Assessment Benefits & Barriers

Shared Experiences with the Usefulness of Assessment Data

***How do you use assessment data to make improvements to teaching learning or the curriculum each year***

Regina Doherty: We like to use assessment data intercourse planning so looking at what happened last semester and did the assignment that we targeted for the learning and asked does it need tweaks or does it need to be completely revised And so we tend to use data as a faculty group to talk about planning for the next semester

Tracy Brudvig: If I see something on an exam that Ive given that a good majority of the students are missing the concept of but I really have to rethink and I have to think about how I presented it whether we had a lab component to kind of bring it to life you know and if we did what was the lab activity did we spend enough time on it could it be covered in different way Because we get all of our exams on our course management program that we have at the Institute and we get a lot of statistics back from our tests which can be very helpful in looking at overall performance item performance how well the better performers are performing on a certain item versus the the lower performers so we get a lot of data that we can actually use but I try to look at areas where students are doing well and look at my teaching and just try to do a critical reflection on what took place that semester

***Who is involved in using or discussing the data and when do those discussions take place***

Richard Voos: Faculty have responsibility at the core for looking at assessment data and discussing and making changes and that chiefly happens inside departments or programs so I talked in previous example about our school of management different departments at Simmons think about this differently so they may have a subcommittee that looks at data and reports to the full department the department may be small enough to do it as a whole and in some cases individual faculty or the chair of the department may do it but it is absolutely a fundamentally a faculty responsibility because its fundamentally about curriculum

Regina Doherty: We have a leader team around that curriculum and then all the faculty because we are a newer program weve been quite intentional about having all the faculty involved in those discussions so that everyone knows that its not just my job that its not just leaderships job to ensure that the curriculum is assessed Its everyones job Not only is it everyones job but its everyones responsibility to ensure that they implement best practice around assessment and integrate that into their course so that it can be integrated into the curriculum

Laura Saunders: Ideally we want to have everyone involved in it but it does happen in different places in sort of with different groups at different times So we have an assessment committee thats made up of six or seven people including two student reps and the assessment committee will be sort of we do the first pass of the data most of the time We gather all the data from all of the different assessments that we do so the surveys and the direct assessments for the course embedded assignment and things like that and will put together sort of as a first pass analysis and try to boil things down If we have a survey that even if its only 30 or 40 questions you can end up with 50 pages of Data in the end So we try to boil it down into something thats a little bit more manageable and we have at this point developed a report template so for any of the assessments that we do we can we have a two page template that all of the results can be entered into and then those go directly to our dean and she can review them so were sort of doing the first pass and then with the dean well review things again and then eventually it goes the whole faculty And really we tend to use faculty is sort of our default word but typically a lot of our staff are involved as well so for instants we have a capstone coordinator who is also really heavily involved in assessment our director of curriculum of course is involved so typically we will share the data just kind of briefly in faculty meetings but then we have been planning retreats throughout the year where we can get a lot more in depth So at the retreats will share reports that are a little bit more in depth even in those two pages that we typically send to the dean and well identify issue areas and then usually we will have 2 to 3 hours where well just be discussing and brainstorming and again this is open to everybody adjunct faculty are invited like I said staff and usually we have student representation as well so like I said ideally everyone should be involved because everyone brings a different perspective each person notices something a little bit different

***How has assessment data helped you develop a better understanding of student performance***

Regina Doherty: I have the pleasure of seeing everything every activity and because of accreditation reporting I see student performance on these different activities and it really has helped provide me with a window into understanding the curriculum and where students are really driving and where they are struggling and it can help with the individual student to I think itll be helpful in about six months from now we will have student serve repository there to do some reflection on their own I think itll be helpful for the students to see where their strengths and their weaknesses are

Laura Saunders: I think one of the things thats done has help me to sort of differentiate between those sort of general anecdotal feelings that I have about who our students are and how well they perform or how much they know and understand about certain areas of the field and what they actually know and understand

Tracey Riley: On the undergraduate program curriculum committee we build and assess the result of a content exam and that exam goes to all of our senior students in their capstone course in their senior year weve been able to look at the results of that exam and see whether or not our students are meeting our learning objectives with content But beyond that with the students as a whole we can also look at student groups Maybe our transfer students arent coming with the core curriculum knowledge that we hope they do so then we can initiate discussions with our transfer institutions that we work with and ensure that they are building the right curriculum for the students that are then joining us Or maybe we find a different populations like international students might be struggling in one area of the curriculum and we can reach out to the organizations on campus that work with international students to see how we can fix things so that they can better learn

***What types of groups within your institution use or receive the assessment data that youve collected What about groups outside your institution***

Regina Doherty: Inside the institution really in our institution is at the program level so our program leadership has access across the curriculum we share that with our faculty as a whole The faculty have their own courses but then we share results with everyone And then we share select results with the institution as well in different reporting mechanisms We dont have centralized assessment offices as far as outside the institution we do a lot of sharing with our accrediting agency and that comes in all forms through each course in the curriculum through all the learning objectives through the program philosophy and its really an assessment focused to show how our program maintains accreditation standards

Laura Saunders: Within the institution theres a couple of standard reporting procedures So I mentioned that the assessment committee will gather most of the data initially it gets shared with the deans and then it will also go to the allcollege assessment committee So once a year we put together a report that sort of outlines all of these assessment activities for our department for that year And that goes to our assistant provost in the provosts office But also within the institution as I mentioned weve got certain people who have to get some of the feedback who may not be directly involved in say the assessment committee or the faculty but they definitely need to be made aware of what kind of data were getting and what its telling us So like I said certainly we have to share with all the faculty because it directly impacts what our expectations are in the classroom but also for instants our internship coordinator or our student services offices we want to make sure that they are aware of what kind of information were getting from the students and especially things that are relevant to them If we are getting specific feedback about advising or student groups or the kinds of support that they got from student services then of course we want to share that But I think even more broadly they should be kind of aware of across the program how are we doing meeting all of our different goals In terms of sharing extern only I would say that at this point we havent been sharing a lot of information externally beyond accreditation reporting and things like that or at least not with been sharing it probably at a very high level of aggregation So for instants we have we do try to keep in a lot of lines of communication open with employers we have a number of people who post interns for us and we have posted employer focus groups and things like that and I think that its a good circle of communication because we get information from them about what their expectations are what skills and competencies they think are most important But it also is a chance for us to share some information with them about what we are seeing in our student whether that is possible concerns that we have for things that we are really excited about I think one thing that I am unsure of in terms of sharing information external he too is just what the ethics are around to that A lot of the information that we gathered especially course embedded assignments and things like that I think have to be well there are some issues of privacy and confidentiality but I think if we share sort of highlevel aggregate information thats fine

Chris Cratsley: We have most of our assessment being looked at an individual program level and that data is collected in a couple different ways So programs collect their own data of the kind and type that they want to and that can vary from looking at student preand post test to collecting whole student portfolios in their program to possibly collecting individual student artifacts from select courses and processing on that through a rubric and that they take ownership of and certainly we have an assessment management system TK 20 that allows them to enter that data into a system where I can analyze four then I can pull together the data and organize it for them in ways that makes it more usable and makes it easier for them to interpret it But again theres a piece of that that involves that has to involve their own judgment it has to involve their own qualitative analysis of what their students are learning in addition to whatever quantitatively we can pull out and then on top of that we have a graduating student survey that is our own creation on our campus we administer two students every time they are getting ready to graduate And that data can be disaggregated and shared with individual programs to think about what kind of programmatic changes they need to make Now thats not something we would do on an annual basis because with response rates on the survey sample sizes are usually too small for them to draw any conclusions but as programs go through a five your cycle of program review we give them five years of data and they can sit down and reflect on it And so the program level is the primary level where assessment data is being used And then its also going to be used at the institution and so I do two things in my role as director of assessment along those lines one is to work with some campus wide group like our General education committee what we call our global arts and sciences counsel And also as well as that with the faculty as a whole when they come together for our development days And then finally with our deans where I sit down and have monthly meetings with the deans focused on some data that we think they need to bring to the attention of their chairs and raise the importance of and often times thats data from the national survey for student engagement where we want to our latest administration of that we want to highlight where there are were there seem to be patterns emerging overtime in terms of Waze students are responding areas of strength areas of weakness But it also can be the assessment data itself What have we found in individual programs as we have assessed and summarizing that for the Deans so that they understand and can engage meaningfully and have a conversation with the chairs about how address some of the bigger issues in terms of what students are learning

***Tell us a story about how assessment data has influenced your decisions when preparing your course for future semesters***

Tracey Riley: When I first started teaching I designed my course by thinking about I have 15 weeks I have so many hours these are the chapters I want to cover in the content I want to deliver this is how many exams I can fit in and I realize I dont through the assessment process that I was doing it backwards I needed to start what are the learning goals and objectives Im setting for my students in this class where do I want to see them 15 weeks later and then I built my course from there So I can actually show them as well in the syllabus these are the objectives I want you to meet this is how the course material is going to help you meet them and this is how you will be assessed to ensure that you got there