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Nursing's Role in Developing and Implementing an Academic Assessment Process at a Comprehensive State University

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Nursing’s Role in Developing and Implementing an Academic Assessment Process at a Comprehensive State University

Melissa Garno, EdD, RN, Associate Professor, BSN Program Director
Kathy Thornton, PhD, RN, Associate Professor, RN-BSN Program Director

Session Objectives

This presentation will discuss the collaborative role of the School of Nursing (SON) during the adoption of an institution-wide assessment process through the following objectives:

- Describe the history and challenges of an institution-wide focus on assessment.
- Overview the strategies implemented at the institutional level to initiate a culture change among faculty.
- Explore how the SON collaborated with interdisciplinary departments to model assessment of student learning at the programmatic level to measure program effectiveness.
- Discuss the 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

What we did institution-wide:

- Implementation:
  - Singular Assessment model adopted
  - Reporting format adopted for use across institution adapted from James Madison University
    - Mission/Purpose statement
    - Outcomes/Objectives
    - Measures
    - Types of measures and the relationship between measures and outcomes
    - Data collection and integrity
    - Targets
    - Findings
    - Presentation of results
    - Interpretation of results
    - Action Plans

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:

- Select or develop measurable student learning outcomes
- Make adjustments in course content and teaching and learning strategies to address weaknesses and strengths
- Analyze assessment results
- Measure student learning outcomes

Academic Assessment Process

What was done:

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

Nursing’s involvement
- Always one nursing faculty member of AA steering committee
- Evaluated reports
- 3 subcommittees
  - Nursing faculty on AA policy subcommittee
  - Nursing faculty chaired Rubric Development subcommittee
- Nursing faculty one of three Program Assessment Leaders – assigned to COE and CHHS

Series of workshops and retreats offered to educate faculty

- 3 day retreat for all faculty to learn about cycle
- Supported by stipends
- Report writing retreats with available support
- Participatory
- Supported by stipends
- 77% representation in 2013;
- 87% representation in 2014
- Nursing heavily involved in modeling activities...

Exemplars from Nursing’s Assessment Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit Name</th>
<th>Exemplars from Nursing’s Assessment Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary Purpose</td>
<td>The School of Nursing provides comprehensive and innovative nursing programs that promote health and quality of life using a global perspective. The School’s hallmark embraces the core values of holism, diversity, social and ethical accountability, transcultural competence, leadership, and citizenship. The faculty promotes critical thinking and competence in evidence-based nursing practice. Scholary activities and dissemination of knowledge address vulnerable populations, health promotion, and nursing education. Through collaboration, faculty, staff, and students serve the university, the community, practice environments, and the nursing profession. Graduates of the academic programs meet nursing-related health needs and address both health and health care disparities with an emphasis on vulnerable populations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standards</td>
<td>Stakeholders: vulnerable populations, Primary Activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Characteristics of Targets:

- Acceptable target level:
  - What is the minimum level of achievement that you expect of students on any given measure to be successful?
  - How did faculty decide on this level?
  - How many students do you expect to meet the minimum?
- Desired target level:
  - Higher level of achievement that you strive to see in your students.
  - How did the faculty arrive at this desired target?
  - How many students do you think is reasonable to meet this level?
  - What is the decision based on?

Example of Targets in SON:

- Acceptable level:
  - 90% of graduating seniors will reach “competent” levels on all selected elements related to student learning outcomes on their senior capstone project.
- Desired level:
  - In addition, 50% of the students will reach “outstanding” on three of the five rubric elements. These targets are based on an analysis of previous student performance conducted by program faculty at last year’s annual planning retreat.

Exemplars from Nursing’s Assessment Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Portfolio Findings</th>
<th>Student Ratings</th>
<th>Faculty Ratings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2011</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>2.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Level Average</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>2.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Portfolio Findings</th>
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<th>Faculty Ratings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2013</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>1.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Level Average</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exemplars from Nursing’s Assessment Process

**Correct Report of Portfolio Findings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Self-Evaluation Mean</th>
<th>Faculty Evaluation Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td>Apply core knowledge and problem-solving principles in evidenced-based decision-making to provide therapeutic nursing care within a health promotion framework.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>2.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td>Assume responsibility and accountability for professional nursing roles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>2.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td>Apply scholarly inquiry and analysis for decision making, critical reasoning, and creative thinking to improve nursing practice thereby enhancing healthcare outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>1.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td>Incorporate caring, compassion, and empathy in all aspects of nursing practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>2.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td>Develop collaborative partnerships to promote, maintain, and restore health.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>2.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td>Apply leadership principles in nursing practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>2.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td>Demonstrate competence incorporating healthcare information and technology in providing nursing care.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>2.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Series of workshops and retreats offered to educate faculty**

- SON collaborated in workshops...
  - Action plan workshop
  - Rubric development workshop
  - New faculty orientation workshops
  - Assessment symposium
    - 2013 Attendance 30
    - 2014 Attendance 76

**Institution-wide Results:**

- All programs use consistent assessment process and format for reporting
- Regained compliance with accrediting body standards
- Increased faculty involvement in the assessment process
- Greater emphasis on student learning /awareness of evaluating student learning instead of faculty teaching
- Disciplines can talk with each other in common language
- Fosters interprofessional collaboration in designing teaching/learning endeavors

**Recommendations:**

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