Persistence, Completion,
and Assessment of Student Learning:
Helping Programs to see
the Connections

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Western Illinois University

- Two Campuses
  - Traditional residential campus
    - Opening year was 1902
    - Rural location (Macomb, IL)
    - Approximately 10,200 students
    - Student to faculty ratio is 15 to 1
  - Metropolitan upper-division commuter campus
    - Approximately 1,500 students

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Learning Objectives

- Participants will be able to:
  - Describe our four step model of assessment and utilize all or part for implementation at their institution
  - Identify the use of assessment results to improve student learning as a key to persistence and completion
  - Apply a persistence and completion focus to the use of assessment results to improve student learning in a way that motivates stakeholders, and
  - Demonstrate a common goal across assessment of student learning projects: student persistence and completion.

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WIU Four Step Model

- All programs at WIU are required to use the four-step model for assessment of student learning:
  1. Two to four meaningful <u>learning outcomes</u>
  2. <u>Direct measurement</u> methods for each learning outcome (indirect optional)
  3. <u>Results</u> of data collection
  4. <u>Impact</u>: data is used to improve student learning

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Required Reporting Format

- Required to ensure each learning outcome may be clearly followed through all four steps when reviewed:
  – 1a. Learning Outcome #1
  – 1b. Direct Measure
  – 1c. Results
  – 1d. Impact

  – 2a. Learning Outcome #2
  – 2b. Direct Measure
  – 2c. Results
  – 2d. Impact

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Importance of Defining Direct vs. Indirect Measurement

- Direct Measurement
  – Provides clear evidence of student learning
  – Directly stems from the learning outcome. Examples include content of knowledge tests, and student papers or projects
- Indirect Measurement
  – Results imply students have achieved learning outcomes but measures cannot stand on their own as proof of student learning

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How Are Results Used to Improve Student Learning?

- This is where we are at WIU
- This question guides assessment of student learning processes
- Departments see where they need to rework or are missing steps by focusing on impact
- Many are wrestling with making results meaningful and really using results

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Challenges for the Departments

- It can be difficult to get the use of assessment results on to faculty radar
- They often still see it as peripheral
- Department chairs need some language or frame to help faculty see the link between the use of assessment results and their own students' success

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Persistence and Completion

- Persistence and Completion Academy
  - We are members
  - First year of Academy- Finding our way
- We have been wrestling with how persistence and completion translates into assessment of student learning
  - Academy goal: "Address interrelationships among student persistence and completion, assessment of student learning, and program review efforts."

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Aha Moment

- Immediately we were excited!
- We realized that the connection between persistence and completion was…. Impact!
- Our new mantra became: to use data to improve student learning helps students *persist and complete*
- Articulating this to departments has been challenging…

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Implementation in Annual Meetings with Programs

- We asked: How do you use results to impact persistence and completion?
  - Blank stares
  - What?
  - Interesting...
  - That makes sense. But how?
  - We do this. It is a key component of _____ (standardized test, assessments at multiple stages), we just do not use that language.

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Recognizing Negative Potential and Reassuring Folks

- It cannot be an addition, individuals doing assessment need to know it is not an add-on
- This is intuitive, if we do good work in impact, this is a result
  - There is no new work: to use data to improve student learning helps students persist and complete
- Positive: what can this do for your program in precarious times?

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Our Matrix

- Annual reporting each year of status of assessment of student learning in all programs across campus
- Portray successes in assessment of student learning across the university to constituents
- Very effective as a tool to facilitate improvement and to discuss persistence and completion

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The Matrix

- This year, we have added the expectation that *student learning assessment data would be used to improve student learning in order to help students persist and complete*

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College of Fine Arts and Communication

Department	Effective Assessment	Meets Requirements Minimally	No Direct Results (Indirect Only)	No Results	No Report Submitted	Grades Reported (Non-Assessment)	Plan Fits Report	No Updated Plan
Art (BA): (U)								
Art (BFA): (U)								
Art Teacher Education: (U)								
Broadcasting: (U)								
Communication: (U)								
Communication:(G)								
Communication Sciences and Disorders: (U)								
Communication Sciences and Disorders: (G)								
Museum Studies: (G)								
Music: (U) Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Music								
Music: Teacher Education								
Music: (G)								
Theatre: (U)								
BFA Musical Theatre: (U)								
MFA Theatre: (G)								

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Department	Effective Assessment	Meets Requirements Minimally	No Direct Results (Indirect Only)	No Results	No Report Submitted	Impact based on evidence	Impact addresses student persistence and completion
Art (BA): (U)							
Art (BFA): (U)							
Art Teacher Education: (U)							
Broadcasting: (U)							
Communication: (U)							
Communication:(G)							
Communication Sciences and Disorders: (U)							
Communication Sciences and Disorders: (G)							
Museum Studies: (G)							
Music: (U) Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Music							
Music: Teacher Education							
Music: (G)							
Theatre: (U)							
BFA Musical Theatre: (U)							
MFA Theatre: (G)							

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The Common Goal Across Assessment Projects: Persistence and Completion

- In general education:
  - Four step model
  - Departments are encouraged to use embedded assessments
  - Assessment results are analyzed in departments but are reported out and collected university-wide as well
  - In this way assessment processes are similar to major and graduate assessment
  - Challenge is in encouraging ownership of student success when not in program

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Sample Report Form

Assessment of Student Learning in General Education					
Data Report Form --- Fall 2013 Data					
Department **ECONOMICS**				Enter data in yellow ce	
Goal # *	**2 (CRITICAL THINKING)**				
Course Number	Does Not Mee	eets Minima	ets as Expec	eds Expecta	TOTAL
ECON 100Y Freq.	8	10	13	11	42
all sections %	19%	24%	31%	26%	100%
ECON 231 Freq.	46	140	103	57	346
all sections %	13%	40%	30%	16%	100%

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Tips to Engage Faculty

- Introduction of persistence and completion naturally follows a conversation about impact
  - Remember: What is done with the results of assessment to improve student learning and to assist students to persistence and complete?

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Tips to Engage Faculty

- Do not try to overwhelm a department new to assessment- but it does provide rationale!
  - To use data to improve student learning may help students persist and complete in your program.
- Do not overthink
  - The goal is clear: student success

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Questions?

- Comments???

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