

Assessment of Learning  
in Student Affairs:  
A Comprehensive Division-wide Plan

**UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON**  
**DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS**

Robert W. Aaron, Ph.D.

Director of Assessment and Planning, Division of Student Life  
Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis

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# Interactivity

- Please ask questions!
- E-mail me this morning  
rwaaron@iupui.edu
- Follow me on Twitter  
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# Overview

- Background/context
- Assessment of learning in student affairs
  - Learning Outcomes Defined
  - Determination of Measures
  - Data collection
  - Use data for improvement
- Questions/Answers

# Session Outcomes

- After attending this program, participants will be able to:
  1. Describe the importance of providing evidence of learning in student affairs
  2. Begin the process of creating learning outcomes for their unit

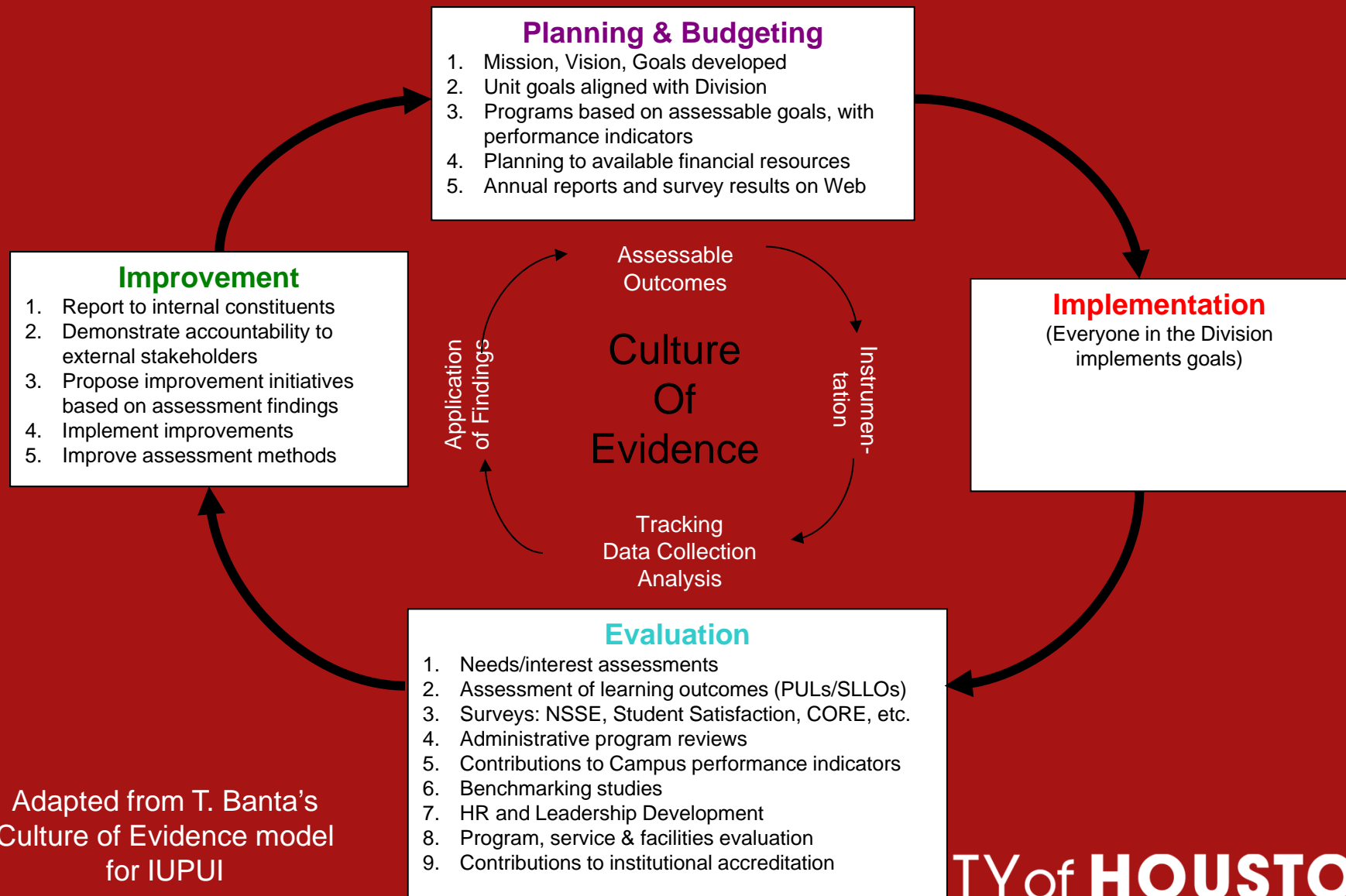
# Background / Context

- Rise of Accountability measures since 1990s
  - Increase in college costs
  - Decrease in evidence of student learning
  - Inability to explain / misunderstanding of what is actually done in higher ed  
(Bresciani, 2011; Palomba & Banta, 1999; Upcraft & Schuh, 1996)
- Discussions with our academic colleagues - bridging a historical divide between academic and student affairs

# Assessment is...

- ...different from research
- ...a tool, not a cure-all
- ...is not alive!
  - Action must be taken on assessment
  - Assessment alone does not fix anything
- **...A VEHICLE for INFORMED DECISION-MAKING, based on a variety of rich data sources**

# Student Life Assessment Cycle



# LEARNING OUTCOMES, DEFINED

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# Learning Outcomes

- An **outcome** is the desired effect of a program, service, or intervention but is more specific than a goal. *It is participant centered.*

Upcraft, M. L., & Schuh, J. H. (1996). *Assessment in student affairs: A guide for practitioners*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

# Types of Learning Outcomes

- Student learning outcomes: cognitive or affective abilities/characteristics demonstrated
- Program outcomes: what your program accomplishes
- Operational outcomes: metrics regarding how well the operation works (financial metrics)

# Domains:

## STUDENT Learning Outcomes

- Cognitive (knowledge)
  - Thinking
  - Mental skills
- Psychomotor (skills)
  - Doing
  - Physical skills
- Affective (attitudes)
  - Attitudes
  - Feelings
  - Emotions

# Bloom's Taxonomy

- **Knowledge:** identifies, defines, describes
- **Understanding:** explains, summarizes, classifies
- **Application:** demonstrates, computes, solves
- **Analysis:** differentiates, diagrams, estimates
- **Synthesis:** creates, formulates, revises
- **Evaluation:** criticizes, compares, concludes

Bloom, B. S. (1956). *Taxonomy of educational objectives, handbook 1: The cognitive domain*. New York: David McKay Company, Inc.

# Learning Outcome Anatomy

- Learning outcome =
  - SWiBAT + **Bloom Word** + **Condition**
- *Example:*  
Students Will Be Able To **explain** healthy lifestyle choices **as a result of participating in outreach activities sponsored by CAPS.**

Busby & Henning, 2008

# WRITING LEARNING OUTCOMES & DETERMINING MEASURES

rwaaron@iupui.edu  
@Rob\_Aaron

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# Process

- Determine the points of learning in your programs, services or activities
- Write SWiBAT statements
- Determine Measures
- Check for alignment with guiding standards (e.g., field-based, Division-based, University-based)

# Determination of Measures

- Pre-existing instruments...OR...
- Develop learning outcome questions that will be incorporated into evaluation forms
- Allows for describing what was learned in addition to participation numbers
- Example of our end goal:
  - 133 students participated in LEAD IUPUI Emerging and Advanced Leaders workshops last year
  - *93% of the participants indicated this helped them gain critical thinking skills*



# Learning Outcomes & Measures (indirect)

- As a result of living in a Residence-Based Learning Community, students will be able to discuss ideas with their peers to assist with their academic success.
  - *Measure: Add detailed RBLC Question to Residential Satisfaction Survey (compare to similar NSSE item)*
- Students will be able to explain healthy lifestyle choices as a result of participation in outreach activities.
  - *Measure: Increase in coping strategy indicator from outreach surveys*

# Learning Outcomes & Measures (direct)

- As a result of working at the Multimedia Production Center, students will be able to discuss issues related to cultural heritage
  - *Measure: Portfolio of graphic design work related to cultural heritage month programming, evaluated by the Division's graphic design coordinator and Coordinator of Social Justice*

# Align with Guiding Standards

## EXAMPLE:

### IUPUI Principles of Undergraduate Learning (PULs)

- Core communication and quantitative skills
- Critical thinking
- Integration and application of knowledge
- Intellectual depth, breadth and adaptiveness
- Understanding society and culture
- Values and ethics

Web site: <http://academicaffairs.iupui.edu/plans/pul/>

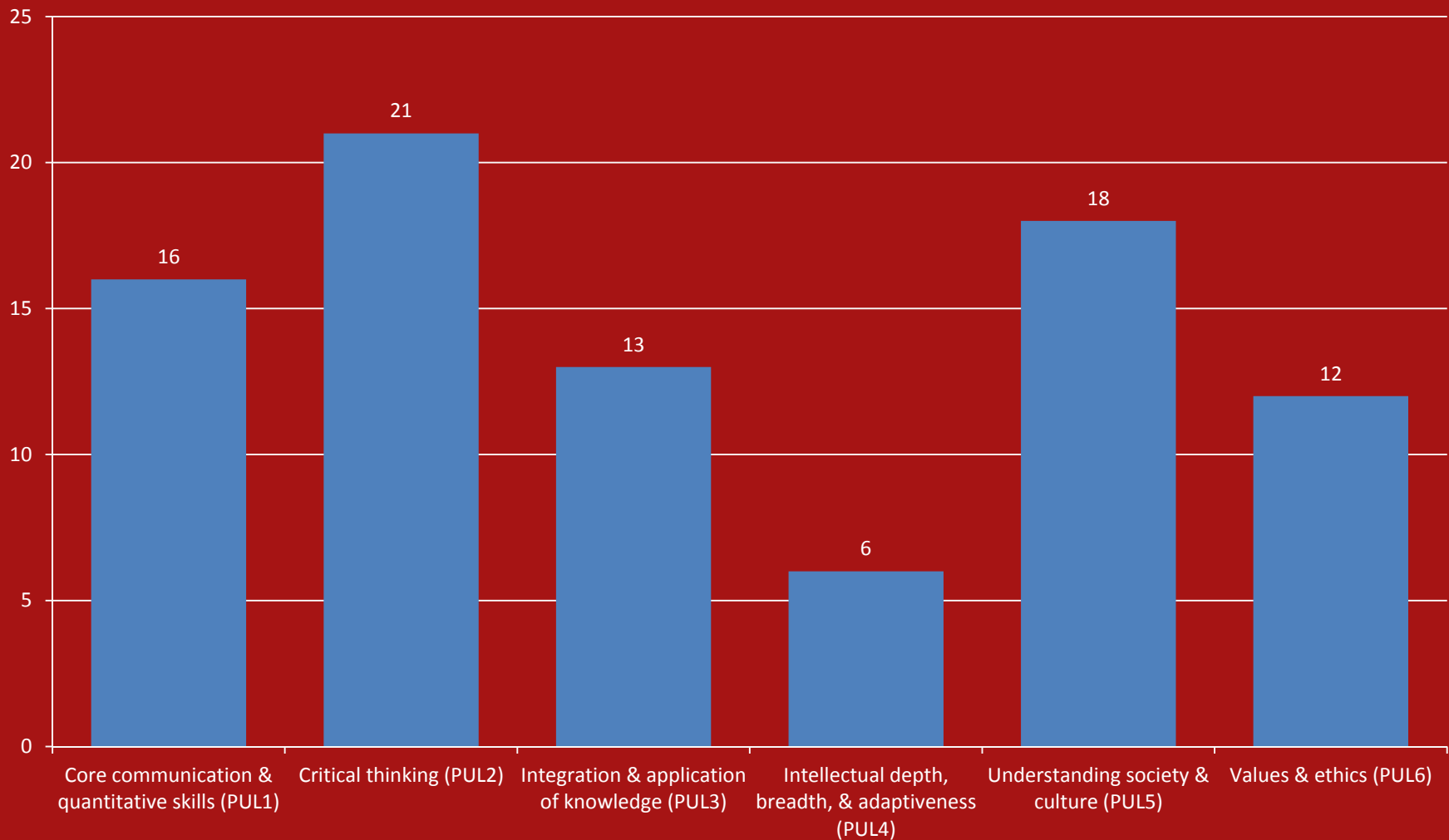
# Other Guiding Principles

- Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS)
- Specific professional associations
- Theories relevant to your specific functional area
- Compilation of numerous ideas:  
Learning Reconsidered 2 has several examples

# Phase 1a: Mapping Project

Unit program/service	Communi- cation & quantitative skills	Critical thinking	Integration & application of knowledge	Intellectual depth, breadth, & adaptiveness	Understanding society & culture	Values & ethics
<b>Office of Student Activities</b>						
<b>Welcome Weeks</b>	X				X	
<b>Student Organizations</b>		X	X			
<b>Leadership Program</b>		X	X			
<b>Cultural Heritage Month programming</b>					X	X
<b>Fraternity and Sorority Life</b>		X				X
<b>Community Service</b>			X		X	
<b>Programming Board</b>	X		X			

# Results of PUL Mapping Project

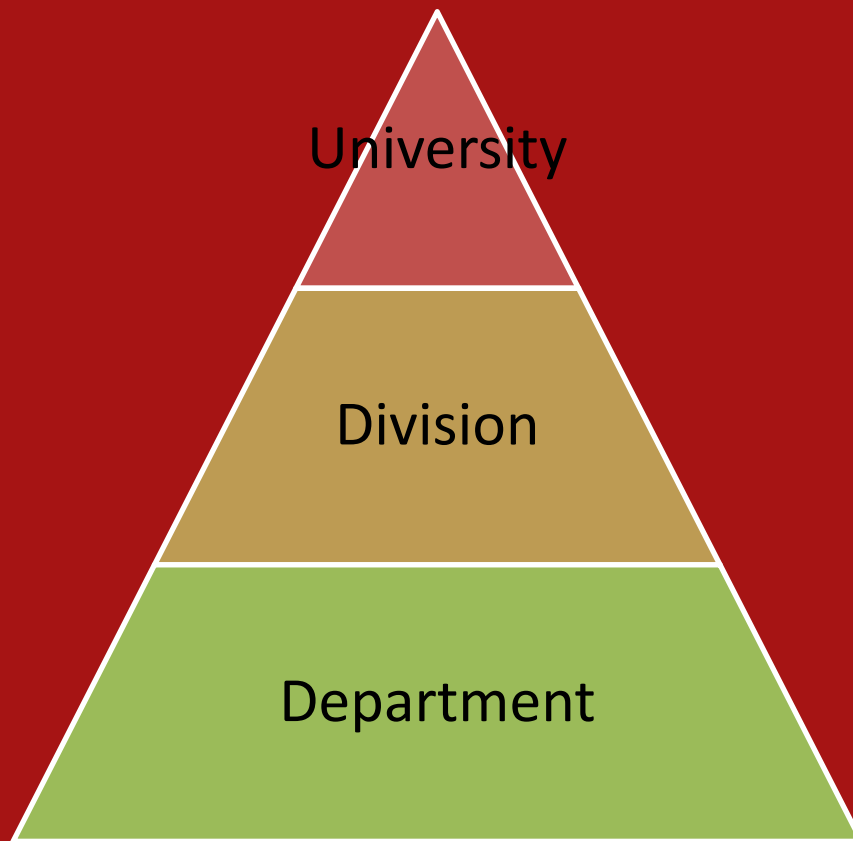


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@Rob\_Aaron

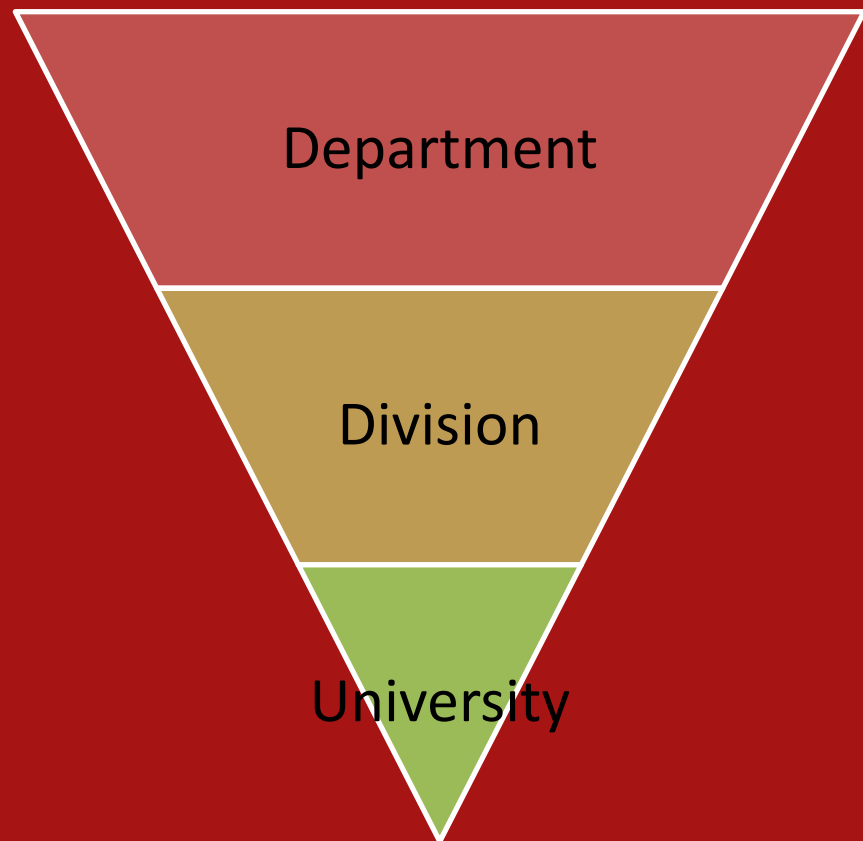
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# Alignment Approaches

## Deductive



## Inductive



# DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS

rwaaron@iupui.edu  
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# Managing Data Collection

- Combine strategies learned through the outcomes-writing project:
  - Make strategic choices to get started
  - Use the measures you determined earlier
  - Embed learning outcome items into regular program evaluations
  - Help each other – this may be new territory!

# Managing Data Collection

- Basic rule:  
**Resist the temptation to assess every aspect of everything you do!**
- Focus on finding meaningful results that you can use to share your story

# Example: LEAD IUPUI

- Leadership education program established 2007
- **Learning Outcomes:**
  - **Gain personal competencies**
    - (PUL1: communication; PUL2: critical thinking)
  - **Develop a sense of personal leadership identity**
    - (PUL5: society & culture; PUL6: values & ethics)
  - **Understand how their personal leadership identity relates to working with others**
    - (PUL5: society & culture; PUL6: values & ethics)
  - **Build community with the IUPUI and Indianapolis community**
    - (PUL3: integration & application of knowledge; PUL 5: society & culture)
  - **Connect to the IUPUI campus**
    - (PUL1: communication; PUL2: critical thinking)

# Lead IUPUI – Survey Data (indirect)

Principle of Undergraduate Learning	Measure (5-point scale of “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”)	Results
Core communication and Quantitative Skills (PUL1)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. This seminar encouraged me to look at ways to communicate within a team to solve problems.</li> <li>2. This seminar provided me with new skills to communicate effectively with my peers</li> <li>3. I have gained insight on how to deal with “difficult people.”</li> </ol>	93% indicated “agree” or “strongly agree” (n=30)
Critical Thinking (PUL 2)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. This seminar encouraged me to analyze different ideas and proposed solutions.</li> <li>2. This seminar caused me to review my ideas about how to approach an issue.</li> <li>3. This seminar provided me with the critical thinking skills to generate new ideas or ways to improve things.</li> </ol>	93% indicated “agree” or “strongly agree” (n=133)
Integration and application of knowledge (PUL 3)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What I learned today in this seminar will enhance my personal life.</li> </ol>	94% indicated “agree” or “strongly agree” (n=59)
Intellectual depth, breadth, and adaptiveness (PUL 4)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I am able to define conflict and distinguish it from other forms or interaction.</li> <li>2. This program has allowed me to identify the views of nature of conflict.</li> <li>3. Through this program, I know the principles of working through conflict.</li> </ol>	100% indicated “agree” or “strongly agree” (n=24)
Understanding society and culture (PUL 5)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. This seminar provided me with an understanding of culture and society that allows me to respect the views of people with different perspectives</li> <li>2. This seminar helped me to see relationships among local, national, and global issues</li> </ol>	89% indicated “agree” or “strongly agree” (n=60)
Values and ethics (PUL 6)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. This seminar allowed me to apply my set of values and ethics to a specific situation.</li> </ol>	100% indicated “agree” (n=9)

# Lead IUPUI – Reflections (indirect)

## Core Communication Skills (PUL 1)

- “I believe that the best thing a leader can do is to walk into a conversation with a strong positive mindset. This conveys confidence to who you are talking to and makes them want to be a part of the team. .. Listening is a key aspect of a good leader, by getting them to talk to you, you form a back and forth conversation that keeps both parties initiated and helps present each other's' viewpoints.”

*Advanced Leaders Seminar Online Presentation – Passion and Inspiration*

# Lead IUPUI – Reflections (indirect)

## Critical Thinking (PUL 2)

- “I will contemplate further on the goals and roles of my life, so that I will always be able to determine what is most important to me.”

*Emerging Leaders Seminar – Balance and Time Management*

- “How to find the significance of purpose for me.”

*Advanced Leaders Seminar – Finding Purpose*

# Lead IUPUI – Reflections (indirect)

## **Application of Knowledge (PUL 3)**

- “I plan to use his profound ideals in my everyday life. Whether I am leading a group or just meeting new people I will convey my self-confidence. I will also listen more and talk less in order to better understand their viewpoints of the matter at hand. I will continue to focus on the positive things during times of adversity in order to boost team morale. Most importantly of all, I will find ways to use my passions and beliefs to better lead my team through the rough times and onto successful outcomes.”

*Advanced Leaders Seminar Online Presentation – Passion and Inspiration*

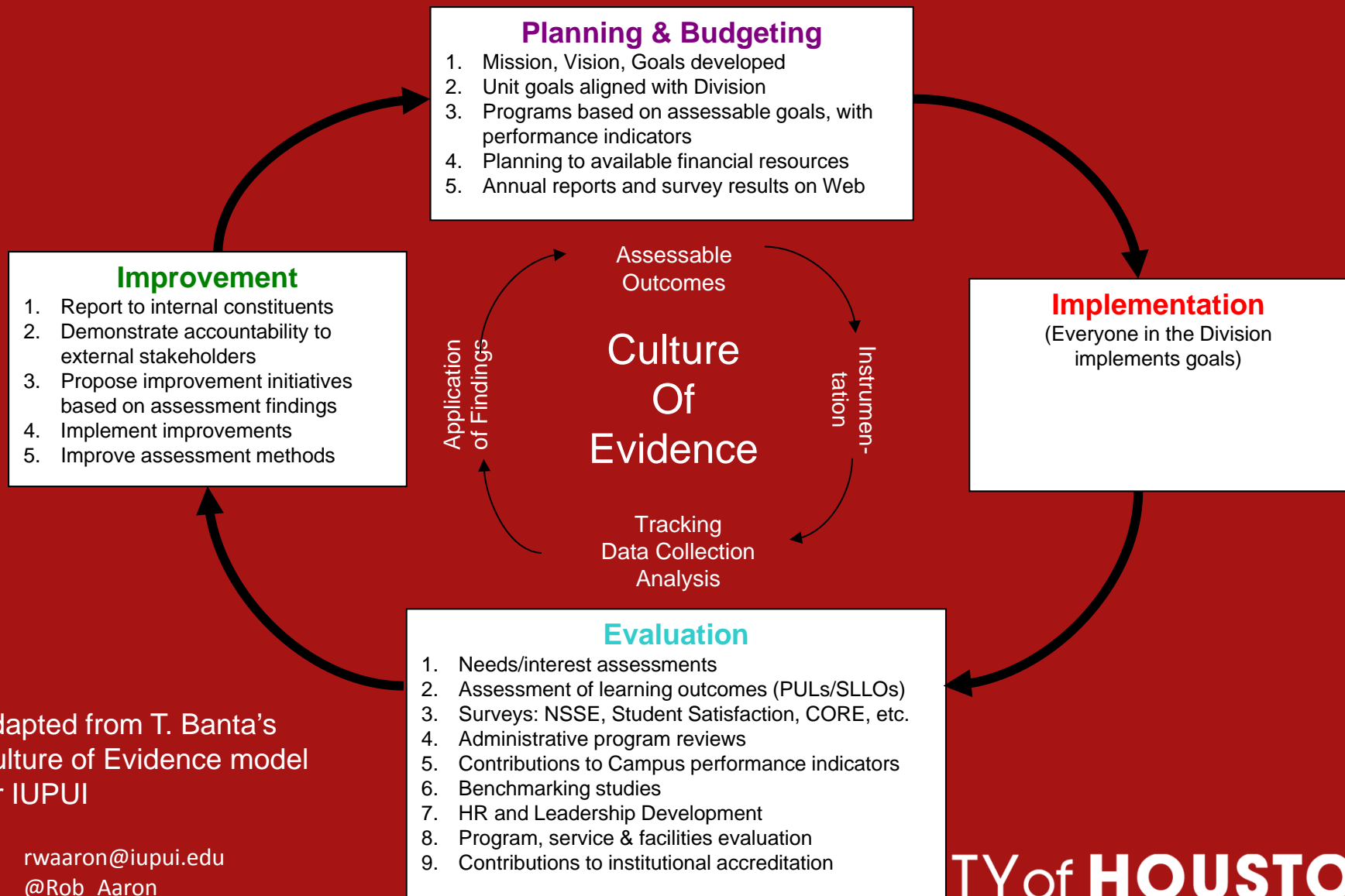
# PHASE 3: USE FOR IMPROVEMENT

rwaaron@iupui.edu  
@Rob\_Aaron

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# Student Life Assessment Loop



# Lead IUPUI Use for Improvement

- Collected data are very positive and support that student learning is occurring in many different outcome areas
- Although all the results were very positive, there were a few PULs that scored lower comparably to others
- More experiential, extended programs needed
- Different types assessment methods should be explored
- Staff should better assess outcomes not related to PULs

# Closing the loop

- Help students make connections
  - Regular every-day conversations
  - Helping students in need
- Assist students with documenting connections
  - Portfolio
  - Resume
  - Journal
- Systematically share examples of learning
- Use data for improvement

# Final Thoughts

- Student affairs assessment is messy! Jump into the pool and get wet.
- The field, and our students, are constantly changing. Continue to be flexible and go with the flow
- Don't fear the data!

# Questions?



rwaaron@iupui.edu  
@Rob\_Aaron

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# Keep in touch!

Robert W. Aaron, Ph.D.

Director, Assessment and Planning

Division of Student Life

Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis

(317) 274-8990

[rwaaron@iupui.edu](mailto:rwaaron@iupui.edu)

<http://life.iupui.edu>

@Rob\_Aaron