BAC Admissions Assessment Plan:

Examining Data to Measure Success & Inform Future Decisions

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Signature Assignment Assessment Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In today's world of rising tuition costs and difficult economic conditions, many have called for increased accountability within higher education (Arnold, 2010). Assessment is an extremely important method in which one can analyze evidence of learning and evaluate what is working and what needs to change (Cheney, 2016a). Assessment can be a valuable tool with which to present information regarding improvement and accountability to various stakeholders – students, parents, faculty, staff, alumni, the greater public, and more – and to help ease concerns through the use of data and analytics.

Assessment does not only apply to student learning; it can be applied to other departments such as Admissions to highlight current practices and suggest possible changes and inform future decisions. In this paper, I will present an Admissions Assessment Plan that applies to a small, private design-based College in Boston. The institution itself did not seem to have a concrete or cohesive training and assessment plan for their admissions team, and as such, my plan focuses on proposing, designing, and implementing a plan that could work to help the team learn, grow, adapt, and continue to evolve their practices.

The overarching goals for the Assessment Plan will be to evaluate the team members on their tracking of and relationship with the CRM data and their student inquiry and applicant pools. I will be analyzing data from self-evaluations by the admissions representatives, the CRM data, weekly one-on-one meetings between each Admissions Rep and the Director of Admissions, and student evaluations about their admissions experience after they enroll. Possible risks and potential opportunities of implementing this data will also be discussed. By analyzing what the Admissions team does each day and throughout each recruiting period within the context of the missions of both the Admissions department and the College overall, we should be able to see what the team members are doing well, what changes need to be made, what areas for growth are available, and how we can continue to evolve the process for future recruitment success.

PROPOSAL:

At the Boston Architectural College, the topic of assessment is very much alive and well. By definition, assessment is the process of gathering data from multiple sources to inform stakeholders of the current practices of an institution, organization, or company (Cheney, 2016a). Assessment is used in multiple ways "as a continuous improvement process yielding actionable information for faculty and staff as well as for institutional leaders" (Kuh, Jankowski, Ikenberry, & Kinzie, 2014, p. 36). The BAC currently measures student progress through portfolio reviews, project rubrics, studio evaluations, and many other testing formats throughout their programs of study. Particularly unique to the school, the BAC incorporates working hours as a practice requirement throughout the curriculum, which ensures that students are positioned as "exceptionally competitive in the marketplace" (Practice Department, 2016). Given that most students should not only be learning basic information but how to incorporate theory into practice, the BAC creatively uses practice assessments to gauge how well and what a student is learning. This is extremely helpful because "the more subject-specific, personal transferable and academic outcomes are clearly expressed [and communicated], the more the learner is able to concentrate on what he/she needs to know in order to succeed on a given module or course" (Allan, 1996, p. 104). Assessing student learning through multiple mediums is especially effective as not all students learn the same way. Because of this, the BAC was recently recognized in 2015 as a recipient of the CHEA Award for Outstanding Practice: "Combining academic coursework with assessment of professional skills gained through non-classroom

instruction and discipline-specific employment remains an essential educational component that...equips [students] with necessary tools for solving complex projects and design parameters for today's global and diverse communities" and was based on "articulation and evidence of outcomes, success with regard to outcomes, information to the public about outcomes, and use of outcomes for educational improvement" (The BAC Earns 2015 CHEA Award for Outstanding Practice, 2016). Clearly, the BAC uses dynamic and effective techniques to determine if and how learning is taking place on the student level.

Within the institution, my role is in the Admissions Department as Assistant Director. The department is responsible for recruiting and admitting the next incoming class of students using an open admissions approach. We do not use methods such as ACT or SAT scores, GPAs, or reflective essays to judge our applicant pool. Instead, our mission is geared toward encouraging the students who have the passion and excitement about architecture and design to be able to pursue their dreams with little to no entry hurdles (Apply to the BAC, 2016).

In terms of assessment, the Admissions department is in need of their own plan that clearly outlines our goals (both mission-based and numbers-based), data recording methods, and departmental outcomes of our work each recruiting cycle. Presently, the Admissions team is responsible for responding to inquiries and applicants, attending college fairs and school visits to promote the College, running events such as Open House, and securing deposits from students likely to enroll. Currently, the work is split using an alpha-split model evenly between the four members of the team. This includes both domestic and international student populations in addition to the online population. We are primarily measured by weekly check-in meetings with our Director to review applicants, but we are also measured against statistics and reports showing year-to-year inquiries and applicants. We use a CRM database called Salesforce to host our student information. Each of us use this data to respond to inquiries and applicants, send emails, log phone calls, and more.

Because there is no set manner in terms of how we approach our daily tasks, the BAC Admissions Department is in serious need of consolidation and standardization of our current practices. It is imperative that we as a department "focus on the importance of clear purposes and goals, on ongoing rather than episodic attention to improvement, and on the involvement of multiple stakeholders" (Hutchings, Ewell, & Banta, 2012). Oftentimes we're so focused on the upcoming semester that we do not have time to catch up and determine the best courses of action for the next recruiting cycle. Given that admissions is a large part of the greater Enrollment Management strategy at the BAC, and we have a big responsibility to not only bring in the proper numbers of students well-suited for the programs, but also to reach our budgetary goals each fiscal year through new tuition-paying students. Admissions plays a significant role in sustaining the school each year, so a dynamic and well-designed assessment plan for the team could considerably help safeguard the school as a whole long term.

Basic Outline of Admissions Assessment Plan:

The overarching goals for the Assessment Plan will be to evaluate the team members on their tracking of and relationship with the CRM data and their student inquiry and applicant pools. I will be analyzing data from self-evaluations by the admissions representatives, the CRM data, weekly one-on-one meetings between each Admissions Rep and the Director of Admissions, and student evaluations of the Admissions process and team after they enroll.

The direction for my Assessment Plan will come from three important areas: the overall mission and goals of the institution; the goals for the Admissions department; and overall student expectations.

The Assessment Plan will focus on addressing important evaluative questions based on

Kirkpatrick's Four Levels of Training Evaluation (2009):

- Level 1 Reaction (Is admissions happy with learning environment? How is the institutional, team, and training culture?)
- Level 2 Learning (Has admissions received enough training? Is admissions acquiring skills required to do their tasks to best of their ability?)
- Level 3 Behavior (Does admissions feel supported through coaching and mentoring from Director and co-workers? Are the database programs easy to use after learning?)
- Level 4 Results (Have students been properly serviced and helped? Has admissions succeeded in meeting their numbers/targets?)

Throughout the assessment plan, I will be keeping in mind certain standards for

excellence that the Admissions team and the overall College should be adhering to and should be

consistently aligning their goals, objectives, and outcomes.

Standards for Excellence/Expectations (NEASC, 2016):

Admissions

- 5.2 Consistent with its mission, the institution describes the characteristics of the students it seeks to serve. This description informs recruitment and admissions activities and the academic and other support programs and services available to students.
- 5.3 The institution has an orderly and ethical program of recruitment and admission that complies with the requirements of legislation concerning equality of educational opportunity. Its admission and retention policies and procedures are clear, consistent with its mission and purposes, and available to all students and prospective students in appropriate printed and digital institutional publications.
- 5.4 Standards for admission ensure that student qualifications and expectations are compatible with institutional objectives. Individuals admitted demonstrate through their intellectual and personal qualifications a reasonable potential for success in the programs to which they are admitted. If the institution recruits and admits individuals with identified needs that must be addressed to assure their likely academic success, it applies appropriate mechanisms to address those needs so as to provide reasonable opportunities for that success. Such mechanisms receive sufficient support and are adequate to the needs of those admitted. The institution endeavors to integrate specifically recruited populations into the larger student body and to assure that they have comparable academic experiences.
- 5.5 The institution utilizes appropriate methods of evaluation to assess student readiness for collegiate study and provides services sufficient to serve the needs of students admitted.
- 5.6 The institution demonstrates its ability to admit students who can be successful in the institution's academic program, including specifically recruited populations. The

institution's goals for retention and graduation reflect institutional purposes, and the results are used to inform recruitment and the review of programs and services.

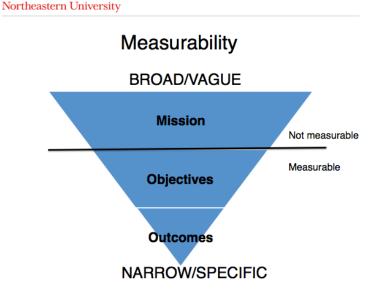
By analyzing what they do each day and throughout each recruiting period within the context of both the Admissions Department and the College overall, we should be able to see what the team members are doing well, what changes need to be made, what areas for growth are available, and how we can continue to evolve the process for future recruitment success.

DESIGN:

The population that will be evaluated in my Assessment Plan will be the Admissions Team. For many years, the Admissions Team was given little guidance and structure in their everyday tasks and miniscule training into fully utilizing their CRM data, which makes up a large part of their day-to-day responsibilities and tasks. Data analytics can be very helpful when asking, "How can we make sense of the data that's available and how can we use tools to improve the experience of the individual users" (Siemens, 2013). By implementing the current assessment plan, the Admissions Team should quickly benefit from learning what methods are working, what areas need improvement, and which tools to appropriately utilize in order to maximize the data already collected. Although there may be some initial backlash, likely because they "are accustomed to performing their duties in a set way" (Hrabowski, Suess, & Fritz, 2011, p. 3), I anticipate that the entire admissions team will soon realize that the plan will better define their expectations and responsibilities as well as allow them to maximize their data tools to best capture student data.

Given that assessment is a collective activity, this assessment plan should benefit not only the Admissions Team, but the student body, faculty, staff, administrators, trustees, alumni, and many more vested parties. In fact, assessment results "can and should inform institutional strategic planning and trustee discussions and decision making" (Kuh et. al, 2014, p. 18). By putting this plan into practice, the entire College and its greater educational community stand to benefit.

For my framework, I will be basing my design on Professor Cheney's Alignment Model:



(Cheney, 2016c, p.11)

This model should help me narrow down the focus of the goals, objectives and outcomes in more

measurable terms.

In order to align the admissions assessment plan goals, objectives and outcomes, we must

align them with the overall admissions department mission:

"The Boston Architectural College has a policy of open admissions for all of our onsite degree programs because it is our philosophy that anyone who wants to pursue the study and practice of design deserves that opportunity. Our alternative approach to admissions supports our mission of diversifying the design profession by allowing us to provide an exceptional design education to many talented students who would not otherwise have such an opportunity. Many of our students are first-generation college students as well as members of under-represented groups, which encourages a positive and inclusive learning environment on our campus in downtown Boston" (Apply to the BAC, 2016).

Given that the department has an open admissions policy and wants to encourage diversity in a positive, inclusive environment, the Admissions team must tailor their communications with care and organization in order to reach all the interested inquiries and applicants. Having meetings, CRM analysis reports, team self-evaluations, and student evaluations once they are enrolled will help gauge whether or not the Admissions team is meeting their standard mission.

In addition to meeting the Admissions department goal, we must also align with the institution's mission to meet their enrollment goals, continue to draw in larger incoming classes, to expand their diversity within the student body, and provide an exceptional and personalized customer service experience.

The mission and goals of the institution, the Admissions department, and what students expect of us are incorporated into the overall Learning Outcomes for my Assessment Plan:

Goals	Objectives	Outcomes	Data Method Used:
Effectively service our student population via multiple information avenues	 Admissions will reach out to potential inquiries every couple of business days Admissions will call and email each applicant upon receipt of application Admissions will communicate with and update applicants as to remaining requirements leading up to enrollment Include specific dates for scholarships, FAFSA, orientation, etc. Admissions team will attend college fairs (including virtual fairs) and visit schools to recruit potential students 	Admissions reps will contact all new inquiries at least once a week, will contact new applicants on the same day they apply with remaining tasks, and will add institution events to their Salesforce record for tracking purposes.	CRM database (Call logs, email logs, activity reports, admissions event logs)

Goals, Ob	jectives,	&	Outcomes:

Compile statistics and reports to reflect admissions tracking progress	 Run reports through Salesforce reflecting applications received weekly to compare with prior recruiting cycles (e.g. this time last year, two years ago, etc.) Director of Admissions should hold weekly check-in meetings with each admissions rep to ensure proper follow-up procedure on applications and inquiries each week as well as noting any trends or challenges Track events held at the BAC – students who responded, confirmed, attended, and those who turn into applications Compile list of most common lead sources to watch where most inquiries and applications derive from 	Admissions reps will analyze and interpret their CRM data about inquiries and applicants to determine which to focus on and which to withdraw.	Weekly admissions/ Director meetings, CRM reports created and run by rep
Produce surveys and evaluations for tracking accountability and effectiveness	 Student Survey after enrolling (assess experience) – likely during their Orientation period at beginning of enrollment semester Admissions Team Evaluation after initial training and then after each recruiting cycle (assess progress and make recommendations/updates/changes) 	Admissions reps will use student survey and self- evaluation data to inform changes, updates, and suggestions for next recruiting cycle.	Student surveys, Admissions Rep Self - Evaluations

I plan on capturing and measuring data in both holistic and analytic (Mertler, 2001) as well as formative and summative (Cheney, 2016b) ways. Within admissions, it is important to have data that looks at both the quality and quantity aspects of the job, whether that be in the form of rubrics and surveys for evaluation feedback (summative) or CRM reports (formative) that measure specific database figures. Having "end point data is particularly valuable as a summative indicator of how well the program, [in this case my assessment plan] taken as a whole, is achieving its goals" (Miller & Leskes, 2005, p. 9). Similarly, having "analytical assessments, which can be as simple as written comments" (p. 4) can reveal certain challenges or successes for the admissions rep during particular points. Overall, "Effective assessment plans are implemented in an ongoing, systematic manner" (Hatfield, 2009, p. 5), so it will be imperative for this plan to have a permanent life cycle that is done over time, instead of merely periodically.

In terms of formative assessments that are used to assess learning during the process itself (Cheney, 2016b), I aim to use CRM analysis reports and meetings between the Admissions Reps and the Director (involving comments and suggestions for improvement or follow-up). These are also known as direct or analytical assessments, and will be used to measure progress, provide clear evidence of what the admissions rep is learning and applying, and improve the overall function and day-to-day tasks of the admissions team overall (Cheney, 2016b). As for the summative assessments which are used to measuring what learning took place during a certain timeframe (Cheney, 2016b), I will employ the use of evaluations and surveys (including the use of rubrics), both from the admissions rep and the students they enroll. This data should tell the Admissions Team what worked overall after the assessment period is complete, and are also evidenced as indirect or holistic assessments as they may not provide clear-cut evidence that the admissions reps are learning (Cheney, 2016b).

Next, I have aligned each learning outcome for the Admissions team with the appropriate data source where it should be evidenced and subsequently measured. From here, we use the below criteria for success to judge if the outcome is being met and why or why not.

Criteria for Outcomes Success:

Learning Outcome	Data Source ↓	Little->Basic Meeting of Expectations	Meets Most Expectations	Meets All/Exceeds Expectations
Admissions reps will contact all new inquiries at least once a week, will contact new applicants on the same day they apply with remaining tasks, and will add institution events to their Salesforce record for tracking purposes.	CRM reports (Call logs, email logs, activity reports, admissions events logs)	CRM produces no evidence of correspondence or follow-up with student population	CRM produces evidence of basic correspondence (e.g. once every 1-2 weeks)	CRM produces evidence of consistent or superior corresponden ce with student population (e.g. contact 1-2x per week, shows creative ways of reaching different untapped yet valuable populations)
Admissions reps will analyze and interpret their CRM data about inquiries and applicants to determine which to focus on and which to withdraw.	Weekly Admissions Rep & Director meetings, CRM reports created and run by rep	Rep does not demonstrate CRM proficiency	Rep shows basic knowledge of running and analyzing CRM reports but does not take additional steps to further understanding	Rep creates necessary CRM reports and uses them to assess their own progress, making decisions to increase potential applicant pool
Admissions reps will use student survey and self-evaluation data to inform changes, updates, and suggestions for next recruiting cycle.	Student surveys, Admissions Rep Self - Evaluations	Rep does not complete progress evaluation and/or rep does not use feedback from self-evaluation and student survey to	Rep completes self-evaluation and reviews student survey but does not show initiative to implement into future practices	Rep completes self- evaluation and reviews student survey, and is prepared to make changes and implementatio

inform future	ns within
practices	future
	practices

In order to further determine if the outcomes are being met, I have created benchmarks listed below that quantify the percent or level of achievement that the Admissions representatives should be meeting:

Learning Outcome:	Benchmark/Standard:			
Learning Outcome.	Exceeds:	Meets:	Approaching:	Fails to Meet:
Admissions reps will contact all new inquiries at least once a week, will contact new applicants on the same day they apply with remaining tasks, and will add institution events to their Salesforce record for tracking purposes.	Admissions reps meet at least 95% of the criteria	Admissions reps meet 85- 94% of the criteria	Admissions reps meet 75- 84% of the criteria	Admissions reps fail to meet at least 75% of the criteria
Admissions reps will analyze and interpret their CRM data about inquiries and applicants to determine which to focus on and which to withdraw.	CRM analytics show at least 90% of inquiries and applicants in green (moving forward, active)	CRM analytics show 80-89% of inquiries and applicants in green (moving forward, active)	CRM analytics show 70-79% of inquiries and applicants in green (moving forward, active)	CRM analytics reflect less than 70% of inquiries and applicants in green (most are not moving forward or active)
Admissions reps will use student survey and self-evaluation data to inform changes, updates, and suggestions for	Admissions rep completes 100% of self- eval and uses both student survey and self-	Admissions rep completes 90-99% of self-eval and uses some data from	Admissions rep completes at least 75% of self-eval and does not have concrete list of	Admissions rep completes below 75% of self-eval and does not have list of changes or
next recruiting cycle.	eval to make list	student survey	suggestions for	suggestions for

Benchmarks for Success:

of changes and	and self-eval	next recruiting	next recruiting
suggestions for	to suggest	cycle based on	cycle
next recruiting	changes for	self-eval and	
cycle	next recruiting	student survey	
	cycle	results	

The Admissions team will be measured based on how well they perform in terms of semester-to-semester total number of enrolled students as compared to the same timeframe last year (for the same recruitment cycle/semester). Each representative will also be assessed in terms of how many of their total inquiries were contacted and eventually turned into applicants, as evidenced by the table below:

What	Description	<u>When</u>
Self-evaluations from admissions representatives (Holistic rubrics – Mertler, 2001) – Self eval RUBRIC scale 1-5	An evaluation will be given to each admissions representative to document their experiences after training and after each enrollment cycle	After initial training period upon hire; End of each subsequent recruitment cycle
CRM Analysis	Inquiry reports will be generated to see how many turned into applicants, where they originated (Lead Source), and other pertinent data (e.g. geographic location, previously attended college or not, program of interest, etc.)	Every couple of days by Admissions Rep
	Applicant reports will be generated to determine # times contacted, Lead Source, and data such as geographic location, international vs. domestic student, income bracket, previously attended college or not, program of interest, etc.)	- Weekly by Admissions Rep - Once a week during Admissions Rep and Director Meeting

	Activity Logs for Calls, Emails, Event Attendance (e.g. Campus Visits, Open House, College Fairs, Accepted Student Reception, Orientation, etc.) College fairs – rubric rating value of attending fair/worth it in future 	Submitted at end of each week by Admissions Rep to Director
One-on-One Meetings between Admissions Rep & Director	Individualized, in-person meetings to assess how Adm. Rep is performing and keeping up with applicant pool, if Rep can determine important trends, RATING of each applicant in terms of likelihood of enrollment	Weekly
Student Surveys (use Holistic Rubrics, Mertler, 2001)	Students will be given a survey to complete and submit back to Admissions team after enrollment – evaluate their experiences and give suggestions or changes	End of each recruitment cycle/beginning of each academic semester

By analyzing the data presented above (i.e. measuring their correspondence with their respective student population, their utilization of CRM reports and analytical data, and the completion of the self-evaluation and the student surveys) along with the criteria and benchmarks for successful outcomes, we should be able to clearly determine if each Admissions representative is getting the training they need to do their jobs well. By using the same assessment process throughout the department and throughout each recruiting cycle, we should be able to more accurately determine what is working and what needs to change.

Results and Data Sharing Practices:

The results from the data collected will be shared between the admissions representative and the Director of Admissions. The data collectively will be shared among the entire Admissions Office as well in terms of patterns recognized, upcoming potential trends or markets to target, best utilization methods of the CRM database, and more. All the data collected and the assessment results will be helpful for making future decisions, planning and improvement for the College as a whole. Faculty could better understand their prospective students and refine their curriculum design and offerings; Financial Aid could better understand the income levels of enrolled students; administrators could use the CRM data to plan for future budgets; the Alumni & Development Office could better understand the current challenges that incoming students face and relay new scholarship or funding opportunities; and Institutional Advancement could utilize the analytics to prepare for upcoming accreditation meetings, among other ideas. Comprehensively, a review of the admissions assessment plan data by the entire institution will allow the College as a whole to communicate and perform more respectfully, efficiently, and successfully.

IMPLEMENTATION:

As with any executed assessment plan, there will be various opportunities for learning and improvement as well as certain risks.

Regarding the opportunities, the Admissions team stands to gain guidance, knowledge, and insight into their student body. The data gathered will allow the admissions team "to scientifically assess which inquiries are most likely to become applicants" (Eduventures, 2013, p. 11) in addition to informing them of trends, best practices, potential drawbacks, and future improvements. Since the entire team will be responsible for collecting, analyzing, and sharing the assessment findings, it is obviously in their best interest to learn from this experience and share what they know to other departments and the general College at large (New Leadership Alliance, 2012). By implementing the current assessment plan, the Admissions Team should quickly benefit from learning what methods are working, what areas need improvement, and which tools to appropriately utilize (Eduventures, 2013). I anticipate that the assessment plan will better define the team's expectations and responsibilities as well as allow them to maximize their data-honing skills to influence future actions and decisions.

Other departments such as Financial Aid, Advising, Curriculum Planning, and the Alumni office stand to benefit as well. For instance, assessment data reflecting the number of incoming students and enrollment trends year-to-year could assist the Financial Aid department in determining the amount of aid needed and aid available to sustain their student population. Moreover, assessment data might tell us which international countries would be best to recruit from based on current data and trends from the past recruiting cycle. This could be used by the Advising department to determine if further instruction might be needed for international students coming from these trending countries, and if further resources would be necessary to budget for. Furthermore, the admissions data might provide a striking visualization of which programs at the school are the most popular, and therefore most revenue-producing, and which are not. This could be helpful for Faculty Curriculum Planning Committees when they discuss which programs need to be further resourced, downsized, or eliminated altogether. The Alumni office could benefit as well, knowing how many more students are projected to arrive next cycle, and how much in donations they might need to fund events and other College functions.

In terms of the risks however, there is a chance that the data may not tell the whole story. Oftentimes, we try to use just one method of collecting and analyzing data, when we truly need to pull in other resources or analyze data from a different perspective. As others have pointed out, "no single assessment tool or approach can adequately represent…learning" (Kuh et. al, 2014, p. 12). Therefore, having just one CRM database to analyze the computerized data is tricky because it is only one data source for mountains of data, and it is just one way of looking at the data. In addition, there also may be some initial backlash by the reps, likely because they "are accustomed to performing their duties in a set way" (Hrabowski, Suess, & Fritz, 2011, p. 3). It may initially cause friction and indeed take some time to flesh out the discrepancies for goal setting and learning outcomes in this sense, at least perhaps with the first test group.

Stakeholder Support

Seeing how "the primary goal of collecting evidence or assessment data is to be able to inform action that will lead to improvement" (Cheney, 2016a, p. 5), the Admissions team as well as the entire College stands to benefit from this plan. Furthermore, assessment results "can and should inform institutional strategic planning and trustee discussions and decision making" (Kuh, Jankowski, Ikenberry, & Kinzie, 2014, p. 18). What is learned and gained in the Admissions Assessment Plan should be shared and communicated effectively across departmental lines and outside the institution to maximize success all around (Hatfield, 2009; Hutchings, Ewell, & Banta, 2012; Kinzie, 2010; Kuh et. al, 2014; New Leadership Alliance, 2012). As such, we will need sincere stakeholder support from everyone at the College, from administrative leaders and faculty to students and the IT department, to successfully implement the plan. In addition, we will require technology resources, a meeting room, and overall extra time within the Admissions schedule to compile the data and results to ensure a smooth and clear presentation to all.

CONCLUSION:

Sharing the results from the Admissions plan should help ease concerns and allow stakeholders of all kinds to gain insight into the current practices as well as the recommended

changes and suggestions. In this sense, "analytics helps address the public's desire for institutional accountability..., given the widespread concern over the cost of higher education and the difficult economic and budgetary conditions prevailing worldwide" (Arnold, 2010, p. 1).

Given the current state of affairs within higher education, it will be imperative to roll out the Admissions assessment plan effectively and transparently, knowing it will help provide tasks for improvement, better inform decisions in other departments within the College, and prove our accountability to the greater public. Having data to back up what we do can be liberating and provide a level of responsibility and answerability that will likely satisfy all stakeholders, both internal and external, in the end.

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