

The Insight

One result of the culture of assessment was a deeper understanding of the guiding purpose of assessment as truly focusing on improving student learning and how that understanding permeates the institution at all levels.

Implications

A striking feature of an assessment culture was the emphasis on faculty collaboration. This was a grassroots adoption of assessment practices that spread across faculty as they worked together to support one another and consulted one another for ideas and best practices.

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A CULTURE OF ASSESSMENT

This article is the first in a series of three that represents an attempt to capture and share my personal experiences from a faculty perspective as one who is new to assessment. I am writing from the front lines of assessment in the classroom, but also as a novice member of two assessment committees. As a result, the learning curve has been steep but interesting.

To address my lack of knowledge, I had the opportunity to attend the IUPUI Assessment Institute conference last October. I focused on attending sessions that addressed the issues closest to what I need to enhance my roles on the committees and in the classroom. These sessions helped me understand the different orientations of each, their objectives, and the connections among them.

One of the sessions that I found interesting described how Georgia Southern University developed an institutional culture in which assessment is firmly integrated. My goal here was to learn more about the support structure necessary for assessment to be part of the air we breathe rather than perceived as some nuisance activity that detracts from our role as faculty.

The process described in this session revolved around faculty determining the value of assessment, being rewarded for their assessment activities, and having assessment built into the faculty and administrative performance review criteria. In addition, accomplishments that were identified through assessment, such as improvements in student and class performance, were shared and publicly celebrated, reinforcing the value of assessment to individual faculty, the institution, but most of all the students whose learning increased. We share this collaborative approach here at Ferris; let's use it as we engage in assessment and integrate it into our own practice.