

Commission
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Collaboration Network
Academy For Assessment Of Student
Learning Network



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From the Ground Up: Assessment of Student Learning

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Project Detail

2012-10-12

Describe the project you developed at the Roundtable. Focus particularly on the general strategies you developed. (500 words)

The LSSU Academy Project will focus on promoting an institutional culture of assessment concentrated on student learning. The objective is to provide training and tools to assist faculty in the implementation of course and program assessment processes, as these processes are integral to institutional improvement and effectiveness. To reach this outcome we intend to

utilize technology in the form of a university-wide system for collecting, disseminating, and implementing assessment results. We will build faculty participation through a staged faculty & staff development process with a dual focus. We will provide faculty training and feedback on developing and refining learning outcomes at both the course and program level. At the same time, we will work on shifting the ad-hoc and disparate assessment activities, now underway across the university, to a centralized location for the collection, aggregation, and dissemination of assessment data. As faculty and staff work to formalize their existing assessment activities into the now-established university framework (outcomes – measures – targets – results – action planning), we believe that our institutional understanding and use of assessment data will become more refined and more robust. The explicit focus in years one and two will be on the refinement of course-level assessment, in the latter two years we intend to expand to encompass program-level assessment. Assessment data itself is not the end goal, but the data will become a tool for effective decision making and ultimately improved student learning.

What are the desired outcomes of this project? How will you know that you have achieved each of these outcomes?

Through this project we intend to build a culture of assessment based decision making that positively impacts student learning. We plan to standardize and systematize the collection of assessment data from across the university. Building from the smallest component (and the one most relevant to the individual faculty member) we will begin our efforts on course-level assessment and expand into program-level assessment. We hope to develop a pattern for institutionalizing assessment which is faculty and student focused, positioned in the context of meaningful change (relevant to both the faculty member's own instructional and research framework), and which leads to improved student learning. To determine the success of this project, surveys will be given to the faculty in order to determine their level of satisfaction with the assessment system. We will also obtain measures of use through training records, audits of course and program activity, as well as attendance at meetings and conferences.

What serious challenges do you expect to encounter? How will you deal with them?

Assessment efforts at LSSU have had a couple of false starts over the years. These efforts

seemed to begin well enough, but then faded as administration changes, financial pressures, and passing fads made their way through the university. Historical evidence of assessment related to student learning has not been consistently cataloged or archived. However, faculty have been willing to work towards assessment tasks; when those tasks were clearly defined and linked to improving their instructional practice and to strengthening student learning.

We have identified several areas where barriers do exist. For example, there is an ongoing need for faculty professional development and training in translating the existing instructional activities already in use into measureable and reportable assessment data-points. Concerns have been raised about the proposed use of assessment data and its relationship to evaluation and program prioritization. In addition, some may have philosophical objections to what they perceive as quasi-industrial quality control. Finally, many of the program outcome statements submitted to this point reflect faculty driven inputs, rather than student-oriented outcomes.

Faculty are very conscious of the time demands that assessment activities can require. Two subtly distinct time-related challenges have posed barriers to past attempts at implementation. First, inauguration of new assessment activities simply can be very time-consuming. The array of activities associated with refining outcomes developing and/or discovering measures (and subsequent elements of the process) can significantly affect faculty workloads. Second, day to day academic life is frequently marked by significant schedule fragmentation: frequent (and sometimes spontaneous) movements from one task to another make sustained attention to new and unfamiliar responsibilities difficult. In light of these challenges, it will be key to frame assessment in the context of activities that are relevant and directly beneficial to enhanced student learning and to the faculty member's own instructional practices.

Describe the specific steps you will be taking in Year 1 to develop and implement the early stages of your project.

At the end of year-one we intend to have met with, and provided customized training to, every school/department in the development of their assessment systems. We intend to work with faculty at the school level to familiarize them with the software tools and structures, as well as assisting each faculty member in entering one course (outcomes and measures at a minimum) into the system. We will promote/encourage faculty members who teach general education courses to do these courses first, building on the general education assessment data sets already in existence. We will provide faculty with professional development opportunities (as needed) related to writing outcomes statements that lead to actionable steps to improve student

learning, and within the context of the year-one outcomes.

Update Questions

Please confirm that this Activity is ready for review.

This project is ready for review.

Tags:

- Assessment Practices