Integrating Assessment with Teaching and Learning Excellence: A Proactive Model

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Session Description
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In 2017 the Association for the Assessment of Learning in Higher Education (AALHE) established a Knowledge Development Task Force (KDTF) with a broad mission to contribute to the body of scholarship related to student learning assessment. The current focus of the KDTF is to identify characteristics that are associated with institutions that have integrated the assessment process and practices with curriculum and instructional development and improvement practices to maximize student learning. KDTF members have been exploring how current assessment practices at various classifications of higher education institutions a) focus upon and influence curriculum design and redesign; b) deliberately use assessment for instructional planning, professional development, and implementation of effective pedagogy; and c) emphasize continual maximization/optimization of student learning.

While exploration is still ongoing, our findings to date suggest approaches that academic leadership can pursue in order to explicitly and proactively connect student learning assessment with teaching and learning.

In the past academic year, members of the KDTF began reviewing journal articles and other publications for the purpose of identifying institutions and scholarship that address the integration of curriculum and instructional planning with the assessment process, thereby enabling programs and units to focus on continual improvement of the curriculum, instruction, and student learning. (See Selected Reference List). To this point, the ongoing review is seeking to identify the characteristics of such processes as well as challenges or inhibiting factors. The literature revealed that culture of assessment is defined differently across institutions and that context has significant impact on processes. Accreditation/reporting continues to be viewed as the major goal for conducting assessment.

Concurrently with the literature review, KDTF members examined the websites of approximately twenty institutions that had been proposed by nationally recognized assessment experts as potential exemplars of this organizational culture. We were explicitly seeking evidence of institutions that <u>systematically</u> weave assessment into curriculum and instructional planning and improvement processes. To date, we do not have definitive examples of institution-wide cultures that intertwine assessment, curricular, and instructional practices to enhance student learning. Many institutions, however, can point to "pockets of excellence," e.g., programs, departments, schools or colleges where assessment and learning improvement are inextricably linked.

Both the literature review and institutional reviews are continuing into the 2019-20 academic year. In addition, assessment professionals, faculty development professionals, academic leadership and faculty at the most promising institutions will be surveyed in Fall 2019. Preliminary survey findings will be shared at the conference session.

While the primary focus of the AALHE KDTF is at the institutional level, the presenters believe that the integrated culture for which we advocate must begin in programs, departments, schools and colleges. The purpose of this presentation is to inspire further "pockets of excellence" which will ultimately pervade the institutional landscape.

Toward this end, we will discuss the research findings up to this point and will introduce activities that illustrate these findings and to demonstrate their potential value to departments/programs. We propose the following outline:

Introductions and purposes of the project   10-15 min

Case studies (attached) – 2 scenarios – 1 proactive/integrated, 1 reactive   20 min
Participants divide into smaller groups to discuss focused questions (See Draft attached).

The full group reconvenes to discuss advantages and disadvantages   15-20 min
of the proactive and reactive approaches

Presenters share their work, emphasizing the role of academic leadership   20 min
          Planning vs responding
          Examples from literature
          Institutional characteristics/ survey findings

Think/Pair/Share – Participants reflect on what organizational structures   20 min
currently support or impede the integration of assessment with teaching
and learning at their own institutions, followed by a quick debrief to address
lingering questions/thorny impediments and introduce the final exercise

Individual activity – planning concrete action steps (See Draft attached)   15 min
Presenters will circulate and "consult" one-on-one as needed

Selected Reference List

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