Closing the Loop: Making decisions based on the evidence

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June 9, 2012
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Agenda

- Closing the Loop
- Action Plans for the next year
- Final Thoughts
Process of Continuous Improvement

1. Establish Objectives and Outcomes
2. Provide learning opportunities
3. Collect and analyze learning data
4. Use results to improve teaching and learning

Needs to be done at each level of the University Structure
Implementation

O Common Problems
  O Methodological problems
    O Instrument in development; method misaligned with program goals
  O Human or administrative error
  O Response/participation rate programs
    O Insufficient numbers (few majors; reliance on adjuncts, convenience sample; poor response rate); insufficient incentives, motivation
    O High “costs” of administration
  O Document the programs; provides one set of directions for “closing the loop.”
Document everything!

- “If you didn’t document it, it never happened . . . “
Reminder: Where?

- Individual Classroom
  - Foretells potential problems
  - Not prepared
  - Heard material before
  - Connection of courses
  - Students understand it is continuous improvement
  - Formative

- Capstone Experience
  - Measures overall learning
  - Connection of different courses & learning & theories
  - Summative
Analyzing & Interpreting Data

O Think about how information will be examined, what comparisons will be made, even before the data are collected.

O Provide Descriptive Information
  O Percentages, means, summaries

O Provide Comparative Information
  O External norms, comparisons to other programs, other concentrations
Interpretations

- Identify patterns of strength
- Identify patterns of weakness
- Seek agreement about innovations, changes in educational practice, curricular sequencing, advising, etc. that program staff believe will improve learning.
Story

- Oral Communication Skills
  - 2009/2010 – developed rubric and tested it by listening/observing 12 student presentations.
  - 2010/2011 – gave to faculty to use
  - Asked question in Alumni Survey
  - Asked question on NSSE survey
    - Few students had experience
  - Formative & Summative
Establishing Standards/Criteria

- Four broad relationships
  - A standard was established that the students met.
  - A standard was established that students did not meet.
  - No standard was established.
  - The planned assessment was not conducted or not possible.

- Some Drawbacks to targets
  - Difficulties in picking the target number.
  - Results exceeding standard do not justify inaction.
  - Result not meeting standard do not represent failure.
Reporting

- Who to report to?
- Who is the audience for the report?
  - Administration
  - Accreditation
  - Advisory Board
  - Faculty
  - Students
Actually, closing the loop

- To be meaningful, assessment results must be studied, interpreted, and used.
- Using the results is called “closing the loop.”
- We conduct outcomes assessment because the findings can be used to improve our programs.
Why Close the Loop?

- To Inform Program Review
- To Inform Planning and Budgeting
- To Improve Teaching and Learning
- To Promote Continuous improvement
Ways to Close the Loop

- Curricular design and sequencing
- Restriction on navigation of the curriculum
- Weaving more of “x” across the curriculum
- Increasing opportunities to learn “x”

http://www.colorado.edu/pba/outcomes/overview/lchange.htm
Additional thoughts

- Strengthening advising
- Co-designing curriculum and co-curriculum
- Development of new model of teaching and learning based on research or others’ practice
- Development of learning modules or self-paced learning to address typical learning obstacles
From Article: “Engaging Departments in Assessing Student learning: Overcoming Common Obstacles”

- Assessment helps us figure out whether our students are learning what we think we’re teaching.
  —Chemistry faculty member

- Discussing how to go about assessing the intended learning outcomes of our major led to some of the best—and longest!—conversations we’ve ever had about pedagogy.
  —Romance languages faculty member

- Assessment played a key role in being awarded an NSF grant for curriculum and pedagogical innovation, and now that the grant is completed, we’re able to show convincingly that it had great results.
  —Psychology faculty member

- Assessment can be useful in the classroom insofar as it helps make our expectations more transparent to our students.
  —Political science faculty member.
Remember: Methods

- Even if the question is simply . . .
  - Are students performing . . .
    - Way better than *good enough*?
    - *Good enough*?
    - *NOT good enough*?

- The answer may depend on the assessment method used to answer the question!