

Talking the Talk: Leading supportive and meaningful conversations about assessment

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By the end of the session, you will:

- ▶ Identify best practices for discussing assessment and improvement with colleagues
- ▶ Consider professional development techniques that can improve assessment culture and relationships
- ▶ Produce an action plan for communication of assessment information at your institution

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Strategies for communicating and building relationships around assessment

Steps to effective communication

- ▶ Step 1 - Assess culture of the institution
- ▶ Step 2 - Identify and engaged key blockers and champions
- ▶ Step 3 - Meet individually or in small groups with stakeholders
 - ▶ Step 3a - Do not focus on assessment
 - ▶ Step 3b - Do not focus on accreditation
- ▶ Step 4 - Work with administration to prioritize assessment
- ▶ Step 5 - Stay in constant communication
- ▶ Step 6 - Be consistent and be flexible

Examples of communication strategy

	Institution #1	Institution #2	Institution #3
Culture	<i>Faculty overworked and new administration</i>	<i>Faculty had little assessment structure, but receptive</i>	<i>Faculty are mission-driven and have good relationship with assessment</i>
Blockers	<i>One major department and select chairs</i>	<i>Technology and lack of assessment knowledge</i>	<i>Uneven assessment and new General Education curriculum</i>
Champions	<i>Allied Health programs and former HS educators</i>	<i>Provost, faculty in BSS, and student services staff</i>	<i>AVP of General Education and STEM faculty</i>
Meetings	<i>Met with each program once per semester</i>	<i>Attended department meetings once per semester</i>	<i>Met with deans, then chairs, then select faculty</i>
Priorities	<i>Developed Assessment Day activities each term</i>	<i>Present at annual symposium and taught assessment class</i>	<i>Work with CTE and present at annual symposium</i>
Consistency	<i>Bi-weekly emails and lots of drop-ins</i>	<i>Bi-weekly emails, meetings, and select events</i>	<i>Individual meetings to address unique requests</i>

Asking the right questions

- ▶ What do you want your students to learn?
- ▶ How do you know they are learning it?

Asking the right questions

- ▶ What do you want to know about your students?
- ▶ What did you learn about your students this year?
- ▶ How can you better help your students learn?

Asking the right questions (and the end of the “cycle”)

- ▶ What surprised you about student learning?
- ▶ What seemed to have the greatest impact?
- ▶ How do the results align with the mission or your department/program?

Some rules are made to be broken

- ▶ Supporting use of alternative/nontraditional measures
- ▶ Sometimes a department needs to take a breather or have discussions—might not lead to specific measurement during that cycle
- ▶ We enter results for departments as needed
- ▶ The rule I enforce—do *something* each year

Positive messaging

- ▶ We are here to help—not enforce
 - ▶ Assessment Handbook/Manual → Assessment Guide
- ▶ Use “learning” whenever possible
 - ▶ Assess for Success → Student Learning Showcase
- ▶ Exercise your active listening skills
- ▶ “Compliance”
- ▶ Accreditation vs. Assessment

What is “Accreditation”?

- ▶ The action or process of officially recognizing someone as having a particular status or being qualified to perform a particular activity
- ▶ Accreditation is the process in which certification of competency, authority, or credibility is presented.



What is “Assessment”?

- ▶ Assessment is the systematic collection, review, and use of information about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning and development. (Palomba and Banta, 1999)
- ▶ Assessment is the process of gathering and discussing information from multiple and diverse sources in order to develop a deep understanding of what students know, understand, and can do with their knowledge as a result of their educational experiences; the process culminates when assessment results are used to improve subsequent learning (University of Oregon, Teaching Effectiveness program)



Why Are these Conflated?????

- ▶ How many of you have heard faculty/colleagues/administrators talk about assessment when they really mean “accreditation”?
- ▶ Share some examples with a partner....



“Good Assessment” Doesn’t Always mean “Good Accreditation”



How We Talk About Accreditation/Assessment.....

- ▶ Accreditation can be punitive - is that how we want faculty to think about assessment?
- ▶ Accreditation often has checkbox-type requirements
- ▶ Assessment should be about improving learning - accreditation is about “passing”
- ▶ Assessment should be done by the people impacted - and it should be transformative and/or meaningful

Changing the narrative

- ▶ Traditional discussion of assessment
 - ▶ Regional accreditation
 - ▶ State or regionally-mandated
 - ▶ Top-down structure
- ▶ Problems
 - ▶ Sounds mandatory
 - ▶ No direct connection to students
 - ▶ Outside most faculty members' expertise

- ▶ Understanding faculty motivation
 - ▶ Student-centered
 - ▶ Subject matter experts
 - ▶ Grassroots mentality
- ▶ Methods to engage faculty
 - ▶ Putting students at the center of assessment
 - ▶ Provide support and incentivize professional growth
 - ▶ Allow autonomy within a general framework

Your Turn!

- ▶ Work in small groups
 - ▶ Discuss the communication and relationship-building techniques that were presented.
 - ▶ What might work well at your institution?
 - ▶ What might be difficult to implement at your institution?
 - ▶ Share any additional methods you have used at your institution.

Professional Development

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Consider Professional Development for Faculty

- ▶ Support faculty in attending assessment conferences and accreditation conferences
- ▶ Support faculty in publishing their assessment work (with appropriate IRB approvals)
- ▶ Use faculty learning communities for ongoing discussion about assessment of particular areas (General Education, Major, etc.)

Supporting faculty

- ▶ Assessment Days are great, but do not always work
- ▶ Work within structure and culture of the institution
- ▶ Partner with existing areas to extend influence
- ▶ Provide macro and micro support
- ▶ No audience is too small

The necessities of an Assessment Day

- ▶ Time built into calendar
 - ▶ Professional development days and faculty participation
- ▶ Physical space
 - ▶ Large general space with smaller nearby rooms
- ▶ Diverse agenda
 - ▶ Multiple activities that highlight work from all areas
- ▶ Have a gimmick to make it fun

Alternative Professional Development

- ▶ Work within the existing structures
 - ▶ Have presence at annual events or lead workshops
- ▶ Professional Development Initiatives - FL Southern
 - ▶ Faculty received \$250 for completing a four-week class
 - ▶ Five to seven classes offered each semester
 - ▶ One class consists of four 90-minute workshops
 - ▶ Allows for deeper dive on assessment

Harper College Assessment Conference & Share Fair

- ▶ Recently held 10th annual conference
- ▶ Posters and breakouts, as well as a nationally-recognized keynote speaker
- ▶ Make it about helping students
- ▶ Make it fun—include games, raffle, etc.
 - ▶ General Education Sticker Hunt, Decathlon Events
- ▶ Offer continuing education credits (toward promotion/tenure)

Communities of Practice

- ▶ Harper used to have “Assessment Fellows”
- ▶ Moved to more collaborative Community of Practice model
 - ▶ Meet monthly to discuss project successes and challenges
 - ▶ Attend a Conference together (IUPUI Assessment Institute, Illinois Community College Assessment Fair)
 - ▶ Present project at following year’s internal assessment conference (poster or breakout session)

Other ideas

- ▶ Use existing venues/partner with faculty development group
 - ▶ Faculty/Staff Orientation Week
 - ▶ E-Newsletters
- ▶ Drop-in assessment times
- ▶ Data Lab → Harry Potter Harper Mystery
- ▶ Using professional development needs rubrics to create focused programming
- ▶ Create incentives where they don't already exist

Challenges

- ▶ “Competing” with other development opportunities or too many activities on campus
- ▶ May not have monetary incentives
- ▶ Varying levels of institutional/provost/dean support
- ▶ Assessment not always viewed as part of “teaching” or “learning”
- ▶ Change in department chair/dean/provost can lead to confusion

Action Planning

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Implementing an Action Plan

- ▶ Upon returning to your institution you need to identify:
 - ▶ How will you engage faculty?
 - ▶ When and/or how frequently will you engage faculty?
 - ▶ What potential partnerships exist across campus?
 - ▶ How can you positively incentivize assessment?
 - ▶ How will you assess the success of the actions?

How?	When?	Partnerships?	Incentivize?	Assess?
Rubric workshop	Beginning of semester	CTE or eLearning	Certificate or \$\$\$	End of workshop assessment
Pro Dev newsletter	Once a month	HR, CTE, or faculty	Highlight great faculty	Clicks, engagement in highlighted events
1-on-1 meetings	Once per cycle	Deans	Make it about them	% of meetings that result in development of assessment or improvement plans

Your Turn!

- ▶ What two things will you do when you return to campus? Share this with your small group.



Thank you!

We're happy to continue this conversation!

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