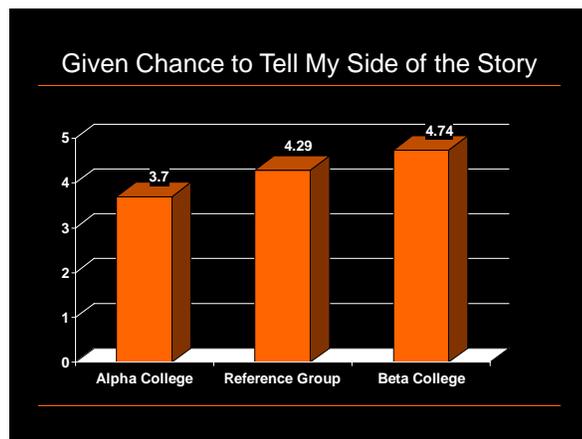




Using NASCAP Data to Improve Your Conduct System

Part of the benefits of being a member of the NASCAP Project is that you get a three-part assessment of your student conduct system. Outcomes are measured in: system efficacy, student learning, and environmental press. Your scores associated with each of these sections of the SCAPQ are compared with a reference group each year so that you can measure your conduct system and campus environment against a larger group of institutions.

While this comparison is helpful, the real advantage to participating in the NASCAP Project over time is that you can identify areas for improvement, create strategies that target those areas, and measure your results against your own goals. Assessment over time can and should lead to continuous program improvement. Let's show you how this works.



As an example, let's assume that your conduct system's score on the item that addresses "giving students an opportunity to tell their side of the story" falls well below the reference group score, and you decide to focus on that item in the next data collection cycle. What strategies could you employ to improve student response to that item on the SCAPQ?

First, you'll want to examine current practice. You might have a senior conduct officer observe how staff members conduct their hearings or you might want to employ audio or video recorders to sample how students are being treated and what staff members are saying. You might also review the "scripts" or check lists that you might be using to help conduct officers with their hearings. These simple reviews will give you clues on what needs improvement.

As an alternative, you might want to use the data in a staff retreat to brainstorm causes and remedies for this issue.

Depending on how sophisticated you want to be, you could even conduct focus groups to learn what referred students think. The amount of time and other resources you can invest in this discovery will vary by office.

As a second step, you'll want to develop strategies based on these data to address the "telling their side of the story" issue. Several ideas are listed below:

- Ensure that meetings with students are scheduled in a comfortable and inviting environment. Cramped and hectic offices where interruptions occur, do not communicate concern.
- Check for proper scheduling of cases to ensure that enough time is allowed for this communication to take place. Hasty meetings do not communicate caring.
- Revise hearing scripts and check lists to focus on collecting information from the referred students. To often, conduct officers focus on due process requirements and telling students what they need to know about the rules.
- Ensure that conduct officers take the time to listen actively to what is being said and communicate an openness to what is being expressed. As Gary Pavela often says, "Hear the case before you decide it."
- Communication research shows that most of what an individual remembers about a conversation is based on a person's tone of voice and non-verbal behavior. Ensure that conduct officers understand these dynamics.

Once your list is developed, you should select strategies that can be reasonably implemented. Remember that just saying so, doesn't make it happen. Commitment must be obtained and perhaps even a shift in department philosophy might be necessary. In some instances, staff training may be necessary. Depending on the situation, some conduct officers might need to learn active or reflective listening. Some may need to know more about non-verbal communications.

Once the training is complete, these new practices must be monitored over time to ensure that they are being used. And then finally, measure the same constructs again. While success cannot be guaranteed and single measures do not tell the whole story, SCAPQ scores should move in a positive direction by executing this type of improvement plan.