

How to Build and Sustain a Culture of Assessment in Your College and Department

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Objectives for This Presentation

- Think in short range and long range goals
- Define assessment and shared conceptual understanding
- Discuss what institutionalizing assessment would look like
- Discuss implementation barriers and strategies
- Identify resources to leverage
- Identify new resources needed
- Plan for action

First Things First (Bresciani, et alia, 2006)

- Acknowledge why you are engaging in outcomes assessment
- Acknowledge your political environment
- Articulate a shared conceptual understanding
- Define assessment
- Define a common language
- Articulate your assessment expectation(s) and the use of the results



The Assessment Cycle

(Bresciani, 2003)

- The key questions...
 - What are we trying to do and why? or
 - What is my program supposed to accomplish?
 - How well are we accomplishing that which we say we are?
 - How do we know?
 - How do we use the information to improve or celebrate successes?
 - Do the improvements we make work?

The Iterative Systematic Assessment Cycle

Adapted from
Peggy Maki, Ph.D. by
Marilee J. Bresciani, Ph.D.



Assessment (Bresciani, 2003)

- Most importantly, it should be
 - Understood = by faculty/professionals and students
 - Inclusive = involve as many faculty/professionals as possible
 - Meaningful = faculty/professional (i.e., expert) driven
 - Manageable = takes into account varying resources
 - Flexible = takes into account assessment learning curves
 - Truth-seeking/objective/ethical
 - Iterative and systematic
- Inform decisions for continuous improvement or provides evidence of proof
- Promote a culture of accountability, of learning, and of improvement

Defining Assessment

- There is no one “right” way of conceptualizing assessment. However, there are certainly more productive ways to approach it, if you want to use assessment to improve teaching and learning.
- Establish a common language for assessment and a shared conceptual understanding of assessment.
- Commit to flexibility - - this is a “thinking person’s process”

Why are you Engaging in Assessment?

What are your institutional expectations for assessment?



First Things First, Cont. (Bresciani, et alia, 2006)

- Identify what you have already done that is evaluation/assessment/planning (formal verses informal)
- Identify easy to access resources (data, assessment tools, people, technology, etc.)
- Articulate everyone's role in this process (will an assessment committee be evaluating content and another committee be evaluating process? How much of the process will be centralized? How much will be controlled by colleges?)

First Things First, Cont. (Bresciani, et alia, 2006)

- Establish a support system for each section of delivery (e.g., centralized support, college support, support for Faculty Fellows, etc.)
- Establish a communication plan (e.g., map how the information will flow) How will plans go through the departments to Deans to the Provost? How will results flow?
- Identify short-range and long-range goals (time-line)

Identify what you Have already Done that is Evaluation/Assessment/Planning (Bresciani, et alia, 2006)

- How do you plan to use the program/department assessment plans?
- What have you already done with the evaluation of general education?
- What data can you get from your Institutional Research and Planning Office? Registrars Office? Strategic Planning?
- What else?

Identify Easy to Access Resources (data, assessment tools, people, technology, etc.)

Who are these people
and where can you
find them?



What will the Assessment Committee's Role be? (Bresciani, et alia, 2006)

- Support the process (train-the-trainers, provide and administer assessment resources)?
- Evaluate process?
- Evaluate content?
- Given the role of each group, do you have the most appropriate representation on each group?
- Other?

Questions (Bresciani, et alia, 2006)

- Will you have a university / division assessment plan timeline for implementation of this process?
- Will there be someone doing the “regular” data collection (e.g., enrollment figures, retention and graduation rates, budget figures)?
- Will there be someone coordinating the assessment planning process?
- Will assessment plans be centrally located?

Questions, Cont. (Bresciani, et alia, 2006)

- Will there be someone in charge of documentation?
- How can you use assessment to inform your enrollment planning, performance indicators, and other types of evaluation?
- How can key assessment coordinators (e.g., Assessment Faculty Fellows) get resources they need to get the process established?
- How will you manage the sometimes competing information requests from external constituents and internal constituents?
- How will you use the assessment results?

Questions, Cont. (Bresciani, et alia, 2006)

- What will the rewards be for engaging in assessment?
- How will assessment results inform resource allocation or re-allocation?
- Will assessment results be used for personnel evaluations?
- How will all your planning and evaluation initiatives link?
- Will you have institutional learning outcomes that all programs need to assess?
- What if programs and courses cannot link to specific institutional goals?

Establish a Support System

(Bresciani, et alia, 2006)

- Will it be the Assessment Committee who is the support system?
 - Is the committee permanently identified?
 - How will you educate yourselves?
 - How will you renew yourselves?
 - How will you rotate in new members?
- Will you have “permanent” or on-going Assessment Faculty Fellows?
- How will they be supported on a permanent basis? Who should provide the support?

Establish a Communication Plan

(Bresciani, et alia, 2006)

- Who will articulate assessment expectations?
 - How?
- How will you inform the university community about the plan? ...the resources that are available?
- Will the university community have an opportunity to comment?
- How flexible will you be?

Barriers and Resources

An Example - -
What is applicable to
you?



Barriers to Assessment

- Limited time to conduct assessment (67.7%)
- Limited resources to put toward assessment (58.1%)
- Limited understanding or expertise in assessment (48.4%)
- Benefits of assessment are not substantial enough (22.6%)
- Don't want to bother the students with completing several surveys (20.4%)

So They Asked, What do You Need?

- Easy to access on-line tools (surveys, rubrics, portfolio design and evaluation) to help me gather evidence of learning outcomes (45.5%)
- Provision of "no cost," on-campus, identified facilitators to assist me with identifying appropriate assessment methods (38.3%), assessment tools (37.1%), to assist in writing an assessment plan (35.9%)
- One course release time to develop assessment plans (35.3%)

What do You Need?, Cont.

- Electronic means to manage the assessment process (31.7%)
- Easy to access on-line data about my program's students and their opinions (31.1%)
- Research Assistant or temporary staff member assigned to my department to assist with managing the assessment process (30.5%)

What They Provided?

- An Expectation that Outcomes-Based-Assessment will be conducted
- On-line assessment tools and assistance
 - [Assessment for Undergraduate Affairs](#)
 - [Undergraduate Academic Program Review](#)
 - Advertisement of University Planning and Analysis
Nationally Known [Assessment Resources](#)
- [Workshops](#) on all assessment topics

What did we Provide?, Cont.

- Train-the-trainer Workshops
- UAPR facilitators
- Matching Mini-Grants
- TracDat (UGA paid for first 120 users) and provided iWebfolio at a discounted rate
- Advertisement of UPA's rich source of easy-to-access data
- A Symposium to celebrate their assessment accomplishments

What are Your Barriers?

- All the aforementioned?
- Documentation?
- What else?

What Resources can you Provide?

Now and then Later



Helpful Reminders (Bresciani, et alia, 2006)

- Clearly communicate assessment expectations
- Go ahead and write every program outcome down but...
 - Don't try to assess every program outcome every year.
- You may want to start with course outcomes and build program outcomes from those.
- You can start with institutional, college/division, or departmental outcomes and see each program or course ties to those.
- Then, move to implementing the entire assessment cycle one outcome at a time making everything for that systematic - - In other words, we want to begin to form "habits" of assessment.

Helpful Reminders, Cont. (Bresciani, et alia, 2006)

- Faculty / Administrators must understand the purpose of assessment - - it is not assessment for assessment's sake
- Faculty / Administrators must value what is being measured
- Faculty / Administrators must have ownership of the process
- Respect varying disciplines' academic freedom
- Recruit influential faculty / administrators to lead the process

Suggestions to Promote the Process

(Bresciani, et alia, 2006)

- Be flexible
- Remind each other of the benefits of assessment
- Share examples with each other
- Celebrate assessment victories
- Advertise your assessment learnings and decisions made
- Nudge and Retreat (Maki, 2001) or Scratch and Sniff (Richardson, 1998)
- Incorporate students in all facets of assessment planning and implementation, if your program is ready



Suggestions to Aid The Process Continued

(Bresciani, et alia, 2006)

- Articulate your assessment expectations
- Acknowledge and address barriers to assessment
- Pay attention to varying demands and resources
- Understand your role as an assessment committee member
- Answer the question, “What happens if I don’t engage in assessment?”

How Will you Know how Well You Are Doing?

- Visit the Commission on Higher Education's website for Levels of Implementation matrix found at <http://www.ncahigherlearningcommission.org/resources/assessment/index.html>
- Use or adapt self-evaluation tools found at http://www.ncsu.edu/undergrad_affairs/assessment/files/evaluation/evaluation.htm
- Look at what your assessment plans and results are telling you
- Ask your faculty, co-curricular specialists, and students

Questions?



One Minute Evaluation

- What is the most valuable thing that you learned from this workshop?
- What is one question that you still have?
- What do you perceive to be your next step in implementing continuous systematic assessment at your institution?

References

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