

Assessing Administrative and Support Units

Building An Assessment Program From The Ground Up

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February 10, 2006

What Is Assessment?

- "Assessment includes the **gathering of information** concerning the functioning of students, staff, and institutions of higher education. The information may or may not be in numerical form, but the basic motive for gathering it is to **improve the functioning** of the institution and its people. Functioning refers to the broad social purposes of a college or university: to facilitate student learning and development, to advance the frontiers of knowledge, and to contribute to the community and the society."

Astin, Alexander W. *Assessment for Excellence*. Phoenix, Arizona. American Council on Education and The Oryx Press, 1993.

Be Wary of The One “Who Knows”

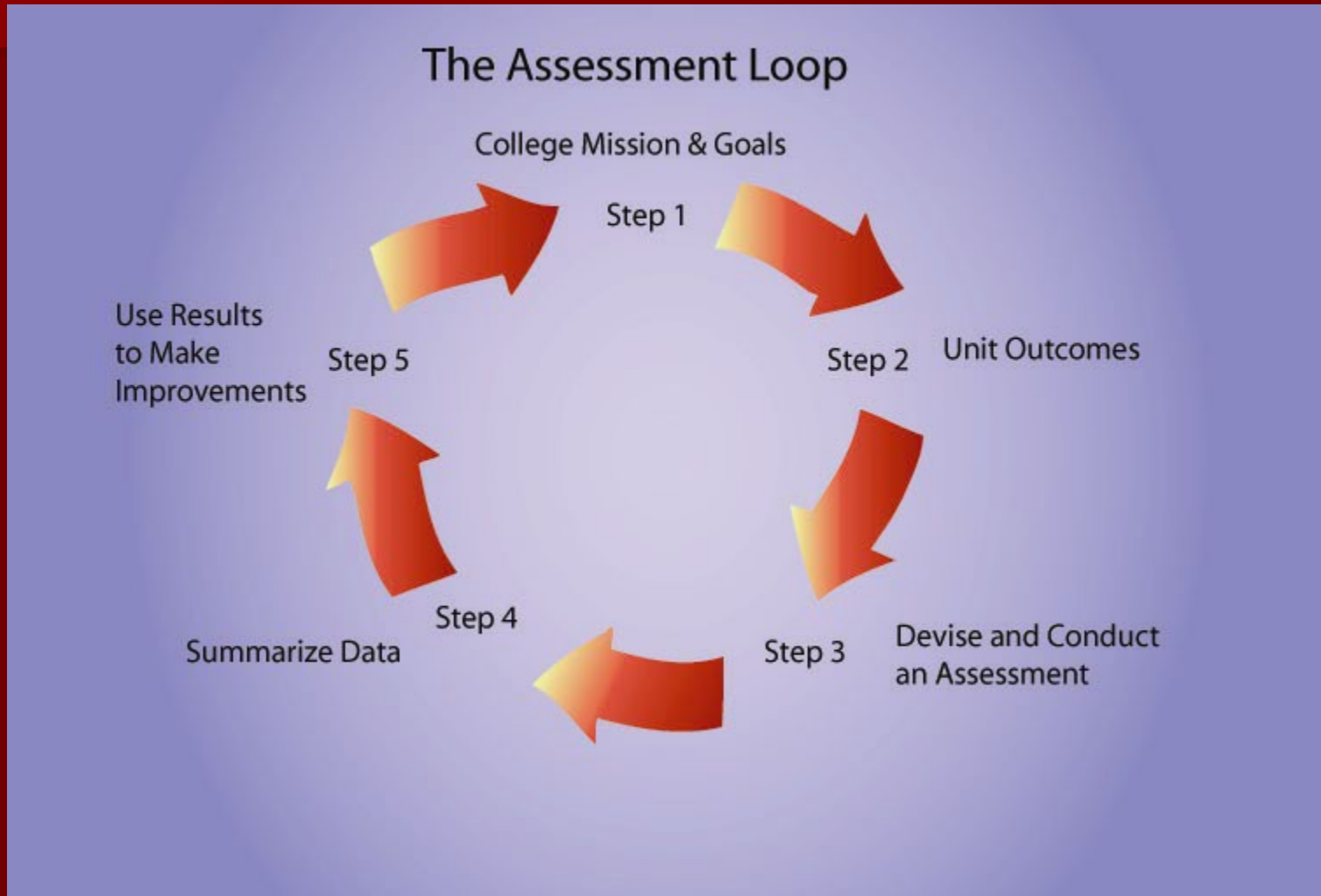
- This is just the story of **one** institution and **one** assessment coordinator.
- It is not “The Way” for your institution.
- I spent months researching how other institutions conduct assessment and took what I thought would fit at WNCC.

Instructional and Admin/Support How Different Are They?

- They both focus on learning outcomes.
- Outcomes are goals we set and measure to see if we're living up to our unit mission and goals (and ultimately, the institution's)
 - Instructional: What do our students learn?
 - Both Instructional and Admin/Support: What are we learning about ourselves in order to improve?

Assessment Basics

The Nichols Five Column Model



Outcomes

- Instructional units focus on student learning outcomes.
- Non-instructional units focus on service or support level outcomes.
 - What we learn about ourselves and our unit to meet our mission and goals.
- Student Affairs units do both.
 - Student learning outcomes AND unit self assessment in order to improve services to students.

Higher Education's Enlightenment (reform?) Project

- Sapere Aude! Dare to Know! Immanuel Kant.
- Reasons to participate.
 - Cause we have to.
 - Helps us move from anecdote to evidence.
 - Opportunity to plan for your own future.
- What happens if we don't participate?
 - "The shift to assessment is a thinly disguised reform movement." Jeff Seybert. Think "No Child Left Behind" for higher education.

Making It Meaningful

- There is a lot of literature on this subject for the instructional side, not so much for admin/support.
- Key is to show units the benefits.
 - Helps us move from anecdote to evidence.
 - Opportunity to control your own destiny
 - Opportunity to plan for your own future.
- Link it to strategic planning and evaluations.
 - Evaluated on completing assessments, not on what the results are.

So, You Want An Admin/Support Assessment Program?

- WNCC Background story
 - IR was given a new position conditional on designing, implementing, and coordinating an admin/support program.
 - Fit it into timeline for upcoming accreditation visit.
 - More than one year's worth of results in less than two years.
 - Assess every admin/support department.

Assessment at WNCC



Getting Started: Research, Research, Research

- Look around and develop a good understanding of assessment fundamentals.
 - Attend conferences (IUPUI Assessment Institute, NASPA, etc.).
 - Read books and case studies.
 - Cruise the internet.
- Important considerations.
 - Success stories.
 - Timeframe/schedule.
 - Forms.
 - Implementation strategy.

What You Need To Succeed

- Executive level support.
- Budget for assessment projects.
- Assessment Coordinators in each unit.
- Knowledge of assessment components.
- Coaching and communication skills.
- Good documentation.
- Time.
- Patience.

Execute Support

- Administrators are used to working in the academic hierarchy—use this.
- They may have asked you to start an assessment program, but they don't know what you need—here's your chance!
- Create fear, I mean confidence (!). Leverage strategic planning and accreditation expectations.
- Keep in touch with VPs and President.

Budget

- Assessment isn't free.
 - Survey costs.
 - Focus group costs.
 - Temporary staff.
 - Bringing in external evaluators.

Assessment Coordinators

- Need a person in every unit responsible for completing an assessment.
- They are the glue that makes it work.
 - Make friends, not enemies.
 - Offer to meet and help frequently.
 - Offer to speak to their supervisor when appropriate.
 - Track all contracts and offers of help.

Assessment Knowledge

- You must coach everyone else so you've got to know the fundamentals.
- You don't have to be Trudy Banta. People appreciate it when you admit you don't know everything. As long as you can find a solution.

Coaching Skills

- A new program means very little knowledge of assessment theories or processes.
- If you can't coach/help coordinators, they'll never forgive you.
- If you don't know something, admit it and get back to them.

The Tracking Spreadsheet

Administrative Assessment Progress Chart

Units	Coordinators	6/7/2004	6/22/2004		Appointment	Unit Mission	Unit Objectives
		Sent EMaterials	Phone/email Conta				
Finance and Administration		x	n/a			n/a	n/a
Child Development Center		x	left vmail 6-22-04	7/20/2004 10am	x	x	x
Environmental Health & Safety		x	left vmail 6-22-04	7/22/2004	x	x	x
Budget Office		x	left vmail 6-22-04	7-15-04 9am	x	x	x
Public Safety		x	left vmail 6-22-04	6-28-04 2pm	x	x	x
Controller's Office		x	phone conv 6-22-04	7/25/2004	x	x	x
Human Resources/Affirmative Action		x	left vmail 6-22-04		x	x	x
Bookstore		x	in person				
Sedway		x	in person				
Institutional Advancement		x	n/a			n/a	n/a
Business and Industry		x	phone conv 6-22-04	7/13/2004 4pm	x	x	x
Fallon Campus & Rural Development		x	left vmail 6-22-04	7/21/2004	x	x	x
Information & Marketing		x	phone conv 6-22-04	n/a	x	x	x
Planning & Facilities Management		x	left vmail 6-22-04	7/22/2004	x	x	x
Grant writer		x	subsequent email				
VP Academic & Student Affairs		x					
Computing Services		x	left vmail 6-22-04		x	x	x
Student Services		x			n/a	n/a	n/a
Admissions & Records		x	phone conv 6-22-04	n/a	x	x	x
Financial Assistance		x	phone conv 6-22-04	n/a	x	x	x
Student Outreach		x	left vmail 6-22-04	7-13-04 2pm	?	?	?
Student Activities		x	phone conv 6-22-04	7-13-04 2pm	?	?	?
Institutional Research		x	x	7-16-04 2pm	x	x	x

Documentation: Good Content Follows Good Forms

- Annual cycle provides enough time to complete.
 - Submit plan for next year with finished annual report.
- If you provide a box, they will fill it.
- Criteria for success is the biggest challenge.
- Provide examples.
- Explain, give more examples, and explain again.

<http://www.wncc.edu/institutional/assessment.php>

Time and Patience

- Its about relationships.
- Give lots of notice and reminders.
- Give lots of examples and offers of help.
- Be prepared for the last minute rush.

Types of Admin/Support Assessment

- Attitudinal (satisfaction).
- Direct measures (counting degree/volume of service).
 - Activity: average response time.
 - Efficiency: number of clients served.
 - Quality: errors committed per 100 transactions.
- External validation (external auditors)
- Observation or performance of clients.

Beware The Survey

- Everyone wants a survey but not everyone needs them.
- They are often expensive and don't necessarily produce the most useful results.
- You can assess without them.
- Ask: "Can we get this information any other way?"

Assessment Tools

- Use existing surveys and other data.
 - Grad surveys, employer surveys, NSSE, CSSE, Noel Levitz, etc.
- Develop rubrics to assess performance, student leadership skills, etc.
- Find national or regional benchmarks for your unit.
 - Professional organizations.
 - Standardized survey result reports.

What I Learned

- People almost always wait until the last minute to ask for help.
- Encouragement by executives is priceless.
- Be as approachable as possible and be prepared to propose possible assessment projects.
- Once people get it, they really get it and become champions. Find them quickly.
- Conversely, one negative person can wreak havoc.

Assessment of Assessment

Closing the Loop

- Results of online evaluation completed by Assessment Coordinators (9 responses of possible 14):

My department will use results for improvement:

- Agree or strongly agree: 75.00%.
- Disagree or strongly disagree: 12.50%.
- Neither disagree or agree: 12.50%

I have good ideas about what to assess next year:

- Agree or strongly agree: 77.78%.
- Disagree: 11.11%.
- Neither disagree or agree: 11.11%

The assessment process is useful from my department:

- Agree or strongly agree: 55.55%.
- Disagree or strongly disagree: 33.33%.
- Neither disagree or agree: 11.11%

I would attend an assessment training activity:

- Agree or strongly agree: 44.44%.
- Disagree or strongly disagree: 44.44%.
- Neither disagree or agree: 11.11%

What Not To Do

- Don't schedule departments for their first assessment report and program reviews at the same time.
- Don't close any doors.
- Don't let people yell at you.

Some Useful Resources Publications

Anderson, James A., Bresciani, Marilee J., Zelna, Carrie L. (2004) *Assessing Student Learning and Development: A Handbook for Practicioners*. Jossey-Bass: San Francisco.

Nichols, James O., and Nichols, Karen W. (2005). *A Road Map for Improvement of Student Learning and Support Services through Assessment*. Agathon Press: New York.

Palomba, Catherine; Banta, Trudy (1999). *Assessment Essentials: Planning, Implementing, and Improving Assessment in Higher Education*. Jossey-Bass: San Francisco.

Walvoord, Barbara E. (2004), *Assessment Made Clear And Simple*. Jossey-Bass: San Francisco.

A Useful Website

- North Carolina State: Internet Resources for Higher Education Outcomes Assessment.

<http://www2.acs.ncsu.edu/UPA/assmt/resource.htm>

Questions?