Motivating Faculty Colleagues to Participate in Assessment

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Sources of Resistance to Change

- Some people are satisfied with the status quo
- Some people don't see the relevance of an initiative to them and therefore try to ignore it
- Some old-timers have seen many initiatives come and go over the years; this too shall pass
- Some people think they will need to learn and use new skills that are difficult to master
- Some feel threatened by a new initiative
- Some have misconceptions about a new initiative
- The prospect of change means the prospect of more work



Tangible Actions To Promote Faculty Participation In Assessment

- Devote at least two hours in one or more faculty meetings each year to discuss what the faculty in each program expect students to be able to do when they graduate, how you know whether or not students have achieved this, and what you could try to address weaknesses.
- Ask each faculty member who regularly teaches the same courses to bring copies of one of his or her syllabi to share with colleagues. Discuss what expectations the faculty member has for the course, what weaknesses he or sees in student preparation, and how this course fits in with others in the curriculum.



Tangible Actions To Promote Faculty Participation In Assessment

- Adapt faculty performance expectations (or recognize them if they are already there) to explicitly acknowledge participation in assessment of student learning.
- Recognize the scholarship of teaching and learning as a legitimate and important part of research in the department. Reward faculty members who receive grant funding (AAIR supplies this!), who make conference presentations, and who publish concerning teaching and learning in the discipline (see list of journals that publish on the scholarship of teaching and learning).



What Are The Benefits of Assessment?

 In general, benefits include getting faculty members, within and across disciplines, talking about their goals for student learning, seeing how courses fit together, making expectations more clear to students, and sharing detailed feedback with students.

(Suskie, 2009; Wolvoord, 2010)



What Are The Benefits of Assessment?

- Increase our confidence that we are putting our time and resources into activities that we value as an institution
- Increase our confidence that we are allocating resources to areas that are producing the outcomes we value
- Gather and use data that will enable us to make decisions that lead to improved instruction, stronger curricula, and effective and efficient policies
- Strengthen our ability to say that our graduates are wellprepared to succeed in their future endeavors



What Are The Benefits of Assessment?

- Have ready access to data that will satisfy the requirements of accrediting agencies and funding agencies, and will inform various accountability driven conversations
- Gather and use data that will strengthen arguments for increased funding and/or resource allocations to areas that are producing valued outcomes
- Increase the effectiveness of our communications about the value of a Ball State University education.

(University of Delaware, n.d.)



- How Can We Assess Complex Student Learning? Isn't Assessment Just About the Lowest Common Denominator? How Can We Capture the Ineffable?
- We should be spending our time in assessment concentrating on what really matters most. This is not easy, but its not impossible. We need to figure out how to effectively evaluate things that student do that reflect our goals for them. Lots of people have been thinking about this, both within and across disciplines. Is your national disciplinary professional association talking about this? An excellent resource for assessment of cross-disciplinary, liberal education college student learning is the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) LEAP (Liberal Education and America's Promise) and VALUE (Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education) Projects, see http://www.aacu.org/LEAP and http://www.aacu.org/value

(Walvoord, 2010)

Does Assessment Violate Academic Freedom?

- The Association of American Colleges and Universities' Board of Directors Statement on Academic Freedom and Educational Responsibility (2006) directly addresses this question:
 - Faculty members are responsible for establishing educational goals for student learning, for designing and implementing programs of general education and specialized study that intentionally cultivate the intended learning, and for assessing students' achievement. In these matters, faculty members must work collaboratively with their colleagues in their departments, schools, and institutions as well as with relevant administrators. Academic freedom is necessary not just so faculty members can conduct their individual research and teach their own courses, but so they can enable students—through whole college programs of study—to acquire the learning they need to contribute to society.
- retrieved from <u>http://www.aacu.org/about/statements/academic_freedom.cfm</u>



Are There Factors Beyond Our Control That Affect Student Learning?

 Of course there are! Acknowledge factors that you cannot control, such as students' incoming skill levels or the number of hours they spend in their jobs to establish beginning points for student assessment and to provide a context for learning.

(Walvoord, 2010)



Why Aren't Grades Enough?

- Course grades usually tell us something about how an individual student knows relative to other students in the same course section, but no details about exactly what that student actually knows or doesn't know.
- If grades reflect attendance, this doesn't tell us much about student learning.
- If multiple sections of a class are offered and taught be different people, are the content and the grading criteria exactly the same?
- Grades for individual assignments are typically not available to anyone else besides the instructor and the student.
- A degree program should be more than a set of disparate courses. Are there things we want students to know and be able to do that span multiple courses? Do we really know how each course fits into a coherent curriculum?



The Most Common Actions Resulting From Assessment

- Changes to the curriculum, requirements, programmatic structures, or other aspects of students' course of study
- Changes to the policies, funding, and planning that support learning
- Faculty development



Journals That Publish Scholarship on Assessment of College Student Learning



Additional Resources

- "Most Common Misconceptions About Program Assessment"
- NILOA paper on faculty development in assessment
- NILOA paper on faculty unions' perspectives on assessment



Discussion

