Facilitating Use of Program Assessment Results for Program Improvement

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Outline

1. How UH Mānoa used assessment
2. Strategies for program level assessment leaders
3. Strategies for institutional level assessment leaders
**Program Learning Outcomes Assessment**

**Definition**
An on-going process designed to monitor and **improve** student learning. Faculty: a) develop explicit statements of what students should learn (i.e., student learning outcomes); b) verify that the program is designed to foster this learning (alignment); c) collect data/evidence that indicate student attainment (assessment results); d) use these data to **improve student learning** (close the loop).

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The Assessment office was established in 2008 based on faculty senate recommendation. It reports to both faculty senate and the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. There are two faculty specialists currently in the office to carry out the mission of the office.
To what extent is this happening?

Slide 6

Over \(\frac{3}{4}\) programs used assessment twice in a five-year period

Data: 2015 Annual Program Assessment Reports
Sample: 151 reports from 164 programs that claimed use of results
Slide 7

**Major uses for enhancing learning**

- Assessment tools and procedures
- Course changes
- Program curriculum and policy
- Resources and personnel
- Student out-of-course experiences

Slide 8

46% of 164 programs made curricular changes

- 37% (A)
- 37% (C)
- 23% (P)
- 22% (S)
- 14% (R)
Examples

Course Changes
The faculty in the Natural Resources and Environmental Management M.S. Program studied the SLOs and their curriculum map. They identified the need for more depth of content coverage. To do so, they need to reduce the topics in a new core course. They used dot-voting to rank order priority topics.

They described this strategy in their poster presented at our Assessment for Curricular Improvement Poster Exhibit:
C: Assignment/Activities

Satisfactory results → further enhance critical analysis:
- Organized more structured class discussions
- Broke down assignments into smaller steps
- Clarified assignment instructions/directions

In Educational Foundations MEd program, the assessment results showed that all students met the standards (equivalent of student learning outcomes). Even so, faculty still want to further enhance students’ ability in critical thinking and analysis. Through faculty collaborative discussion and strategy sharing, they:
- Organized more structured class discussions
- Broke down assignments into smaller steps
- Clarified assignment instructions/directions

Link to the 2015 Assessment Report:
Pacific Islands Studies found their students’ writing dissatisfactory. They developed workshop modules to be integrated into individual courses. These workshops were offered by a senior editor and a graduate assistant. Course instructors, after sitting through the workshops with their students, started to teach the workshop themselves.

This is an example that curriculum improvement actions can function as professional development for instructors.

Link to the assessment poster:
The Economics BA program took an array of actions to improve student learning related to quantitative reasoning. The most commendable action is this cross-discipline collaboration with the math department to develop a new math course relevant to the field of economics.

They also
- offered Econ 420: Mathematical Economics on a regular basis.
- Requested TA support for Econ 130: Principles of Microeconomics.
Electrical Engineering BS: Achievement in SLO 12: Discrete Math is the lowest at 70% in comparison with the other outcome achievements. To increase this outcome achievement, the department took many actions:
- They required students to get a C instead of C- in a pre-requisite course to become a major.
- They created a new course EE362 which covers the materials in both the introductory Discrete Math course in ICS 141 and next level Discrete Math course in ICS 241. It is designed with solving engineering problems in mind. They also make EE362 a pre-requisite for an advanced computer algorithms course.

Link to their 2015 Assessment Report:
Through performance assessment, the faculty found students lacking animation design skills. They analyzed the curriculum and required students to go through the sequence of courses. The courses were designed to build upon each other in developing design skills. You can see the pictures next to the course clusters in each tier. They represent what students can do at each level.

Link to the assessment poster:
In the Professional Educational Practice (EdD) program, the assessment results lead to their decision to increase students’ satisfactory completion of the Group Consultancy Projects. They requested a change that allows students to repeat the course: EDUC 710: Group Consultancy Project once. In this course, students observe school leaders, the curriculum, and school environment. They then make recommendations for school improvement. Taking the course across two semesters helps students understand the context of the institution better, and thus, make more useful recommendations.

Link to the 2015 Assessment Report:
Molecular Biosciences and Bioengineering found their Ph.D. students are relatively weak in developing research hypothesis. In their revised student handbook, they included a resource section on how to develop a hypothesis.

Link to the assessment poster:
S Advising/Mentoring

SLO 2: Inquiry Skills relatively low

Advise students to take two methods courses

Educational Psychology MEd 2015 Assessment Report:

R Program Resources & Personnel
For the last two years the BSW and MSW Programs have held “teaching” sessions to address curriculum questions and common classroom issues. Topics have included curriculum rollout, vertical and horizontal sequencing, assignment design and implementation as well as classroom management. Also covered are SLOs, Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) and course assignment alignment. It is critical that both instructors and adjunct faculty recognize the need to connect assignments to stated outcomes and objects to measure competence. Because of this, the “teaching” sessions serve as both training site and site for program culture development that is competency based.

When a faculty retired, the Dance BA program examined their program SLOs and the learning achievement results. They rewrote the job description to recruit a faculty in the areas of their students’ learning needs. Changing job description for hiring new faculty is a profound way to use assessment.

Link to 2015 Assessment Report:
Major uses for enhancing learning

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- Course changes
- Program curriculum and policy
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Facilitating Use for Program-Level Assessment Leaders
1. Intriguing result presentation

When we present assessment results, we can think of three principles:
- Emotionally engaging
- Personally relevant
- Intellectually challenging

Hiding your results in fortune cookies is an emotionally intriguing way to present the results. Presenting the results does not have to be boring. We can use games and fun activities.

### 2. Results with diagnostic information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Courses</th>
<th>SLO 1 Knowledge (85%)</th>
<th>SLO 2 Critical thinking (75%)</th>
<th>SLO 3 Research (70%)</th>
<th>SLO 4 Written Comm. (60%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course 101</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Course 102</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>Course 201</td>
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<td>Course 202</td>
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<tr>
<td>Capstone</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Presenting your results in the curriculum map is intellectually challenging and can be personally relevant. The curriculum map itself provides information to diagnose the results. Look at this curriculum map, why do you think the achievement on written communication is low? If you are the faculty members in this program, what would you suggest to improve students’ writing? What can you do in your own course to help students achieve this outcome?
Faculty members are not only experts in their research areas, they also have experience and expertise in teaching. Peer sharing is a very feasible yet powerful way of improving teaching. Pay attention to the rhetoric. Instead of saying: How can we improve teaching? Try: “How can we help students succeed?” “What are the strategies to help students succeed in achieving PLO X, on Assignment Y, and perform satisfactorily in the capstone course?”
Facilitating Use for Institutional-Level Assessment Leaders

Showcase through scholarship

Assessment for Curricular Improvement Poster Exhibit

How can we facilitate and promote use of assessment at the Institutional level? Showcasing excellence is an important strategy. Our office organizes the Assessment for Curricular Improvement Poster Exhibit every year now. We showcase the programs that have done an excellent job in program assessment, and at the same time, we promote assessment scholarship.
Showcase through awards

Each poster also has an opportunity to win one of the three awards:
- Best use of results
- Best faculty engagement strategies
- Best design

Showcase through workshop

Through analyzing assessment reports and reviewing the posters, I compiled the excellent examples of the programs that used assessment results and presented them to the campus in the workshop format.
We created an excellent use-of-assessment map to recognize programs. Also to create peer pressure.

Mapping the programs on google map will let the world know of their good work! The link to the map is [here](#).
I compiled a list of “low-hanging fruit” examples to encourage programs to start using assessment results.

As an example, my colleague and I also organized a series of assignment design workshops to help faculty improve assignments. A better assignment helps students learn better and it improves the quality of assessment. Because an assignment sharing session mainly relies on faculty’s peer feedback, it is an efficient way of using assessment results.

Links to some of our assignment workshops are:

Facilitate institutional committee discussions
Guideline to identify priority to use results:
- Low achieving outcomes
- Locate movers and shakers
- Identify possible resources

If you have the assessment results for discussion at the faculty committee meeting, consider sending them out before the meeting. Use a few minutes to explain the gist of the results and quickly move on to identify priorities to use assessment results.

For example, I conducted the analysis of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) results related to our Institutional Learning Objectives (ILOs). During the meeting with the ILO Implementation Committee, I briefly summarized the results, and asked the committee to rank order the ILOs that we want to improve. I provided some guidelines in their prioritization task:
- Think about the low achieving outcomes
- Locate the movers and shakers on the campus who are willing to lead actions.
- Identify possible resources for the actions to happen.

Through this prioritization task, the committee identified quantitative reasoning and civic engagement as two areas to act upon first.
Another strategy for the institutional level leaders to promote use of assessment results is to cultivate assessment leaders, who in turn can engage faculty in meaningful and relevant assessment activities in their own programs.

At UH Mānoa, our office hosts the Assessment Leadership Institute every year. Participants go through a three-day training on assessment and facilitation skills. They meet in follow-up support group meetings and present their assessment project at the campus poster exhibit. These grassroots leaders are fundamental to the assessment cultural changes in their respective unit.
Any strategies that sparked your thoughts?

Program Level
- Intriguing results presentation
- Results with diagnostic information
- Faculty sharing “Strategies to help student succeed in ...”

Institutional Level
- Showcase excellence
- Package low-hanging fruit
- Facilitate institutional committee discussions
- Build grassroots assessment leaders

Thank you!
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