

## Quantifying the Impact: Developing an Assessment Model

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“It was the best weekend ever.” “It was a life-changing experience.” “The best experience I’ve had as a member.” These are just a few of the ways leadership programs are typically described, but what does this really mean? How does a potential attendee know or understand what happens at the experience? How can we as program coordinators or directors begin to tell these students’ stories?

Two years ago Delta Tau Delta partnered with Growth Guiders LLC to develop a process that would quantify the impact of our leadership programs and articulate the value of the experiences to our stakeholders: students, board members, volunteers, foundation donors, campus partners, etc. The model we created is based off Jack and Patricia Phillips’ book *Beyond Learning Objectives*. The process includes developing comprehensive objectives and a four-step program assessment model.

### Outlining Program Objectives

Phillips and Phillips (2008) outlined a model we have adopted to develop a clear plan of what we hope to accomplish with our leadership programs. In their model, they develop five different types of objectives: input, reaction, learning, application, and impact. Creating each objective is essential to the process in order to develop the case you are hoping to make through your assessment model. Below is a table that outlines the purpose for each objective and provides examples used by Delta Tau Delta.

Objective	Purpose	Examples
Input	To outline the parameters and initial reason why a program should be developed, the need to be met, and what you want the program to look like.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop an emerging leader program for men in their first year of membership.</li><li>• The program will function with a \$100,000 budget.</li><li>• Three staff members will be responsible for executing the program.</li></ul>
Reaction	To measure how participants feel about their experience at the program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I am more aware of my personal values.</li><li>• I feel more confident in my skills as a leader.</li><li>• I understand membership in Delta Tau Delta is a lifelong commitment.</li></ul>
Learning	To demonstrate specific knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identify primary LPI leadership</li></ul>

	participants should gain as a result of participating in the program.	<p>style.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• List three personal values.</li> <li>• Name the components of the Golden Circle.</li> </ul>
Application	To identify how we intend the participants use the information learned and what they will do after the leadership event.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take a leadership role in their chapter.</li> <li>• Attend another Delta Tau Delta leadership event.</li> </ul>
Impact	To predict the long-term benefit participation will have on the individual and the organization.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Within one year of attending Ignite, 33% of participants will have taken a leadership position within their chapter.</li> <li>• 80% of Ignite participants are retained as members through graduation.</li> </ul>
Return on Investment	<p>To determine the financial implications the programs have on the organization.</p> <p>As Delta Tau Delta continues this assessment process, we hope this data helps tell the value of Ignite and The Charge.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 15% of Ignite graduates donate to the Educational Foundation as an alumnus.</li> <li>• 33% of The Charge participants hold a volunteer role in the Fraternity within five years of graduation.</li> </ul>

Identifying the objectives helps staff better understand what they are trying to accomplish with each program. The objectives lay the framework for the curriculum and provide direction to create themes for each leadership program. For example, a theme for our emerging leader experience is to define participants’ undergraduate legacy. After developing the curriculum, the objectives and themes are used to design the assessment materials.

### **Delta Tau Delta’s Program Assessment Model (PAM)**

The objectives work in partnership with the assessment model so you know what information you need to collect from participants. There are four steps to our assessment model. Each step has a clear purpose, methodology, and correlates to an objective.

<b>Step</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Method of Assessment</b>
Readiness Assessment  (Measures learning objectives)	Prior to a program, participants are asked 10 to 15 questions based on the learning topics.	An electronic survey administered through Survey Monkey. Participation is required from all participants. Surveys are uniquely coded.
Learning Outcomes Assessment	Set up like a quiz, the learning topics from the readiness	Onsite paper evaluation completed by all participants and coded to

(Measures learning objectives)	assessment are reevaluated.	match readiness assessment.
Reaction Assessment (Measures reaction objectives)	Participants reflect on their experience at the leadership program.	An electronic survey administered through Survey Monkey. Participants are not required to complete this evaluation.
Post-Interview (Measures application and impact objectives)	Follow up with participants to supplement the data collected in steps one through three with qualitative participant feedback.	Conducted through face-to-face and telephone surveys.

There are many benefits for the organization in using this comprehensive model. Two of the most tangible are: Telling the story of our programs, and shaping the curriculum to maximize student impact.

### Storytelling

Staff members are now able to take the themes for each program, compare them to the assessment conducted and share the impact of attending. For example, when discussing our emerging leader program, the themes are defining legacy, affinity building and *Ritual* education. Now we are able to use the following description:

“Ignite (the emerging leader program) is a weekend experience, in a camp-type setting for members who have joined within the past 12 months. At Ignite there are three objectives we want to accomplish. First, we want to help you establish what you want to accomplish in your time as an undergraduate member. We’ll examine what roles you want to hold, what issues you want to tackle, and look at the impact you want to make on your campus. From there we will connect you with other brothers and volunteers, so you can have resources outside of your chapter. Finally, we will look at the Fraternity’s values and examine how they can be used as a leadership tool. We know half of the men who went to Ignite last year went on to hold a leadership position in their chapter. Fourteen percent of participants went on to be elected chapter president, so as you can see, many of your brothers have used Ignite as a springboard to leadership roles in the chapter.”

### Curriculum Design

In addition to telling the story of the organization’s programs, the assessment helps shape the curriculum design process. For example, after the first installment of our senior capstone experience, staff members were able to look at the assessment data, compare the information to the objectives, and determine which ones were not being met. Comparing data from year one to year two and making curriculum changes resulted in more positive participant responses. For example, we found an increase in the following reaction objectives:

- Students who left The Charge with an action plan to create change in their lives/community increased by 23%.
- Participants who said The Charge was the defining moment of their undergraduate career increased by 32%.
- Students who said The Charge was the only place they could have had this experience increased by 17%.

### Lessons Learned

Assessment can be intimidating, but here are a few lessons to remember throughout the process:

- **We are not writing a dissertation.** The information is used to show correlation and not causation. The biggest hurdle to overcome was the self-consciousness of not having a statistical background. Inferences can be made and as you continue to gather more data, you will be able to make more specific projections. The key is to just start.
- **Time must be set aside.** Mining this data is not difficult. It takes more time than anything else. Going through individual survey responses and matching a specific individual's pre- and post-event responses are not the most exciting parts of the job. If you do not block off time, it will not be done.
- **Having an outside coach is beneficial.** While the assessment process Delta Tau Delta is using is not rocket science, it would not have started if we were not given direction. Identify a volunteer that has some experience; if you are on a campus utilize a resource there; or, if funding is available look into an outside consulting firm.