



Northern Illinois University

Using Data Informed Decision-Making to Improve Faculty Experience with Assessment Reporting

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Introductions



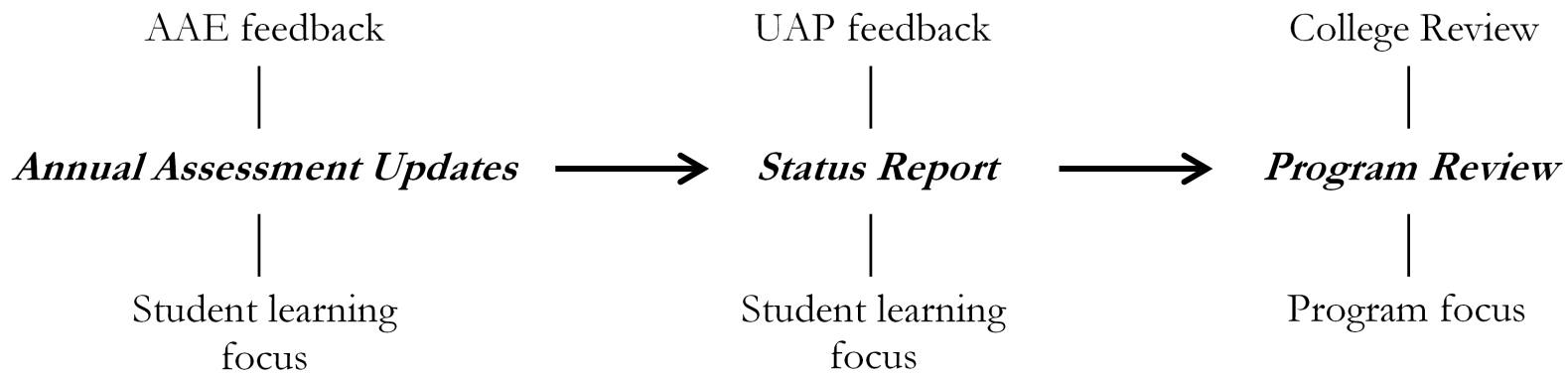
- **Carrie Zack**, Associate Director for Accreditation, Assessment and Evaluation
- **Tawanda Paul**, Senior Research Associate for Accreditation, Assessment and Evaluation
- **Ursula Sullivan**, Associate Professor, Marketing
 - Assessment Review Task Force member
 - University Assessment Panel member

Intended Learning Outcomes



- Compare the intent of NIU's program assessment processes with how (some) NIU faculty participants perceived them
- Identify the changes participating faculty felt would make the assessment process more meaningful and less burdensome
- Describe the changes made in 2022 to address the findings of the task force report
- Discuss preliminary feedback received from faculty regarding the new processes
- Compare and contrast this with processes and sentiments on your own campus

Context: Reporting Requirements



Assessment Task Force Charge



- Review student learning assessment practices
- Recommend modifications that will
 - (1) minimize the reporting burden on programs
 - (2) promote meaningful faculty-led assessment activity
 - (3) assure continued compliance with state/federal regulations, regional accreditation

(Report and Recommendation of the Assessment Review Task Force, March 2021)

Task Force Composition



- Three members from Academic Planning Council
- Three members from University Assessment Panel
- Director of Accreditation, Assessment and Evaluation
- A graduate student
- Faculty from colleges not otherwise represented

Task Force Timeline



- **November 2020** – Idea introduced at Academic Planning Council by Provost
- **January 2021** – Task Force first meeting
- **February 2021** – Faculty surveyed
- **March 2021** – Vice Provost for Institutional Effectiveness presented HLC requirements related to assessment
- **April 2021** – Task force chair presented findings and recommendations to
 - Faculty Senate
 - University Assessment Panel
 - Academic Planning Council

Initial Information Collected for Context



- Differentiating between NIU's program review & assessment reporting processes
- Summary of points to consider about good assessment practice
- HLC: expectations, statistics on areas of frequent citations/kinds of evidence lacking
- How other MAC institutions/other peers "do" assessment

Collecting Data



- Survey sent to program chairs & directors
 - Response rate: 68% (49/72)

- Content
 - Opinions on benefits, drawbacks of current annual assessment reporting
 - Recommendations for improvement

(Report and Recommendation of the Assessment Review Task Force, March 2021)

Perceived Utility of AAUs



All Programs

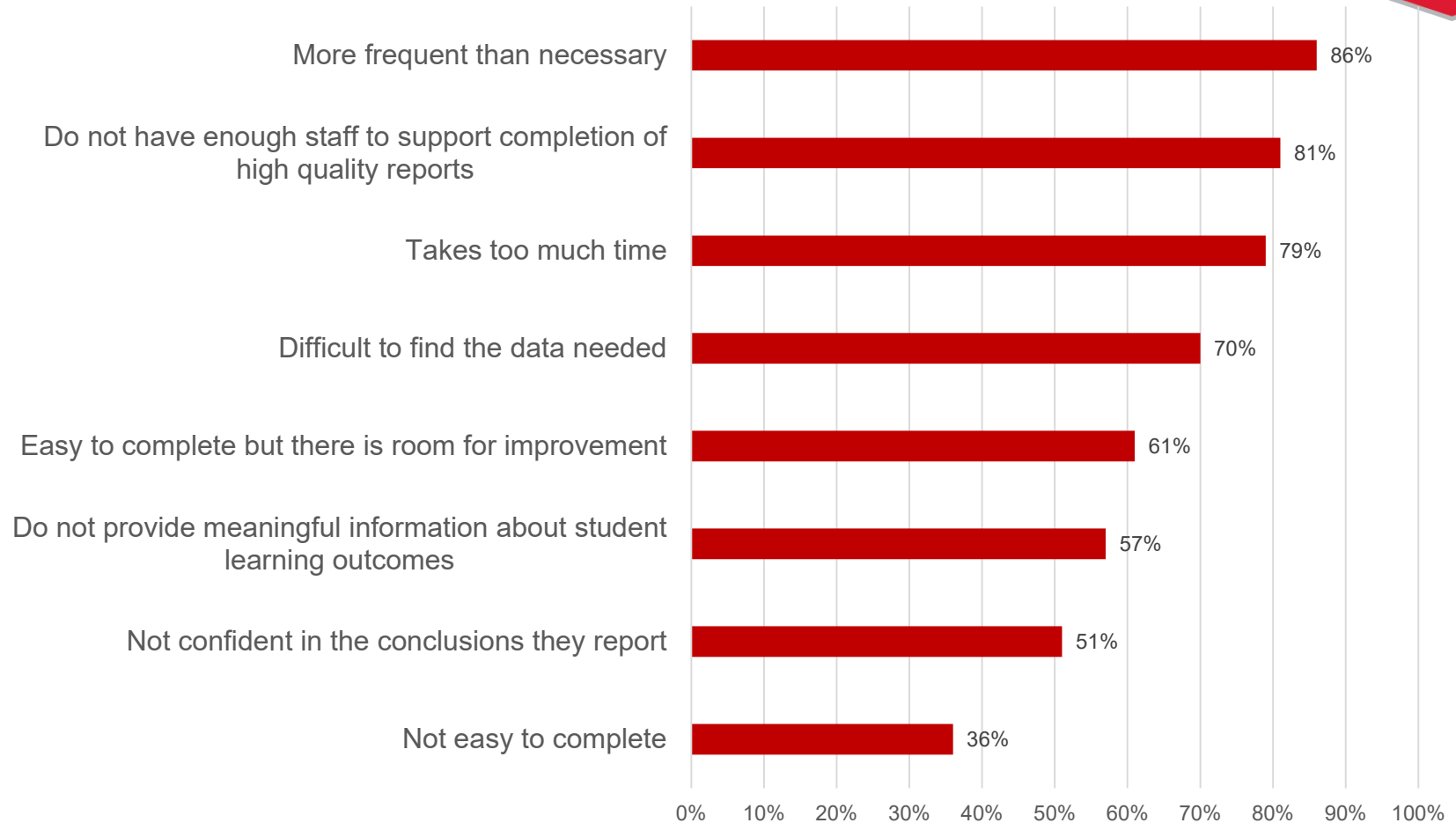
- 61% Collecting information does not add value
- 84% Never/rarely used AAUs to make decisions
 - 26% data is duplicative of other sources
 - 14% data is not meaningful

Accredited Programs

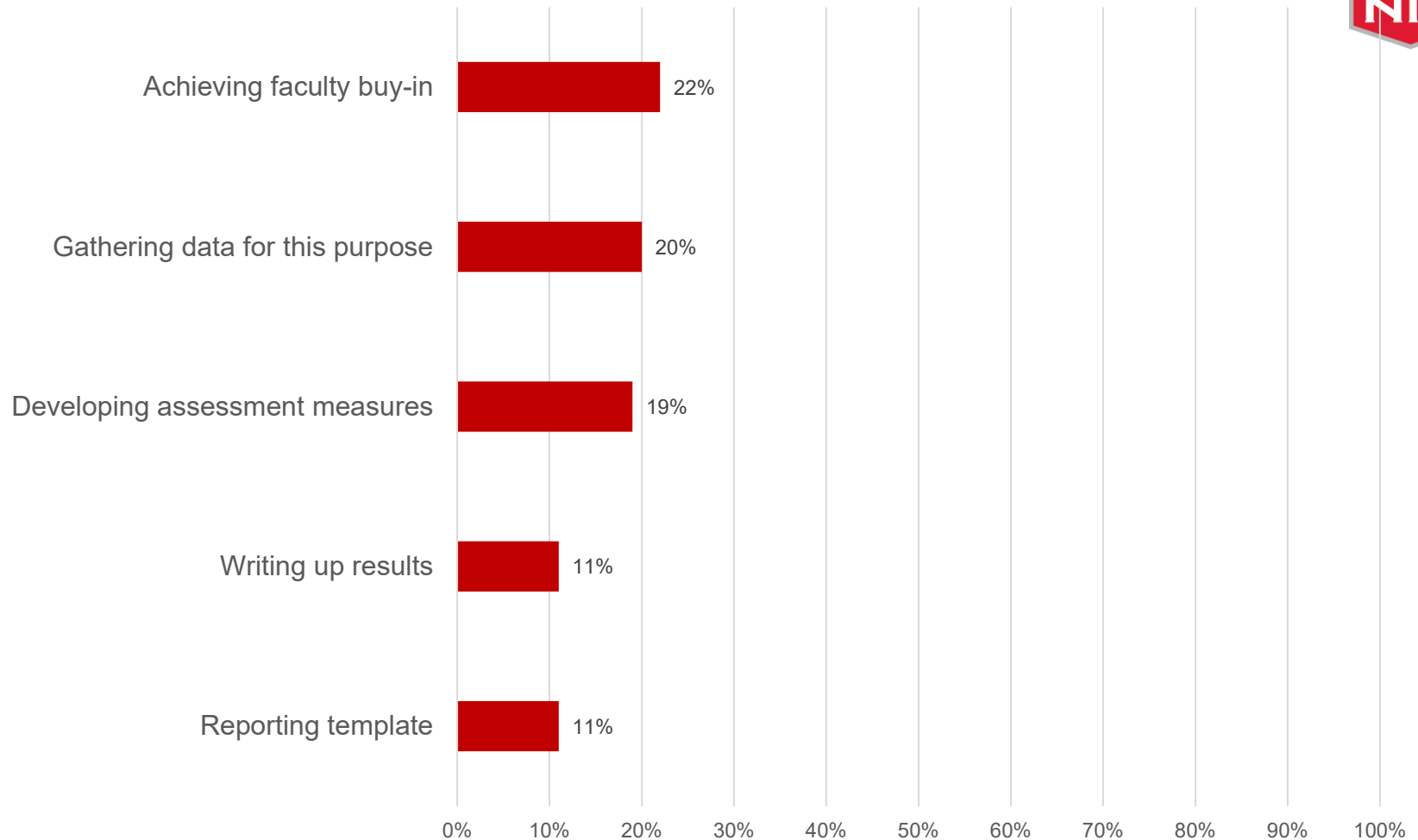
- 44% Not helpful for preparation for accreditation
- 49% More burdensome than accreditation reporting

(Report and Recommendation of the Assessment Review Task Force, March 2021)

Perceptions of Annual Reports



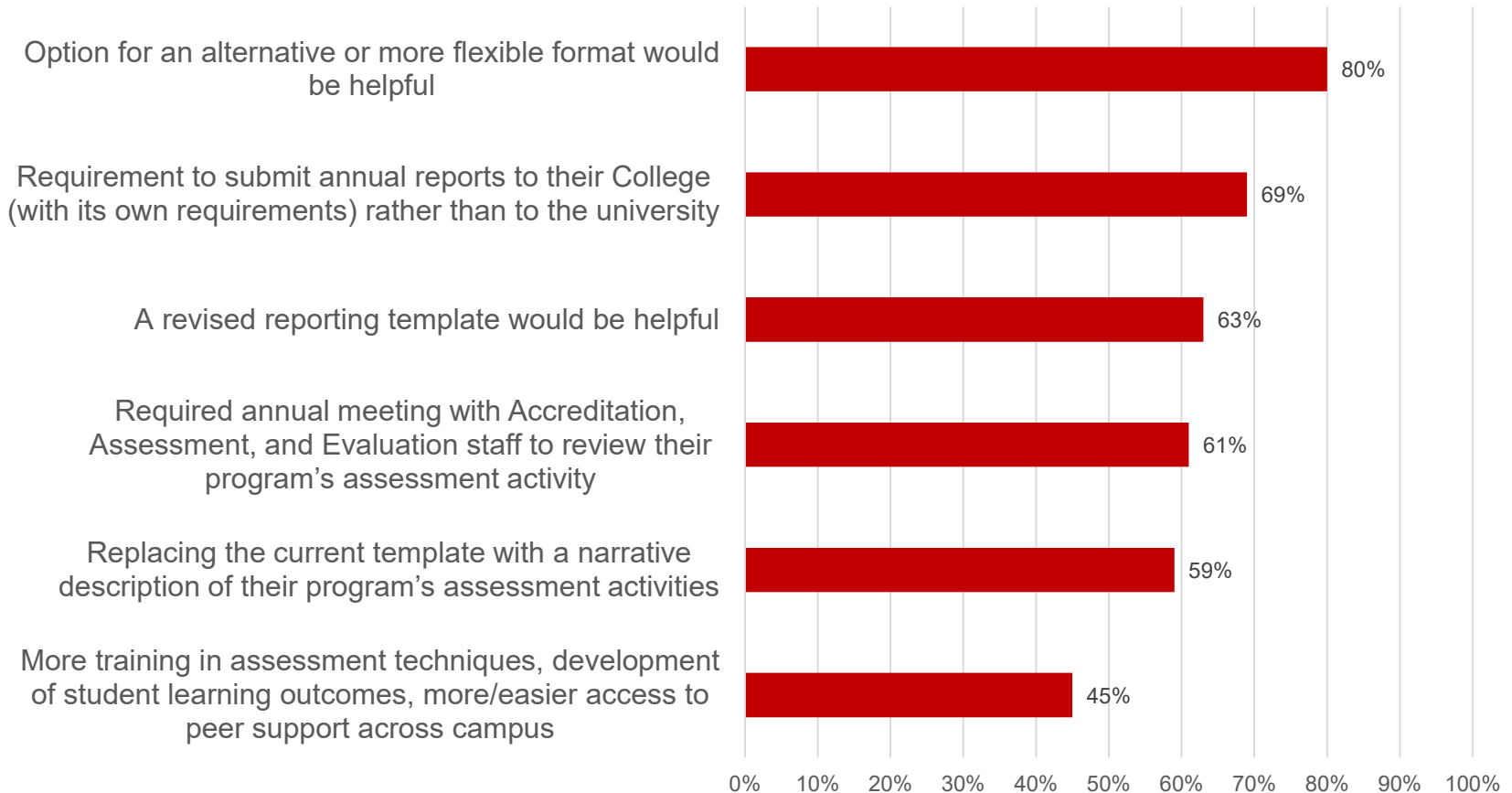
Top Reasons Annual Assessment Update is Not Easy to Complete



Options for Improving



Perceptions of Potential Improvements



Perceptions of Need for Annual Assessment Reporting



- Our program would continue assessing student learning outcomes and utilize the data in a timely manner without annual report requirement
 - 82% of all respondents
 - 97% of respondents from accredited programs

(Report and Recommendation of the Assessment Review Task Force, March 2021)

Themes from Survey Comments



- Improve Communication
 - Assessment processes
 - Offices/processes, how they do/do not work together

- Faculty Assistance
 - With putting feedback to use, including its clarity/brevity/utility
 - Demonstrate the value of assessment for individual programs

(Report and Recommendation of the Assessment Review Task Force, March 2021)

Conclusions, Actions



Recommendations

1. Allow programs to report on their assessment activities in a manner that they deem most meaningful →
2. Authorize accredited programs to use the assessment documentation they provide their accreditors →
3. Create an online reporting tool →
4. Engage in assessment training and outreach efforts →
5. Encourage distributing the workload of assessment among faculty/staff →

Changes Made

1. New template - flexibility in terms of what/how to report within broad categories
2. Agreement for several educator licensure degree programs to use accreditation-related reports
3. Online portal (Qualtrics) created
4. AAE staff increased offerings of small group orientations, workshops
5. Emphasize involving more faculty/staff in assessment work during orientations, workshops, etc.

Closing the Loop: Preliminary Feedback



- New template in Qualtrics implemented starting with AAUs due June 1, 2022
- Feedback on AAUs sent to programs in late August/early September
- Survey sent to chairs of all academic programs late September/early October 2022
 - Response rate: 26% (11/42)
 - 8 had experience with previous AAUs
 - 3 did not

Perceptions of Changes to AAU



Question	Not sure/Does not apply	Not at all	To some extent	To a great extent	Total
Maintain the default AAU option for programs satisfied with pre-2020 requirements but ease the administrative burden by creating online tool for this	18% (2)	0% (0)	45% (5)	36% (4)	11
Encourage programs to be strategic about distributing the workload of assessment among faculty and staff	18% (2)	9% (1)	55% (6)	18% (2)	11
Discontinue one-size-fits-all reporting requirements and allow programs to report on assessment activities in a way they deem most meaningful	9% (1)	0% (0)	36% (4)	55% (6)	11
Consultations, workshops, and other resources related to assessment are available	18% (2)	0% (0)	27% (3)	55% (6)	11

Perceptions of Changes to AAU



Question	Strongly/ somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Strongly/ somewhat agree	Total
Clear and easy to understand	0% (0)	0% (0)	100% (11)	11
Concise and not overwhelming	0% (0)	0% (0)	100% (11)	11
Will help us consider next steps to take in improving the departments' assessment system	0% (0)	9% (1)	91% (10)	11
Addressed meaningful aspects of student learning assessment	0% (0)	18% (2)	82% (9)	11
Provided suggestions to consider rather than expectations to address	0% (0)	18% (2)	82% (9)	11
I am aware of how to access additional support	0% (0)	0% (0)	100% (11)	11

Relevant comments

The feedback didn't offer suggestions or meaningful comment on my report. The gist was you're doing a good job.

I appreciate the concise feedback that can be efficiently implemented.

Other Comments



Accredited programs

- You continue to improve the process. It is much appreciated by those of us who continue to have multiple reports to different agencies.

Assistance from AAE

- Assistance that I received from the assessment office has been very beneficial...the support has been very helpful.
- The help I received was invaluable. I also was put at ease, as the prospect of this report was quite daunting.

Communication/Process

- A reminder must go out a month before they are due.
- Each year, let us know all of the questions ahead of time.
- The new process did not really seem to change things much in our department

Meaningfulness

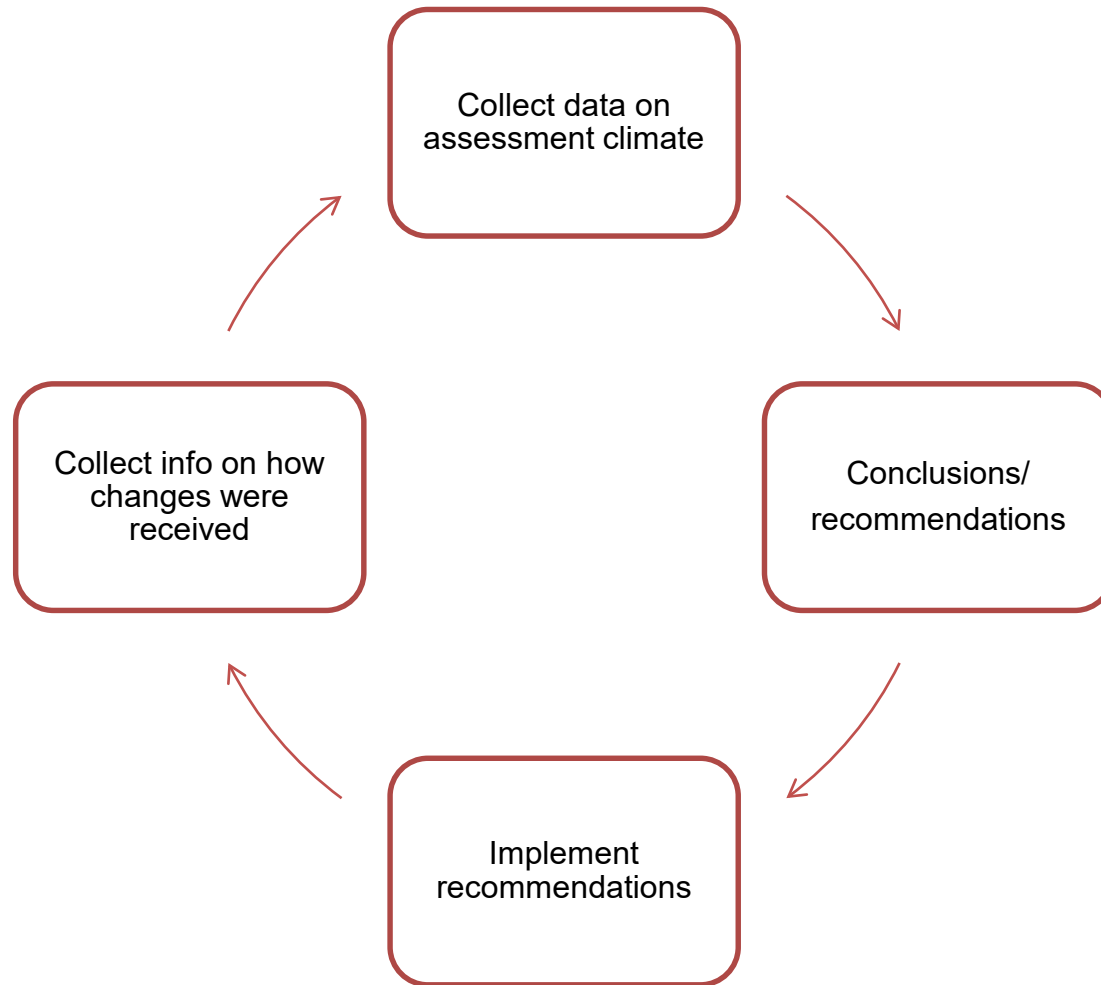
- It took some time to adjust to the change, but it is much more flexible and allows for more meaningful reporting.

Questions to Consider



- How does NIU's approach to assessment compare with that on your campus?
- What is your sense of how faculty feel about assessment processes/practices on your campus?
- Has the assessment process ever undergone changes due to faculty feedback about it?
- Has the loop been closed when changes are made (have they had intended effect)?

Takeaway



Questions?

