Resistance is Futile: Constructing a Culture of Assessment

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We Are the Borg. You Will be Assimilated. Resistance is Futile.

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• Introductions
• Pretest
• Why do we need assessment? What does a culture of assessment look like?
• Kezar’s theory of change
• Recognizing and addressing resistance
• Steps, model program, and common elements
• Small colleges, what works
• Alignment with mission, vision, and values
• Case study
• Roundtable
• Exemplary assessment programs
• Posttest and evaluation
PRE-TEST

1. List two or more features of a culture of assessment in student affairs:

__________________________________________________________________

2. Offer approaches to combat resistance to assessment:

__________________________________________________________________

3. How does Kezar’s (2001) theory of change help you build a culture of assessment?

__________________________________________________________________

4. Describe at least one benefit of connecting an assessment plan to the mission and core values of the institution.

__________________________________________________________________
• Making the case for assessment: The burning platform* appeal
  – Increasing pressure
    • Internal from constituents
    • External from stakeholders
  – Justifying our existence in a state of declining resources
• The need to demonstrate effectiveness

*Piper Alpha oil rig fire in 1988 where survivors had to jump 150 feet into the freezing sea

Schuh & Upcraft 2001
What does a culture of assessment look like?

- Integrated into every activity
- Conducted for accountability and improvement
- Embedded in everyday practice
- Systematic
- Comprehensive
- Use of appropriate methods
  - Direct or indirect evidence
  - Quantitative or qualitative research
- Stakeholder involvement
- Assessing the assessment

Allen, Elkins, Henning, Bayless, & Gordon (2013)
Kezar’s (2001) theory of change is outlined by three stages (can be applied when adopting new assessment procedures)

- innovation
- adaptation
- diffusion
Innovation

Product
- CampusLabs
- SurveyMonkey
- iPad
- Feedback form

Procedure
- Soliciting newsletter articles
- Delegating data entry to interns

Process
- Exporting SPSS files to shared drive
- Administering surveys electronically
Your annual assessment report should include graphs generated using the CampusLabs data, and will be submitted electronically.

- Learning to login to CampusLabs and incorporating this into report-preparing routine.
- Saving time by not entering data by hand, or creating graphs in Excel.
Diffusion

Awareness

Interest

Evaluation

Trial

Adoption
Recognizing Resistance

• Struggling with change (Burke, 2011)
  – Afraid to lose something of value
  – People resist the imposition of change

• Types of resistance (Hambrick & Cannella, 1989, as cited in Burke, 2011)
  – Blind (afraid & intolerant of change)
  – Political (fearful of losing something of value)
  – Ideological (ill fated or in violation of values)
Addressing Resistance

• The degree to which people feel they have a choice in making a change will determine the degree of success (Burke, 2011)

• Blind—offer reassurance and allow time to pass
• Political—counter with negotiation
• Ideological—persuasion based on data

• Persuasive communication to overcome resistance depends on two key words (Jellison, 1993)
Steps in the assessment process
(Schuh & Upcraft, 2001)

1. Define the problem
2. Determine the purpose of the study
3. Decide where to get the information needed
4. Determine the best assessment methods
5. Conclude whom to study
Assessment process continued

6. Determine how data will be collected
7. Decide what instruments will be used
8. Determine who should collect the data
9. Figure out how the data will be analyzed
10. Determine the implications of the study for policy and practice
11. Report the results effectively
Model Assessment Program  (Schuh & Upcraft, 2001)

- Examine your mission
- Identify clients, customers, and students
- Needs assessment
- Cost effectiveness
- Satisfaction assessment
- Outcomes assessment
- Be prepared for the future
- Tell your story
Common Elements in Assessment Plans (Griffin 2013)

• Statement of mission and goals
• Student learning outcomes and/or program outcomes
  – Audience/Who
  – Behavior/What
  – Condition/How
  – Degree/How much
• Assessment method(s)
  – Quantitative
  – Qualitative
  – Mixed methods
Common Elements in Assessment Plans continued

- Assessment measure(s)
  - Direct
  - Indirect

- Implementation plan
  - Timeline
  - Who is responsible for carrying out the assessment
  - Other campus partners
  - Sampling details
Conditions that promote assessment for student affairs in small colleges (Seagraves & Dean, 2010)

• Support from the senior student affairs officer

• Informal, or lack of formal, expectations

• Belief in assessment as a means to improvement

• A collegial atmosphere
Aligning assessment efforts with mission, vision, and values of the institution is key to:

- Accreditation reporting
- Showing the data
- Proving your value
Small, independent, liberal arts college
Student Affairs has not had any coordinated assessment efforts to date. With accreditation coming in two years, the vice president has asked for volunteers to serve on a committee led by the Assistant Dean of Students. The committee will have a budget of $2000. The Assistant Dean is an enthusiastic champion of assessment efforts. Develop a strategy/approach for how they would create a culture of assessment at that institution.

Medium-sized, comprehensive, public university
There is no office or staff working with assessment. The vice president for student affairs has asked the Director of Housing to pull together a group to develop an assessment plan, but has no resources to allocate immediately. Develop a strategy/approach for how they would create a culture of assessment at that institution.

Large, public or independent, research university
The division of student affairs has a staff member in the vice president’s office working exclusively on assessment. There has been a divisional assessment committee for the last five years with representatives from each functional area. The committee is trying to get more people from their respective units to embrace assessment and see it as a needed competency for all staff. Develop a strategy/approach for how they would create a culture of assessment at that institution.

Community college
The division of student services has been tasked with developing and implementing an assessment plan for their units because accreditation is coming next year. Assessment has been a standing committee with varied results year-to-year. There is no staff support, but a budget of $1000 has been allocated. As the assistant vice president for student services, you need to make this happen. Develop a strategy/approach for how they would create a culture of assessment at that institution.
Roundtable

• How does your institution handle assessment in student affairs?

• Do you have a culture of assessment?

• Have you experienced resistance to assessment efforts?
**Qualities of an exemplary assessment program**

- Presence (web, publications)
- Relationship with Institutional Research
- Tie to mission of unit, division, university
- Effectively tell your story (marketing)
- Consistency in the process
- Win an assessment award
- Create a “culture of assessment”
Post-Test

• Pre and post-test will evaluate the learning outcomes of this presentation, which concurrently serves as an example of an assessment based on learning outcomes

• Highlighting direct vs. indirect measures of the learning outcomes of the program (e.g., evidence that learning is taking place)
References


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  – Center for the Study of Student Life http://slra.osu.edu/

• Miami University
  – Assessment and Research http://www.units.muohio.edu/saf/research/

• Council for the Advancement of Standards
  – Assessment Services http://www.cas.edu/index.php/standards/

• ACPA Commission for Assessment and Evaluation
  – http://www2.myacpa.org/assessment-home

• NASPA Knowledge Community on Assessment, Evaluation and Research
  – http://www.naspa.org/kc/saaer/default.cfm

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  – http://www.albany.edu/studentsuccess/assessment/

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  – http://studentaffairs.unt.edu/research/data