

2018-2019 Assessment Final Report

Department: Student Conduct and Community Standards

Considering Impact, Behavior, and Values: Assessing Student Learning During an Administrative Hearing – Triangulating Data from Multiple Years

Introduction

Assessment Project Description

Students who have allegedly violated the *Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities* (the “Code”) will be referred to the non-academic misconduct process. Specifically, alleged violations that, upon review of the initial information, do not rise to the level of suspension or expulsion may be resolved through an informal, administrative hearing. An administrative hearing is a meeting with a Hearing Officer to inform the student of their rights within the non-academic misconduct process, share the information the university is aware of regarding the alleged violations, allow the student to respond to the allegations and provide further, relevant information, and, if the student is in violation of the Code, discuss the appropriate sanctions that serve to educate the student and repair any harm to the community. When a student faces potential suspension or expulsion, they are given the choice to engage in an informal, administrative hearing or a formal hearing.

Assessing student conduct learning outcomes can be challenging since the student population being assessed does not initially see the value in the service and education provided. In order to render rich assessment data, SCCS must consider what students discuss in informal, administrative hearings. The student conduct practice at the University of Kansas embraces the impactful nature of the conversation and learning that occurs during these meetings and, as such, seeks to evaluate them in “real time.” Through an assessment that occurs during that meeting, SCCS intended to evaluate student learning that occurred prior to the meeting and while participating in the meeting. This immediate feedback has the potential to render richer data, which can be used for ongoing training for Hearing Officers and allow an in depth evaluation of administrative hearing practices.

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Service/Program Student Learning Outcome(s)

Students participating in an administrative hearing with a University Hearing Officer will be able to...

- Analyze how their behaviors impact the KU community (Department Learning Outcomes 1 & 3)
- Contrast their personal values with their actions during the incident. (Department Learning Outcome 2)
- Articulate why their actions may be inconsistent with KU's expectations (Department Learning Outcome 1)
- Identify how their behaviors impact their personal and academic success at KU. (Department Learning Outcome 3)
- Develop strategies that prevent future behaviors from occurring and how to repair harm to the community. (Department Learning Outcome 1 & 4)

Population/Sample:

Initially, SCCS proposed that the sample would include any student referred to SCCS who did not potentially face suspension or expulsion. SCCS estimated the number to be at least 30 students. The project was refined during the course of the academic year (as described below) to involve more limited assessment methods with a broader pool. 404 students received the survey. 90 students completed the survey, for a response rate of 22.78%.

Assessment Method(s):

While the department intended to engage in more robust assessment strategies (including pre-hearing self-assessments and in-hearing assessments by the hearing officer), numerous staff changes in SCCS prevented this from occurring. The project was assessed solely through the use of a post-hearing survey sent in students' outcome letters. All students who participate in a student conduct hearing receive an outcome

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letter following their hearing. The outcome letter identifies the hearing officer's decision (either responsible or not responsible) for all alleged policy violations and the rationale for their decision. If the student is found responsible for the policy violation(s), the outcome letter includes the required sanctions and the hearing officer's rationale for assigning the sanctions. The outcome letter is delivered electronically and includes an invitation to complete a survey about their experience in the conduct process.

The survey, administered through Campus Labs, asks students to identify any actions they took to prepare for the conduct hearing, their understanding of the process, their perception of the hearing officer's respect for them, their understanding of their rights, and their belief about whether the conduct process as outlined in university procedures was followed. Additionally, the survey asks students to reflect upon their learning as a result of the experience and their understanding of the rationale and sanctions, regardless of whether they agreed with the decision.

The survey contained 30 multiple choice questions and one open-ended question for any additional information students wished to share.

Summary of Key Findings/Results

Results of the survey initially indicate that a majority of students who participated in a conduct hearing achieved the department's stated learning outcomes. Students were asked to identify their agreement or disagreement on a five-point scale. They responded as follows:

- 69.77% strongly agreed or agreed that they understood the rationale for the decision made concerning the alleged violations.
- 62.32% strongly agreed or agreed that the conduct meeting helped them to think about how their behavior affects their academic success.
- 58.82% strongly agreed or agreed that the conduct meeting helped them to think about how their behavior impacts others and the community.
- 69.57% strongly agreed or agreed that the conduct meeting helped them to develop a future plan of action to avoid further conduct violations.

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- 65.22% strongly agreed or agreed that the conduct meeting helped them to think about how their behavior relates to their personal values.
- 61.90% strongly agreed or agreed that the sanctions they received were appropriate for their violations.
- 60% indicated that they believed they violated the policy and accepted responsibility for their actions.

These results provide a solid foundation from which to start, but they also indicate significant areas for future growth. SCCS would like to see increases in each of the categories identified above. Specifically, students agreed most significantly with the statement that they knew how to avoid future conduct violations. This does not necessarily indicate that they will change their behaviors as a result of the alleged violation. Additionally, students seem less confident in their ability to identify how their behavior impacted their academic success and others in the community. Students' understanding of their impact on themselves and others is a critical component of the SCCS work, and this highlights the need to strengthen education and conversations around this topic in the upcoming academic year.

In the future, SCCS will use additional assessment methods to triangulate the data and provide a more robust picture of student learning through the conduct process. The current assessment asked to students to identify their agreement with the learning outcomes. However, it did not ask students to describe how they felt about those items or how they knew they achieved the learning outcomes. Introducing more robust hearing officer assessments will help to identify student learning in each of these areas beyond students' simple agreement or disagreement with the statements.

In considering the comprehensive community standards education program, the current assessment project provides several useful measures to improve upon. Specifically:

- 15.55% of students read the *Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities* prior to the hearing.
- 11.31% of students believed their behavior was a violation of policy.
- 15.90% of students believed their behavior was not a violation of policy.

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- 17.78% of students said they did not change their behavior since learning of the alleged violation.

These low numbers indicate a need to help students proactively understand the *Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities* and their expectations as a KU student, as well as opportunities to identify problematic behaviors and change those behaviors before policy violations occur.

Finally, over 86% of students indicated agreement or strong agreement that they understood the conduct process, felt that the process was clearly explained, and they were treated with respect. 95% of students felt they were able to give their perspective on the alleged violations. This suggests an area of strength in the student conduct hearing process and opportunity to continue strengthening through future hearing officer trainings.

Conclusions

Impact of Assessment

Relying upon more comprehensive data from the two previous years and the available data from the current year, SCCS will use results of this assessment project to:

- Evaluate training content and practices for all hearing officers, including SCCS staff members, KU Student Housing hearing officers, and formal and student hearing board panelists.
- Evaluate the non-academic misconduct hearing process thoroughly. This will include the notification process when alleged violations occur and the overall process for the administrative hearings, as well as developing strong questions for hearing officers' use in meeting with students.
- Identify strategies to strengthen the decision rationale and sanction descriptions provided to students in hearings (when appropriate) and in outcome letters.
- Influence restorative sanctions that are educationally sound and community focused. This includes conducting a comprehensive review of all previously assigned and currently available sanctions to gather additional assessment information if available, review the appropriateness of those sanctions for current KU students, communicate

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appropriate sanctioning guidelines to all hearing officers, and develop language that helps students to understand the sanctions they are assigned.

- Inform educational outreach around community standards and university values. SCCS is preparing to launch a comprehensive community standards education and prevention program in the 2019-2020 academic year. Results from this project will help to inform the proactive programming planned for the upcoming year.

Lessons Learned

As mentioned, the project was narrowed in scope after a number of staff transitions within SCCS. While the department's intention was to utilize pre-hearing student self-assessments and in-meeting evaluation by the hearing officer, the only method of data collection was a post-hearing survey sent to students. The limited scope of the current assessment project makes it difficult to compare longitudinal data from previous years, as was the original goal.

It is difficult to assess student learning during a conduct proceeding using solely a post-hearing online assessment, since students are often resistant to attend the meeting or accept the results of the meeting. Results of the limited assessment for this project suggest a need to consider the questions utilized during hearings and to improve upon assessment strategies in order to help students better identify how their actions impact themselves and their community. Additionally, results of this assessment indicate a need to help students understand the sanctions to which they are assigned. In the coming year, SCCS will utilize this data to restructure hearings as appropriate, strengthen rationale and sanctioning explanations, and create a more robust assessment plan for this project in the 2019-2020 academic year. SCCS remains committed to gathering longitudinal data about student learning during conduct hearings, although additional assessment strategies are required to achieve this goal.