of the success of low income, first generation and disabled students.
Monitoring:	Data are available from a number of sources: the university's student records, the centre's student database, and feedback from students participating in the centre's activities. Data are analysed and combined with data from other student services areas where applicable.

Improvement plan and desired outcome

Outcome description:

XX% of students participating in the centre's activities will progress as a result of study skills assistance, and support/referral for academic and personal difficulties.

Strategy to demonstrate outcome:

Provide services in the form of individual advice (3 times a semester), individual tutoring (up to 3 hours a week), weekly drop-in group tutoring (for high-demand courses), and individual study skills assistance (by appointment).

For the new academic year, a computerised study skills diagnostic assessment will be created for each new student. This tool will be used to create a plan to improve their study skills, with choices from one-to-one assistance or access to several on-line study skills improvement resources.

Evaluation method:

Track services with the centre's database, evaluate students' academic performance/achievement each semester, administer a student evaluation survey to all students participating in the centre's activities during the autumn and spring semesters.

The survey asks students to respond to statements using a 5-point Likert scale (strongly agree to not applicable). Examples of statements include:

- Overall, I am satisfied with the services I received
- My academic self-confidence has increased as a result of the support I received
- My study skills have improved as a result of this support
- The support was of high quality

Expected outcomes:

1. XX% of students participating in the centre's activities will progress;
2. YY% of survey respondents will indicate that their 'academic self-confidence has increased as a result of the support received;'
3. ZZ% of survey respondents will indicate that they 'agree' or 'strongly agree' with the statement 'the support was of high quality.'

Derived from Colorado State University.