**Developing Sustainable Assessment Practices Activities**

**To begin with, focus on an assessment project or initiative on your campus that has stalled. Here are some prompts that may help frame your response:**

* **Did the project stall at the department level, the program level, or the institutional level? Why?** Assessing other writing programs as points of comparison to our own. This stalled because too many untenured faculty were involved that were not confident they had support from tenured faculty and in particular those that attacked previous curricular revisions
* **What were one or two of the most significant reasons for that assessment project to stall?** Fear.

**Now, consider an assessment process that has been sustained on your campus or elsewhere:**

* **Why is it continuing?** The LAS assessment did continue up until two years ago when they switched to curricular concerns. It was able to continue because a few figures spearheaded gathering the information and we had a sufficient number of people able to share the assessment load.
* **What do you consider the three most important features that must be fostered for an assessment project to result in actionable data and sustainable, institutional knowledge about learning?** Regular commitment from enough scorers, consistent analysis of data (which did not happen enough in the LAS example) and measured growth based on evidence based decisions (also limited in a program review only done internally).

**After viewing the video, return to the examples of stalled and continuing, sustainable assessment processes from your own institution and respond to the following prompts:**

1. **Have you thought of any other hurdles that likely contributed to one of your assessment practices’ stall? Generate a succinct list of the hurdles you’ve encountered.**
2. **In both stalled and sustained assessment efforts, how did the individuals responsible for the project move the project forward? Or did they?  What happened if the project didn’t move forward?**
3. **Who else with a particular area of expertise might have been involved in either the planning process for an assessment project in order that the project close the loop effectively and result in actionable data?**
4. **What do you consider the three most important features that must be fostered for an assessment project to result in actionable data and for the assessment cycle to close the loop?**

1) Hurdles included faculty workload and departmental support

2) The project moved forward only because I continued to do the research myself. Nothing was done with those comments then. The project did not move forward because no one got involved earlier on because they were too scared and did not have the support of tenured faculty.

3) We needed tenured faculty to buy into the process and put in the work too, but they had little to no incentive to do so. Entrenchment of faculty is a problem here.

4) The people affected by it have to be invested in the process and care about the student learning that is clearly a concern. Unfortunately, the 4/4 load makes doing this impossible if faculty still want to participate in their own creative and research work. COURSE RELEASE is NECESSARY to make significant changes without reducing research.

**“what might emerge as potential hurdles in this year’s assessment plan? Why? And what practical action steps can I take to avoid or proactively address a stall in the process?”**

Time will be the biggest factor since we all teach 4 writing courses which are intense to grade and I can try to mitigate this with early planning and carving out benchmark achievements at regular intervals to maintain momentum.

**After completing the activities, reflect on the process you have engaged in this module so far by responding to the questions below. You can do this exercise through either individual reflective writing or discussion with a partner.**

1. **What limitations have you uncovered in the sustainability of your own assessment efforts?**
2. **In what ways have you expanded on your understanding of the potential barriers or hurdles to implementing and sustaining assessment practices?**
3. **What guiding principles have you begun to identify for ensuring sustainable assessment practices?**
4. **What steps can you envision taking on your own campus to ensure greater sustainability of your assessment efforts and assessment plans?**
5. **For group dialogue: What is one piece of advice or information that you would give your colleague if they asked for feedback on how to improve and/or re-prioritize their goals for sustainable assessment practices?**

1) The plan requires all 6 professional writing faculty to be invested in the work, which, with course load is not possible. Perhaps advocate for a retreat to get the work started?

2) Time will always be a problem

3) Think about how to chuck the project into achievable parts so the sense of satisfaction isn’t stalled and momentum for the project wanes.

4) Meeting at the beginning of each year/semester with the concentration and setting goals for that particular year/semester and drafting a plan that day

5) Don’t overcomplicate the process or bite off too much. Start small and move up from there.

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| **Program or Academic Area** | **Goals and Objectives Being Assessed** | **Data Being Collected** | **Process for Reviewing the Data** | **Changes made as a result of using data** | **Use of data for program review or external accreditation** |
| English | Research writing | Approaches paper and Capstone portfolios | Assessment committee rates them against the written communications rubric | None to my knowledge | Included in program review |
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**Once you have completed the table, consider the following questions:**

1. **Are there any interesting areas of overlap between your program and others in terms of the goals and objectives you are assessing?**
2. **Are you collecting data in similar or different ways from other programs, and can you see opportunities for sharing data or data collection approaches?**
3. **Did you encounter any interesting ways in which other programs review their data?**
4. **Can your program benefit from considering some of the types of program changes that have been made in other programs?**
5. **To what extent at your institution has the assessment process been integrated into the process of program review and/or external accreditation?**

Unfortunately, I do not know of the assessment efforts in other departments. This is why these modules are much better as guided workshops than individually completed webinars.

**Pick two or three assessment efforts that are underway with which you could see building a network to support your own assessment work. Restrict yourself to 2-3 besides your own to keep your plan manageable. Fill out the table below, and after briefly describing the assessment effort, complete the other columns with your evaluation of the strengths of each assessment effort (if any) from the perspective of each of the four frames.**

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| **Program or Academic Area** | **Brief summary of relevant parts of assessment plan** | **Symbolic Frame Strengths** | **Political Frame Strengths** | **Structural Frame Strengths** | **Human Resources Frame Strengths** |
| Comm Media | Redeveloping a social media concentration | Collaborating with them in their curriculum planning might help us differentiate our dept. tracks | We could look at overlaps in our efforts as potential interdisciplinary minors | Data on their student’s communicative skills and our students writing skills could provide potential comparisons if we look at them together | We could recruit for joint grant funding for this project to help incentivize faculty to continue doing this work. |
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**Now that you have examined a few different assessment efforts, consider what strengths in one area might also represent potential opportunities for your own assessment effort, either through some partnership or through learning from and building on the work in another area. Please provide a list of opportunities for your own assessment efforts through each of the different frames by responding to the questions provided below:**

* + 1. **Symbolic Frame Opportunities: How can you better connect your assessment efforts to the campus mission, strategic plan, international or national standards and/or accreditation?**
    2. **Political Frame Opportunities: How can you better connect your assessment efforts with critical stakeholders who have the potential to help insure its sustainability?**
    3. **Structural Frame Opportunities: How can you insure that you have the proper organizational and communication structures in place to sustain the level of assessment you have planned?**
    4. **Human Resources Frame Opportunities: How can you insure that you have provided appropriate support in the form of professional development resources, personnel, time and rewards to sustain your assessment process?**

1) We could think on expanding the writing program to include public discourse and get our students more involved in the community with their writing.

2) We could reach out to other state schools who are expanding their writing program or civic learning components

3) We could be careful to document the work load of all component of the process so that we may petition for a reallocation of faculty time to continue our work

4) We can take advantage of the Dean’s offer for retreats for professional development and can work with the CTL to arrange for training in curriculum mapping.

**For this activity, identify 1-3 different assessment initiatives you would like to build on and conduct a brief SWOT analysis for each using the table below.**

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|  | **Strengths** | **Weaknesses** | **Opportunities** | **Threats** |
| **Initiative 1**  **Mapping curriculum** | **Would immediate reveal what’s actual in our program** | **May require a good amount of guessing since some faculty don’t us objectives on their syllabi** | **Could start important conversations about the future of the program** | **Could be demoralizing to see the hole we have in the program** |
| **Initiative 2**  **Measuring writing strengths** | **Would give a strong picture of our existing student level** | **Would need to create a new rubric** | **Could get good thinking on assessing creative thought** | **Limits the views we might have on writing** |
| **Initiative 3**  **Brief description** |  |  |  |  |

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|  | **As you move into the next section of this module you will begin to consider how to plan for sustainable assessment. After completing the table in the preceding activity, take a moment to reflect on the following questions. You can do this exercise through either individual reflective writing or discussion with a partner.**   1. **For the 1-3 initiatives you have identified what would be the first steps you would take to try to strengthen your assessment efforts?** 2. **Do you feel that one or two of the frames in particular: symbolic, political, structural, or human resources, poses the greatest challenges at your institution in terms of sustaining assessment?** 3. **What are the key questions you feel always need to be answered to determine if assessment practices are sustainable?** 4. **For group dialogue: What is one piece of advice or information that you would give your colleague if they asked for feedback on how to improve and/or re-prioritize their efforts at supporting one or more of their initiatives?** |

1) I would be sure that we have a solid idea as a group about what we mean to achieve

2) The political frame could be the most challenging given past encounters with similar programs and the reticence of many of our faculty to share about our work.

3) Do we really want to do this and why?

4) Be open to talking to lots of people across the university about what you’re doing. Don’t try to hide or work in fear.

**Read the** [**case study**](https://mghinstitute.desire2learn.com/content/enforced/170219-LEARN_ASESS/Case%20Study_sustainability.pdf?_&d2lSessionVal=G0lCYZwKDvwwgRkPUK8QFwQ83&ou=170219) **on one institution’s plan and process for assessing an undergraduate general education curriculum and then respond to the questions below:**

1. **If this assessment process were taking place at your institution, how do you think you would be engaged in the process, given your current position?**
2. **Which aspects of this assessment process struck you as positive, beneficial, or innovative? How do you think assessment benefits the continued improvement of the PLAN curriculum?**
3. **Did you see any gaps or potential for improvement in the data that is gathered? In how the data is shared or used?**
4. **What is the one aspect of this assessment plan that might be most sustainable? The least sustainable?**
5. **If you were an assessment consultant to this institution, what advice would you give them going forward?**

1) As a faculty member on the LAS committee at my institution, I would fill the role of “General Education Advisory Board” and “The Simmons College Faculty”

2) Weaving together so many constituents into the cycle of work is a great idea since at our institution it seems like the left hand never knows what the right hand is doing.

3) I would say that they may want to look at GPA of students in these GE courses to see if there are pertinent patterns there that the objectives based assessment might be missing

4) The regular assessment of 15-20% of the common assignment seems like it would be easy to maintain. Getting professional development might be harder to maintain on a regular basis as people become less interested in the topics of the training or funding thins.

5) Seems a presumptuous question for me to answer, but I guess I’d suggest that they keep accurate record of curricular changes and responses to lay over their assessment data.

**A) Establishing intentional connections with other campus processes, structures, systems, or rituals to create complementary relationships.**

Evidence of the establishment of intentional connections:

1. create a group of administrators and faculty to share the load of the work

2. used embedded assessments

3. surveyed students

Ideas for strengthening sustainability in this area:

1. have reward systems for faculty involved in the assessment process

2.

3.

**B) Committing resources that support assessment, such as professional time, funding, professional development, or investment in data-gathering or management software**

Evidence of the commitment of resources:

1. went to course training retreats

2. went to an assessment retreat

3. faculty retreats to review the data

Ideas for strengthening sustainability in this area:

1. not enough information on data-gathering technology here…maybe there’s a better way to do this too?

2.

3.

**C) Regular campus practices that demonstrate intentional recognition for the value of assessment work in both institutional growth/health and the teaching and learning process.**

Evidence of regular campus practices that demonstrate the value of assessment:

1. CET integration for pointed PD

2. Communities of Practice model at CET

3.

Ideas for strengthening sustainability in this area:

1. could have a more robust collaboration with the GE Advisory Board on curriculum

2.

3.

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|  | **5-10 Guiding Principles for Sustainable Assessment** |
| **1.** | **Keep the process iterative and have a timeline for that revision process** |
| **2.** | **Keep the purpose or goal of the assessment clear throughout the process** |
| **3.** | **Provide space and time to faculty and the professional development necessary to keep the process going and a part of the faculty’s normal thought process** |
| **4.** | **Think of building a community around the assessment work, not just getting the work done** |
| **5.** | **Think of funding streams for assessment projects** |
| **6.** |  |
| **7.** |  |
| **8.** |  |
| **9.** |  |
| **10.** |  |

**Activity 3*:* Imagine that you are a full-time tenured faculty member, and your department chair has just left for a one-year sabbatical. The Dean has asked you to step in as interim chair during your colleague’s absence, and as part of your interim chair responsibilities, the Dean has asked you to develop a sustainable assessment plan for the department.  The regular chair hasn’t put in the effort to do this work, and as the institution is up for its reaccreditation site visit in three years, the Dean sees your interim role as a timely opportunity to create a sustainable plan that won’t “embarrass” the department during the reaccreditation process. Write an email to the Dean, giving your top suggestions for how the two of you could best collaborate to create a plan that will be sustained when the current chair returns from leave.**

Dear Dean X,

I can recognize the need for improvements to our existing assessment plan that would result in a more sustainable and robust assessment culture in the department. To begin thinking about what this new plan might look like I would appreciate a short description of what expectations our accreditors have for assessment plans and perhaps some recommendations of other departments on campus who have model assessment plans that I might consult.

Also, I would like to share what work has been done and the major challenges our department has faced in maintaining our assessment program to help determine what institutional support would be most effective. In the past years we have focused assessment on X, Y, and Z and the resulting changes in our curriculum include A and B. What has been most troubling is the lack of training our faculty have on assessment best practice and the time commitment to assess the materials we have targeted. I will also speak to the Director of Assessment for his recommendations on these issues as well.

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|  | **After completing the activities, answer the following questions. You can do this exercise through either individual reflective writing or discussion with a partner.**   * **Review your recommendations in the last activity. In what ways do they fit into or reflect the different frameworks for sustainability described in this module?** * **What did you find most revealing about the current sustainability (or lack of sustainability) of assessment practices on your campus?** * **How would your answers to the first activity be different if you had $200,000 to spend? If there was no funding available?** * **What are the top 2-3 practices or changes that you think might have a positive impact on sustainability at your institution? How might those be enacted?** |

1) They look to all four frameworks, though I could have added more on the Human Resources Framework. That one just seems like something done later in the process.

2) That the university is not particularly interested in innovating

3) If I had $200,000 to spend, I would probably only be asking the dean about what departments might be good models that I could talk to. I would probably direct more attention to the CTL Director for recommendations on training and assessment retreat options that have been successful in the past. If I had no funding and no opportunity for funding, I think I would have to be much more candid about the limitations and willingness of my faculty to take on such work.

4) incentives like course release and stipends would be one. Another would be if the process at the institutional level was more transparent to faculty to help assuage fears.

**Look back over your list of 5-10 guiding principles for sustainable assessment you generated for the last activity at the end of the module. Reviewing the content of the module as a whole, would you add anything to the list, remove anything? Can you articulate rationales for each guiding principle? If you could only do one thing in the next year to improve the sustainability of your assessment practices what would it be? How quickly could you implement it? What would you do next?**

**You may find it helpful to keep your final list of guiding principles and potential campus initiatives for sustainable assessment handy, and monitor your progress in bringing these principles to bear and promoting these initiatives.**

I’m sure I could think of more principles but the ones included seem to the most frequent and persistent concerns. I can articulate rationales for these (again, frame as an open question). If I could only do one thing to improve sustainability, I would map objectives and an annual review process so then a team would have the tools they need to start the process (save the assessment rubrics, which they should make to feel invested). Within a year, this could be implemented if prioritized. I would have to get faculty interested and probably provide some sample rubrics.