Communicating Assessment Results

(RE) Opening the Assessment Toolbox (Part 2)

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*Old Dominion University*

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The Commission on Colleges
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Presentation Outline

- Ways to Deliver Results
- Knowing your Audience
- Presenting Useable Results
- What is Assessment and Why Is It Important
- Using Graphics
- Oral Presentations
Ways of Delivering Assessment Results (not mutually exclusive)

- Written Report
- Web Presentation
- Handouts
- Graphics Tables and Charts
- Oral Presentation
- Mixed Formats

Know Your Audience

- Fac/Dept Chair: 31%
- Dean/Provost: 21%
- VP/Exec: 11%
- Inst Eff/Res: 19%
- Other: 18%

Communicating Assessment Results
Appreciating Multiple Perspectives

• With regard to assessment results, what are the concerns of . . .
  – Presidents . . .
  – Provosts . . .
  – Department Chairs/Faculty . . .
  – Institutional Effectiveness/Assessment/ Institutional Research Officers . . .
  – Others On Campus . . .
  – External Constituencies

• Liberal arts and sciences vs. professional academic programs
  – Presence or absence of professional/ specialized accreditation requirements
  – Licensure/certification requirements of graduates
  – World view differences
  – Research methods and standards of evidence

Moving from Analysis to Presentation

• Knowing when to leap from analysis to presentation
• Discussing methodology – with a roomful of experts with differing opinions – be prepared to defend your position
• Use of triangulation across different types of data collections – look for converging evidence
**Presenting Usable Results**

- Presenting assessment results in such a way that they can be used to support decisions and make changes
- Organized, coherent, telling a story
- Know what the key decisions are
- Look for teachable moments
- Be prepared to provide just-in-time analyses

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**Delivering Meaningful Results**

- To some extent, depends on quality of research design and execution . . .
- Major goal in providing assessment results:
  - Does the format and presentation paint a clear picture of the meaningful, actionable results?
  - Can a policy decision be made based on the data provided?
Explaining What Assessment Is and Why it is Important

• When you prepare to present assessment results, you should be prepared to:
  – Respond to challenges regarding the legitimacy and motivation of assessment activities
  – Explain the importance of assessment and its role in improving academic programs (and not “administrative busy work”)
  – Defend the choice of various methodologies
  – Explain that assessment is not being used for the purpose of faculty evaluation

Explaining What Assessment Is and Why it is Important

• A common question:
  – We give the students grades, so shouldn’t that be enough to demonstrate they have mastered the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required?
  – Yes, for the purpose of certifying student satisfactory course completion
  – No, for the purpose of assessing the effectiveness of the program

• An important distinction:
  – Measuring student performance and assessing the effectiveness of the program (using student learning outcomes)
  – Goal: using program objectives/student learning outcomes as the basis for program assessment
Jim Nichols’ Grade Book Analogy: How you can use student performance to assess program strengths and weaknesses? – a way to conceptualize the process

Typical Grade Book

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grading Dimensions</th>
<th>Student Performance</th>
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<td>Student</td>
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Typical Grade Book

- Rows represent individual students
- Dimensions across the top most typically represent measures of student performance at various points in time and/or results from different measures or instruments
- Student performance at the end of the semester is summarized and a course grade results.
- Student performance may vary across the columns, but, in general, is not important in summarizing student performance in each row.
- Presumably, the objectives or targeted learning outcomes are met on the average, but does not allow a close examination, but an overall summary.

Adding Learning Outcomes

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<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Outcome 1 Desc.</th>
<th>Outcome 2 Desc.</th>
<th>Outcome 3 Desc.</th>
<th>Outcome 4 Desc.</th>
<th>Outcome 5 Desc.</th>
<th>Outcome 6 Desc.</th>
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Adding Student Learning Outcomes as Column Dimensions

- Unit of analysis changes from an individual course to the academic program
- Individual student performance is mapped based on achievement of particular outcomes
- Achievement of each outcome may be measured at one or more times and in one or more ways during the course of the program

Focus on the Columns: Learning Outcomes

- As in the grade book previously, analyzing the row data results in a summary of individual student performance.
- HOWEVER, analysis of the column achievement should identify strengths and weaknesses of the program which are not apparent when looking at student summary data only.
A Conceptual and Functional Tool

• Again, how the student performance data is mapped into this matrix can vary depending on the particular measures used.

• Once particular strengths and weaknesses are identified, analysis of how the curriculum is delivered should ensue.

A Concrete Example
Political Science
B.A./B.S. Intended (Student) Outcomes

- Understanding of the central themes, concepts, and political institutions in political science.
- Develop analytical and critical thinking skills.
- Develop effective writing communication skills.
- Develop effective verbal communication skills.
- Students will learn research and methodological skills and develop effective computer skills.
- Students will gain multidisciplinary knowledge and a multicultural perspective.
## Political Science B.S./B.A.

### Learning Outcomes

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<th>Student</th>
<th>know concepts, institutions</th>
<th>analytical critical thinking skills</th>
<th>effective writing</th>
<th>effective verbal comm skills</th>
<th>res method, computing skills</th>
<th>multidisc know, multicult pers</th>
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### Column Measure - Average

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