Scaling up University and Program-level Assessment Meaningfully

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What I hope you will identify in this session

1. Who your stakeholders/partners are to engage in collaborative assessment structure building.

2. How you can align assessment reporting to make processes meaningful and to foster sustainability.

3. The formative methods you could use to conduct assessment review to foster quality assessment and to improve teaching and learning.

But first a little story... Perhaps you've heard the one about

*... **does not yet regularly and comprehensively assess all student program learning outcomes for undergraduate and graduate programs***

The Commission recommends that the assessment of student learning outcomes be systematically accelerated such that continuous improvement resulting from assessment leads to enhancement of student achievement and to a meaningful evaluation of mission fulfillment.

We believe that assessment done well is a valuable ally during times of change.

Our goal was to shift mindsets and practices.

This meant moving from an accreditation mindset to engaging in localized assessment practices that were meaningful and relevant to faculty.

WE knew that accreditation standards, while necessary, were <u>not compelling</u> faculty as a reason to engage in quality assessment.

Faculty Perspective

"Faculty are increasingly called on to document what students learned and how that contributes to program-level and campus-wide learning outcomes" (Farkas, 2013, p. 2) and strategic initiatives.

- Increased pressure to demonstrate comprehensive, sustainable assessment practices and evidence of using assessment results to improve student outcomes, **student learning outcomes assessment has had very little influence on policy and institutional practice** (Kuh, 2016).

- This disconnect is due to focus on **increased compliance, lack of institutional infrastructure to collect and effectively use data. Accreditation**, rather than student and organizational learning, **became the driving mechanism** for assessment on many campuses.

This focus on compliance affects faculty morale, satisfaction, and autonomy!

- These impede satisfaction and faculty participation with assessment (McCullough & Jones, 2014).

- Faculty "prize independence … and want to control how pressure for external scrutiny unfold on their own turf" (Banta, Ewell & Cogswell, 2016).

- Oftentimes assessment processes "are not well suited to adequately capture the knowledge and skills faculty want their students to get" (Kuh, 2016, p. 2).

Beliefs

- If institutions build cultures of inquiry where using assessment data to answers questions faculty and staff care deeply about, then meeting the larger institutional needs and accreditation expectations are really straightforward.

- Building this culture of inquiry and using data is a process that engages faculty, staff, and leadership connecting courses to programs to the institution.

Unknowns at that point

- What does it mean to build cultures of inquiry where assessment is used to answer questions of importance?

- What does it take for shifts in organizational ways of being?

- What roles do faculty and staff actively engage in this process?
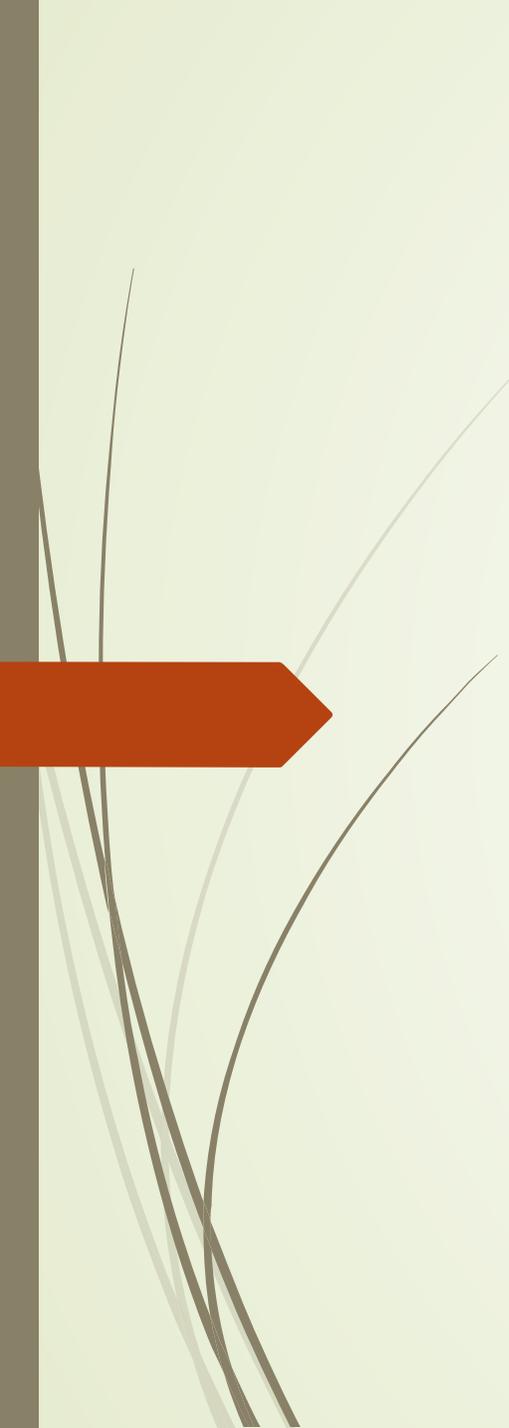
Our journey

Review the literature on assessment best practices and building cultures of assessment, honor our faculty, and honor our past

Our journey: **Review the Literature**

- **Understand elements to creating a culture of sustained assessment.**
  - The literature is pretty clear on what works to establish a culture of assessment that faculty take ownership and that fosters principles of good practice for assessing student learning.
- **Use well established key principles for engaging in quality assessment practice.**
  - The Nine Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning (AAHE, 1992)
- **Draw from a large body of research for direction to help us shape the future of assessment at PSU.**
  - Organizational change (Farkas, 2013), academic libraries (Lakos & Phipps, 2004), assessment both in academic (Banta, T.W., & Associates; 2002; Maki, 2010; Suskie, 2014; Weiner, 2016) and student affairs (Bingham, Bureau, & Duncan, 2015; Yousey-Elsener, Bentrim, Henning, 2015)

What works
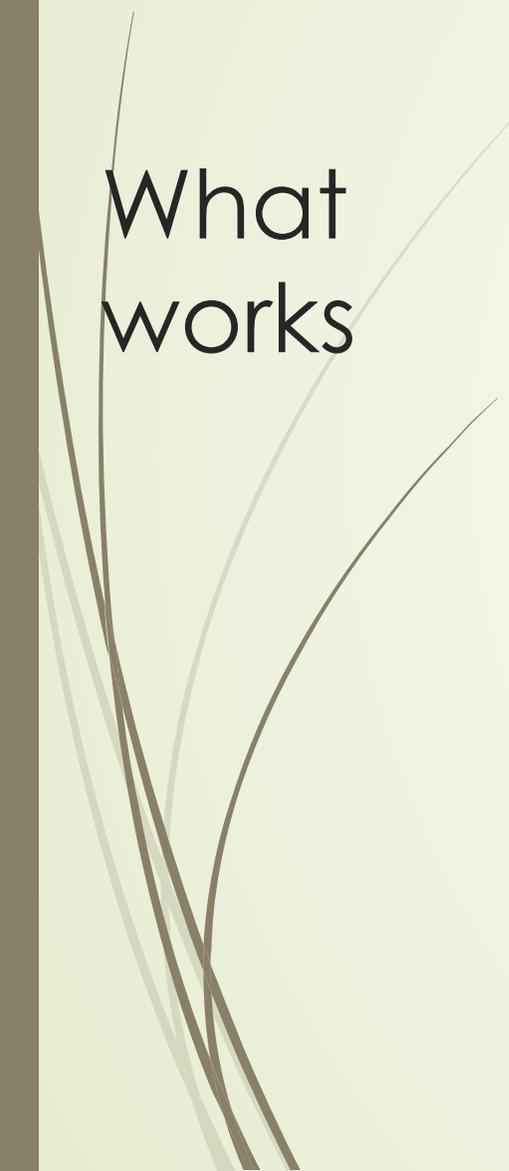
Across the aforementioned studies several key elements emerged as essential to building a culture of assessment:

- leadership dedicated to assessment efforts,

- alignments,

- positive messaging,

- infrastructure that supports assessment,

- shared common language and practices,

- standardized processes & procedures,

- new efforts build on existing efforts,

- transparency and sharing of assessment findings, and

- progress recognized and successes celebrated.

Our journey: **Honor our faculty**

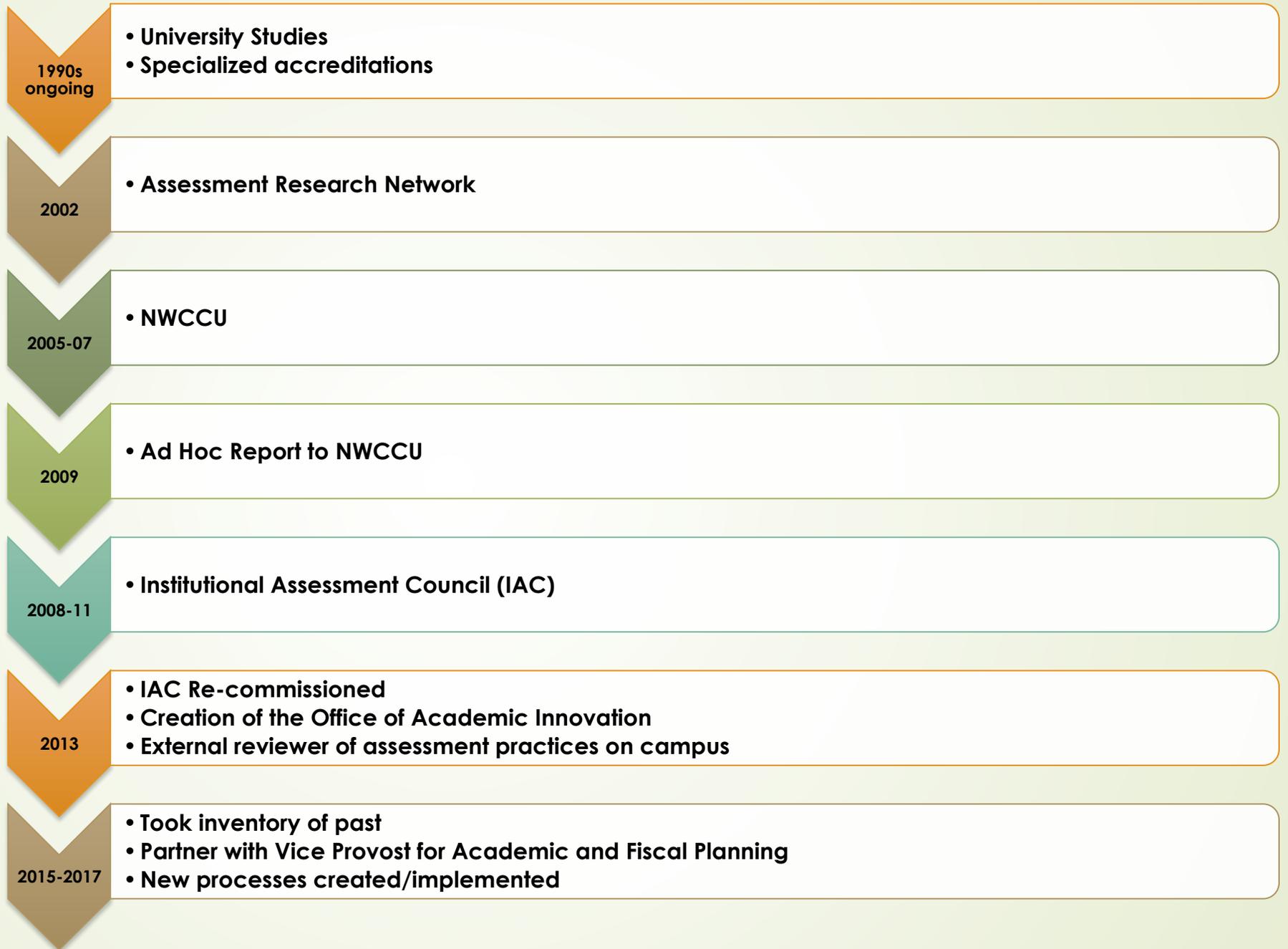**We were determined to include faculty voices, gleaned from interviews to shape assessment processes on campus.**

- Our faculty wanted to collaborate around a clearer sense of shared as well as diverse perspectives on learning to make more progress with their educational plans.

- Faculty wanted assistance in making good use of student outcome data to improve teaching and learning. Faculty voice was essential to make meaning out of the numbers.

- Faculty wanted to use reporting strategies that helped them engage the outcomes — that integrated their interpretations and implications for continuing practice.

Our journey: **Honor our past**

What we learned, and had reaffirmed, from a review of literature is that we needed to move away from the pressures of accreditation expectations, and remember lessons learned from past assessment efforts in shaping a culture of value for doing, using & sharing assessment.

Past assessment efforts

1990s ongoing
- University Studies
- Specialized accreditations

2002
- Assessment Research Network

2005-07
- NWCCU

2009
- Ad Hoc Report to NWCCU

2008-11
- Institutional Assessment Council (IAC)

2013
- IAC Re-commissioned
- Creation of the Office of Academic Innovation
- External reviewer of assessment practices on campus

2015-2017
- Took inventory of past
- Partner with Vice Provost for Academic and Fiscal Planning
- New processes created/implemented

New Assessment Era

Bringing it all together...

We knew that for faculty and staff to care about assessment, it had to mean more than fulfilling external requirements. We decided to **frame the goal of assessment as program improvement**, not just fulfilling an accreditation requirement knowing that program assessment data could be mined for accreditation data.

We are on this path...

- Fostering leadership and partnerships

- Empowering faculty and staff

- Creating a common and agreed upon language of assessment

- Emphasizing and supporting quality teaching and learning through formative feedback

- Recognizing and rewarding quality program assessment, encouraging sharing and transparency

Formed partnerships and collaborations

- Partnership between the IAC, the Office of Academic Innovation (OAI), and Office of Academic Affairs (OAA) strengthened around shared goals for quality systemic assessment of student learning.

- Leadership from the Vice Provost for Academic and Fiscal Planning in assessment and accreditation, increased substantially the opportunity for the IAC to coordinate its work with assessment initiatives in OAA.
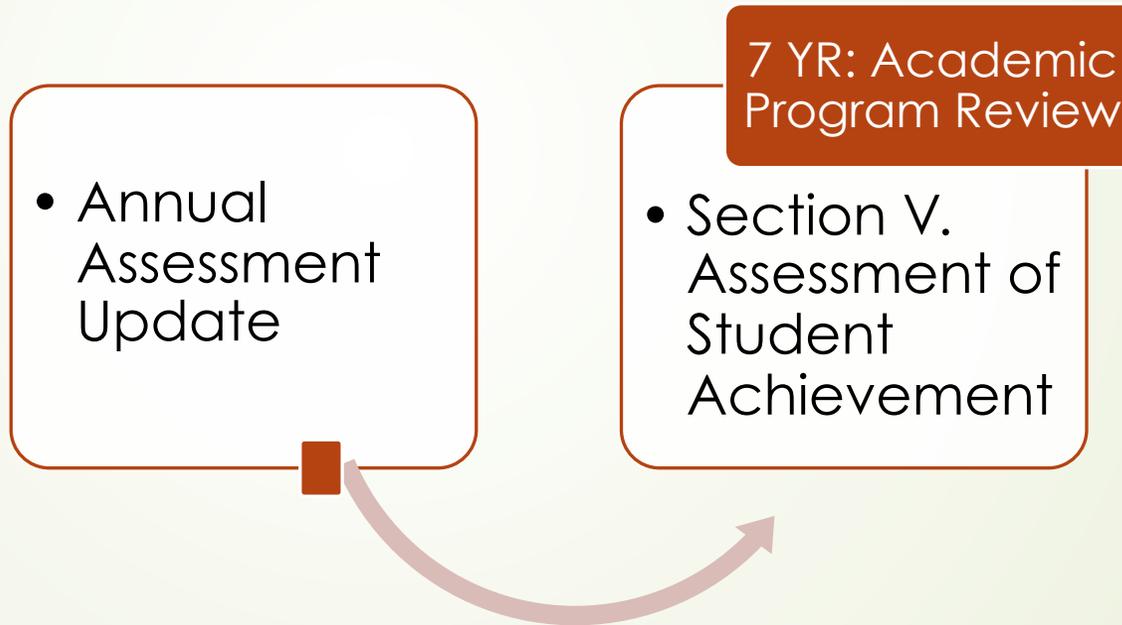
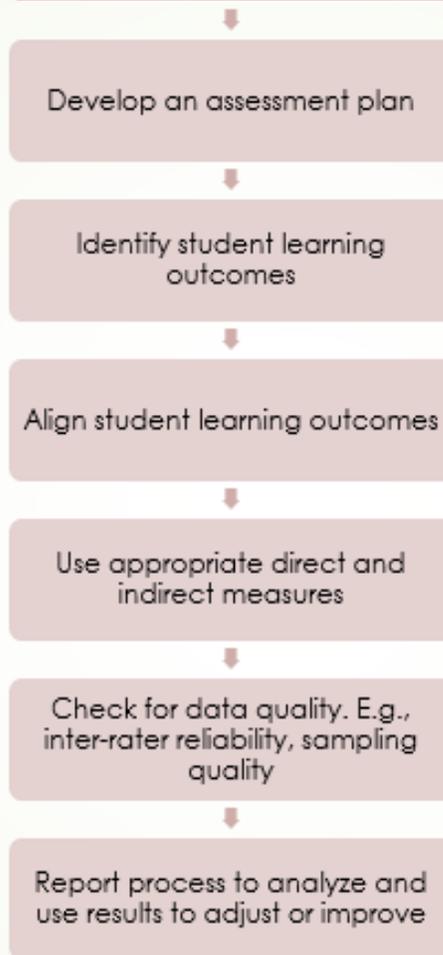- Communication and ownership shifted too

Empower faculty and staff

- This process begins with honoring previous assessment efforts and building capacity/quality from where programs are.
  - Strategy I use when I consult with programs

- Foster a common and agreed upon language of assessment, and provide faculty and staff with the training and resources needed to engage in sustained assessment practice.
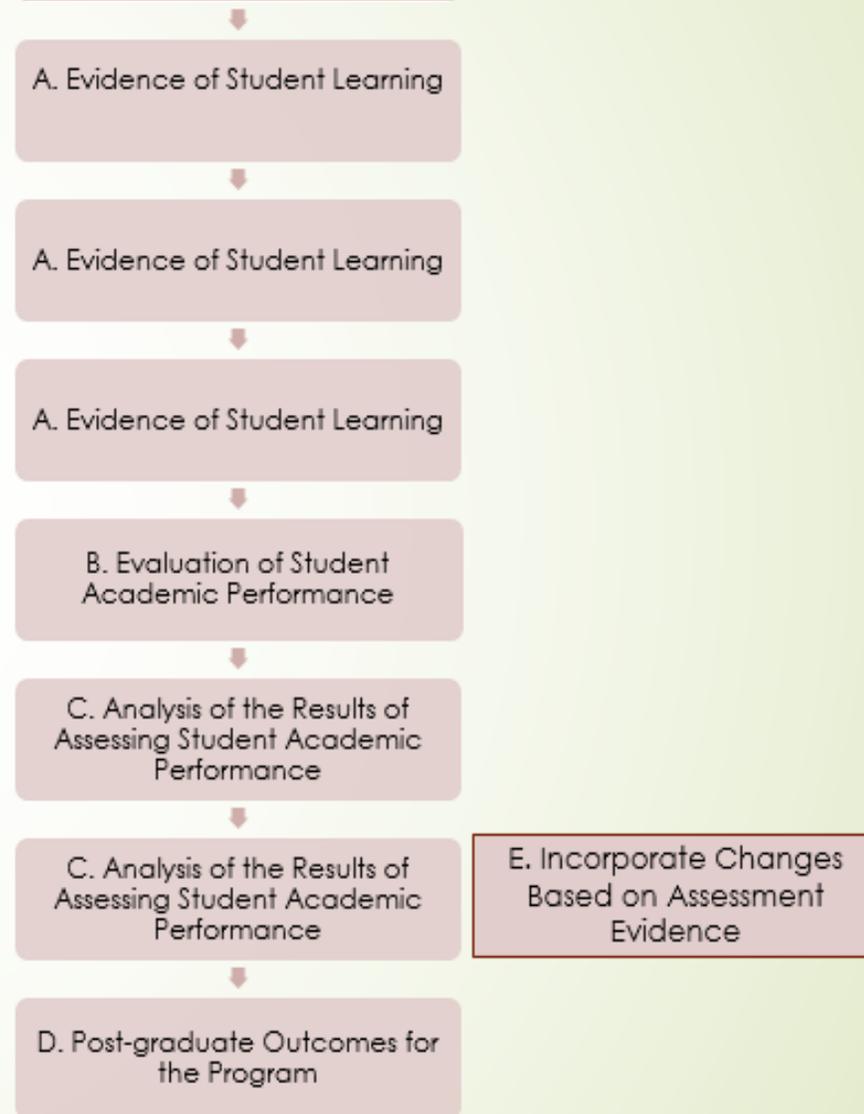
Integrated assessment processes

- Annual Assessment Update

7 YR: Academic Program Review

- Section V. Assessment of Student Achievement

Formative feedback mechanisms

Exercise 2

# Rubric

- Aligns to best assessment practices /NWCCU expectations
- Key areas assessed
  - Assessment Plan
  - Alignments
  - Learning Outcomes
  - Assessment Activities
  - Data Quality
  - Assessment Findings, Interpretation, Use
- Scale used
  - (1) Does not meet expectations/ Meets expectations (2)/ Exceeds expectations (3)
- Link

Exercise 3

Provide (ongoing) assessment support and resources
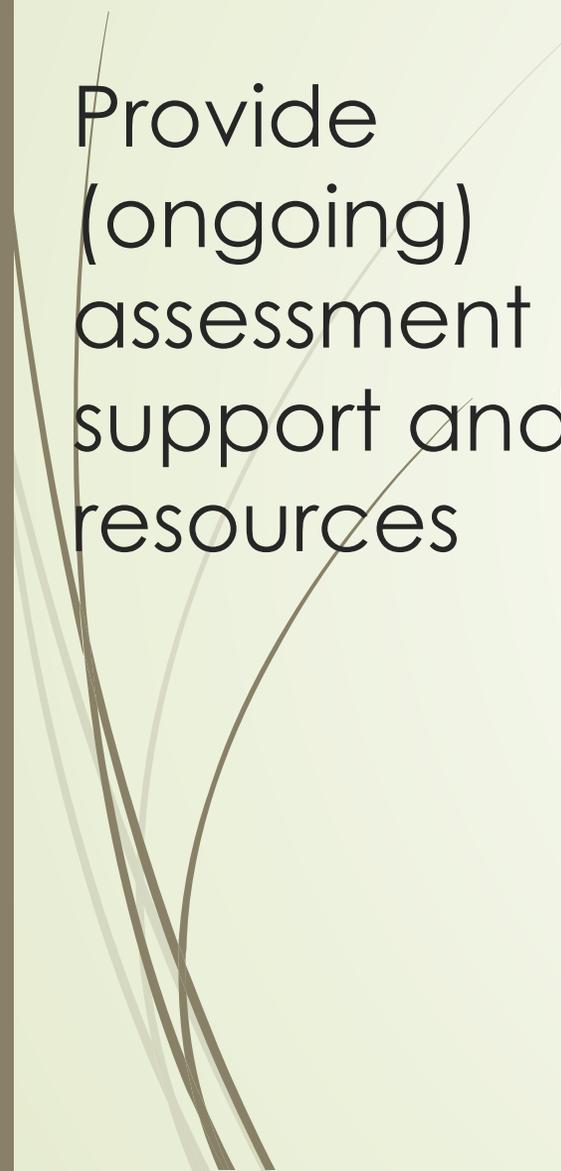
2015-ongoing
- IAC website resources
- I provide individual, program consults

Winter 2016 - Spring 2017
- **First** Annual Assessment Update and formative feedback given

Fall 2017
- **First** APR training. 20 academic programs scheduled for APR in the next two years
- "Train" all IAC members on applying the rubric to APR Section V

Fall 2017 - Winter 2018
- Create communication lists (assessment coordinators, Program Chairs, Deans and Associate Deans, and any others that influence UG and/or Grad assessment) and determine information needs
- Determine APR feedback format based on use of rubric

Winter 2018
- Annual Assessment Update due and formative feedback given

Spring - Summer 2018
- Score APRs and provide formative feedback

Fall 2018
- Assessment celebrations

Celebrate assessment progress and accomplishment

- To communicate value of engaging in assessment, we need to recognize and reward quality program assessment, keeping the <u>focus on the program</u>, not individual faculty.

- Encourage <u>sharing and transparency</u>

- Select APRs and Annual Assessment Updates that <u>exemplify best practices</u>, as indicated by rubric scoring, and share these resources on the appropriate website
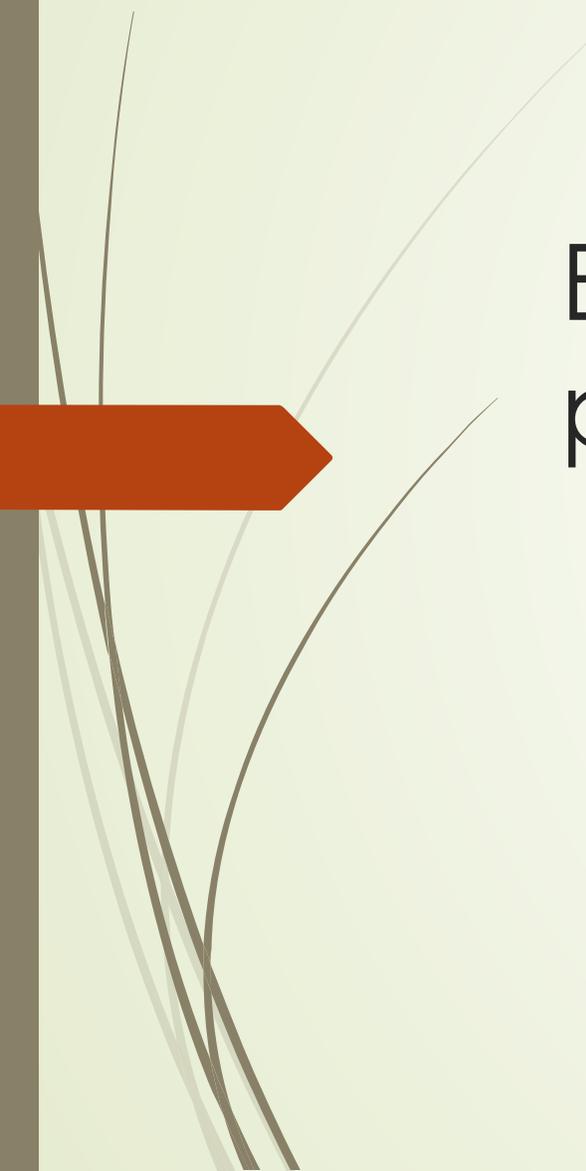
Evidence of shifts in mindset and practice

Signs and efforts...

- Shifts in language that reflects assessment as a means to learn about students and ourselves as educators
- Increase in assessment capacity and quality within programs
- Increase in program assessment leadership
- Increase in number of programs seeking assessment support

Baseline data

- Increase in communicated stories related to assessment in the context of learning and teaching
- Greater transparency within and across programs
- Learn to self-assess for quality
- Highlight successes and learn from these

Resources to support (Y)OUR Assessment

- Institutional Assessment Council (IAC)
  - IAC website: https://www.pdx.edu/institutional-assessment-council/
  - Assessment Planning Checklist:
    - https://www.pdx.edu/institutional-assessment-council/assessment-plan-template
  - Rubric for Evaluating Outcomes Assessment Plan and Progress
    - https://www.pdx.edu/institutional-assessment-council/sites/www.pdx.edu.institutional-assessment-council/files/ProgramAssessmentRubric_0.pdf

- Office of Academic Innovation: Vicki Wise (Wisevl@pdx.edu)
  - Creating an assessment plan
  - Aligning within & across courses
  - Writing learning outcomes
  - Deciding on an assessment tool
  - Determining data quality
  - Using assessment results