Student Learning Outcomes: Shifting from Threat to Transformation

NISOD
May 28, 2012
As though you were the one at your institution providing leadership for the development/implementation/redesign of an assessment or institutional effectiveness process:

- Provide reframes on what assessment is and what it isn’t

- List considerations for establishing a culture that embraces (or is at least willing to consider) learning outcomes assessment and institutional effectiveness
Survey

What is your primary role with regard to the assessment of student learning outcomes or institutional effectiveness?

A = Faculty member
B = Administrator
C = Institutional researcher (data person)
D = Student
E = Other staff (student services)

Dr. Lee Ann Nutt, Lone Star College – Tomball, May 28, 2012
Survey

Rate your level of knowledge and experience with the identification and assessment of student learning outcomes:

A = Expert  I know all there is to know
B = Experienced I know enough to be dangerous
C = Intermediate I know enough to know I don’t know it all
D = Beginner I kind of know what this is about
E = Novice I’ve never heard any of this stuff before

Dr. Lee Ann Nutt, Lone Star College – Tomball, May 28, 2012
Survey

Which of the following is the most threatening about assessing student learning outcomes?

A = It doesn’t seem fair to assess what is taught when the students don’t care if they learn.
B = Assessing outcomes in college feels like a slippery slope toward a high school mentality.
C = People are afraid assessment data will be used against them.
D = That which I don’t understand is scary.
E = It’s not threatening.

Dr. Lee Ann Nutt, Lone Star College – Tomball, May 28, 2012
• Lone Star College System
  • Formerly North Harris Montgomery Community College District
  • 6 campuses around north Houston, Texas
  • 79,000+ students
  • 5,000+ employees
  • SACS Accredited – as one institution
  • One of the fastest growing community colleges in the United States
  • Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation - Completion By Design leader
  • Achieving the Dream institution
  • One of The Chronicle’s Best Community Colleges to Work For
Background/Context

- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
  - Reaffirmation Site Visit – October 2012
  - Recommendation on Institutional Effectiveness – “lack of an institutionalized institutional effectiveness process”
  - Redesigned IE process for assessment of student learning outcomes - Fall 2012
  - Not starting from Ground Zero

- Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
  - Core curriculum redesign
  - Academic Course Guide Manual project
Assessment Reframes

- What it is.

- What it isn’t.
What is assessment?
What it is. What it isn’t.

**ASSESSMENT**

focuses on the work to be done, the outcomes, and the impact on others—typically, the aggregate situation, not just the individuals.

**EVALUATION**

focuses on the work of the individuals—their contributions, effectiveness, creativity, responsibility, engagement, or whatever factors the organization deems most desirable.

Source: Dr. Jo Allen, Senior Vice President & Provost, Widener University
What it is. What it isn’t.

**INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS**

a continuous process of monitoring and assessing performance in order to enhance and upgrade operations of the college

**STRATEGIC PLANNING**

the process of setting short, intermediate, and long term goals within the context of current and predicted conditions of the internal and external environment

Source: Kansas City Kansas Community College

Dr. Lee Ann Nutt, Lone Star College – Tomball, May 28, 2012
Refrares

- Assessment is not about you.
- Assessment is not about teaching.
- Assessment is not about revealing what is wrong with teaching.
- Assessment is about students.
- Assessment is about learning.
- Assessment is about improving student learning.

Dr. Lee Ann Nutt, Lone Star College – Tomball, May 28, 2012
The SLO Paradigm Shift

- No longer should we ask, “What content will I cover in this class?”

- Rather, the question becomes, “What will the students learn?”
The big secret...

You are already doing this.
Culture Shift
At my institution ________:

A = during discussions about assessment we all hold hands and sing Kumbayah

B = we generally are not opposed to assessing learning outcomes, but we just don’t do it very well yet

C = even the mention of assessment of learning outcomes generates a firestorm

D = assessment? Learning outcomes? What’s that?
• It is required by external forces.
• If we don’t do it for ourselves, someone will do it for us.
• It is the right thing to do.

Dr. Lee Ann Nutt, Lone Star College – Tomball, May 28, 2012
We have to...

SACSCOC

- CR 2.1
- CS 3.3.1

THECB

- TAC
- GIPWE
- WECM
- ACGM

Dr. Lee Ann Nutt, Lone Star College – Tomball, May 28, 2012
If we don’t, someone else will.

- Massive standardized testing would not benefit the rich higher education system in the United States.
- Could subject us to strict governmental control.

Dr. Lee Ann Nutt, Lone Star College – Tomball, May 28, 2012
If we don’t, someone else will.

Faculty and administration TOGETHER must take ownership and responsibility and we must be leaders in the retention of peer review processes.

Dr. Lee Ann Nutt, Lone Star College – Tomball, May 28, 2012
Assessment enables us to:

- Showcase quality teaching and learning.
- Link courses together in a coherent sequence.
- Open up dialogue about what was taught, why it was taught, standards, expectations, etc.
- Improve curriculum where needed.
- Challenge students to take ownership of their learning.

Dr. Lee Ann Nutt, Lone Star College – Tomball, May 28, 2012
“If we undertake assessment just for the purpose of demonstrating accountability, we waste our time. We must do assessment in a way that we are getting information that faculty can actually use...”

-- Trudy Banta
It is the right thing to do.

- communicate clear expectations about what’s important in a course or program
- inform them that they will be evaluated in a consistent and transparent way
- reassure them that there is common core content across all sections of a course
- allow them to make better decisions about programs based on outcomes results

Benefits for Students

Dr. Lee Ann Nutt, Lone Star College – Tomball, May 28, 2012
It is the right thing to do.

Benefits for Faculty

Answers the question:

Did my students learn what I wanted them to learn?
It is the right thing to do.

Benefits for Faculty

- help faculty determine what's working and what's not working in their courses or programs
- facilitates valuable interdisciplinary and intercampus discussions
- provide powerful evidence to justify needed resources to maintain or improve programs
- allows faculty to tell their story to individuals outside their area (e.g. administrators, politicians, employers, prospective students, transfer institutions)

Dr. Lee Ann Nutt, Lone Star College – Tomball, May 28, 2012
It is the right thing to do.

- provide reassurance that all faculty teaching a particular high demand course agree to address certain core content

Dr. Lee Ann Nutt, Lone Star College – Tomball, May 28, 2012
Keep it SIMPLE

- See through
- Institutionalized
- Meaningful
- Planned
- Local
- Engaging
Know, speak and act what you VALUE

- Faculty ownership
- Integrity
- Safety
- Inter – accountability
- Process clarity
Keeping it SIMPLE means:

- Meeting faculty (other administrators, staff, et al) where they are.
  - Knowing where they are.
  - Accepting where they are.
  - Starting where they are.

- Keeping the process manageable to elevate the meaning.
Keeping it SIMPLE means:

• Allowing for evolution of the process and growth of the people involved.

• Operationalizing definitions (e.g. objectives, outcome, department, program).
Keeping it SIMPLE – show connections

Student Learning Outcomes

Evidence that outcomes are addressed

Using data to make improvements

Dialogue about interpretation of data

Dr. Lee Ann Nutt, Lone Star College – Tomball, May 28, 2012
Be able to see it...

- Identify
  - Outcomes
  - Objectives

- Assess
  - Regularly
  - Meaningfully

- Report
  - Annually
  - Consistently

- Improve
  - Based on assessment
  - Visibly

- Improve
  - Based on assessment
  - Visibly
Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes Pathway

Step 1: Curriculum Team determines which course(s) and which student learning outcomes (SLO) to assess.

Step 2: Faculty complete SLO assessment.

Step 3: Faculty submit data to “discipline/department assessment liaison”.

Step 4: Assessment liaison aggregates data from all discipline faculty who collected data.

Step 5: Faculty review aggregated assessment data for their discipline at their college.

Step 6: Aggregate assessment data is input into Strategic Planning/Institutional Effectiveness database by assessment liaison.

Step 7: Campus instructional departments vet aggregated assessment results.

Step 8: Campus deans, Vice President of Instruction and President vet aggregated assessment results.

Step 9: Campus Assessment & Planning Council ensure IE process has been followed.

Step 10: Curriculum Team reviews aggregate assessment data, and collaboratively decides use of results.

Step 11: Assessment liaisons input “use of results” information into Strategic Planning/Institutional Effectiveness database.

Step 12: Campus Assessment & Planning Council ensure final steps of the cycle have been completed.

Step 13: Campus deans, Vice President of Instruction and President review use of results.
So hopefully….

- Reframes on what assessment is and isn’t.

- Considerations for establishing a culture that embraces (or is at least willing to consider) learning outcomes assessment and institutional effectiveness.
Thank You!

Dr. Lee Ann Nutt
Vice President of Instruction – Tomball
281-351-3378
LeeAnn.Nutt@lonestar.edu

http://lonestar.edu/tomball-vpi.htm