Best Practices for Completing a Comprehensive SLO Cycle

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Presentation Overview

- Purpose of Research
- Literature Review
- Organizational Change
  - Senge Model
- Barriers and Best Practices
  - Moorpark College Example
- Survey of California Community Colleges
ACCJC
Rubric for Evaluating Institutional Effectiveness in SLOs

Community College

Level 1
Awareness

Level 2
Development

Level 3
Proficiency

Level 4
Sustainability

Documented
Improved
Student Learning

Accreditation Standard 1B
Call for Assessment

- Public concern and federal government involvement has grown over the last 30 years
  - GI Bill (1944) and era of expansion (1950-1970’s)
  - A Nation at Risk report (1983)
  - A Test of Leadership, also called Spellings report, (2006)
  - American Graduate Initiative (2009)

- Call for accountability and transparency is not going away

- Colleges and universities are legally mandated to assess student learning outcomes and share data with the public
Problem Statement

• Meeting accreditation and public demand for assessment and accountability requires a major organizational change for most colleges

• Community colleges have experienced major barriers to making this profound change
  • Since 2008, only 50% of community colleges have received full accreditation after their regular commission review
  • Since 2009, approximately 20 colleges have been on sanction each year, many with recommendations related to:
    • Lack of integrated planning and program review
    • Lack of documentation clearly demonstrating the ongoing, systematic review of SLOs
    • Lack of documented ongoing dialogue about SLOs and continuous improvement
Reality Check

• Based on your current campus experience, related to SLO assessment, where do you see your college today on the ACCJC rubric for evaluating institutional effectiveness?

• Where do you expect your college to be in Fall 2012?
Research Purpose

- Examine college practices associated with the successful institutionalization of student learning outcomes assessment.
- Test if specific college activities or leadership behaviors can predict successful institutionalization.
- Determine if organizational change theory can help explain what is causing some colleges to stall out in their effort to complete the SLO assessment cycle.
- Offer suggestions for Best Practices on how to successfully complete the SLO assessment process.
Literature Review

- Included over 100 research studies, dissertations, and journal articles, websites, government reports
- Topics included Student Learning Outcomes, assessment, leadership, and organizational change
- Compared the research to several organizational change theories, including:
  - Kotter’s “Eight Steps”
  - Rogers’ “Diffusion”
  - Senge’s “10 Challenges”
Organizational Change Theory

- Implementing and sustaining a SLO assessment process requires organizational change for both culture and practice.

- Senge et al. (1999) Ten Challenges of Profound Change
  - Most closely matched the literature
  - Explained the main barriers and best practices
  - Most literature focused on the implementation stage
  - My research focused on the institutionalization of SLOs
## Ten Challenges (Senge et al., 1999)

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Moorpark College Case Study

- SLO assessment is a journey
- Examples of Moorpark’s barriers and best practices
Initiation Stage: Not Enough Time

Factors that hinder success:
• Faculty lack time to devote to assessment and data analysis because they are busy with many other job duties
• Faculty stress is high due to lack of time and knowledge required to complete assessment
• Faculty workload is an issue because assessment is time consuming

Recommendations that promote success:
• Purposefully create time for faculty to collaborate with peers
• Reduce other college obligations; schedule on-campus training sessions; ensure support throughout the process
• Help faculty manage their workload by teaching them how to use assessment tools they have already developed and by limiting their assessment agenda to only a few outcomes at a time
• Help faculty accept that assessment is a necessary time commitment by showing on-going support and interest in the process
Initiation Stage: No Help

Factors that hinder success:
• Faculty do not automatically know what student learning outcomes assessment is or how to develop assessment tools or analyze data
• Assessment activities are time consuming, so faculty need additional support to develop and assess data

Recommendations that promote success:
• Offer on-going faculty professional development/training opportunities
• Allocating resources to send faculty to assessment conferences
• Allocate resources to train/support at least one SLO expert on campus
• Hire a full-time SLO coordinator and/or institutional researcher (or give faculty release time) to ensure someone on campus has a full-time commitment to the assessment process and is available to offer on-going faculty assistance
Initiation Stage: Not Relevant

Factors that hinder success:
- Faculty often do not see the relevance of assessment to their teaching
- Faculty will not support assessment if they do not believe in the vision and its relevance

Recommendations that promote success:
- Provide a clear vision for the college
- Tie the assessment process to faculty values, such as improved student learning or student success, not to accreditation requirements
- Communicate and explain vision and relevance to each discipline
- Involve as many faculty as possible because participation increases perceived relevance and faculty buy-in, and improves successful implementation of the process.
Initiation Stage: Walking the Talk (Leadership)

Factors that hinder success:
• Faculty will not support assessment efforts without strong administrative and faculty leadership
• Clear, on-going communication throughout the process from leaders is necessary to ensure campus understanding and prove that assessment is a college priority
• SLO assessment requires organizational change to develop and support a culture based on data driven decision making

Recommendations that promote success: (Leaders must:)
• Establish and communicate the college vision and guiding principles
• Communicate throughout the process to explain, build trust, and reduce anxiety caused by change
• Develop the college structure to support the assessment process by allocating resources for professional development and tying assessment results to planning, budgeting, and resource allocation
• Continue to show support and interest throughout the entire process or faculty will not believe assessment is a priority
• Keep discipline faculty informed throughout the assessment process
• Celebrate success and offer faculty lots of positive praise for their work throughout the assessment process to help them stay motivated
• Let faculty champions lead and offer them strong support
Sustaining Change: **Faculty Fear/Low Trust**

**Factors that hinder success:**

- Faculty believe assessment is a threat to autonomy, academic freedom, and existing culture
- Faculty fear that poor assessment results will be used for evaluation purposes

**Recommendations to promote success:**

- College leaders must create an atmosphere of trust and reassure faculty that data will not be used for evaluation purposes
Sustaining Change: Disconnect or Time Lag for Results

Factors that hinder success:
• Faculty do not see that assessment is useful
• Assessment results are often not used for program improvement

Recommendations to promote success:
• Provide training and support to ensure that faculty have the knowledge and skills to produce useful data during the first assessment cycle
• College leaders must use assessment results to inform college decisions and make changes
• Develop assessment processes that require faculty to complete assessment, analyze results, and report changes within a one-year assessment cycle. College leaders should then use these results during the next budget or resource allocation cycle so that faculty can see evidence of the effectiveness of their effort
Sustaining Change: **Isolation**

**Factors that hinder success:**
- Faculty members who support the student learning outcomes assessment process find it challenging to convince others of their value

**Recommendations to promote success:**
- Provide faculty training sessions to help bring in non-believers
- Integrate discipline specific activities with college-wide assessment activities to show non-believers that assessment is valued
Redesigning and Rethinking Stage: Governance

Factors that hinder success:
• Lack of faculty participation and buy-in
• Lack of formal process and structure

Recommendations that promote success:
• Faculty must play a key role and have ownership of the assessment process
• Administrative support should include allocating resources for the SLO process
• Administrators must be educated about SLOs
• Develop systems that ensure collaboration between faculty and administrators
• Develop an institutional structure that includes an annual process or timeline
• Develop realistic plans that are integrated into normal coursework to minimize extra work for faculty
• Link SLOs and department goals to the college mission
• Tie assessment to budget and resource allocation
• Communicate structure and process to all employees
• Communicate assessment results to both internal and external stakeholders to ensure accountability
Redesigning and Rethinking Stage: **Diffusion**

**Factors that hinder success:**

- Faculty frustration and time wasted because every discipline group must learn how to develop assessment tools and analyze data

**Recommendations that promote success:**

- Establish on-going communication and collaboration among cross-discipline groups to improve faculty buy-in, enhance learning, and increase assessment participation and completion
- Share best practices and failures across disciplines to improve successful implementation; faculty learn from each other, which helps reduce data collection and analysis mistakes
Redesigning and Rethinking Stage:
Where are We Going and Why?

Factors that hinder success:
• Lack of leadership commitment and support for assessment

Recommendations that promote success:
• Top leaders must continue to communicate the vision so that everyone in the college understands and stays committed to a culture of assessment
• Continually refine the assessment process to make improvements and adapt to change
• Embrace the belief that assessment is a journey. Help the college understand that it takes several years to reach a point of on-going, systematic assessment
Quick Summary: Research Results

- Quantitative Research Survey
  - 98 out of 112 California community colleges responded

- Timing: August/September, 2012

- Participants included:
  - Deans responsible for Business discipline
  - Deans responsible for History discipline
  - SLO Coordinators
Thank you!!!!

• Pick up a Best Practices handout on your way out.