

ENMU-Roswell ASL Project

Response - Version 1

2018-07-23

What are some strengths of this project/Academy work? Why are these strengths?

Wanda Baker

In the very first sentence of your write-up, you acknowledged the importance of keeping things simple. Yes!!! Keep reminding yourself of this. Your energy and motivation can make it tempting to start adding on interesting things you saw another school doing, then your own work can start to get away from you. Start by building a basic system focused on good assessment practice; you can always come back later and add more.

It's clear that you understand that you have a lot of work to do, and that you aren't locked into a specific approach just yet. I can see that you "listened and learned" at the Roundtable, and that you appear to be finding some resources online or at conferences. It's good to see what's out there and find things that adhere to good practice and fit your institutional context.

Your emphasis on good communication with stakeholders and ongoing training opportunities for faculty are essential for your success. It's good that you're building this in from the beginning.

I like that you will be aligning outcomes to the strategic plan. People often forget to do that.

Assessment skits? Neat! Who says assessment can't be fun?

Susan Hatfield

Wanda does a great job of summarizing the strengths of the proposed project. Starting with one area will help build the foundation for changing the culture. There is also a very clear timeline for the next year and appears to be a strong commitment to the Academy!

What remains unclear or what questions do you still have about this work to assess and improve student learning?

Wanda Baker

I'm listing several questions that came to mind as I read your write-up. These are mostly questions you might want to ask yourselves, if you haven't already considered them, but they're also to help me better understand where you're going with your project and where you might hit some speed bumps along the way.

What remains unclear or what questions do you still have about this work to assess and improve student learning?

1. You talked about communicating assessment expectations " ... to all players ... " and the importance of " ... clear and consistent communications." Have you identified who all those players (your assessment stakeholders) are, and what kinds of communication will be needed with various stakeholder groups? For example, some groups (perhaps your Board and senior leadership) may prefer to receive periodic briefings on your progress, while faculty will be wondering what's going to be asked of them in terms of workload and whether assessment will make their jobs or their programs vulnerable. I see that you've started building out a website and are planning other ways to communicate. That's good to see; I'd just encourage you to also think about ways to get important information to people who may not visit the website, and how to tailor the message and the medium for your various stakeholder groups.
2. You've emphasized the importance of a culture of assessment. What would that look like for ENMU-R?
3. How do you plan to build "an entirely new assessment system?" Some schools prefer to design each element of a system on their own; others explore what others are doing and take pieces here and there and others adopt study another school and adopt their methods for themselves. Do you have a plan at this stage for what you'll do and how you'll go about it?
4. Have you thought about the kinds of topics you want to cover in the faculty workshops you're planning? Will they be various topics of interest; more of a series to train faculty on the new system as it's being built, tested, and refined; or maybe something else?

Susan Hatfield

What is the current climate on campus -- is this a good time for this initiative? You may want to consider acknowledging that assessment is something that faculty already do, on an almost daily basis in their classrooms. I think a lot of initiatives get off to a bad start when the assumption is that faculty do not already do assessment. At the same time, remember to keep focused on student learning. You can have a culture of assessment without learning. But you can't have a culture of learning without assessment.

What are some critical things to which the institution should pay attention as it plans its work for the next six months?

Wanda Baker

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Keep in mind that faculty attrition and turnover is a constant on any campus; you may want to consider ways you can offer these opportunities as video recordings or archived webinars as new people come on board.

As you move forward, you will want to set target dates by which all ENMU-R programs will (a) have learning outcomes in place; (b) have completed at least two assessment cycles; (c) use assessment results for budget and planning; and (d) have documentation of tracking of any actions taken as a result of assessment data - and any impact on student learning.

Keep in mind your campus climate as you make the transition from "vultures of assessment" to "culture of assessment" what do you expect the campus climate to be in response to this shift? Consider the perceptions of the "progress monitors" ... will they be the assessment police or the assessment buddies? Along the way you will also need to think about how will you get more reluctant people -and those who are willing yet struggling to master what's expected of them - on board and up to speed. Also, understanding what kind of support you will need from administration and if your approach will be carrots or sticks (or both) will be important.

In the past, you've had varying degrees of assessment quality from programs, and you've also had institutional ups and downs. That's a common problem. It would make sense at this early stage to reflect on what has happened in the past and commit to making sure it doesn't happen this time.

You might find it useful to begin building genuine continuous improvement into every aspect of your assessment work from the beginning. Think about how to reflect, refine, and improve internal processes that are ultimately focused on the continuous improvement of student learning. I'm seeing that you have plans to pilot, revise, and improve, but are you thinking about long term improvement of your practices?

In particular, you'll want to think about how you focus on the improvement of student learning. Are there steps you can build into your model to keep the attention on learning? As you begin to collect assessment data and make decisions based on those data, how will you track any impact your follow-up actions have on student learning?

At my prior institution, I had a colleague who used to remind everyone that, "No matter what we do or how we do it, we can always do it better." I keep that in mind as I look for ways to improve my own practice so that I can impact student learning.

I hope you'll think about the questions and ideas and if there are items that would impact early or long-term success, begin to address those in this early stage.

Susan Hatfield

Wanda's comments are very thorough and on target. They will be useful to keep in mind as you move through the first year of your project. Ultimately, you want to remind yourself to not lose

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sight of your end game -- to document and improve learning -- while you are developing processes and methods.

What are some other possibilities or resources that might contribute to the success of this project? For instance, can you suggest resources such as books, benchmarks, instruments, models, and processes?

Wanda Baker

Here are some resources I've found useful:

National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA). If you aren't familiar with NILOA, I encourage you to explore the web site (link below) and sign up for the monthly newsletter. The best way I know to describe NILOA is a central repository of high-quality assessment information and resources. I hope you'll take a few minutes to explore their web site and see if anything might be useful to you. I get the monthly newsletter and I learn something from every one. I've added a link below to their web site.

<http://learningoutcomesassessment.org/>

A Simple Model for Learning Improvement: Weigh Pig, Feed Pig, Weigh Pig (Fulcher, Good, Coleman, and Smith) NILOA commissions a series of papers by scholars in the field of assessment, each focused on a specific topic. This one focuses on the iterative nature of assessment and how assessment alone does not improve student learning.

http://learningoutcomesassessment.org/documents/Occasional_Paper_23.pdf

Outcomes-Based Academic and Co-Curricular Program Review: A Compilation of Institutional Good Practices (by Marilee J. Bresciani Ludvik and Ralph Wolff) What they call program review in this book is actually assessment. One of the best books on assessment I've read. It's full of useful information, with examples from various institutions. It's focused on building and implementing a new assessment system, with suggestions for how to communicate with stakeholders, getting faculty buy-in, etc. I'd really encourage you to take a look at it. I paid around \$20 for it.

Assessing Performance: Designing, Scoring, and Validating Performance Tasks 1st Edition by Robert L. Johnson, James A. Penny, Belita Gordon. This is a book I recommend to everyone I do

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assessment work with. It may be more useful to you further down the road as you begin working on rubrics. It is an excellent resource for designing performance tasks, designing scoring rubrics, and using the rubrics effectively. I went to grad school with two of the authors, and worked on multiple research projects with the other; they are among the best at what they do. It's an inexpensive and practical work aimed at practitioners rather theoretical types.

IUPUI Assessment Institute. Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) hosts an annual assessment institute. I attend and present every year, and I always learn something new.

<http://assessmentinstitute.iupui.edu/>

Assessment 101: Five Steps to Continuous Improvement of Student Learning. I wrote a handbook that I use in my work as an assessment director to teach faculty how to develop outcomes, measures, etc., and how to use their assessment results to improve student learning. It provides examples at each step, with space for the reader to draft his/her own work, then check the work against a checklist of guidelines. I've uploaded a PDF copy to Dropbox. If you're interested, you can download it and see if there's anything you can use.

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/ajky2hvh8hwoipy/Assessment%20Handbook%20-%20Oct%202017.pdf?dl=0>

If you want to discuss any of my questions or comments, please feel free to contact me.

Susan Hatfield

Wanda has provided a solid list of resources that you might find helpful as you move forward!