The Gen Ed Assessment Journey: Where Pedagogy Meets Accountability

Presented by
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Our Journey

• The Cheshire Cat tells Alice that she will get "somewhere" if she walks long enough!
  – Finding the intersection of pedagogy and accountability in the assessment & reporting of student learning outcomes is challenging, especially for those new to assessment.

• Facilitators share their current professional development strategies and engagement processes,
  – highlighting strengths and weaknesses,
  – encouraging participants to engage in lively and interactive discussions of best practices.
Session Objectives

• To share our insights into engaging Gen Ed faculty in a collaborative and productive assessment & reporting process

• To encourage a collegial exchange of ideas for building an effective assessment & reporting plan that includes meaningful faculty engagement
Introductions

• Plickers Cards Ready!!

• **Who is here today?** (Q1 & 2)

Answers are A, B, C, or D – hold your card up with your selected letter at the top of the card.

When you see your card number highlighted on the screen, put the card down.
Presenter Background

- SACSCOC reaffirmation in progress, 2013-14
- Personnel changes, 2013 – present
- New administrators bringing faculty perspectives, both secondary & postsecondary
- Working with outdated assessment practices – task vs. process, 2010 - 2014
Step 1: Where Are We Going?

Research on effective teaching in higher education emphasizes three interconnected and interrelated components:

- Identifying and communicating clear student learning goals and outcomes – *accountability*

- Helping students achieve these learning goals and objectives through the use of activities that promote active, engaged learning – *pedagogy*

- Engaging in actions leading to continued improvement based on analyzing, reporting, & reflecting upon results – *accountability + pedagogy!*

Step 1: Where Are We Going?

Do your faculty and your academic leaders have a clear picture of the process from alignment to analysis?

- **Alignment**: Understanding the path from institutional goals to embedded course level assessments
- **Assessment**: Moving from independent to collaborative scoring and data analysis (grading versus assessing)
  - “Grading twice” seen as extra work at semester’s end
  - Holistic assessment of anonymous work samples takes the stress and bias out of this process
- **Analysis**: Begins at Assessment Day, continues through the year leading to the next Assessment Day

Step 1: Where Are **YOU** Going?

- Plickers Cards Ready!!

- How interconnected and interrelated are your IE /assessment activities? (Q3)
Step 2: How Do We Prepare for the Journey?

Create a plan for gaining faculty support and ownership of the process – Build intrinsic motivation

- Recognize faculty’s value of autonomy: viewed as an asset rather than a barrier - *pedagogy*
- Bridge the gap between administration and faculty constituents
  - Regular F2F interaction, meetings, focus groups to have honest conversations about IE and the roles we each play in the process - *accountability*
- Create a manageable timeline for “closing the loop.”
- Take some of the reporting work out of faculty’s hands
Step 2: How Do We Prepare for the Journey?

Create a plan for gaining faculty support and ownership of the process –

Build intrinsic motivation

- Put the plan in writing; create a team of faculty and administrators
- Extend planning time by eliminating a fall report
  - F2F planning meetings in fall
  - Develop/revise the common assessment rubric
  - Administer & collect fall & spring assessment
- Create a manageable timeline for the process
  - Value teaching time - take reporting obligations from faculty
  - Respect the expertise of faculty and assessment professionals
  - Reinstate common assessment practices (Assessment Day)
Closing the Loop

The Assessment Cycle for Instructors:

1. **Plan**
2. **Teach**
3. **Collect Samples**
4. **Assess**
5. **Report**
6. **Adjust**

- **Fall and Spring Semesters**
- **Summer/Fall Semesters**
- **Spring/Summer Semesters**
- **Spring Semester**

- **Fall Semester**
- **Fall/Spring Semesters**
Step 2: How Have You Prepared?

• Plickers Cards Ready!!

• Tell us about your Gen Ed IE / assessment process. (Q4 & 5)
Step 3: What Will We Encounter Along the Way?

- Issues with Institutional Culture
- Recognize the difference between faculty and administrative attitudes toward IE activities
- IE should not be simply a response to external forces, yet the impetus for IE usually comes from external constituents

“Ideally, institutional effectiveness activities are motivated by a sense of internal dedication to the improvement of the institution” (Welsch and Metcalf).

Step 3: What Will We Encounter Along the Way?

- Institutional culture – Collegial conversation about academic freedom and academic responsibility
- A true focus on quality requires everyone within an institution to work together to answer the question, “Are students learning?” (Paris, “Assuring Quality”).
- Paris (2012) states,
  - Gathering, reporting, and using evidence to improve student learning is still not an ordinary activity in colleges and universities.
  - The question then is whether we as a profession can develop ways, consistent with our existing commitment to academic freedom, of regulating ourselves.

Step 3: What Have You Encountered?

- Plickers Cards Ready!!

- How is your process perceived?  
  (Q6)
Strategies We Use

- Build the Gen Ed assessment process with the end in mind, respecting the content expertise of your faculty
  - Put it in writing and get a commitment

- Regular F2F meetings for collegial discussion and/or professional development ensure effective communication and closing the loop
  - Do not let e-mail lead your discourse!

- Collaborate with rather than isolate faculty – Common assessment activities (Assessment Day) are great ways to facilitate assessment and discussion about pedagogy.
  - Emphasize assessment versus grading.

- Create a less stressful / more effective data collection and reporting process
  - Work smarter not harder!
What We’ve Learned

Pedagogy
• Respect content expertise of faculty
• Establish the role of faculty in the IE process
• Value faculty time and workload
• Engage in F2F decision-making

Accountability
• Clarify the IE process as a whole
• Offer meaningful professional development
• Optimize non-intrusive reporting processes
• Facilitate collaborative decision-making

At NFCC, “closing the loop” occurs at the intersection of pedagogy and accountability.
Resources


Resources


Contact Information

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What did you think of Plickers? (Q7)