



LEADERSHIP ACADEMY FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

Pathways Project Implementation Memorandum

TO: Laura Rittner, Executive Director, Success Center – OACC
FROM: Angela Fernandez, Melissa Ramirez, Joseph Abbott, Katie Austin
RE: Creating "buy-in" for Assessment among Faculty
DATE: September 2, 2020

"Creating an Environment for Positive Change in College Institutions"

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY/INTRODUCTION

Ohio community colleges struggle with closing the loop between assessment data and implementing change. This disconnect negatively impacts faculty and student experiences, retention, and success. Continuous change is essential in academia to ensure that practices remain relevant to the rapidly changing needs of stakeholders.

For our pathways project, our team will provide a review of the literature for empowering the faculty and staff throughout the process of change implementation. Utilization of the outlined steps will provide specific points to focus on while creating a positive culture of change. This strategic plan will outline intentional campus efforts and strategies for practical application in any setting, to encourage the development of a culture of continuous change.

RELEVANT LITERATURE REVIEWED

An organization is a general term describing a social network that shares a common purpose and maintains mechanisms to distinguish its members from the remainder of the social world (Koya and Hage, 1972; Etzioni, 1964; Perrow, 1986). Organizations are a central feature of all societies, serving as a means for accomplishing cooperative actions (Etzioni, 1964; Perrow, 1986). Organizations may take many forms, such as a neighborhood club to businesses corporations to colleges and universities. As characterized by Hall (1996), organizations constantly surround and influence us in our everyday lives, with a certainty similar to that of death and taxes.

Formal organizations, as opposed to informal ones, are designed for maximum efficiency often by means of explicit rules, regulations, and procedures (Etzioni, 1964; Perrow, 1986). Specifically, all forms of formal organizations share certain characteristics, including a recognized purpose or goal, an institutionalized structure of authority, a self-perpetuating presence of leaders, and a well-established set of boundaries. Although in today's world it seems more exciting to say that we live in a

modern "information age," it is, however, probably more accurate to say that we live in the age of the formal organization.

Colleges and universities, both large and small can be viewed from the perspective of the formal organization. For example, America's institutions of higher learning are composed of many distinct subsystems, each with their own goals, that when taken together create a functioning whole. Furthermore, as argued by Katz (1964), educational organizations are connected with many other structures in society. Ballantine (1997) provides an open system model of educational organizations which allows for structural change through interaction with the environment. For Ballantine (1997), the school as a formal organization consists of seven characteristics or parts: structure, goals, functions, bureaucratic aspects (e.g., a division of labor, administrative hierarchy, specific rules of procedure, etc.), professionals, growth, and control of schools. If one of these parts breaks down, then the other parts are affected.

Assessment in higher education is a tool to ensure the continued functionality of the organization by helping to identify key issues and opportunities to improve effectiveness. Effective assessment aids in the development of action plans to support the achievement of organizational goals.

To engage college and university personnel in the assessment process, Falluca (2017) recommends that college administrators clearly define what assessment means to the institution, why it is important, and clearly articulate the instructions and procedures for assessing the program, course, or service using practical, understandable language across campus. In addition, Falluca (2017) suggests that administrators can help coordinate assessment efforts across campus by training faculty through peer mentoring and workshops, and by assisting with development of assessment instruments and data analysis. Lastly, Falluca (2017) argues that administrators can increase the participation rate of faculty in assessment activities by offering growth opportunities, incentives, certificates, and hours toward professional development requirements.

From a process perspective, Feldhaus et al. (2017) offer key questions to ask for improving the quality of assessment, including:

1. What method of data collection will be used?
2. What type of data will be collected?
3. How will the data be analyzed?
4. How is success measured?
5. What specific changes can be made as a result of the assessment?

Other suggestions from Feldhaus et al. (2017), include:

1. Give faculty time to develop assessment instruments.
2. Allow faculty to attend workshops and to participate in faculty learning communities.
3. Invite faculty to observe areas of improvement (e.g., student outcomes).

4. Emphasize specific practical, positive results/changes/benefits.

Lastly, Reynolds-Sundet and Adam (2014) recommend the following:

1. Provide feedback to faculty and assessment data.
2. Create a safe zone for assessment, ensure faculty that poor results do not necessarily mean they are poor teachers
3. Provide videos on value of assessment (testimonials from faculty from around the country) as extra validation of benefits of assessment

Lauer and Korin (2014) offer a creative and unique suggestion to involve students in assessment efforts, for example, students might participate in the development of methods to assess and measure course learning outcomes. In addition, the authors suggest that students should provide input with constructing survey questions with the goal of creating questions that are meaningful and will likely be answered by students. Lastly, Lauer and Korin (2014) suggest that student participation in assessment efforts can be increased by emphasizing the benefits to students: career-relevant skills, including computer skills, survey construction, faculty-student team work, leadership, initial data entry and analysis, and so forth.

Souza (2014) argues that faculty will be more willing to embrace assessment when they are able to use the results to track coverage of course learning outcomes and monitor student performance. From the perspective of the students, Souza (2014) argues that participation in assessment empowers students to take a more proactive approach to internalizing their learning.

The review of literature on the development of a culture of assessment shares a common theme that institutions of higher learning can very quickly encourage participation in assessment by creating a common vision and awareness of urgency that celebrates the benefits of assessment-driven change. The first goal should be to increase faculty commitment, motivation, sustained energy, persistence, and willingness to facilitate the culture of assessment-driven change. One step towards this goal can be facilitated by allowing assessment participation to count as evidence for promotion. In addition, faculty should be given authorship and recognition for their assessment efforts and contributions.

DATA EXAMINED

In order to assess the scope of the concerns surrounding the implementation of an "assessment culture," a survey was administered to assessment stakeholders within three community colleges in Ohio, with each school representing small, medium, and large enrollments. The sample consisted of nine respondents serving in roles from faculty to mid-level administration (i.e., chair of an academic department) to upper-level administration (i.e., provost). The interview schedule consisted of the following three open-ended questions: (1) "How have you implemented change on your campus and what was one major barrier that you have experienced when implementing that change?"; (2) "Based on your experience, what can be done to promote change in a

positive way?"; and (3) "How have you seen others implement changes in a positive way?"

For question 01 (barriers to implementing change), the following topics emerged in a consistent way:

- Lack of a clear set of rules
- Lack of effective communication
- Lack of inclusiveness and openness to ideas from others
- Issues with technology and instructions/directions
- Resistance to change
- Preexisting negative attitudes towards new approaches and practices

For question 02 (promote change in a positive way), the following topics emerged in a consistent way:

- Promote transparency and honesty
- Promote cooperation and respect
- Promote shared governance and inclusiveness
- Promote openness to new ideas

For question 03 (witnessing successful changes), the following topics emerged in a consistent way:

- listening to and implementing ideas and practices
- being inclusive
- reaching consensus
- forming subcommittees to accomplish specific tasks and goals
- highlighting benefits
- implementing change slowly
- allowing time to adjust to change
- listening to feedback
- providing strong and consistent leadership

Four major themes emerged from the analysis of the survey data:

- Communication/Transparency
- Technology
- Inclusion
- Leadership

From these data, we may conclude that faculty buy-in and effective use of assessment is more likely to occur within an organization that strives to have consistent and strong leadership that facilitates communication and inclusion across campus in assessment practices that rest on preexisting and clear directions and instructions with working technology.

PROPOSED CHANGES/REFORMS TO BE ADOPTED

Internal and external stakeholders are the key to meaningful and impactful assessment. Whether it be from a lack of interest, a sense of being overburdened, or any of the other factors of resistance, faculty and staff often disengage when it comes to assessment practices. Forced change from top administrators fosters even more resistance, outrage, or outright sabotage (Calegari, et al, 2015). However, John P. Kotter (1996) has formulated a well-researched and easy to implement process for creating buy-in and implementing meaningful change in organizations that can be effectively applied to creating a culture of change around assessment in your institution (see appendix 1 for an example of applying Kotter's eight-step model).

The eight steps of Kotter's (1996) change process are:

1. Create a sense of urgency
2. Build a guiding team
3. Get the vision right
4. Communicate the vision for buy-in
5. Empower action
6. Create short-term wins
7. Don't let up
8. Make change stick

Create a sense of urgency

Problem: Allowing too much complacency

If buy-in for assessment is already low, lack of motivation and complacency can become commonplace, stifling the success of assessment initiatives before they even begin.

Solution: Create a Sense of Urgency

Analyze the need for accreditation and present the rationale in a way that is credible and valid. Discuss the potential benefits and obstacles within assessment to support the given rationale. Address any points of resistance honestly but with a focus on opportunity.

Build a guiding team

Problem: Failing to create a sufficiently powerful guiding coalition

If there is a negative culture around assessment already present on campus, it will take more than just senior administration to create a culture of change. A strong and diverse coalition that includes multiple players from many ranks is needed to overcome tradition and move an initiative forward.

Solution: Build a guiding team

Encouraging participation and persuading others to support assessment initiatives will require a group of initiators with enough power to lead the change and get buy-in from others. It is imperative that this team include change agents that are credible, influential, and trustworthy (Calegari, et al, 2015).

Get the vision right

Problem: Underestimating the power of vision

Absent a sound vision, initiatives run the risk of becoming time-consuming projects that go in the wrong direction or nowhere at all.

Solution: Get the vision right

The guiding coalition creates a vision that clearly and concisely communicates the purpose of assessment initiatives which includes input from both stakeholders and faculty. When appropriately implemented, participating in decision-making tends to increase comprehension of and support for those decisions, which in turn helps smooth and speed implementation (Leana, Locke, & Schweiger, 1990).

Communicate the vision for buy-in

Problem: Under communicating the vision

When people are confused about the purpose, don't understand the approach, or continue to act in ways contrary to the culture of change, cynicism results among those needed to make meaningful strides.

Solution: Communicate the vision for buy-in

Give stakeholders a sense that they have been heard and use multiple avenues to constantly communicate the new vision and strategies. In this stage, it is also very important for the guiding coalition to model the enthusiasm needed for others to buy-in to the initiative.

Empower Action

Problem: Permitting obstacles to block the new vision

There are many possible obstacles to implementing assessment practices on a campus. Some are valid and some are imaginary. If not addressed, one strategically placed obstacle can disempower faculty and staff and undermine change efforts.

Solution: Empower Action

Remove or change any systematic, organizational barriers that may already be in place. Invest in the change by creating positions and/or systems that support the new initiative. Encourage non-traditional ideas and acknowledge activities that support the new direction.

Create short-term wins

Problem: Failing to create short-term wins

Change at an organizational level is complex and takes time. If not monitored, initiators run the risk of losing traction with faculty due to burnt out and disengagement from the effort.

Solution: Create short-term wins

Publicly acknowledge faculty for their efforts. Display changes in data measures that indicate progress in the direction of impactful assessment efforts. Reward significant contributions when appropriate.

Don't let up

Problem: Declaring victory too soon

While celebrating short-term wins creates motivation and excitement for change efforts, declaring victory after one major improvement can be imperative to the strategy.

Solution: Don't let up

Step one warned of the dangers of complacency. Change efforts often fail because participants revert back to prior bad habits, failing to continue to implement the change (Kotter, 1996). Develop both a college-wide plan and a faculty plan for continued involvement in assessment.

Make change stick

Problem: Neglecting to anchor changes into the culture

Allowing things to go back to status quo before they are embedded in the social norms and shared values of the campus.

Solution: Encourage permanency

Continue efforts until assessment is viewed as the way things are done on your campus. Demonstrate tangible performance improvements, orient newcomers, reinforce training, continue communication, align reward systems with the intended targeted behavior, and provide resources to make the change successful.

IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

Creating a culture of change in higher education is not always easy and takes time as introducing assessment practices can be challenging and can be a struggle for faculty, staff, and administration. One reason is simply because many do not understand assessment and its purpose. “Assessment as applied in education describes the measurement of what an individual knows and can do” (Banta & Palomba, 2015, p.1). The role of assessment is vital within an academic institution for the reason of assessment provides an opportunity to identify strengths and weaknesses in programs and courses. In addition, assessment plays a major role in enhancing student learning and development. Overall assessment is all about learning and is an ongoing college-wide process which consists of the following phases: implementing, and improving, and sustaining the process (Banta & Palomba, 2015, p. 15).

One may ask what comes to mind when they hear the word “Assessment” and what the results of assessment might lead to, which is change. It is not uncommon for one to resist change due to individual fear of stepping out of one’s comfort zone and breaking old habits. “Individual fears or concerns about change can inhibit or limit the organizational change with common complaints like, “I can’t do this and my job,” “We’ve tried this and it doesn’t work,” “This is just an excuse for downsizing,” “Management is the roadblock not us, they never walk the talk,” “It’s just another program, so who cares?” (Levine, 2017). Attitudes are contagious and play an important role when trying to implement change on campus. It is important for administration to set an example and focus on the positive aspects of the change process. This can sometimes be challenging but it is essential for creating a culture of change.

Another challenge with implementing change is getting everyone on board and getting support from administration. For example, not everyone may come to an agreement with the assessment processes set in place to carry out change. This can be for several reasons such as not having enough time for an additional task, insufficient budget, and lack of support from upper administration. It is essential to be patient and persistent when carrying out change to help gain college wide buy-in. When you have employee buy in with change and remove obstacles it will help make the whole process go much smoother and makes it easier for others to support a continuous culture of change.

Understanding the assessment process is another challenge. Training faculty and ensuring they have the appropriate assessment tools is also another hurdle because of fulltime faculty and adjunct ratio teaching. It is difficult to train fulltime faculty in

addition to ensuring adjunct faculty adequately assess their students or get involved in the assessment process since they are not on campus fulltime. One can get creative in developing an assessment process that works for the entire campus culture. An institution must value assessment and make time and resources available to faculty and staff. In essence, a culture of assessment to drive change entails collaboration, participation, and support as it is important for everyone to work together.

Furthermore, another challenge of assessment is utilizing data to implement change. It is one thing to collect information; however, one may question what happens to the data after it is gathered. It is vital for faculty, staff and administrators to use the data to make improvements and drive change to enhance student learning, improve academic programs, and college-wide processes. Stakeholders may simply not know how to interpret the data or make use of it to implement such changes. In addition, faculty and staff must realize that assessment does not put their job at stake in any way and is solely utilized to make improvements. An institution cannot survive by remaining stagnant. Assessment is a method used for improving student learning by understanding what works and what does not work. It is extremely important that academic institutions properly train their faculty and staff on using the assessment data to make improvements or changes to courses and programs, as well as college-wide processes and student services. By simply understanding the information from assessment and implementing change from data collected will help in closing the loop that so many find challenging in doing so today.

Lastly, communication is another challenge when trying to carry out change. Barriers in communication can create hurdles and cause conflict amongst others that could possibly impact the outcome of change. It is significant that effective communication takes place to gather input from others to prevent issues from arising. As noted in Kotter's 8-step process, "Communicate the Vision" (Kotter, 1996). Change cannot successfully be implemented without one sharing their overall vision or ultimate goal. Communication is the key to implement successful change on campus.

CONCLUSION

Community colleges can show that they embrace a culture of change by utilizing assessment data to its best ability and using Kotter's 8-step process for leading change. Academic institutions must be committed to drive change and make effort in working together to empower the campus community and instill a positive culture of change. According to Banta and Palomba, "it takes a campus to develop a graduate" (2015, p. 241), which means that faculty, staff, and administration are encouraged to collaborate amongst each other in helping their institution achieve its organizational mission and college-wide assessment goals.

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APPENDIX 1

Step	How To Do It	Examples
1. Increase urgency: People endorse the need for change and begin to push for new behaviors	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide tangible, vivid evidence of need for change, preferably from external sources 2. Reduce complacency and negativity 3. Appeal to specific interests and needs of recipients 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Used AACSB and WASC accreditation as a driver for change 2. Presented both potential losses and gains by emphasizing <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Instances of schools being put on continuing review by the accrediting bodies b. Instances of successful implementation of assessment plans and data gathering that helped improve insight into student learning and achievement
2. Create a guiding coalition: Form a group powerful, influential, and knowledgeable enough to guide change and develop a sense of teamwork and trust	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create incentives and structures to encourage involvement from key participants 2. Reinforce teamwork 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Department chairs and faculty nominated "opinion leaders" in their departments 2. Team meetings were conducted virtually – no face-face meetings were held. This was a significant inducement in recruiting team members 3. Team members functioned as ambassadors for the assessment process, informally lobbying others about the benefits and need for assessment
3. Get the vision right: Create a vision and strategy tailored to the change	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop concise visions and strategies that touch the head and the heart that can clearly guide the change effort 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Emphasized linkages between school mission and accreditation 2. Identified strategies supportive of widely endorsed values in the mission through college-wide surveys and meetings 3. Vision used to allay fears; demonstrate the value of key initiatives
4. Communicate for buy-in: Enhance understanding and acceptance of the change so that new behaviors begin to reflect that change	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Communication should be trustworthy and easy to grasp 2. Adapt communication strategies to the needs, desires, and concerns of the potential change recipients 3. Ensure that communications are "heard" and make it through the typical communication clutter 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Associate dean and dean continually communicated urgency and importance of accreditation and assessment via email and meetings 2. Widely communicated results of surveys demonstrating support for the efforts and areas for improvement, thus spurring further change efforts 3. Presentations to each department on assessment and AACSB guidelines 4. Working sessions to help design assessment plans 5. College committees consisting of elected faculty oversaw the process 6. Accreditation team served as ambassadors for accreditation
5. Empower action: Remove obstacles to action and reward behaviors that reinforce the change	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Highlight actions of influential people that are supportive of the change 2. Develop reward and recognition systems that celebrate efforts toward change 3. Expand the range of participants 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Created and widely disseminated an assessment handbook 2. Instituted early small experiments in assessment and other areas (new faculty orientation, mentorship program) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Gave faculty a sense that this process could be manageable and appealed to long-standing values 3. Face-face meetings and on-line surveys to obtain faculty input <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Communicated the results to all faculty within one week 4. Created stipends to reward activities supporting accreditation
6. Create short-term wins: Support, communicate, reinforce efforts that move the change to reality	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify "low-hanging fruit" and dedicate resources toward accomplishing successful efforts to encourage participation and support 2. Widely communicate and celebrate wins 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Results of assessment experiments helped faculty see tangible outcomes 2. Examples of significant wins: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Guiding team achieved an 83% faculty response rate for the assessment surveys that occurred early in the process b. Securing approval of the assessment plan shortly after it was developed by the accreditation team also provided significant win
7. Don't let up: Continue to support continuously more challenging endeavors to promote the change	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do not be satisfied with the first improvements and changes 2. Continue reducing obstacles and streamlining processes, adapting to new data and evidence 3. Continue creating urgency 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continued communication (emails, internal web page, face-face meetings) 2. Attempts to streamline various reporting and compliance processes to ease faculty workload

* Resource adopted from Calegari, M. F., Sibley, R. E., & Turner, M. E. (2015)