Developing a Communications Strategy to Support Faculty Assessing Student Learning

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sometimes a few dedicated faculty members drive the process, but increased support of faculty is needed to cultivate a culture of assessment on campus.

how do people find out about what is happening with faculty and staff learning outcomes assessment at your college?

Current Question…. 

• What is a communications strategy?

• Beyond marketing
• More than educating
• Deliberative
• Relationship building
• There is a vision behind it with larger goals in mind

• What would a communications strategy look like that was designed to support faculty (and staff) in their work assessing learning outcomes?
So we might begin by asking…

• How do senior-level administrators learn to effectively include their assessment and institutional research staff in decision-making processes?

And… how about… specific to assessment…?

If we can figure out communication strategies that work well at a few institutions – could they be shared and used elsewhere?

Planning on a Survey

• The goal was to develop a short, brief report that could be handed to a new senior-level administrator so s/he could begin to develop ways of supporting the work of faculty (and staff) assessing student learning outcomes.

From a survey to a case study….

• Interviews with six senior administrators and six professionals from assessment and institutional research offices.

By the end of this session you should be able to…

…develop a draft communication strategy relevant to your role, taking into account your guiding coalition, goals, and strategy.

…describe a few of the communication strategies that were identified through the study and apply a few of those strategies in the context of your own institution.

…share some of the key strategies with senior-level administrators and/or assessment and institutional research staff at your institution.
Appreciative Inquiry....*

• What is one of the most effective ways of communicating at your institution related to assessment (program learning outcomes or otherwise...)?

• When using Appreciative Inquiry “problems get replaced with innovation as conversations increasingly shift toward uncovering the organization’s (or group’s, or community’s) positive core”

(Bernard Mohr quoted: http://centerforappreciativeinquiry.net/2011/04/27/what-is-appreciative-inquiry/)

Developing a Communications Strategy: 1. Coalition

Guiding coalition to support faculty and staff assessing students (who)

Developing a Communications Strategy: 2. Goals

Goal (increase student mastery) It is shared, are there key habits that need to change? (what)

Developing a Communications Strategy: 3. What are your strategies?

Strategy (provide extra practice sessions in order to...) root causes of problems may be addressed here (how)
Supporting Faculty Members by Creating the Context and the Culture…. 

1. Consider how you generate a sense of purpose
2. Dedicate the time and resources necessary to act on results.
3. Communicate ways you are learning from and acting on results.
4. Who creates the context (our story)?
5. Who helps to develop a shared language (our vocabulary)?
6. How do we communicate success beyond the institution?
7. How do we honor individuals and bring their successes into a shared story?

A Guiding Coalition

- Position Power
- Expertise
- Credibility
- Leadership

(Leading Change, Kotter, 1996)

Is there a guiding coalition?

Is there a team working across the college sharing information?

What is the role of the faculty and staff within this team?

Who are your Foxes?

- Nate Silver, The Signal and the Noise (2012)

What is your strategy?

- Mistaking goals for strategy….
- “Statements of desire rather than plans for overcoming obstacles…”

Can you articulate a goal related to supporting faculty and staff engaged in learning outcomes assessment?

Who else needs to be part of the guiding coalition developing the strategy?

What would the strategy be related to that goal?
Keystone Habits

What are the root causes behind negative patterns, gaps in communication?

- CEO Alcoa – safety – uniting factors

*Is there a keystone?*

(The Power of Habit, Duhigg, 2012)

What are the uniting factors that bring people together on your campus instead of dividing them?

Beginning Outline

- Guiding Coalition
- Goal (related to assessment)
- Strategy (related to assessment)
- Keystone

- Which do you have?
- Which do you need?

Strategies Identified in the Interviews

**Questions for you … and for other leaders on campus…**

- Consider how you generate a sense of purpose
- Dedicate the time and resources necessary to act on results.
- Communicate ways you are learning from and acting on results.

Assessing your Approach to Communication:

Faculty members (or…) at our college should be able to…

**How do we share information –**

**What is the impact?**

“…in market plagued by asymmetries of information, the quality of goods will decrease and the market will come to be dominated by crooked sellers and gullible or desperate buyers.”

* (Noble Prize paper “The Market for Lemons…” Akerlof)

- Nate Silver, The Signal and the Noise (2012)
Assessment colleagues can help to...

- Create context
- Develop a shared language
- Honor individuals and bring their successes into a shared story
- Communicate success beyond the institution

Developing a Communications Strategy

Goal (increase student mastery) It is shared, are there key habits that need to change? (what)

Strategy [provide extra practice sessions in order to...] root causes of problems may be addressed here (how)

Guiding coalition to support faculty and staff assessing students (who)

Imagery — if it is to happen — will occur where faculty and staff have the most leverage to change how they approach teaching and learning.”

— Ewell, Paulson, and Kinzie, 2011

Works Cited


