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Successful Assessment Leadership: Helping Senior Campus Administrators Help Faculty
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Examples of Assessment Success

As an institution, we have had incredible successes with regard to meeting or exceeding student-learning outcomes. The impetus for change (and the resulting successes of change) began in 2006 when both faculty governance committees and the academic administration made the strategic commitment to begin creating an honest and transparent culture of inquiry designed to drive short-term and long-term decision-making. We are publically committed to supporting high quality academic departments, programs, and student development divisions who provide our students with an excellent liberal arts education. We have availed ourselves of every opportunity to improve teaching and learning and to provide accountability.

Ownership

- 1) CSB/SJU has made presidential and institutional commitments to improve the gathering of evidence about student learning outcomes; expand the use of evidence on student learning outcomes to improve programs and practices; and expand the reporting on student learning outcomes on- and off-campus to ensure transparency and accountability.
- 2) The faculty governance committee responsible for the overall quality of the curricula works in coordination with the Provost, Vice Provost, Academic Dean, the Director of the Office of Academic Review and Curricular Advancement, and the Director of the Common Curriculum to continuously improve teaching and learning. We have built a strong foundation in continuous quality improvement in the past six years. We have established an open and transparent leadership ethos that, we believe, has made a very positive improvement on the relationships between our administration and our faculty.
- 3) In September 2011, we initiated a two-year long program review of our Common Curriculum (our general education). This formal in-depth analysis gives us the opportunity to gauge where we are regarding the articulation and delivery of the Common Curriculum student learning outcomes. We are using the program review process to revisit and possibly change our student learning goals, communicate those goals to all stakeholders, and create effective ways to determine whether they have been met.
- 4) The Provost, Vice-Provost, and Academic Dean use the evidence from the assessment of student learning outcomes and disciplinary program review to make strategic planning decisions, including resource allocation decisions. Consequently, academic departments are motivated by the decision making structure to take the results of assessment and program review seriously and uses those results to make significant strategic and resource allocation decisions to improve the teaching and learning process and provide accountability.

5) CSB/SJU has strategically supported enhancing faculty salaries in order to be competitive in our hiring and retention strategies. We also honor the professionalism of our faculty who take assessment of student learning and program review seriously. This is evidenced by our ability to integrate these initiatives in our faculty governance system as well as board deliberations.

6) During the last six years, we have moved from having a faculty culture that was very resistance to assessment to a faculty culture where the overwhelming majority of faculty members use assessment in their respective courses and departments to improve teaching and learning and demonstrate accountability. Part of this incredible transition comes from the hard work of the faculty committee that has responsibility for assessment and program review.

Communication

1) We are founding members of the New Leadership Alliance for Student Learning and Accountability.

2) We publicly list student learning goals on our web pages including, for example: (a) the coordinate mission, vision, and learning goals; (b) the Common Curriculum student learning goals; (c) individual departmental learning goals; (d) the faculty governance policy for assessment and disciplinary program review; (e) our 2008 Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Self-Study; and (f) the HLC final evaluation reports, (g) CLA results, and (h) NSSE results. Many departments list aggregated student-learning outcomes on their department web pages.

3) Institutional Dashboards are presented each year to the Joint Academic Affairs Committee of the Boards to indicate not only academic department compliance with assessment and program review reporting procedures but also improvement in pedagogy and curricula. The committee also annually reviews and endorses assessment and program review efforts. The joint boards regularly review and endorse program review work.

Development

1) Wabash Center of Inquiry in the Liberal Arts 2010-2013 Study: the Wabash Study allows us to continue our development of systematic approaches to measuring the impact of learning that occurs inside and outside of the major. Our commitment to continuously improve teaching and learning, to articulate and share our learning goals for our students, and to be accountable to our internal and external stakeholders are major reasons why we were invited to participate in the 2010 Wabash Study, sponsored by the Wabash Center of Inquiry in the Liberal Arts. Our study examines evidence of critical thinking and analytical reasoning in our Common Curriculum courses. We will use the results to make fundamental improvements to not only individual courses in the Common Curriculum but also structural changes in an effort to improve how and what students learn.

2) Participation in the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) Pathways Project and annual administration of the CLA since 2005: the 2010-2012 Collegiate Learning Assessment Pathways Project is part of the Council of Independent Colleges/Collegiate (CIC/CLA) Learning Assessment Consortium supporting a number of urban independent colleges and universities in efforts to improve learning of “at-risk” first-generation students and students from low-income backgrounds. Ten CIC institutions in urban settings—situated in cities or urban areas with

populations over 100,000—were selected to join the current CIC/CLA Consortium of 47 institutions. CSB/SJU are serving as control institutions in the study.

3) Teagle Foundation assessment grant: the 2008-2012 Teagle Foundation grant entitled "Systematic Assessment: Building Capacity and Closing the Loop" provides the opportunity to develop an expert faculty and staff infrastructure with a strong assessment skill and knowledge base. This \$149,667, grant allows us to increase faculty expertise in assessment, create an institutionalized system of mentoring for good assessment, refine data sharing and communications structures related to assessment, and enhance oversight processes and structures to sustain the momentum for this work. The primary vehicle for mentoring faculty and staff in the craft of assessment is to teach four yearlong courses in the assessment of student learning. Our "Assessment 101" Workshop is designed to introduce faculty, staff, and student participants to the literature on student learning, help them explore issues in higher education assessment, teach them about assessment methodology, and have them design, conduct, analyze, and use assessment to improve pedagogy and curricula and to provide highly visible accountability in their respective departments and programs and across the institutions. Each year, we employ two to three undergraduate Student Research Scholars who participate in the workshop as peers to our faculty and staff members.

4) We manage 17 semester-long study abroad programs and more than 10 short-term study abroad programs. These programs are linked to the Common Curriculum and/or major and minor fields of study. Our Study Abroad office is using unique assessment tools such as the Intercultural Development Inventory to measure intercultural development during students' study abroad.

5) Other areas of experiential learning (e.g., areas of service learning, internships) are important parts of the education of our students. Clearly articulated, operationalized outcomes inform students of the expectations for learning placed upon them. Faculty, staff, and community partners regularly collect, interpret, and disseminate student outcomes assessment results, and make continuous improvements to these programs.

6) Our Student Development areas are commitment to assessment of the co-curricular experience. We use the Educational Benchmark Inventory (EBI) and StudentVoice (a national survey toolkit) to assess student experiences and outcomes. The EBI provides data on learning outcomes related to personal interaction, intercultural interaction, time-management and problem solving, and personal growth. StudentVoice provides cyclic surveys designed to examine civic engagement, residential life, orientation and other student affairs activities. We use both the EBI and StudentVoice not only to better understand the student experience but also to shape or change the student development programs we provide.

7) We participate triennially in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). We also administer our own Senior Survey each year to evaluate student experiences and engagement.

Questions to Consider on Your Campus

Ownership

- Who “owns” assessment on your campus? Is the ownership the same among faculty, staff, students, and senior administrators?
- Who has responsibility for assessment and program review? Who has responsibilities for teaching and curricular designs? Are they the same people or units?
- What are the origins of assessment and program review?
- How would assessment training be funded?
- In general, what are the purposes of assessment and program review? Are they systemic?
- Are assessment and program review supported by faculty, staff, students, and the administration?
- Are assessment and program review valued? Are assessment and program review part of faculty, staff, administrative, and student cultures?

Communication

- Do you have open and transparent communication between senior administrators and the faculty? Why or why not?
- What would it take to have frank and transparent communication between senior administrators and the faculty?
- What could be some of the catalysts that could change the way communication occurs?
- What would it take to have your internal stakeholders (i.e., faculty and senior administrators) discuss some kind of formal or semi-formal assessment training for faculty?
- Would creating a culture of inquiry and evidence informed decision-making jeopardize or enhance the sense of institutional community, academic freedom, and shared governance?
- What could be some of the catalysts that could change how your institution considers assessment and program review?

Development

- Is assessment training “on-the-job” or is there some kind of training for faculty?
- How do faculty and senior administrators “learn” assessment on your campus?

- Who conducts the current training or who would conduct future training?
- Would there be any faculty and staff rewards for participating in assessment training?
- Do assessment and program review lead to improvements in teaching and learning? Are there rewards for good results? Is there punishment for poor results?
- Do assessment and program review evolve? Are they evaluated and improved?
- Are assessment and program review woven into teaching, scholarship, and service?