BEST PRACTICES IN ASSESSMENT: ADVICE FROM THE FRONT LINES

OU ASSESSMENT FORUM 2016
HOW DID I GET MYSELF INTO THIS?

• Experience at a smaller teaching-focused regional university
  • Assessment was an accepted and non-negotiable part of the culture

• Current assessment liaison asked for help and ideas in faculty meeting
  • Experience + undergraduate teaching specialty = new liaison

• Moral of the story: STAY QUIET during faculty meetings!
1. GET ON YOUR DEPARTMENT CHAIR’S GOOD SIDE

• Support of the Chair is CRUCIAL – even if it’s only “look, people, we have to do this whether you like it or not.”

• Make faculty a captive audience by discussing assessment during department meetings

• Have conversation with Chair behind the scenes about the “What if I just refuse?” question
2. LOOK UP DISCIPLINE-WIDE LEARNING STANDARDS

• Broad question: what do we want our students to know when they leave us?
• Don’t re-invent the wheel
  • Ex: APA has a list of outcomes for psychology degree
• Steal from others and adapt to your needs
3. MAP LEARNING OUTCOMES TO CLASSES

- Once outcomes are established, look at course offerings for logical places to add assessment items
- Take into consideration who TEACHES those classes and adjust accordingly
4. BEG, BORROW, AND STEAL SYLLABI

• Get as many syllabi as you can from the courses you flagged for assessment

• Try to use something they are already doing as an assessment measure

• Ask them how they grade and who does the grading
  • You may need to develop a simple, user-friendly rubric for the sake of standardization
5. NEVER UNDERESTIMATE FACULTY’S ABILITY TO ARGUE

• DO NOT give them open-ended options or choices
  • Come in with a PLAN (in writing) and allow them to make adjustments

• Give them all the grading rubrics, forms, etc. so that they can see the entire process from start to finish
6. NEVER UNDERESTIMATE FACULTY’S ABILITY TO QUESTION

• Be prepared for **lots** of questions!
  • Why do we need to do this?
  • Who is making us do this?
  • Who will see our data?
  • How can it be used against us later?
  • Who is going to do all the work grading and compiling data?
  • What if I refuse?
6. LOVE IS PATIENT; LOVE IS KIND

- Understand their frustration (we KNOW good teaching even if we have trouble documenting it)
- Faculty haven’t been “raised” with this mindset
- Try to convince them that assessment is GOOD for them
- When all else fails, at least send the message that assessment is required, and you are making it as painless as possible