# Students as Partners and Bridges in Assessment:
## Interdepartmental Collaboration for Improvement and Impact

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# Agenda

- Welcome & Getting Started (10 min)
- Intro to HGSE's Student Partnership Model (10 min)
- Student & Stakeholder Partnerships (15 min)
- Applying to Your Contexts (15 min)
- Next Steps & Questions (10 min)

# Learning Outcomes

1. Attendees will review and have the opportunity to develop strategies for supporting partnership between students and stakeholders to increase the likelihood of meaningful, collaborative change.

2. Attendees will examine one university's structure and process for supporting student-led inquiry and improvement.

3. Using a provided template, attendees will be able to identify all relevant stakeholders for an upcoming assessment project.

4. Attendees will be able to develop strategies to invest/engage potential stakeholders in student-led assessment/inquiry.

5. Attendees will be able to explain how partnerships between students and stakeholders in the assessment process can enhance and amplify impact.

Photo by Yan Krukau

# Introduce yourself & your context

- Introduce yourself to a neighbor: What are 2-3 assessment projects that you anticipate working on soon?

# Student Partnership in Assessment & Improvement

- With student partnership, improvement efforts can be more aligned to student needs and motivations (Cook-Sather, Bahti, & Ntem, 2019)

- Including students in all phases of assessment is considered an effective equity-based practice to ensure approaches are inclusive and culturally responsive (Montenegro & Jankowski, 2017)

- **"When we take the time to include students fully in the conversation, we all benefit"** (Silva et al., 2015, p. 165)

# Our Why

# Our Why

"Student-centered practices begin with **re-centering students from the margins** to **elevating them as *experts*** in their own learning environment, primed to activate their voices in **speaking truth** and engaging as agents in **making meaning** and **problem-solving with institutional leaders.**"

(Hong, 2020, p. 107)

Hong, Rebecca C. (2020). Student assessment scholars: Cultivating and empowering student voice in assessment. In N.A. Jankowski, G.R. Baker, K. Brown-Tess, & E. Montenegro (Eds.), *Student-Focused Learning and Assessment*. (pp. 99-120). Peter Lang Publishing.

# Quick Poll

- How confident do you feel in your ability (or your institution's current practices) to center students and elevate their voices as experts in inquiry and improvement?

- How confident do you feel in your ability (or your institution's current practices) to support students in making meaning and problem-solving with institutional leaders?
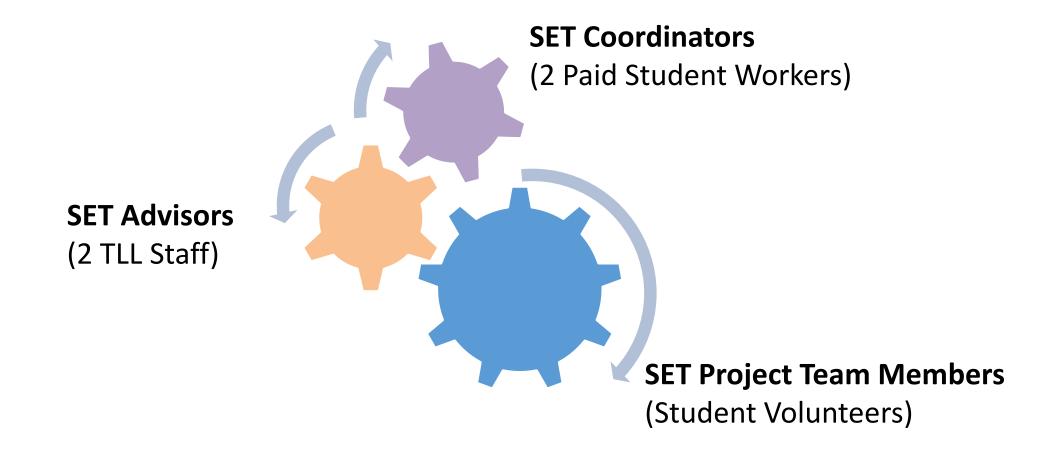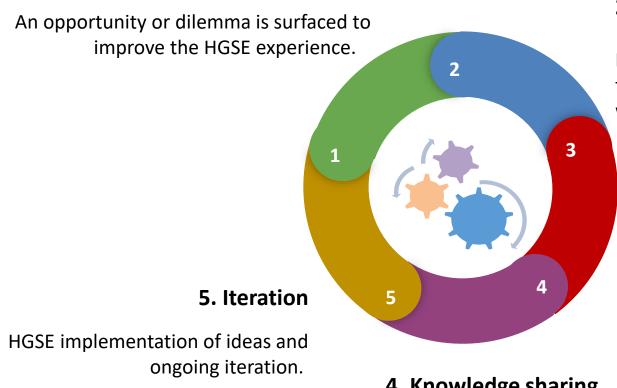
# Student Experience Team (SET)

SET is a student-led, project-based inquiry group supported by HGSE's Teaching & Learning Lab. SET students partner with HGSE stakeholders to center student voices in the design and continuous improvement of academic and co-curricular experiences at HGSE.

**SET Coordinators**
(2 Paid Student Workers)

**SET Advisors**
(2 TLL Staff)

**SET Project Team Members**
(Student Volunteers)

# Student Experience Team (SET)



**1. Inquiry & design opportunities**

An opportunity or dilemma is surfaced to improve the HGSE experience.

**2. Partnership**

HGSE stakeholder reaches out to the SET to share their area of inquiry, or SET reaches out to partner with a stakeholder.

**3. Empathy & design**

SET leads efforts to understand students' experiences and needs, and to generate ideas aligned with these needs. This could include designing surveys and leading focus groups, user tests, and design sessions.

**5. Iteration**

HGSE implementation of ideas and ongoing iteration.
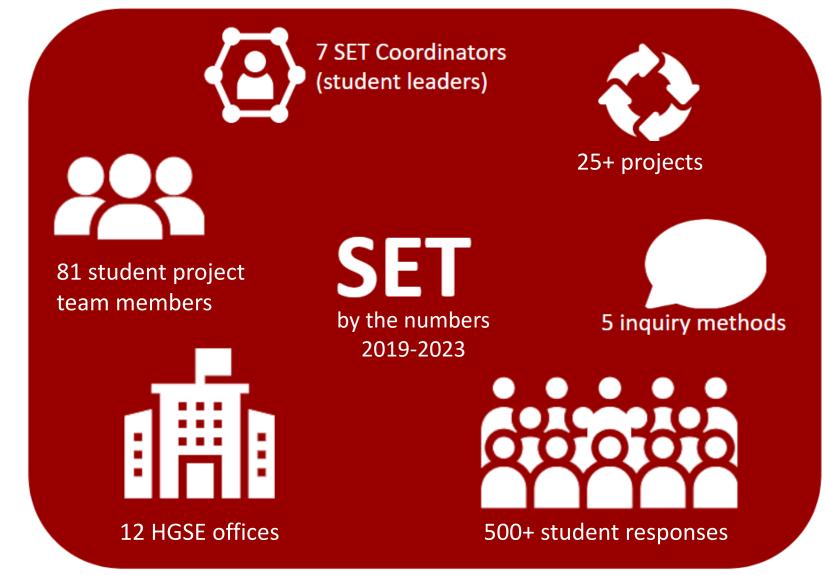
**4. Knowledge sharing**

SET members analyze data, prepare or test any prototypes, and present findings.

# SET's Cumulative Impact



7 SET Coordinators
(student leaders)

25+ projects

81 student project
team members

SET
by the numbers
2019-2023

5 inquiry methods

12 HGSE offices

500+ student responses

# Sample SET Projects

### How People Learn (foundational course)

- How might we scaffold preparation for the final assignment earlier in the course?

### Course Selection Process

- How can we better support students in refining and mapping their course selections for the year?

### The Hub (schoolwide communication platform)

- How might we improve visibility, content, and value of high use areas of the Hub?

### International Student Experience

- How can we improve the experience of our growing body of international students across HGSE?

# Student & Stakeholder Partnerships in Assessment: A Case Study

# Case Study: International Student Experience

International
Student Support

# International Student Experience: Sub-Topics

International Student Support

How might we unpack cultural norms and practices in the U.S. for international students?

How might we build community and curate community events for international students?

How might we provide resources for international career preparation?

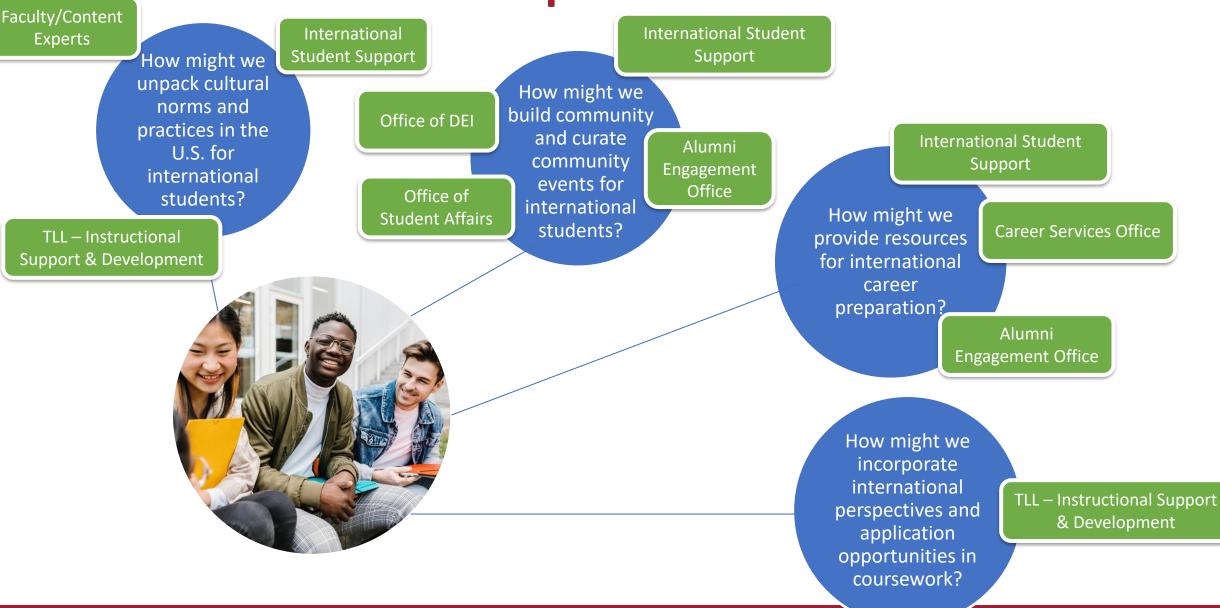How might we incorporate international perspectives and application opportunities in coursework?

# Tips for Investing & Engaging Stakeholders

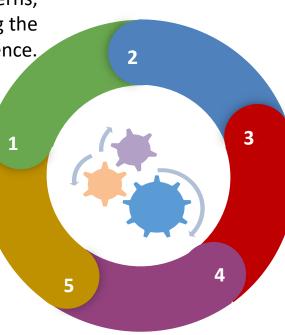|  | Guiding Questions | Examples |
|---|---|---|
| **1. Consider the context** | 1. **Are students approaching you with a challenge/area of inquiry?**<br>2. **Are stakeholders coming to you and asking for student insights?**<br>3. **What is the "climate" around assessment work?** | • Student-initiated project on international student experience<br>• Stakeholders eager for feedback and ideas because of changes in HGSE student body |
| **2. Share potential impact** | 1. **What benefits will you tell stakeholders will come from direct partnership between students and stakeholders?**<br>2. **How will student-stakeholder partnership impact the data gathered?**<br>3. **How will this impact the actions stakeholders are able to take after the inquiry project?** | • Better understand and meet the needs of our growing proportion of international students<br>• Students can tailor assessment plan to align with stakeholders' scope and decision timelines<br>• Benefits of peer-to-peer data, meaning-making, and recommendations for action |
| **3. Clarify the ask of stakeholders** | 1. **What specifically will stakeholders be asked to do, and when?**<br>2. **How much time can they anticipate devoting to this partnership?** | • Collaboration during development of research question(s) and refinement of assessment plan<br>• Provide feedback on protocols/assessment tools<br>• Attend presentation of findings/recommendations |

teaching&learning lab

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# International Student Experience: Student & Stakeholder Roles

### 1. Inquiry & design opportunities

Students raised their concerns, questions, and hopes for improving the international student experience.

### 2. Partnership

SET advisors facilitated partnerships with numerous stakeholders and hosted preliminary planning meetings to refine inquiry plans. Stakeholders provided context as students developed assessment plans. Stakeholders shared feedback on students' initial drafts of protocols and tools.

### 5. Iteration

HGSE stakeholders act on recommendations shared, sometimes running ideas by students, and often working collaboratively with other stakeholders to impelment changes.

### 3. Empathy & design

SET students worked in smaller teams based on sub-topic and recruited peers to share their feedback. Students led focus groups, interviews, surveys, and user testing sessions with peer participants.

### 4. Knowledge sharing

SET students analyzed data, developed data-based recommendations, and presented findings to stakeholders.

# International Student Experience: Students as Bridges

- Final SET report conversations included a wide range of stakeholders who may not otherwise have worked together on the various initiatives they lead

- Stakeholders held cross-department planning meetings after conversations that started during Q&A of SET presentations (e.g., alumni career networking events geared toward international students, planned by multiple offices)

- Summaries of SET findings were shared broadly by HGSE's Dean during a Faculty of the Whole meeting

# Impacts on International Student Experience

| Student Feedback / Recommendations | Stakeholder(s) | Changes & Enhancements in AY23-24 |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Create vocabulary lists/glossaries for key US concepts | • TLL – Instructional Support & Development | All incoming students had access to newly developed U.S. Education Guides |
| 2. International students need more support sooner with finding housing and networking opportunities | • Office of Student Affairs<br>• International Student Support<br>• Alumni Engagement Office | Timing and content of programming for international students was adapted based on students' expressed needs |
| 3. International students are eager for more one-on-one and small-group connections with students and alumni | • Office of Student Affairs<br>• International Student Support<br>• Alumni Engagement Office | Adjustments to mentorship programming, opportunities to engage in online groups by country/region, introduction of student coffee chats |
| 4. Hard to find important information on job search, visa processes, etc. | • Career Services Office | Career resources were streamlined and made more accessible to students, including a new learning module |

# Reflections from Stakeholders

- "The SET team did a great job **including key stakeholders** as they were building this project. I was able to share **areas of focus that were particularly helpful for the work of my office**."
  Andrea Le – Associate Director for Community Building & International Student Support

- "It is incredibly valuable to **have instructional practices informed by students**, particularly at a place like HGSE when our students themselves are often such skilled educators. SET harnesses the insightful perspectives of our students to inform key strategic work. **My work with SET has significantly informed my work with faculty members around anti-racist teaching practices and around better supporting the needs of our international students**, and for that I am grateful."
  Josh Bookin – Director of Instructional Support & Development, Teaching & Learning Lab

Applying to Your Contexts

# Framework for Identifying Stakeholders

**Stakeholders**

**Sub- Topic**

**Assessment Topic**

**What specifically do you want to learn about or change in order to make improvements? What are your research questions?**

**Who are the stakeholders? Who could be at the table for each area of inquiry?**

**What are you assessing? What is the key topic, challenge, or dilemma?**
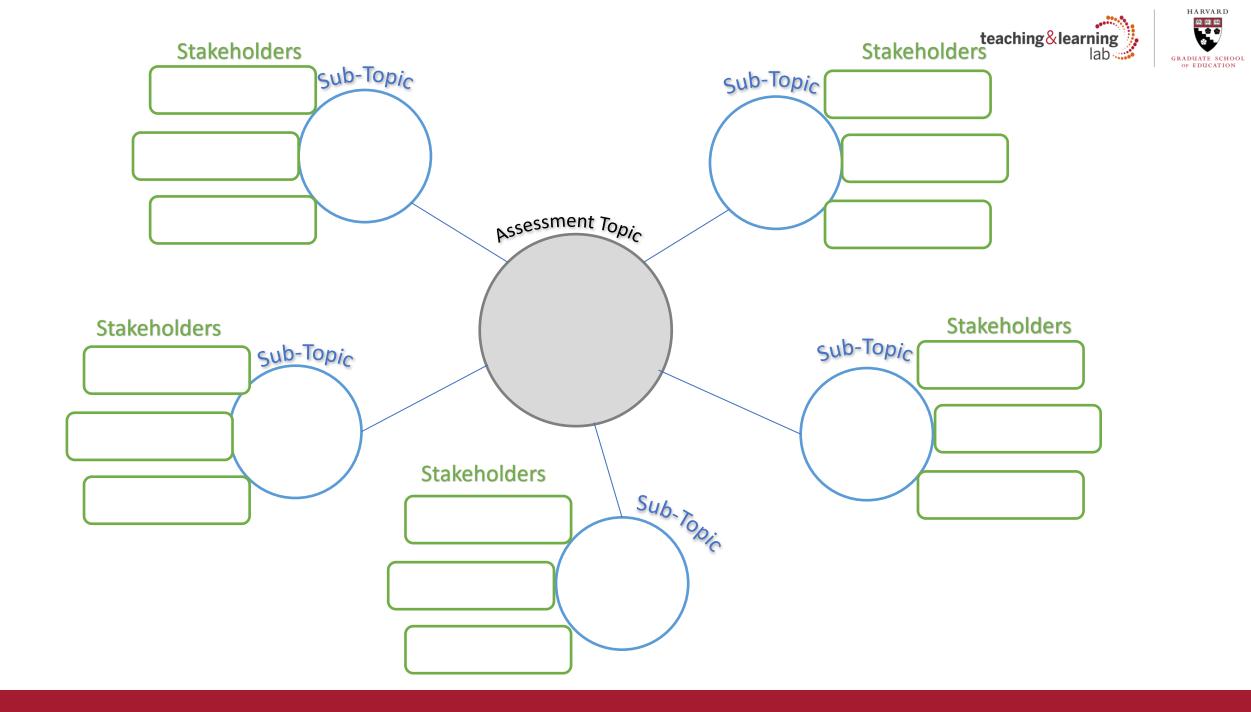
**Need help identifying all potential stakeholders?**

Think about the RACI framework:

- **R: Responsible.** Who is directly in charge of any work that would need to happen? Who would be responsible for implementing recommendations?
- **A: Accountable.** Who is responsible for overseeing the big picture? Who might need to approve big decisions or final implementation plans?
- **C: Consulted.** Who else may need to sign off? Who else may be able to offer valuable advice/insight?
- **I: Informed.** Who else may be impacted by the project and thus needs to be kept in the loop?

# Reflections on Identifying Stakeholders

- How did the process go for you?

- Did any surprising topics/stakeholders surface?

- Any tips to share?

# Next Steps & Questions

# Moving Forward

- How do you think partnerships between students and stakeholders in the assessment process can enhance and amplify impact?

- What is one thing (big or small) you can do to work toward more partnership between students and stakeholders in assessment?

# Returning to Our Why

"Student-centered practices begin with **re-centering students from the margins** to **elevating them as** *experts* in their own learning environment, primed to activate their voices in **speaking truth** and engaging as agents in **making meaning** and **problem-solving with institutional leaders**."

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Thank you!

# References

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