Developing Sustainable Assessment Practices

Evaluating the Sustainability of Your Assessment Processes and the Human Resources Frame (the video says “Support for the Assessment Process”)

***What first inspired you to get involved in the process of assessment on your campus***

Elizabeth Gordon: My first year teaching I was encouraged to attend a NEEAN conference The New England Educational Assessment Network conference and I think that helped to sort of Frame assessment and sort of a broader picture for me and talking about how how we can use assessment to essentially provide evidence that students are getting something out of their undergraduate education and so thats how I kind of first got involved it also spoke a little bit to me about based on our curriculum students they are only required to take one laboratory science course and I started to think if that was if they only take my course for their science requirement I want to make sure I provide an environment for them to achieve the outcomes that the institution has had developed for science And so that felt like it was a something that was very important to me to make sure those students were cheating those outcomes and so I wanted to be able to contribute to the effort of assessment

Elaine Beilin: Well I think it was because I was working in faculty development and and it was really connected to first year writing because I was also a department chair so this was about 2003 And Ive always devoted a lot of my time and attention to first year students and I think thats the absolutely crucial moment for faculty and students and for faculty development So I thought that one of the best things the English department could do would be to hire someone who was a composition and rhetoric expert and someone who knew how to assess writing programs And we were incredibly lucky to get Patricia Lynn who had written a book on writing assessment and exactly the kind of writing assessment that I thought fit our department And it was so I think through seeing what was going on nationally in faculty development and going to faculty development conferences which I have been doing since The 80s actually no really the 90s mid 90s and I could also see that because we are a state institution that assessment was definitely on the horizon So all of these things came together and we got we had a vice President at that Point Bob Martin who came who came to us from Westfield who was very interested in assessment and was knowledgeable So I think all these things came together and I thought it was really interesting and it was a way to really work with first year students it was a way to go forward with faculty development I saw it as perhaps a kind of motivating factor the faculty development And I also sought as a way of not having things posed on us by the state but to really do something on our campus that would forestall having some kind of one size fits all time imposed on us

 ***What has kept you going and feeling like this is a worthwhile use of your time and energy***

Elaine Beilin: once you start to see some results that is when I describe before that sense that we were able to close the loop and do something But I think frankly theres nothing more I like other than being in the classroom which is my favorite thing in the world is talking about teaching and thats really the only reason why I like being in faculty development its probably one of the reasons I liked being department chair is I really I love talking about teaching I think pedagogy pedagogys its really fascinating because youre learning about how people learn and theres always a sense of of improvement that is I think the worst thing would be if a teacher felt oh I know how to do this Im done well thats the moment when you retire So I think that what keeps me going is that sense that its a great opportunity to talk about teaching thats ultimately where we are headed with this how can we improve instruction And I think its also part of the social aspect of being a professor is that talking to colleagues if you are doing assessment you have to talk to other people you have to learn how other people are doing things And and it kind of keeps you humble because you know some people say oh you should never lecture lecturing is terrible thats going to turn students off and then you find that there is this person who does really wonderful interactive lectures and is able to meet your departmental goals by giving wonderful lectures So I think it keeps you humble which is I think a very good way for a teacher to be so its a very active kind of thing being involved in assessment And there is always something new to learn

Elizabeth Gordon: because Ive been able to use the data in my own classroom or see how I can use the information to improve my own teaching so I have contributed work from my own classes for student evaluation assessing their scientific skills and then I was able to see the data and see some of the improvements that I could make in my own classroom and then being involved in the general education seeing where there are common gaps in the student success with for example providing evidence for their arguments And so yeah essentially being able to use that in my own classroom keep the process going for me

***What could your campus do to get more people like you involved in assessment efforts***

Elaine Beilin: its something that we can really work together on it something that brings us together as departments and across campus to work for the benefit of our students and I have to say one of the things I love about Framingham is that I found over and over again if you say to someone if we do this itll help a student or the students or our students you are likely to get people to work with you because it is a very student centered campus and I think people are this faculty that I work with is so devoted to the students and our students are wonderful They are really students to know why they are at University they have very little attitude on the whole they know that their education is going to mean everything in their lives And so we have a highly motivated faculty So I think if we show faculty that this is part that we can use assessment to really help them do what they want to do which is teach their students really well have their students learn very effectively that we can do that And I think I think there are ways that both departments department chairs assessment committees and Celts the faculty center that we can do that

Elizabeth Gordon: administrative support is important for faculty because it is assessment of course is in the classroom is part of their workload sometimes they feel like assessment outside of the classroom or at the program level is above their normal workload so having administrative support for the work but also providing situation where faculty can see how they can use the assessment in their own classrooms so connecting it back to the classroom I think is a really important part of being able to get faculty members involved and keep them involved in the assessment process

***What could your campus do to help keep you interested and involved in assessment efforts***

Elaine Beilin: in the faculty Center we get out grants for innovation in teaching for example And thats actually one of my projects for the coming year is we get probably 90 or 100 applications are here for Celts grants which are modest But we dont get that many innovation in teaching And I think to use the promise of Celts funding and say you know identify something in your department that your assessment has shown needs doing or project that youre already doing right and Innovacion and teaching Grant and you know apply apply for the grant you can get up to $1500 for that it could be something like going to a conference it could be using materials I could be lots of different things you know and imaginative use of technology So certainly we can do that sort of thing campuswide I think stimulating effort to make sure that this is department driven and faculty driven and again I think the sense that something is top down and driven by administrative decisions only tends to not get results I think that the grassroots approach does tend to get more results The other thing Ive been thinking about and again doing this probably through Celts is and I think I alluded to this briefly earlier everybody every faculty member can do something really well And identifying that having that person do a workshop a brown bag spread it around so its not The same people always doing the The ones who are talking about assessment

Elizabeth Gordon: essentially provide provide this environment where Im able to be involved in the process whether thats through revising rubrics that we use for being able to generate or collect the data be able to see where my students are doing as far as outcomes go and being able to use that in my classroom and also to provide the space to that I can experiment in my classroom if I see that there is something my students arent achieving I want to be able to experiment a little bit in my own teaching and see if there is a way to address those gaps and then for me a big part of it is just being involved in this community of educators Being able to talk about the data being able to talk about student learning and so those are all the things that would keep me involved in the process

Elaine Beilin: One of the really inspirational moments in the last few years which I think we can also do more of it is Barbara Wallford came and spoke and she was wonderful for this one simple reason She said do one thing at a time and do it well and you should see all these lightbulbs went on around campus people thought 00 this is so big this is so overwhelming how are we ever going to do this If you do one thing at a time and assess one goal at a time or one Learning outcome at a time you know you can focus on that you can get that done and have a fiveyear plan and do each of your goals one by one so bringing in someone who has a lot of experience and can say this is what Ive learned at other campuses this will probably help you So I think we can also bring in people who are very good at seeing how you can improve and make things better