Transitioning Educational Program Assessment from a Requirement to a Valued Process

2014 SACSCOC Annual Meeting

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Interim Director of Assessment, Institutional Effectiveness

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Program Assessment Leader, Institutional Effectiveness
Session Focus

* Devoted to transitioning views on educational program assessment on our campus from an external requirement to a valued process

* Engaged in a process to ensure compliance with Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1.1

* Committed to active participation of faculty members in guiding and overseeing educational program assessment
Prevalent Challenges

* Academic assessment began over 25 years ago with an emphasis on accountability

* It is still:
  * Often undertaken to satisfy accreditation demands
  * Externally mandated by the administration
  * Confused with evaluation
  * Not well understood as a vehicle for improving/maximizing what we do
  * Viewed as reductionist
Previously on Our Campus

* Assessment was decentralized and inconsistent, for both academic programs and administrative units

* Some academic programs were not been engaged in program assessment activities

* Other academic programs did not distinguish between course grades and assessment processes

* Assessment initially became an exercise in report writing

* Success was measured by “turning the box green” upon uploading reports
Critical Events

* Office of Institutional Effectiveness – Created in 2010
  * In preparation for Fifth-Year Interim Report
  * Associate Vice President (AVP) of Institutional Effectiveness hired August 2010

* Fifth-Year Interim Report – Due March 2011
  * SACSCOC displeased with 3.3.1.1

* Director of Academic Assessment hired in October 2011
  * Realized that assessment is faculty driven
  * Began building infrastructure
  * Dilemma – SACSCOC Response due March 2012
Academic Assessment Process

Mission
Primary purpose of the unit, whom the program serves, the standards to which it aspires, and the program’s connection to the broader institutional mission

Outcomes
Select or develop measurable student learning outcomes

Implementation Strategies
Identify classes, instructional strategies, assignments, and activities to foster outcomes

Data Collection
Measure student learning outcomes

Measure Outcomes
Select or develop measures that are able to provide information about outcome achievement and progress

Action Plans
Make adjustments in curriculum strategies to address weaknesses and strengths

Findings and Analysis
Analyze assessment results

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Infrastructure: Academic Assessment Steering Committee

- Composed of two/three faculty members from each College
- Coordinated by the Director of Assessment
- Charges of the three subcommittees:
  - Establish specific University-wide guidelines for program assessment
  - Select/develop rubric for reviewing Academic Program Assessment Reports and provide guidance for improving assessment process
  - Identify assessment needs and plan activities across University
- Annually review Academic Program Assessment Reports
Critical Events, continued

* Academic Assessment Steering Committee began reviewing Academic Program Assessment Reports by applying Academic Assessment Rubric and providing feedback – May 2012

* AVP of Intuitional Effectiveness retired
  * Director of Assessment appointed Interim AVP

* Placed on SACSCOC Monitoring Status – June 2012

* Program Assessment Leaders selected

* AVP refocused attention to Administrative and Student Affairs Assessment
Program Assessment Leaders (PALs)

* Each PAL served as an assessment liaison for two/three Colleges
* Coordinated by the Associate Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness
* Charged to serve as resources and catalysts in the assessment planning and report process at the College Level
* Worked individually with programs struggling to develop assessment processes within assigned Colleges
* Received course releases and stipends
## Similar Assessment Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic</th>
<th>Administrative / Student Affairs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Assessment Steering Committee</td>
<td>IE Assessment Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Assessment Leaders</td>
<td>Subgroup of IE Team became an Advisory Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Academic Program Assessment Reports</td>
<td>Annual IE Assessment Reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Assessment Rubric</td>
<td>IE Administrative and Academic and Student Support Rubric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Development Opportunities</td>
<td>Development Opportunities</td>
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Early Perceptions/Realizations

* Assessment activities should not be performed just for the purpose of satisfying external accreditors

* Assessment practices should center on maximizing the potential of student learning and unit purposes

* Reports cannot be simply “shelved”
  * Used by Chairs and Deans to request and/or leverage resources
  * Used to highlight student accomplishments and encourage donors

* Based on Assessment reports, gains were made, but evidence that it was externally motivated
Needed to Move Past Assessment as Reporting Activity

- Deeper understanding of assessment
- Greater value placed on assessment
- Bloom’s Taxonomies assisted
  - Cognitive and Affective
Affective Domain

* **Receiving Phenomena**: willingness to hear

* **Responding to Phenomena**: active participation

* **Valuing**: demonstration of importance of phenomena

* **Organizing Values**: places into priorities by contrasting different values, resolving conflicts

* **Internalizing Values**: places into value system, evidence by consistent behavior

Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia (1973)
http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/hrd/bloom.html
Affective Domain

* **Receiving Phenomena**: will listen respectfully about the topic of assessment

* **Responding to Phenomena**: will write report, contribute to assessment process by providing data, developing an action plan

* **Valuing**: will engage in assessment willingly, discuss benefits with others

* **Organizing Values**: will compare and resolve previous conflicting values about assessment

* **Internalizing Values**: will look forward to, engage in process even when data are not required, seek leadership role
**OIE Assessment Plan**

* **Goal:** Foster faculty-driven assessment process to maximize student learning.

* **Previous Objective:** Academic programs will *plan and report* on an assessment process that address all elements of the process, to include: measurable student learning outcomes, places and strategies to foster these outcomes, direct measures, analyzed data, a plan for addressing weaknesses detected, and results of the plan.

* **Revised Objective:** Faculty will *engage* in an assessment process that demonstrates the integration of the assessment and curricular/instructional design processes. The plan/report reflects an assessment approach that provides credible evidence to support achievement or outcomes and to reveal learning weaknesses. The plan/report reflects that multiple faculty members collaborate to analyze the results and develop meaningful and detailed action plans to address outcome findings.
Peer Review of Reports

- Academic Program Assessment Reports submitted annually
- Reports peer-reviewed by Academic Assessment Steering Committee Members
  - One reviewer from same College as program report
  - One reviewer external to College of program report
- Academic Assessment Rubric (adapted with permission from James Madison University) applied to reports
- Both scores and written feedback for improving program assessment provided to programs after the review
## Academic Assessment Rubric

### II. OUTCOMES/OBJECTIVES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Beginning</th>
<th>Developing</th>
<th>Acceptable</th>
<th>Exemplary</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes are too broad</td>
<td>Outcomes have imprecise verbs (e.g., know,</td>
<td>Most outcomes are measurable and generally</td>
<td>All outcomes are measurable and stated with</td>
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<tr>
<td>to guide the assessment</td>
<td>understand) and vague descriptions of</td>
<td>contain precise verbs with specific</td>
<td>clarity and specificity, including precise</td>
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<tr>
<td>process.</td>
<td>content/skill/attitudinal domain or seem</td>
<td>descriptions of the content/skill/attitudinal</td>
<td>verbs and specific descriptions of the</td>
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<td></td>
<td>inappropriate for the graduating,</td>
<td>domain. It is clear whom should be</td>
<td>content/skill/attitudinal domain. It is clear</td>
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<td></td>
<td>undergraduate, or graduate</td>
<td>addressed (e.g., “students completing their</td>
<td>whom should be assessed (e.g., “graduating</td>
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<td>levels. It is unclear whom the outcomes will</td>
<td>junior year in the Nursing program”),</td>
<td>seniors in the Biology B.A. program”), and the</td>
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<td></td>
<td>assess (e.g., “students”).</td>
<td>and the appropriate undergraduate and</td>
<td>appropriate undergraduate and graduate</td>
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<td>graduate achievement levels are reflected.</td>
<td>achievement levels are reflected.</td>
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*Please Write Comments in the Space Below:*
### VI. ACTION PLANS: Documents the use of action plans

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<tr>
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<th>Exemplary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No action plans</td>
<td>Action plans are general, seem related to findings and outcomes, and may have been developed by one person. The action plan may only pertain to assessment plan change.</td>
<td>Action plans were formulated by multiple faculty, seem appropriate and sufficiently detailed to demonstrate a clear connection with the results and outcome statements and focus on student learning. Includes implementation of previous year's action plan and evaluation of associated student learning outcomes, as well as action plans for the following year. Improvements in assessment plans may be included.</td>
<td>Action plans were formulated by multiple faculty and directly relate to assessment findings. These plans are very specific (e.g., the types of teaching strategies/activities/assignments that will be introduced, approximate dates of implementation, and where in curriculum they will occur). Includes implementation of previous year's action plan and evaluation of associated student learning outcomes, as well as action plans for the following year. Improvements in assessment plans may be included.</td>
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**Please Write Comments in the Space Below:**
### Results of Peer Review

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Mission</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Measure A</th>
<th>Measure B</th>
<th>Targets</th>
<th>Findings A</th>
<th>Findings B</th>
<th>Action Plans</th>
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Academic Assessment Retreats

* Goal: Faculty to further learn about the assessment process with the intent of primarily focusing on their own programs assessment cycles

* Two sessions of three-day retreats offered to faculty while they are off contract, allows stipends to be given for attendance

* Results:
  * Summer 2013, Nearly 77% of all departments on campus were represented by faculty in attendance, multiple faculty represented each department excluding three departments in attendance
  * Summer 2014, Nearly 87% of all programs on campus were represented by faculty in attendance, in most cases a single faculty member represented each program
Assessment Symposia

- **Goal:** Recognize faculty for involvement in program assessment activities and celebrate program accomplishments related to assessment activities

- **Format:**
  - 2013, Series of round-table discussions where faculty members shared their stories about the benefits of the assessment process to their programs, students, or themselves
  - 2014, Panel discussion where faculty members shared their stories concerning the benefits of the assessment process in maximizing student learning and informing program curriculum

- **Results:**
  - 2013, 30 faculty and administrators in attendance
  - 2014, 76 faculty and administrators in attendance
Views of Symposium

- What did you find most valuable from the panel discussion?
  - “Faculty from diverse programs discussing how assessment is implemented differently”
  - “Clarifying the difference between assignments and measures”
  - “Knowing how important it is to ‘close the loop’”

- How might you implement information shared during the panel discussion in your courses/programs?
  - “Great to think about bringing it back to the classroom”
  - “Education bridged their accreditations and assessment… We should too!”
  - “Routine discussions of assessment evidence with all program faculty to identify action plans and future development of program.”
Recognition at Symposium

* Recognized both programs and faculty
  * Excellent Academic Program Assessment Reports
    * Received 58 points out of 64 possible points on Academic Assessment Rubric
  * Outstanding Report Writers
    * Academic Program Assessment Report accepted on first submission at Academic Assessment Retreat
* Received Certificate from Provost
Moving Forward

* Reshape University reward structure such that faculty participation in assessment related activities is appreciated
  * Currently working with Faculty Welfare Committee to redefine Annual Faculty Evaluation
  * Course and program assessment activities to be included in annual evaluation

* Develop an Assessment Fellowship Program to be hosted by OIE
  * Faculty provided stipend to develop assessment projects

* Encourage Departments to leverage program assessment results
Key Elements

* Support from the Provost evident across campus
* Strong faculty presence in leadership rolls and decision making
* Consistent process fosters institutional understanding
Additional Resources

* Georgia Southern’s Office of Institutional Effectiveness Website
  * http://academics.georgiasouthern.edu/vpie/

* Presenters’ email addresses
  * Teresa Flateby: tflateby@georgiasouthern.edu
  * Delena Bell Gatch: dbgatch@georgiasouthern.edu