Challenges to Developing and Supporting a Culture of Continuous Improvement: The Contemporary Assessment Debate

Annual Meeting of the Commission on Information, Measurement & Analysis
Bozeman, Montana
July 30, 2018
Goal & Purpose of Session

➢ Provide an overview of current arguments for and against institutional assessment.

➢ Discuss the role of assessment in continuous improvement.

➢ Identify strategies and best practices at our institutions to address how we can use assessment to inform continuous improvement efforts.
Recent Arguments Against & In Support Of Assessment

➢ January 2018
  ➢ “An Insider’s Take on Assessment: It May Be Worse Than You Thought”, Chronicle of Higher Education, Erik Gilbert (1/12/2018)
  ➢ “Letters in Response to ‘An Insider’s Take on Assessment’”, Chronicle of Higher Education, Multiple Authors (2/5/2018)
➢ February 2018
  ➢ “Assessment Isn’t About Bureaucracy but About Teaching and Learning”, Inside Higher Education, Kate Drezek McConnell (3/1/2018)
➢ July 2018
  ➢ “Why Assessment of Teaching is Vital”, Matthew DeSantis, Inside Higher Education, (7/19/2018)
Arguments Against

- Ineffability
  - Student learning is unmeasurable; Validity & Reliability Issues
- Assessment is a Bureaucracy
- Value-Added?
  - To student learning and success; Is assessment ‘worth’ it—assessing assessment
- Content Expertise
  - Faculty are the content experts
- Consequences of not doing assessment
  - “What would/can you do to us?”; Academic Freedom
- Rewards
  - Assessment is something above and beyond faculty workload (it is something “extra”); To improve teaching
Arguments In Favor Of

- Student Learning is Measurable
  - Grades vs. Learning Outcomes; Validity (Construct, Content, Concurrent, Practical)
- Efforts/Tools to Decrease Bureaucracy
- Value-Added
  - To student learning and success; Assessment is Assessed
- Content Expertise
  - Many faculty do not have expertise in assessment
- Consequences of not doing assessment
  - Accreditation & Compliance
- Rewards
  - Assessment can improve/inform teaching; Continuous Improvement
Small & Large Group Discussion

• For each group, identify a:
  • Time Manager
  • Recorder
  • Reporter

Small Group: About ½ hour
Large Group: About 20 Minutes
Small Group Discussion Questions

➢ What is your involvement with assessment efforts on your campus?
➢ How important is assessment in developing and supporting a culture of continuous improvement on your campus?
➢ What is the prevalent argument (for/against) on your campus?
➢ What strategies/action steps have you employed on your campus to use assessment to inform continuous improvement on your campus?
➢ What role does CIMA play in this debate?
What roles does assessment play on CIMA campuses?

What is the prevalent argument (for/against) assessment on CIMA campuses?

What strategies/action steps can you take back to your campus to improve the use of assessment to inform continuous improvement?

What role does CIMA play in this debate?
Final Thoughts

• Assessment and Research are fundamentally different (Assessment = Evaluation; Research = Discovery)*
• Assessment infrastructures need to be integrated and accessible
• Assessment is a core function of teaching and learning
• Faculty play a critical role in effective assessment systems—should be the designers, assessors, digesters, and actors
• Assessment is a critically important mechanism to improve teaching and, thereby, the academy