Using the Early Adopter Model to Promote a Culture of Assessment

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Table Topic: Creating a Culture of Assessment Using the Early Adopter Paradigm: NEAIR- November 16, 2010
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“You never know who will start the chain reaction.”

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Early adopters are\(^1\)-
- “Respectable that try out new ideas ...but in a careful way”
- In other words, credible but & not reckless
- Opinion leaders, opinions that are perceived as worthy

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Why does the early adopter paradigm fit to promoting a culture of assessment?
- Seems to last, not viewed as a trend (but must continue to work the conversion)
- Berks does not have the resources for a “full-blown” assessment effort of assessing everything all the time
- Success breeds success
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...What works? I don’t know and it depends but here’s some strategies that seems to be working for Berks
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Assessment Cycle

- List of all programs, assessment activities, how well each program is “doing” assessment

* Four Year Cycle (suggested activities):
  
  **1st Year**: Assessment
  
  **2nd Year**: Review & Interpret Assessment Results
  
  **3rd Year**: Make Changes to Program;
  
  **4th Year**: Determine if Changes Improved Student Learning Outcomes

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Assessment Cycle (cont.)
- Includes
  * Program
  * Degree Level
  * Year 1/Accreditation Agency
  * Status
  * Status Comments
  * Next Steps, recommendations

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**Conversations, Just Talk**
- Talk with faculty one-on-one sessions (“Thelma & Louise”)
- Talk about assessment, progress, challenges at meetings

**Telling Stories**
- Faculty will convince other faculty that assessment is worthwhile
- Newsletter, intranet, Program Coordinator Meetings
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**Awards & Contests**

- Examples at Berks
  
  *Chancellors Award,*
  
  *Faculty Service Awards*

- To get faculty & staff to read the PRA Newsletter, we sponsor the following contests for nominal prizes but allot of recognition:
  
  “What’s the assessment instrument of month”,
  
  “Find the Fact”,
  
  “Fill in the Blank”
  
  “Did you know? ...Apparently, you did”? 

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- **Encourage Partnerships**
  - Allowing faculty teams to design and implement assessments is much less daunting than “going-alone”

- **Be the Sherriff & Appoint a Deputy**
  - Have a faculty co-facilitator (from a different constituent groups)
  - Of course don’t be the assessment “police”
  - Reinforce your role as the assessment neighborhood watch

- **Mentoring**
  - A bit fancy for Berks but it works
## Providing incentives

- $$$ works
  - "Travel Grants"
- Opportunity to present and/or publish works too
- Participate in retreats or institutes

*AACU Summer Institute*
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**Assessment Grant**
- “Throw” some resources or stipends to do “authentic assessment”
- Faculty will “bite”

**Criteria of grant:**
* Development and use of authentic assessments, those assessment instruments that directly assess student learning,

* Extent the proposed assessment instrument(s) evaluates student learning outcomes,

* Demonstrated (or ability to demonstrate) validity,

* Originality and creativity of the proposed assessment instrument(s),

* Scope and number of students/programs impacted by assessment project,

* Use of results to improve student learning outcomes.

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Clearinghouse (Online Assessment Communities)
- ANGEL Repository or Group
- Discussion area (wiki, blog, etc, intranet forum)
- “sand box” to test new technologies, review newly created assessment instruments
We do it in the name of “assessment is helpful” 
NOT “you have to”
- Demonstrate how assessment improves student learning,
  helps to reallocate budget, resources, faculty
- The accreditation carrot will not work in the long term
- Quality of assessment under this auspice will suffer
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- Set expectations that most but not all will be assessment fanatics
  - If you can get 25%-33% of faculty on the assessment “bus”
    better than most institutions

- Leadership, Leadership
  - If the Chancellor is a champion, it’s all down hill
  - If the Associate Dean is a champion too, you’re in fat city
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Web Page with Student Learning Outcomes

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Here’s are six recommendations to get started or continue that have worked for Berks
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Six Recommendations

1. Make assessment visible

- External demand is to provide “direct” evidence of student academic achievement
- Proves to “public” that colleges are accountable because they want to be not because they have to!

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Six Recommendations¹ #2

💡 Learning objectives must be ubiquitous
- List in catalogues, syllabi, criteria to assign grades
- Take “collective responsibility” of faculty & staff for assessment
- Impress upon faculty & students that there are standards
- Impress upon faculty & students that there is a commitment to those standards

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Six Recommendations¹  #3

**Compiling assessment results creatively...**

- Don’t report results just by using “central tendency” measures
  - Use min, max
  - List weaknesses & strengths
  - Identify variations in performance

- Aggregate by student groups not just overall

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Six Recommendations⁴  #4

- Emphasize assessment at the major transition points
  - At the beginning of the “college” non remedial curriculum
  - Obviously, at end of program is another
  - Individual programs may have other critical transition points

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Six Recommendations

Embed assessment in the regular curriculum

- Collect student work samples (portfolios, capstone courses)
- Look at subsequent course work (next course in sequence, capstone)
- Keep it simple!

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Six Recommendations¹ #6

Foster collective responsibility of faculty & staff

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**Demos**: Assessment Instrument Resources, on the web “ready made”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Association of Colleges &amp; Universities</td>
<td><a href="http://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics">www.aacu.org/value/rubrics</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Opened Practices</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANGEL- Assessment Tool Repository</td>
<td><a href="http://cms.psu.edu">http://cms.psu.edu</a></td>
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Other Assessment Instrument Resources

- National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment:
  [http://learningoutcomesassessment.org/Resources.htm](http://learningoutcomesassessment.org/Resources.htm)

- Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence
  [http://assess.psu.edu/](http://assess.psu.edu/)

- Penn State Berks, Planning Research & Assessment
  [http://www.bk.psu.edu/Information/30304.htm?cn711](http://www.bk.psu.edu/Information/30304.htm?cn711)

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