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Integrating assessment, program review, and disciplinary reports

Philip I. Kramer
College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University, pkramer@csbsju.edu

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Designing Effective Assessment

Principles and Profiles of Good Practice

Trudy W. Banta, Elizabeth A. Jones, Karen E. Black

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improvements. This philosophy is illustrated in the working documents of the Illinois Board of Higher Education and the Office of the Provost at Illinois State University.

- Realizations that "more assessment" can oftentimes be less meaningful than "planned assessment."
- A focus on the use of results to formulate solutions and services that support instruction and learning in higher education.
- Staff commitment and administrative support for managing difficult situations and logistical issues.

Relevant Institutional Web Sites Pertaining to This Assessment Practice

Program Review and Assessment Web Site—Office of the Provost:

www.provost.ilstu.edu/resources/assessment.shtml

University Assessment Program Assessment Web Site:

www.assessment.ilstu.edu/program/

Integrating Assessment, Program Review, and Disciplinary Reports

Philip I. Kramer, College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University

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Look for a faculty review that produced a new online reporting system which integrates three previously unconnected reports: annual assessment reports, annual department reports, and program review reports submitted every seven years.

Background and Purpose(s) of Assessment

Historically, at the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University (CSBSJU) little consideration was given to the possible interrelatedness of three important academic reports. Annual academic departmental and program assessment reports were submitted at the end of the calendar year to the Office of Academic Assessment and the faculty governance committee responsible for

overseeing academic assessment and program review activities on campus. Annual departmental reports, highlighting faculty accomplishments in teaching, scholarship, and service, were submitted in the summer to the academic dean. Program review reports were only submitted to the Office of the Provost either when a department or program completed its self-study (once every seven years) or when the provost requested a formal midcycle program review update. While most campus stakeholders realized the content of all three reports overlapped, there had never been an attempt to link the reports coherently. During a periodic review of our program review policy and in conjunction with work on our institutional reaccreditation self-study, academic administrators and members of the aforementioned faculty governance committee considered integrating all three reports. Integrating the reports was appealing for a number of reasons, including the possibility of further elucidating the similar purposes of the reports; increasing coherence to improve academic excellence; and reducing the workload of faculty members, department chairs, and academic administrators.

Assessment Method(s) and Year(s) of Implementation

In late 2007, the faculty committee, at the request of and in concert with the provost, the academic dean, and the director of academic assessment, began an extensive evaluation of the assessment, departmental, and program review purposes, policies, and report systems. Members of the committee contacted individual faculty members, including department chairs and department assessment coordinators, for their input. The evaluation concluded in the spring of 2008.

Required Resources

No resources were required beyond faculty time to conceive the plan.

Findings

The faculty committee drew the following conclusions:

First, there was significant overlap between the three reports. This overlap was confusing and frustrating to those compiling data and writing reports. Indeed the same assessment coordinators or department chairs frequently would write all three reports for their respective departments. Second, an overwhelming number of the coordinators and chairs complained that large portions of the three reports were redundant. Third, many coordinators and chairs believed they were being asked to gather data and write reports that were never used by the administration to improve teaching and learning or to make strategic fiscal or academic policy

goals or plans. According to coordinators and chairs the reports were essentially "busywork" and a waste of time.

Use of Findings

Because of the committee's conclusions, the policies and practices of campuswide peer review and reporting were completely reconfigured. To simplify matters, committee members decided to create a tailored, homegrown online reporting system. This new online system was initially implemented in spring 2008.

Impact of Using the Findings

The results of the committee's work have clarified the expectations of academic administrators for the faculty, integrated the function and format of three previously disparate reports, eliminated the redundant workload of key internal quality assurance and quality improvement stakeholders, and helped all institutional stakeholders appreciate the importance of collegial and collaborative conversations between members of the faculty and academic administrators.

Success Factors

The effort to integrate formerly disparate reports has resulted in a new online system that keeps the faculty and academic leaders apprised of ongoing efforts to improve student learning through a more immediate and clearer understanding of institutional policies and procedures, the role and success of the faculty, and the achievement of our students.

Relevant Institutional Web Sites Pertaining to This Assessment Practice

www.csbsju.edu/
www.csbsju.edu/cac/webassessmentgrid.aspx

A New Plan for College Park Scholars Assessment

Greig M. Stewart, University of Maryland

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Look for an assessment plan for twelve living-learning programs for academically talented first- and second-year students. This plan was designed to focus on the assessment of student learning after reviews of the twelve programs had failed to do so.