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# A PROCESS MODEL FOR CULTURE CHANGE IN ASSESSMENT

# Who is here?

- Introduce yourself to your neighbors
- Show of hands:
  - Position?
  - Institution type?
  - Experience with assessment?
  - Assessment Challenges?

# Outcomes for this session

Participants in this session will be able to:

- Articulate the relationship between institutional policies and assessment culture.
- Identify specific messages about assessment that are communicated by their institution's processes and policies.

# Outcomes (cont)

Participants in this session will be able to:

- Support cultural change related to assessment by enacting policy and/or process changes that
  - encourage faculty and staff engagement with assessment
  - promote shared responsibility for assessment within and across disciplines and departments
  - focus institutional energy on key improvement activities
  - support consistent and sustainable effort in the assessment process

# Context for assessment

- Shifting focus from teacher to learner
- Public concern for the quality of education
- Accreditation- commitment to peer review
- Obligation to ensure that learning occurs

# Context (alternate)



Source: wikipedia

We are the Accreditors .
You must assess.
Resistance is futile.

# 30 years later…

- Significant assessment challenges remain
- Continued questions of the efficacy of assessment

- Assessment professionals – organizational change agents

# Resistance to change

Discussion
- Talk with your neighbors:
  - What are the causes for resistance to assessment?

  - Share examples:

# Solution: "Develop a culture of assessment"

- Organizational culture: a system of shared assumptions, values, and beliefs, which governs how people behave in organizations
  (McLaughlin, J. http://study.com/academy/lesson/what-is-organizational-culture-definition-characteristics.html )

- Contrasting "assessment cultures"
  - Culture of compliance
  - Culture of (commitment to) improvement

# Culture of compliance

What does this look like?
- Minimum acceptable effort
  - This is a distraction from our real jobs
- Any data will do
  - Just satisfy the administration
- Responsibility is delegated
  - Assigned to lowest status members
- Inconsistent process
  - Susceptible to personnel changes and reinterpretation of external demands

# Culture of improvement

Can we describe this?
- Engaged faculty and staff
- Shared responsibility
- Intrinsically motivated
- Consistent effort
- Integrated into workloads
- Student focused (learning focused)
- Sustainable

# Reflection

- What are the outcomes we hope for from an assessment process?

- How do the required activities support those outcomes?

# A process model for culture change

The administrative processes and policies related to assessment directly influence the critical beliefs and perceptions of faculty and staff that contribute to the nature of the assessment culture of the institution.

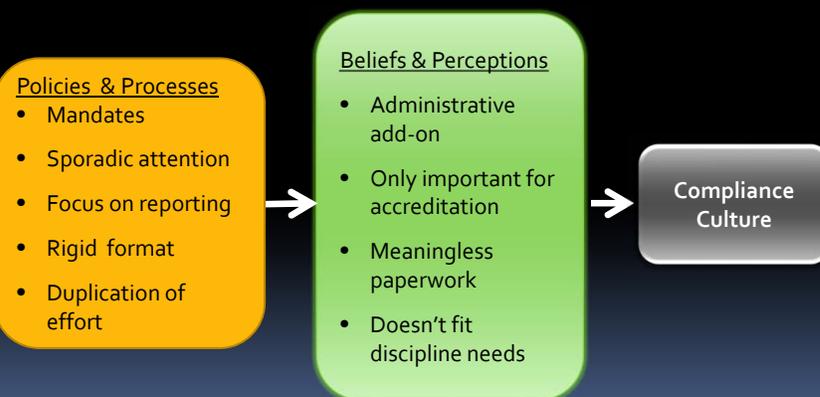| Processes and Policies | → | Beliefs and Perceptions | → | Institutional Culture |

# Critical beliefs and perceptions

- What is the purpose and value of assessment?
- What are the central activities of assessment?
- Who has responsibility for assessment?
- What does a successful assessment program look like?

# Reflection

- Can you identify ways that your institution reinforces a compliance culture?
- Consider
  - The way requirements and expectations are communicated
  - What behaviors are rewarded/punished?
  - What is the nature of the required task?

# Creation of a compliance culture

**Policies & Processes**
- Mandates
- Sporadic attention
- Focus on reporting
- Rigid format
- Duplication of effort

→

**Beliefs & Perceptions**
- Administrative add-on
- Only important for accreditation
- Meaningless paperwork
- Doesn't fit discipline needs

→

**Compliance Culture**

## Applying the process model

- Shape the critical beliefs and perceptions of faculty and staff about:
  - The purpose and value of assessment
  - The central activities of assessment
  - Who has responsibility for assessment
  - What a successful assessment program looks like
- By intentional design of the processes, policies and strategic communication related to assessment
  - Aligned with the needs and values of faculty and staff

## Assessment Defined

1. The use of empirical data on student learning to refine programs and improve student learning
   (Assessing Academic Programs in Higher Education by Allen 2004)
2. The systematic collection and analysis of information to improve student lifelong learning
   (http://cet.usc.edu/resources/teaching_learning/assessment.html)
3. The systematic collection, review, and use of information about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning and development.
   (Assessment Essentials: planning, implementing, and improving assessment in higher education by Palomba and Banta 1999)

# Academic Assessment Defined

A regular practice of inquiry

...that engages faculty and co-curricular staff

...in the examination and discussion of evidence of learning

...leading to the implementation of informed recommendations for program improvement

...that are examined to identify practices that lead to better student learning

(Flaherty, R., 2016)

# Critical beliefs for an improvement culture

- Purpose and value of assessment
  - Better learning experiences (program quality)
- Responsibility for assessment
  - Faculty/staff ownership and broad engagement
- Central activity of assessment
  - Informed discussion and decision-making
- What makes an effective program?
  - Continuous improvement

# Discussion

- Share with neighbors –
- How can you change the policies or communication strategies that reinforce a culture of compliance?

- What policy or process decisions have you made or could you make that support a culture of improvement?

# Communication Strategies

- Assessment should be meaningful and manageable
  - Your process should fit your program
- It's not about the report
  - *"Faculty and staff engagement in discussion about student learning and program improvement is the primary activity of assessment"* –(Flaherty, 2016)
- Progress, not perfection
  - Continuous improvement is the measure of success

# Policy strategies

- Shared responsibility
  - Process requires group discussion
- Flexible conceptions of evidence
  - Qualitative and quantitative
  - Discipline specific standards
- Appropriate scope of the task
  - Multi-year processes, project –based assessment
- Tie to broader institutional activities
  - Budget, planning

# Process strategies

- Integrate with existing processes
  - External accreditation,
- Reduce duplication of effort
  - Avoid re-grading, reformatting data
- Focus on process, not documentation
  - Report on the discussion, not the data
    - No discussion, no report
  - Quality assessment is reflected in action to improve

## Reporting Example:
### Short Form/Long Form

- **Annual report: "Short form"**
  - What aspects of student learning did you study?
  - What information/evidence/data did you gather to inform you about student learning in this area?
  - How was the information discussed in your department?
  - What did you discover? What were your conclusions?
  - What do you plan to do the same and differently based on your discoveries about your students and their learning?
  - What support or resources do you need in order to make your plans happen?*
- **5-year comprehensive report: "Long form"**
  - Integrated into program review process

* Based on a document from an HLC workshop on assessment

## Reporting Example:
### The Two-Document Solution

1. Assessment plan – static description of process
   - Program Mission/Purpose
   - Student Learning Outcomes
   - Curriculum Alignment
   - Assessment Plan
   - Communication, Discussion and Change Processes

2. Assessment report – annual report of activity

| SLO | What meaningful results were discussed by faculty? | Recommendation? |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 30% have trouble with applying concept X | Add assignment in sophomore course |
|  | 18% fail to consider Y in project decisions | Revise rubric and distribute early in the process |
| 2 | All students do well | No recommendation |

+ Data Attachment

## The process model

The administrative processes and policies related to assessment directly influence the critical beliefs and perceptions of faculty and staff including:

- The purpose and value of assessment
- The central activities of assessment
- Who has responsibility for assessment
- What a successful assessment program looks like

## Questions?
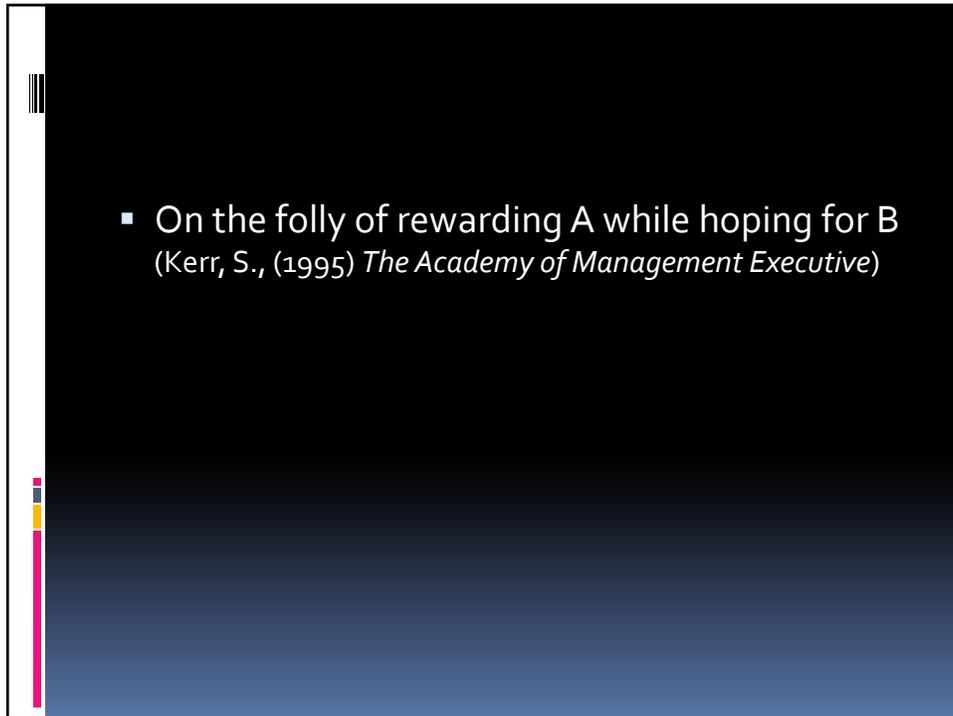
- On the folly of rewarding A while hoping for B
  (Kerr, S., (1995) *The Academy of Management Executive*)