

# **ASSESSMENTS AND ADJUNCTS:**

**WHAT THEY DON'T KNOW ABOUT  
ASSESSMENT AND WHY;  
HOW TO CLOSE THE GAP.**

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# INTRODUCTIONS/OBJECTIVES

- Who is Indiana Wesleyan University?
- Participants will
  - Become aware of how adjunct and administrator perceptions about assessment may differ across the two groups and the challenges brought about by any differing perspectives;
  - Learn what responsibility administrators have for ensuring adjuncts understand assessment;
  - Learn methods to ensure a culture of inclusiveness with adjunct faculty; and
  - Learn about practices being used to train adjuncts in assessment processes.

# BACKGROUND

## Purpose of Study

- Higher education more generally, and graduate programs in particular, are increasingly relying on adjuncts to fill teaching roles.
- Simultaneously, the importance of assessment is growing as programs are called upon to demonstrate the achievement of student learning.

# BACKGROUND

## • Purpose of Study

- The convergence of these two trends means it is incumbent upon program directors and other administrators to see that adjuncts are appropriately educated about and involved in assessment practices.
- This presentation describes original research examining adjuncts' and administrators' perspectives as to the adequacy of preparation adjuncts receive in assessment processes, as well as emergent best practices being implemented to encourage this involvement.

# LITERATURE REVIEW

- Research to Date
  - Role and importance of assessment
  - Growth of graduate education
  - Growth of adjunct model of education
  - Increase in role and importance of accreditation

# LITERATURE REVIEW

- Gaps in the Research
  - Assessment literature typically overlooks the presence of adjuncts.
  - Literature about the role of adjuncts fails to discuss their involvement in assessment.
  - Even when the literature does discuss the relationship of the two, the discussion tends to pertain only to adjuncts on the undergraduate level.
  - Graduate programs in general, and professionally accredited graduate programs in particular, are notably absent from any discussion.

# RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- To what degree do adjunct (contingent) faculty understand assessment requirements as articulated in curriculum and program maps, grade book assignments, or by accrediting agencies?
- What role do administrative leaders have in communicating and training adjuncts to ensure understanding exists?
- What training procedures, if any, are being used to help adjuncts understand assessment policies and practices?



# METHODS

- ▶ Qualitative Research Analysis
- ▶ NVivo 11 for themes and nodes
- ▶ Purposefully selected participants
  - ▶ Contingent (Adjunct) Faculty
    - ▶ Range of Years of Service to Institution
  - ▶ Administrative Leaders
- ▶ Interviews
  - ▶ Face-to-face (recorded)
  - ▶ Telephone (recorded)
  - ▶ Email

# DEMOGRAPHICS

## SUPERVISION MAY BE DIRECT OR INDIRECT

- Administrative Leaders
  - Gender
    - Female 2
    - Male: 3
  - Length of Time as Administrator
    - Average Time: 8 years
  - Supervision of Faculty (Modality)
    - Online: 3
    - Onsite: 1
    - Both: 1



# FINDINGS: ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERS

- Understanding of Accrediting Agencies and/or Bodies:
  - At University Level:
    - 4 – Higher Learning Commission
    - 1 – Not sure
  - At Program Level (e.g. Business, Nursing, etc.)
    - 3 – Understood various program accreditation
      - General knowledge
    - 2 – Not aware of additional accreditors

# FINDINGS: ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERS

- Responsibility for Ensuring Assessment/Accreditation Standards are Met:
  - No Consistent Response
    - Entire University Staff
    - Academic Advisors
    - Adjunct Faculty Care
    - Deans and/or Directors

# FINDINGS: ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERS

- Responsibility for Training in the Area of Assessment/Accreditation:
  - No Consistent Response
    - Adjunct Faculty Care
    - Deans and/or Directors



# FINDINGS: ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERS

- Responsibility for Providing an Environment of Inclusivity:
  - Entire University
  - Deans/Directors
  - Faculty
  - Students



# FINDINGS: ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERS

NO FORMAL TRAINING

INCLUSIVE

HLC

TRAINING MANUAL  
ACCREDITATION / ASSESSMENT

# ADMINISTRATIVE QUOTES

“Well I would say that everyone is responsible for assessment, if you have any role, instructors are responsible for assessment. It moves all the way up through the hierarchy, starts at the faculty level....with rubrics, then school level...moves over to accreditation. It is more specialized, it would be more program or school level. Faculty would be involved...boxes are checked. Assessment is all, accreditation administrative function relying on the data.”

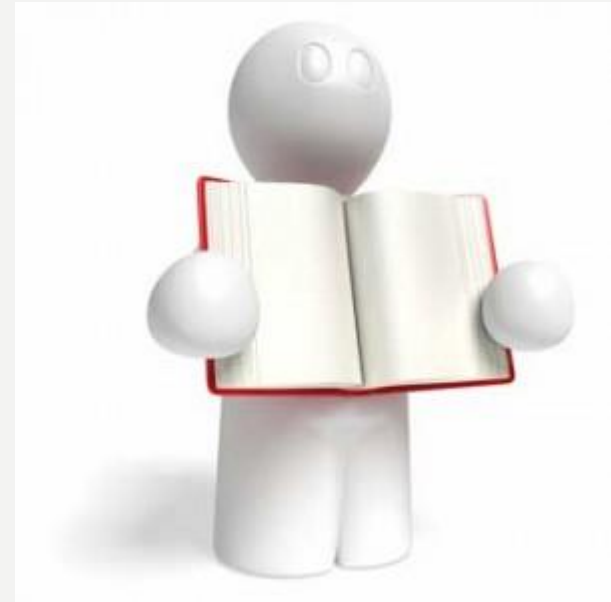
“Assessment has become, in my understanding, one of the major drivers in higher education improvement that through the assessment process we look at program goals and mission and how they connect to the university mission.”

“I think we assume [accreditation/assessment] criteria is communicated. Some adjuncts look at it as a given...of course you're accredited...get federal funding.....How much do adjuncts care about accreditation? They may see their primary work as teaching.”



# DEMOGRAPHICS

- Adjunct (Contingent) Faculty
  - Gender
    - Female 4
    - Male: 7
  - Teaching (Modality)
    - Online: 6
    - Both: 5
  - Teaching Level
    - Graduate: 11



**ONLY ADJUNCT FACULTY WHO TEACH MORE THAN 50% AT A GRADUATE LEVEL WERE INTERVIEWED**

**EMPLOYMENT AS ADJUNCT RANGED FROM ONE YEAR TO OVER 15 YEARS.**

# FINDINGS: ADJUNCT/CONTINGENT FACULTY

- Understanding of Accrediting Agencies and/or Bodies:
  - At University Level:
    - 5 – Higher Learning Commission
    - 6 – Not sure
  - At Program Level (e.g. Business, Nursing, etc.)
    - 4 – Understood various program accreditation
      - General knowledge
    - 7 – Not aware of additional accreditors

# **FINDINGS: ADJUNCT/CONTINGENT FACULTY**

- Understanding of Assessment in Higher Education:
  - All respondents:
    - Relates to following grading rubrics
    - Relates to objectives and outcomes of student learning
    - Ensuring assignments follow syllabi
    - Ensuring processes are in place to assess student development

# FINDINGS: ADJUNCT/CONTINGENT FACULTY

- Understanding of Accreditation in Higher Education:
  - Various responses (no consistency)
    - Evaluation of individual courses/programs
    - Body that provides a “stamp of approval”
    - Conducts evaluations based on a schedule
    - Adherence to pre-set standards
    - Validation of courses



# FINDINGS: ADJUNCT/CONTINGENT FACULTY

- Communication of Assessment Criteria to Students:
  - Majority responses referenced review of syllabi
  - Some referenced sharing expectations and course requirements during the first class session
  - No consistency



# FINDINGS: ADJUNCT/CONTINGENT FACULTY

- Training Related to Assessment/Accreditation
  - No clear understanding of the difference between assessment and accreditation
  - 2 Adjunct Faculty received training related to their syllabi and course rubrics
  - No faculty received training on accreditation
    - Adjunct Faculty in the Counseling program received specific instructions via faculty guide on assessment related to CACREP

# ADJUNCT QUOTES

I don't know who our accrediting body is.

You want to know if your students are getting the knowledge and skill development the accreditor wants; assessment is also a way to evaluate your own teaching to see if you are helping students obtain the learning objectives.

In order to meet assessment criteria, my role is to deliver the curriculum as written

I need to be aware of the aspects of accreditation to tell students and this something adjunct faculty need to be told

I'm not sure who my supervisor is...



# DISCUSSION/IMPLICATIONS

- Training Models
  - Indiana Wesleyan University – Wesley Seminary
  - Granite State College, New Hampshire
- Assessment Fellows
- Implications for Further Research
  - Mentors Roles/Responsibility
  - Training Models
  - Assessment Fellows





# BEST PRACTICES



- Expansion of the Role of Adjunct Faculty Care
- Balancing the Sweet Spot
- Inclusion of Assessment and Accreditation in Adjunct Performance Reviews
- Ongoing Required Professional Development for Adjuncts
- Inclusion of Adjuncts in Developing Training and Review of the Adjunct Corp





# QUESTIONS



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