Workshop for UH West O’ahu faculty, Friday, November 7, 2014.
Facilitator: Monica Stitt-Bergh

Slide 1

Why assess?
How to do it best!

Monica Stitt-Bergh
Assessment Office
University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa

Slide 2

Welcome & mahalo for coming

Aloha kakou. A little about me . . .
Topics

1. Assessment is like . . .
2. Assessment purpose, cycle, levels
3. How did we get here? (brief history)
4. Two assessment paradigms
5. Address challenges and barriers
6. Strategies to increase participation & strengthen assessment

Slide 4

Your Turn

Assessment is like ____[image]____
because _______________________.

Select an image to help you complete this sentence.
Assessment Cycle

1. Student Learning Outcomes
2. Sufficient learning opportunities
3. Collect evidence of learning
4. Evaluate and interpret evidence
5. Take action on results

Purpose of learning outcomes assessment

To improve

Improve student learning
Evolve the program to meet new demands
Learning outcomes assessment

Levels
  • Course
  • Degree program
  • General education program
  • Institution
How did we get here?

It all started last century...

Reports published in the 1980s

*Involvement in Learning*, National Institute of Education, 1984

*Integrity in the College Curriculum*, Association of American Colleges, 1985

*Time for Results*, 1986, National Governors Association

General outcry from businesses: college graduates are not ready for the workforce, in particular communication, problem-solving, teamwork.

In 1992, reauthorization of the Higher Education Act: new accountability provisions requiring accreditors to be more active in demanding evidence of student academic achievement [created the short-lived State Postsecondary Review Entities (SPREs)]

Accreditors responded by adding to their accreditation standards: evidence of student learning outcome achievement at the program and institutional level (some added a requirement for evidence at the course level).

By 2001, all regional accreditors required learning outcomes assessment.

In 2006, the Spellings Commission, as it’s called put out an influential report that highlighted learning assessment and also graduation rates and the cost of education.

On top of this, data showed that USA lagging behind other developed nations in producing college graduates
This cartoon sums it up.

The old method of accreditation was that institutions had to document that they taught students. Now, accreditors and the Federal Department of Education are no longer satisfied with faculty teaching students. They want documentation that students learned.

Accreditation previously required institutions to list the “inputs” and resources: What was taught, library size, number of faculty, credentials of faculty, financials, laboratory square footage, etc. Now we are required to demonstrate that students learned. Reporting course grades and credits earned are insufficient.
Some educational researchers concluded that higher education was not producing student learning because the curriculum was a collection of individual, disjointed courses that did not result in learning that lasted or that met students’ needs after graduation. It’s the buffet style of education.

There is a desire for students to experience coherent, cohesive curriculum. For institutions under WASC senior commission, this is called the “meaning and integrity of the degree.”
Learning outcomes assessment plus scorecards or rankings
E.g., Postsecondary Institution Rating System (PIRS)

Competency-based degree programs
Learning outcome assessment= degree (no seat time)

It appears as if program-level learning outcomes assessment requirements are entrenched.

However, primary attention has shifted to PIRS and tying financial aid to success markers of graduation and retention by different ethnic groups.

In addition, Federal government changes have opened the door for competency-based degree programs: Capella, Western Governor’s, and new programs offered by Purdue, Michigan, Wisconsin.

Before the 2015 school year, the Department of Education plans to develop a new ratings system to help students compare the value offered by colleges and encourage colleges to improve. These ratings will compare colleges with similar missions and identify colleges that do the most to help students from disadvantaged backgrounds as well as colleges that are improving their performance. The results will be published on the College Scorecard. The Department has been developing these ratings through public hearings around the country to gather the input of students and parents, state leaders, college presidents, and others. Currently, the ratings will be based upon such measures as:

- Access, such as percentage of students receiving Pell grants;
- Affordability, such as average tuition, scholarships, and loan debt; and
- Outcomes, such as graduation and transfer rates, graduate earnings, and advanced degrees of college graduates.

By 2018, the plan is to base student aid on the new rating system. Over the next four years, the Department of Education will refine the measurements, while colleges have an opportunity to improve their performance and ratings. The Administration will seek legislation using this new rating system to transform the way federal aid is awarded to colleges once the ratings are well developed. Students attending high-performing colleges could receive larger Pell Grants and more affordable student loans.
Handout: page 2 of the blue handout.

There are 2 paradigms of assessment, “assessment for continuous improvement” and “assessment for accountability.”

In the continuous improvement column, you see that it is formative, for improvement. The stance is internal: assessment is within the campus. The ethos is engagement – faculty participate and lead assessment. The campus uses multiple instruments, can collect quantitative data scores on an exam and qualitative data such as written projects and oral presentations. The campus can establish goals and compare against itself across time. There are multiple internal channels of communication and the emphasis is on an internal feedback loop.

In the assessment for accountability column, you see that the purpose is for summative judgment. The stance is external: assessment activities primarily involve entities outside the campus. The ethos is compliance. The instruments are standardized like the ACT, SAT, Bar exam, professional engineering exam. The evidence is quantitative. The shared reference point allows for comparison across institutions or to a fixed standard. The campus makes its achievements publically known and the results are used primarily for external reporting.
Your Turn

Where do you fall on the assessment paradigm continuum?

Faculty (in general) on campus?

Administrators?

Handout: On the yellow handout, please take 3 minutes to complete page 1.

Write “me” on the arrow where you fall.
Write “F” for faculty.
Write “A” for administrators.

Use what you know. Make an educated guess if you need to.
With the paradigms in mind, how closely are you, faculty in general, and administrators aligned?

Look again at the page 1 of the yellow sheet.

How closely are you, faculty, and administrators aligned?

If you are far apart, that’s something to work on as a campus. It’s best to be working under the same paradigm and I suggest the “assessment for continuous improvement” paradigm because it fits with faculty members’ beliefs more than the other one and it satisfies regional accreditors.
When I’ve worked with faculty and administrators, their initial view of “assessment” in the context of higher education, is on the right of the continuum, Assessment for Accountability.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formative—for improvement</th>
<th>Summative—for accountability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation motivates</td>
<td>Compliance motivates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal (faculty)</td>
<td>External (testing agency)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance, “authentic,” local</td>
<td>Multiple-choice, standardized, external</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal feedback loops</td>
<td>Reports to external organizations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Many people are surprised to find out that in higher education, regional accreditors like WASC, actually fall on the left of the continuum, “Assessment for Continuous Improvement.”

There are some professional accreditors, such as the one that oversees Law School education, that are closer to the right and require external measures such as the Bar Exam.

But for most programs and institutions, the formative paradigm is encouraged and satisfies faculty and accreditors.
Formative, participatory, internal

**Primary strengths**
- Student & faculty motivation
- Results more likely to be used

**Primary challenges**
- Need local technical support
- Increased faculty workload

Summative, compliance, external

**Primary strengths**
- Comparisons across programs/institutions
- Perception of objectivity
- Takes less faculty time

**Primary challenges**
- Lack of student and faculty motivation
- Results typically more difficult to use
- Increased cost
The paradigm influences how assessment happens: the learning outcomes, the pedagogy, the collection of evidence.

For example, in the accountability paradigm, the program and institution need to collect evidence of learning using a standardized instrument so that results can be compared across institutions. This in turn changes what happens in the classroom because students need to be prepared.
We can have our rainbow cake and eat it too.

Regional accreditation requirements allow a lot of flexibility in how assessment is carried out and we can take advantage of that.

If you document these four items, you will have material to support campus re-accreditation.
Address Challenges & Barriers

Address fear

with purpose and guarantees about how results can be used.

Mālamalama (the light of knowledge)

I’ve learned to never underestimate the fear of assessment.

I’ve learned that no amount of data will convince some people. They have an emotional response and it’s usually related to how the results will be used. They worry that punitive measures will be taken. To address that, I emphasize the purpose is improvement and, on our campus, the Faculty Senate has guaranteed that results cannot be used to make high stakes decisions. Results are to be used for program improvement.
Address the belief that assessment is useless with success stories and emphasis on meaningful assessment projects.

Last option: student financial aid (accreditation)

Faculty are not convinced assessment is useful. They may see it as useless. They may believe course grades are sufficient. Because students graduate and get jobs, they question why bother with program or institutional assessment?

To address this, I tell them success stories from other programs. I ask them, is there a burning question about student learning that you’d like to know the answer to? E.g., why do students enter your class without knowing how to write a literature review?

Emphasizing that they can and should only do meaningful assessment projects is a useful strategy.

My last option is to play the accreditation card. We want students to receive financial aid. We want to continue receiving federal grants, etc.
Address faculty workload

Assessment can easily become too much

Faculty workload is an important issue. Assessment can easily become too much. Faculty can see themselves as this poor donkey.

Address faculty workload

with an assessment team approach
and
collaborative efforts on feasible projects.

One reason faculty can feel overburdened is because one person does everything. It’s much better is there is an assessment team. This also increases the likelihood that assessment results will be used for improvement. Collaborative efforts on a feasible project will lighten the load and increase the chance of assessment fulfilling its purpose.
Address faculty workload

by starting with an existing tool/procedure;

by considering technology solutions;

by starting small; pilot projects.

Three more ways to deal with workload:

1) Learning outcome assessment has going on for three decades and there are many resources to draw on, rubrics like the one pictured here.

1) Build learning outcome assessment into existing processes such as program review and departmental retreats.

2) Consider a technology solution for aligning SLOs, collecting evidence, evaluating evidence, documenting activities.

We use a locally-developed online reporting system that faculty members use to document assessment activities.

3) Always start small. While a portfolio of student learning is the platinum standard, it’s okay to go for the bronze and start small. Work up to something better over time.
"My thoughts about the value of measuring outcomes have changed over time, but there has been no single ‘conversion moment.’

Incrementally and cumulatively, I have begun truly to see the point of focusing on student learning, and that doing so has improved my teaching and my students’ learning."

Andrew Fort, Professor of Religion
Liberal Education, Vol 97, No. 1, 2011

Accept that change takes time.

Learning about Learning Outcomes: A Liberal Arts Professor Assesses By Andrew O. Fort
Liberal Education, Vol 97, No. 1, 2011
Strategies to Increase Participation

Public Recognition

- Ask Department Chairperson or other campus leader to publically recognize faculty involved in assessment
  - Spoken thank you in meetings
  - Letters of recognition
  - Notice of research publications related to program assessment
- Express your appreciation. Frequently say, “thank you.”
Slide 31

Interactive Department Meetings

• Use department meetings/retreats for assessment activities
• Have a desired outcome and an interactive process (more than talking heads)

Slide 32

Lead by Example

You and a colleague
• Do an assessment project yourself or with a like-minded colleague
  • Share results/recommendations with colleagues and the department; discuss next steps
  • Publish in a subject-area journal on teaching
Offer to Help

- Meeting facilitation by Assessment Committee member
- Find like-minded faculty in other departments
- Share examples from peer institutions
- Provide resources (e.g., Assessment Office website, books, articles)

Approaches to Strengthen Assessment handout

Skim the white handout “Approaches to Strengthening Assessment on Campus”
Do you have any questions about any of these?
Which strategy(ies) is right for you?

Mahalo!

Monica Stitt-Bergh, PhD
Assessment Office, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa
bergh@hawaii.edu
http://manoa.hawaii.edu/assessment
Two Paradigms of Assessment

Adapted from Peter Ewell\(^1\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Strategic dimensions</strong></th>
<th><strong>Assessment for Continuous Improvement</strong></th>
<th><strong>Assessment for Accountability</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Formative (improvement)</td>
<td>Summative (judgment)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stance</td>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>External</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predominant ethos</td>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td>Compliance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Application choices**

| Instrumentation          | Multiple/triangulation                    | Standardized                     |
| Nature of evidence       | Quantitative and qualitative              | Quantitative                     |
| Reference points         | Over time, comparative, established goal  | Comparative or fixed standard    |

**Communication of results**

| Multiple internal channels, external organizations, media | Public communication |

**Uses of results**

| Multiple, internal feedback loops | Reporting to external organizations |

Interactive Department Meeting

Amazing things can happen in a 30 minute meeting.

Tips

A. Create an action-oriented agenda with a desired outcome and process. Examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Desired Outcome</th>
<th>Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>finalize student learning outcomes list</td>
<td>by evaluating draft student learning outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>narrow a list of commercial tests to a best option</td>
<td>by evaluating alternatives and dot voting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>understand curriculum coherence and identify gaps</td>
<td>by creating and analyzing a curriculum map</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ways to use assessment results</td>
<td>by brainstorming a list of possible actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>improve the program by using assessment results</td>
<td>by prioritizing a list of actions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Redirect – after validation

C. Make contributions visible: Record ideas using markers + flip chart paper or computer + projector

D. Decide how to decide (e.g., consensus, 85/15 rule, super majority, simple majority)

E. Reserve the last 5-10 minutes to summarize, communicate praise for accomplishments, and state commitments/actions/next steps

---


You may use these materials only for nonprofit educational purposes. Please give credit/cite appropriately.
Assessment Paradigm Activity

1. Where do you fall on the continuum?
2. Where would you place faculty (in general)?
3. Administrators?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose of assessment</th>
<th>Formative—for improvement</th>
<th>Summative—for accountability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Philosophy of change</th>
<th>Participation motivates behavioral change</th>
<th>Compliance motivates behavioral change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility to conduct assessment</th>
<th>Internal (faculty)</th>
<th>External (testing agency)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evidence of learning</th>
<th>Performance, “authentic,” local</th>
<th>Multiple-choice, standardized, external</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| Primary use of assessment results | Internal feedback loops | Reports to external organizations |
Activity: Brainstorm strengths and challenges associated with each paradigm.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formative—for improvement</th>
<th>Summative—for accountability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation motivates behavioral change</td>
<td>Compliance motivates behavioral change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal (faculty)</td>
<td>External (testing agency)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance, “authentic,” local</td>
<td>Multiple-choice, standardized, external</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal feedback loops</td>
<td>Reports to external organizations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

List strengths:  

List challenges:  

List strengths:  

List challenges:
Approaches to Strengthening Assessment on Campus

1) Marketing
   a) Buy personalized poker chips and distribute to people who attend assessment workshops, submit reports on time, etc. 10 poker chips = small prize.
   b) Brand assessment as a positive and address misperceptions in flyers, bookmarks, coasters, etc.
   c) Public praise of programs’ assessment efforts by administration, Faculty Senate, or other campus leaders.
   d) Publish success stories (online or newsletter).

2) Always say thank you
   a) Whenever possible, have thank you memos signed by the chancellor, Faculty Senate chair, or other campus leader. Send copy to dean or division leader. Craft memos so faculty can submit as evidence for contract renewal, tenure, promotion.

3) Build faculty capacity to carry out assessment
   a) Offer hands-on workshops.
   b) Do consultations.
   c) Library of good assessment books.
   d) Send faculty to assessment training.

4) Build assessment into existing structures
   a) Department meeting; department retreats.
   b) Program Review & Program Approval.
   c) Budget allocation.
   d) Faculty Senate committee and other Senate procedures.

5) Give encouraging feedback on program’s assessment reports
   a) No black holes – let faculty know their reports are being read and used.

6) Have a web presence
   a) Create an assessment website that states the purpose and how results can be used.
   b) Link to the many other good sites on how to conduct assessment.

7) Encourage assessment projects that are meaningful to the faculty

8) Assessment Committee
   a) Locate interested, willing faculty members to be active members of an assessment committee. They can meet with other faculty to provide technical expertise and moral support.

9) Assessment Coordinator in each program to be the assessment leader and your contact person
   a) Personalize communication to the assessment coordinators by using an email merge program.

10) Competitive mini-grants for assessment projects

11) Start small
   a) Start with willing programs and expand, using them as success stories.
   b) Start with one general education learning outcome or one institutional learning outcome.

12) Use technology to manage data
   a) Make it easy to submit reports. The system can be simple: the equivalent of an online survey with a combination of closed-ended and open-ended questions.
   b) Consider purchasing an assessment management system.
   c) UH Mānoa College of Education has a system that integrates with Banner for you to use but you must provide the IT to implement and maintain.

You may use these materials only for nonprofit educational purposes. Please give credit/cite appropriately.
13) Friendly competition can motivate
   a) Internally, let units know where they stand in comparison to others on the extent to which assessment was conducted (e.g., stages of the assessment cycle). See chart below.
   NOTE: Keep this internal, for the unit’s eyes only. Include only elements of the cycle, not percent of students who met outcomes.

### Status of Assessment: Unit A and Campus (2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Unit A</th>
<th>Campus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SLOs exist</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum map exists</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning evidence collected</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Took action on results</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unit A: Blue | Campus: Orange