Using Evaluation Data and Metrics for Strategic Budgeting

Rick Voorhees
John Wittstruck
SPEC Associates
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Purpose

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- What is an evidenced-based story?
- How can evidence and evaluative thinking be applied to higher education budgeting?
- What stories do state-level budget documents and board minutes tell us?
- Do they share thinking space?

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Budget Requests Documents and Board Minutes Tell a Story

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A Story Should Argue for…

- What needs to be changed and to be done;
- Why past experience is insufficient and why meeting improvement goals and objectives are important;
- How meeting the improvement goals and objectives will be achieved;
- When stated improvement goals and objectives will be met; and
- Where change will occur and lead to desired improvement.

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A Dichotomy

- On one hand, the story is a persuasive argument and describes the context for the request or recommendation.
- On the other hand, the importance of the story may simply be the dollars requested or recommended.

What is an Evidenced-Based Story?

- **Accuracy** (Are the facts right?)
- **Plausibility** (Are the linkages being made between the budget narrative and the dollars requested or recommended, explicit and feasible?)
- **Comprehensiveness** (Would a person who is not a budget insider tell a different story?); and
- **Usefulness** (Does the story help the reader understand the issue and its importance?)

What is Evaluative Budget Thinking?

- Focuses on **what** is important and valued by the public—weighs choices in meeting identified and agreed goals and objectives;
- Considers the **so what** of one choice being made over another choice; and
- Involves a **now what** decision that reflects the action to be taken.

Method

- Gathered documents (n=116) from public places on the Web for the seven productivity agenda implementation states
  - Documents were from June 2009 to August 2010
  - Not all documents were available on the Web
- Developed codes to capture productivity-related themes (see handout)
- Used QDA Miner Software to construct themes and analyze documents

Method (Cont.)

- Categorized documents
  - Budget requests by SHEEO agencies
  - Minutes from Board meetings
  - Reports by SHEEO agencies dealing with productivity or productivity-related efforts
  - Executive budget requests
- Not all categories of documents were found on the Web

After Analyzing Budget Requests and State Board Minutes…

What Did We Find?

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These Topics Were Mentioned the Most

- Governor
- Funding
- Budget
- New Directions
  Challenges
  Opportunities
- Tuition
- Partnerships and Collaboration
- Transfer
- Access
- Quality
- Remedial Education

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These Were Mentioned the Least

- Public Opinion
- Shared Services
- Program Elimination
- Tuition Policy
- Performance Goals
- Course Redesign
- Performance Measures
- Institutional Budget
- College Costs
- Program Duplication

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What Was Missing

- The term “productivity” didn’t appear once
- These concepts also were missing
  - Cost Management
  - Outsourcing
  - Contract for Service
  - Shared Facilities
  - Shared Program

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What Looks Hopeful

- 70% of documents used these terms: opportunities, challenges, new directions, new opportunities and new challenges
- 56% of documents mentioned partnerships
- About half mentioned quality concepts: instructional quality, education quality, quality degrees and quality outcomes

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What Was Perplexing

- Less than a third of the documents mentioned **evaluation**
- Even fewer mentioned **outcomes** or **accountability**
- **Student success** appeared in only 22% of these documents
- **Innovation** appeared in only one of five documents
- Less than one in ten documents mentioned **performance funding**
- Only 5% mentioned **reallocation** of resources

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A Few Conclusions

- Higher education understands the value of partnerships
- A state can't measure what isn't publicly announced in its formal documents
- The threshold for evaluation appears to be quite low given the stakes
- However, there is no baseline of prior research to tell if we're getting better in evaluative thinking

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What Is Your State's Story?

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Download Details

- Presentation
  http://www.voorheesgroup.org/NPC%20Presentation%20SPEC%20Voorhees%20Wittstruck%20Final.pdf
- Evaluative Budget Example
  http://www.voorheesgroup.org/NPC%20Handout%20Evidence%20Based%20Budget%20Example.pdf
- Themes and Codes
  http://www.voorheesgroup.org/NPC%20Codes%20and%20Themes.pdf

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