

Tips from the Panelists:

How to Use Assessment Results to Improve Teaching and Learning

Kirk Armstrong, Shelley Arvin, Concetta DePaolo, Chris Fischer, Eric Hampton, Liz O’Laughlin, Samantha Penney, John Sare, Tatsiana Singh

Faculty Center for Teaching Excellence

9.12.16

1. Map the curriculum to the desired learning outcomes. Look for gaps that suggest an outcome is not addressed early enough and/or thoroughly enough.
 - Re-organize the curriculum to ensure that prerequisite knowledge and skills are taught early enough.
 - Revise courses to include more coverage.
 - Review course syllabi to ensure that all teachers are addressing the same outcomes and using appropriate assignments to provide evidence of what students know and can do.
2. Conduct a peer review of exams to ensure that all are appropriately rigorous. (And lead the way by sharing your own exams.)
3. Break complex knowledge, skills, and projects into smaller pieces (i.e., chunking or scaffolding). Ensure that students master the first skill before they move on to the next. This can be particularly helpful with research papers and projects.
4. Review your assignments to make sure students understand what they are expected to do.
5. Review your rubrics to ensure they truly reflect your expectations for student performance and provide you with sufficiently detailed results to be able to identify specific areas for improvement.
6. Add a “making progress” category to your rubric to encourage students who aren’t yet performing as well as they should be but have improved.
7. To improve students’ writing abilities, include a writing component on every single assignment or discussion, from a single sentence or paragraph written in class to several three-page reports written outside of class. This also reinforces the fact that employers will expect them to write often and well.
8. Develop a predictive modeling system to determine who is most likely to be successful in your course or program. Share this profile with new students so they can self-assess their ability to succeed; direct them to appropriate support services; when necessary, revise your program’s admission standards.
9. Make improving student learning/student support one of your annual goals, and develop specific objectives to achieve it.
10. Apply the Quality Matters rubric to your online or blended course to make sure your assignments and technology work together to help students achieve learning outcomes.
11. Particularly when you’re starting an assessment program from scratch, limit the number of outcomes you’ll assess and tie them to institutional goals that already are well known.

12. Develop a few college-wide learning outcomes and some common assessments to broaden the conversation about assessment and break down boundaries between programs.
 - Hold a college-wide assessment retreat to talk about the results of shared outcomes.
 - Require each faculty member to identify, implement, and track the results of one change she or he will personally make to help address weaknesses in student learning.
13. Don't assess only what your accrediting agency requires you to: Ask (and answer) important questions of your own.
14. Be sure your outcomes are important; keep the number manageable; and collect data that answers significant questions related to the outcomes.
15. Stop thinking about assessment as a closed loop. It's more like a slinky made of multiple loops that keep turning and should propel what you do next year.