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Engaging Faculty to Foster a Culture of Assessment

Melissa K. Garno
Georgia Southern University, mel@georgiasouthern.edu

Kathy Thornton
Georgia Southern University, kthorn@georgiasouthern.edu

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Session Objectives
This presentation will discuss faculty development in the area of assessment through the following objectives:

- Describe the history and challenges of an institution-wide focus on assessment.
- Explore faculty development initiatives to engage faculty in assessment.
- Overview the strategies implemented at the institutional level to initiate a culture change among faculty.
- Discuss the efforts and results of faculty engagement at the departmental level.

History of Assessment at Georgia Southern University

- 1990’s – program and institution had system
- 2000’s – Administrative changes; less emphasis on academic assessment; Each college had own system; Those with external accreditors had process, others did not.
- 2005 – SACS reaffirmation visit identified AA as weakness.
- 2009 – recharged focus on AA at institutional level with adoption of WEAVEOnline
- 2010 – Office of Institutional Effectiveness Created
- 2011 – Put on monitoring report by SACS; Dropped WEAVEOnline; New institutional process established
- 2013 – Successful outcome in 2013

Challenges:

- Assessment was decentralized and inconsistent
- Some academic programs were not engaged in assessment activities
- Other academic programs did not distinguish between course grades and assessment processes
- Assessment initially became an exercise in report writing
- Success was measured by “turning the box green” upon uploading reports

Challenges:

- No consistent process of assessment across the institution
- No consistent reporting format required at the institutional level
- Faculty inexperienced in engaging in a structured assessment process
- It is still:
  - Often undertaken to satisfy accreditation demands
  - Externally mandated by the administration
  - Confused with evaluation
  - Not well understood as a vehicle for improving/maximizing what we do

Assessment Model Adopted:
What we did institution-wide:

Created team members
- AA steering committee – 2 reps from each college
- Evaluate reports
- 3 subcommittees
  - AA policy subcommittee
  - Rubric development subcommittee
  - Symposium subcommittee
- 3 Program Assessment Leaders – assigned to respective colleges

Institutional Faculty Development efforts:

- Summer Retreats
  - 3 day retreat for all faculty to learn about cycle
    - Educational
    - Supported by stipends
  - Report writing retreats with available support
    - Participatory
    - Supported by stipends
    - 77% representation in 2013;
    - 87% representation in 2014

Institutional Faculty Development efforts:

- Workshops
  - Action plan workshop
  - Rubric development workshop
  - New faculty orientation workshops
  - Assessment symposium
    - 2013 Attendance: 36
    - 2014 Attendance: 56

Institutional Faculty Development efforts:

- What did you find most valuable from the panel discussion?
  - Faculty from diverse programs discussing how assessment is implemented differently
  - Clarifying the difference between assignments and measures
  - Knowing how important it is to 'close the loop'

- How might you implement information shared during the panel discussion in your courses/programs?
  - Good to think about bringing it back to the classroom
  - Education bridged their accreditations and assessment... We should too!
  - Routine discussions of assessment evidence with all program faculty to identify action plans and future development of program

Institutional Faculty Development efforts:

- Spring faculty meetings highlighting benefits
  - AA subcommittee organized volunteers from programs to share personal growth stories
  - Refreshments served!

- One-on-one working with faculty responsible for reporting
  - PALS had working meetings with faculty, program directors, chairs, associate deans, deans; Educating and assisting in documenting assessment process

Faculty Development Within the School of Nursing:

- Faculty inclusion
  - Faculty meetings include monthly standing agenda items with action plan updates
  - Faculty involved in data analysis at end of semester
  - Faculty collectively develop action plans post analysis
  - Final report is representative of all program faculty even though prepared by program director
Faculty Development Within the School of Nursing:

- Faculty inclusion
  - Curriculum mapping workshops
  - Ensure no gaps in student learning
  - Examine validity of measures – Identify where and how student learning is measured, is it appropriate for outcomes?
  - Examine consistency of faculty expectations
  - Educate new faculty on curriculum

- Connect Assessment to current P & T criteria
  - Teaching: Assessment process informs faculty of student learning and teaching effectiveness; discuss in portfolio and annual evaluations
  - Scholarship: Opportunities for SoTL projects
  - Service: opportunities for committee involvement (AASC, Ad Hoc: leadership role assignments, standardized data base project)

Results:

- Institution-wide:
  - All programs use consistent assessment process and format for reporting
  - Regained compliance with accrediting body standards
  - Disciplines can talk with each other in common language
  - Fosters interprofessional collaboration in designing teaching/learning endeavors

- School of Nursing:
  - Improved collaboration among faculty (Ad hoc groups formed to work on curriculum projects)
  - Better buy-in
  - Better understanding of implementing assessment
  - Faculty have more ownership of curriculum
  - More focus is on student learning and what students get out of their program

Recommendations:

- Ongoing faculty development
  - Faculty turnover
  - Varied competency levels
  - Sustaining a culture that values academic assessment
  - Promoting continued faculty involvement
  - Resist reverting back to the monitoring program effectiveness as an administrative concern

- Increase collaboration across programs within the SON; Improve consistency in assessment practices
  - Form a single outcomes committee that includes all programs in the school
    - Look at measures
    - Explore student-centered practices
    - Ensure every program is cohesive with the framework of the school