Surviving and Thriving in Programmatic Self-Assessment: Faculty and Administrative Perspectives

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INTRODUCTION AND INSTITUTIONAL BACKGROUND
• ENROLLMENT: Just over 1000 full-time students.
• ACADEMICS: 55 majors, 41 minors, and 11 pre-professional programs
• FACULTY: 74 full-time professors; Average class size = 15, Student-to-Faculty ratio = 12:1.
• STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS: 96% receive financial aid; 35% participate in NCAA Division III sports; 30% first generation.
• OUTCOMES: 95% graduates employed/attending graduate school within six months of graduation.
Higher Learning Commission reaffirmed Franklin College accreditation in 2012.

2012 Systems Appraisal Feedback Report reinforced opportunity for more systematic program review vis-à-vis SLOs.

Transitioned to Open Pathway.


Administration invites Dr. Tami Eggleston, McKendree University, for faculty-wide training on mission statement formation and SLO setting.
• Departments assess at least one student learning outcome per year
• Departments submit assessment reports every three years
• Departments undergo full program review every seven years
• VPAA and Associate VPAA review and discuss results with each department
Political Science pilots program assessment at Franklin College.

Review Process permitted:

- Clarification of department mission and vision,
- Linking SLOs and Dept. Goals to mission and vision,
- Seeking empirical evidence to measure achievement of SLOs and Goals.

Results were mixed

- Some clear success,
- Empirical evidence supports curricular revision, etc. to better fulfill mission and vision.
SEVEN STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESSFUL ASSESSMENT
1. Don’t Panic!

- Embrace assessment that fulfills your goals.
- Resistance to assessment may be rational/expected (Bloxman & Boyd, 2008; Knight & Yorke, 2003), but should not obstruct.
- Faculty should pursue their vision for their program.
- “Skillful teachers” naturally critically reflect on their work (Brookfield, 2006). Programmatic assessment formalizes practice.
2. Let Vision Guide You

• The assessment world is in your hands
  • Begin with mission and vision (Eubanks, 2010).
  • Then, identify key student learning outcomes (SLOs) and programmatic goals (Bloxham & Boyd, 2008; Eubanks, 2010).
  • Brainstorm about how SLOs and goals are, and might be, met.
3. Don’t Reinvent the Wheel

• We put a spin on Eubanks (2010) and others:
  • REDUCE: Do not assess everything, only progress toward SLOs/goals (Bloxham & Boyd, 2008). Example: See Supplement.
  • REUSE: Existing classes and assignments may fit SLOs/goals. Example: POL 110 Pre-Post.
  • RECYCLE: Rubrics currently in use (slightly altered and/or AAC&U’s rubrics) may assist in assessment. Example: POL 360 and Critical Thinking.
4. Assessment Doesn’t have to be Quantitative

• Employ a diverse range of measures (Bloxham & Boyd, 2008; Shipman, et. al., 2003).

• Example: Success via qualitative exit interviews and focus group with our graduating seniors (using mostly open-ended questions).
5. If you are Going to use Numbers, Don’t Overcomplicate

• Avoid elaborate/cumbersome systems (Eubanks, 2010).
• Much may be learned from t-tests and z-scores.
• Colleagues can help.
• Do not be put-off by a “small n.” Take the first step. The “n” will come with time. Even a “small n” result may be useful.
6. Value to Students

• Build around your best learning experiences.

• Identify best part of program, and see if students agree (Eggleston, 2013; Bain, 2004).
7. Intrinsic Value to the Craft

- Use results to inform teaching and innovate, becoming more efficient and effective (Asand, Amidon & Huffman, 2010; Eubanks, 2010; Knight & Yorke, 2003; Shipman, et. al., 2003).

- If you don’t assess yourself; someone else might!

- Example: Results indicated possible changes and methods to improve student performance on comps.


Bibliography: