Spring 2020

Plan It 4-Ward: Assessment of Student Awareness and Engagement

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WMU ScholarWorks Citation  
Bau, Andrea E.; Booher, Steve; and Hernandez De Alvarez, Fanny, "Plan It 4-Ward: Assessment of Student Awareness and Engagement" (2020). Assessment Fellows Grant. 60.  
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Plan It 4-Ward
Assessment of Student Awareness and Engagement
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Plan It 4-Ward Assessment Sub Committee
Western Michigan University

Introduction
Plan It 4-Ward (PI4-W) is a tool students can use to strategically plan their path to graduation while considering specific areas impacting the overall college experience: Academic, Career, Engagement, Financial, and Wellbeing.

Students learn about Plan It 4-Ward at First-Year Orientation and in the First-Year Experience course (FYE 2100). In FYE 2100, students are introduced to the tool, given opportunities to practice use of the tool, and encouraged to continue using it beyond the first semester.

Assessment Objectives
The purpose of this assessment was to:
- Determine the overall effectiveness of Plan It 4-Ward
- Identify whether students found the tool useful in their first semester
- Understand if and how students continued to utilize the tool beyond the first semester
- Examine whether students were encouraged to use the tool across campus, especially within offices that directly relate to the identified areas

End of Semester Evaluation (Fall 2017, 2018, 2019)
Assessment Questions:
- Did the students find the tool useful in the first semester?
- Did the students connect with staff in offices relating to Academics, Career, Engagement, Financial, and Wellbeing?

Methods
- Student survey distributed through Elearning (D2L)
- N=814 (2017)
- Student survey distributed through Experience WMU

Results:

Three Major Themes from Qualitative Data - Student comments

1. Reasons students found Plan It 4-Ward useful:
- Personal awareness
- Planning for the future
- Goal setting / Critical thinking / Time management
- Success / Resources / Connections
- Vision and organization
- Staying on track / Keeping the course
- Stress management

2. Reasons students did not find Plan It 4-Ward useful:
- Did not know about it
- Did not use it
- Did not understand its purpose / confusing
- Felt it was just an activity or assignment for class
- Did not find it interesting

3. Reasons students did not connect, communicate, or utilize areas represented on Plan It 4-Ward:
- Chose not to
- Did not know how to
- Did not feel a need to
- Too busy / Not enough time

1-2 years After Initial Introduction
Students that completed FYE 2100 in 2017 and 2018 were invited to provide feedback on their engagement with the Plan It 4-Ward tool beyond the first semester. N=1067

Evaluation
Assessment Questions:
- Are students using the tool beyond the first semester?
- Do students find the tool useful in planning within the areas as they move toward graduation?

Survey
Assessment Questions:
- Did the students connect with staff in offices relating to the identified areas?
- Did the students find the tool useful in planning areas represented on Plan It 4-Ward?
- Did the students find the tool useful in planning within the areas as they move toward graduation?

Results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plan It 4-Ward Feedback: 2020 Survey</th>
<th>% of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Used the tool beyond the FYE course</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used the tool to access web links provided</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used the tool to plan - Academics</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used the tool to plan - Career</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used the tool to plan - Engagement</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used the tool to plan - Financial</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used the tool to plan - Wellbeing</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider Plan It 4-Ward helpful</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received information about the tool from WMU Offices around campus after FYE course</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* All academic colleges were represented through the respondents

Focus Group
Respondents of the survey were invited to participate in a focus group. Twelve students indicated interest and 2 students participated.

Recommendations
To increase awareness and engagement of the Plan It 4-Ward tool:
- Use a digital format that students can hold in their hands
- Make the tool easily accessible across campus
- Create a check-in process
- Revise the FYE 2100 curriculum and provide more training to the instructors
- Expand the promotion and implementation of the tool across campus to increase engagement of WMU Offices

*One WMU First-Year Experience Building Affinity for WMU committee has recommended a restructuring of the First-Year Experience course to align with the Eight Dimensions of Wellness (Emotional, Environmental, Financial, Intellectual, Occupational, Physical, Spiritual, and Social). The Plan It 4-Ward Assessment Sub Committee supports the use of the Eight Dimensions of Wellness in FYE.

As part of the changing culture at WMU with Think Big and One WMU, we recommend the development of and support for holistic student centered initiatives designed to fulfill the primary goal of Plan It 4-Ward: helping students strategically plan across multiple dimensions while at WMU.

Our assessment revealed that, to be successful, these initiatives need:
- To be accessible to students on their phones 24/7
- To be accessible to advisors and mentors so they can support student success
- An assigned home and leader
- Financial support
- A continuous development and improvement process
- A strong communication plan and university-wide commitment

Acknowledgement
This work was supported by a grant from the Assessment Fellows Grant Program, Office of Assessment and Undergraduate Studies, Western Michigan University.