

Evaluation^2 2018 Results and Recommendations from Student Interviews

Major Goals of the Evaluation Lab:

GOAL 1: To improve UNM Evaluation Lab student capacity to support New Mexico community organizations (COs) to conduct program evaluations.

GOAL 2: To improve the capacity of New Mexico community organizations to develop and implement program evaluations, translate findings into program enhancements, and report findings to funders and other stakeholders.

The evaluation in 2018 focused on whether students had developed evaluation skills through classroom activities, as teams with other students, senior fellows and program leads and working collaboratively with organizations.

Students, in dyads where they chose their partner, and led by a member of the Eval^2 team, asked each other questions developed in advanced. One student spoke, the other one wrote and then they switched roles.

Evaluation^2 Questions, Answers and Recommendations

| | Positive Themes | Delta themes |
|--|--|--|
| Fall Semester Positives and Deltas | <p>Liked the readings, lectures and group discussion combination.</p> <p>Liked site visits, time to plan with partner organizations, discussions of power dynamics and addressing racial and economic biases.</p> <p>Enjoyed the guest speakers and their diversity.</p> <p>Liked the implicit bias test and the evaluation conference</p> | <p>Would have liked readings more spread out and to start gathering data earlier.</p> <p>Clearer expectations of roles of senior fellows and more thoughtful feedback earlier.</p> <p>A rubric for lit review would have been helpful and doing it earlier.</p> <p>Having coding session in the second semester.</p> <p>Did not see purpose of blogs and generally disliked them</p> |
| Recommendations | | |
| <p>Spread out readings, start gathering data earlier, have a rubric for literature review and finish it in the first semester; move coding session to second semester, clarify purpose and structure of blogs to encourage engagement. Clarify and enforce role of senior fellows.</p> | | |
| Spring Learning Community Positives and Deltas | <p>Found the learning community helpful, good practice presenting, liked the laid-back pace, sharing and learning from other teams,</p> | <p>Updates seemed too frequent.</p> <p>Having a quick abstract or summary of each project early would have been helpful.</p> |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| | <p>realizing everyone was in the same boat, receiving early feedback.</p> <p>Diversity of student backgrounds enriched the class.</p> | <p>Final report was due suddenly and would have liked time for more feedback on poster, including from the organization.</p> <p>Would have liked more speakers on data analysis and instruction on collaborative writing.</p> <p>Support on organization cooperation</p> |
| Recommendations | | |
| <p>Develop project abstracts, time qualitative and quantitative data analysis to coincide with when students are at that stage. Provide instruction on collaborative writing and write report in stages throughout the year. Have the workshop as culmination of the class. Have organization vet the poster. Provide support on eliciting more cooperation with some organizations committing to timeline.</p> | | |
| Skills developed by students | <p>Qualitative and quantitative data collection, analysis and writing results. Team and collaborative work. Logic model development, conducting literature reviews, writing skills, setting goals, communication with different audiences.</p> <p>Increased knowledge of nonprofits and appreciation of their work, their clientele, and the challenges they face.</p> | |
| Benefits of working with partner organization | <p>Exposure to organization work. Organization engagement and willingness of staff to work with the lab, work to understand and support evaluation. Eye opening to learn about organizations and their importance to communities.</p> <p>Learning more about at-risk populations, communities' issues and needs as well as regional issues and how political climate affects them.</p> | |
| Challenges of working with partner organization | <p>Challenges communicating with some organizations due to lack of attention/involvement from director, distance and lack of resources. Finding consensus among organization participants. Complexity of organizations. Difficulties scheduling. Awkward to evaluate your employer.</p> | |
| Recommendations | | |
| <p>Some students want more support in helping organizations be more involved and available for required meetings, particularly when distance is an issue.</p> | | |
| Partner anything else? | <p>One organization engaged by giving feedback from administration on a survey the student developed and encouraged staff to also critique the survey.</p> <p>Another organization started to look at data differently from before.</p> | |

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| | <p>Organization committed to and brave to choose an evaluation question that might give them an answer they might not want to hear. Some organizations face barriers to engagement such as time and staff to dedicate to evaluation. At times it is unclear whether organizations will adapt recommendations.</p> | |
| How are partner organizations embedding evaluation? | <p>Organizations appear committed to evaluation and want to be more accountable. Due to working with the lab staff members are more prepared, are thinking differently about evaluation and are ready to discuss results when participating in the evaluation are improving their data collection practices such as surveys and pre- and post-tests.</p> | |
| UNM | <p>Worked: When Senior fellow {and program lead} was experienced, had good communication and management skills and worked well with the organization, it worked well.</p> | <p>Challenging: Unclear expectations, lack of communication within team resulting in uneven division of labor.</p> |
| UNM differently | <p>Some students had no suggestions and thought the Eval Lab worked well and would do nothing differently.</p> | <p>Some wished for better communication of roles, training in team work and less harsh and more constructive criticism.</p> |
| Workshop | <p>Well planned and organized, good speakers, good groupwork, hands-on participation, engaging, rewarding, relevant and useful content. Powerful content of posters (forward thinking). "One of the best workshops attended". Great food. Liked quality of posters, logical grouping of presentations. Helped everything come together "best workshop attended ever"</p> | <p>The afternoon seemed long with three speakers in a row. Students would have liked to hear all the poster presentations. Would have liked more time for participants to get to know each other (time for introductions). Students would have liked more active roles in the workshop.</p> |
| <p>Recommendations</p> | | |
| <p>Dedicate time for introductions, schedule presentations with a break in between, assign more active role for students as facilitators. Let students volunteer for their roles. Consider a different venue (more natural light). Fellows would have liked to hear all the poster presentations (final practice in class would probably take care of this).</p> | | |

CONCLUSION

Responses indicate that the evaluation Lab is meeting the goal of improving students' evaluation capacity by teaching them and have them successfully practice all the required skills to work collaboratively with organizations to evaluate their programs.

Organizations, in turn, seem engaged in the process of evaluation, are learning evaluation skills and applying them and the results of the evaluation to improve their data collection, and to measure what matters to them.

The Lab will be more explicit and intentional regarding the meaning of embedding evaluation as introducing regular "mission time" and empowering themselves to drive the evaluation.

The Evaluation Lab will take into consideration the students' comments based on their individual experiences and will make the necessary changes to improve.