

Final Reflection Paper

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Assessment is a valuable tool that provides an opportunity for understanding student learning that occurs at an institution. It can be described as a process or continuous cycle in which information is gathered to analyze what students know, understand, and what they can do with their knowledge gained in a class or program (Crawford, 2017b). Information obtained through assessment processes must be evaluated to use the results in a meaningful way. Assessment utilized in higher education can provide valuable feedback for faculty and accreditation entities and proves the effectiveness of an institution (Bresciani, Zelna, & Anderson, 2004).

Suskie (2014) described institutional effectiveness as excellent, quality completion of meeting students' needs, keeping promises, stewardship, serving public good, and accountability. Three factors that are imperative to student learning and institutional effectiveness which are clearly supported by assessment and realized throughout CCHE 687 Professional Development Seminar are meeting the needs of the students, stewardship, and accountability.

Meeting the needs of students includes providing opportunity for learning, ensuring learning is occurring, and providing support services to facilitate successful attainment of academic and personal goals. Outcome-based assessment is a method to ensure student access leads to student learning (Nunley, Bers, & Manning, 2011). Outcome-based assessment uses student learning outcomes in each course, program, and department to emphasize what students should be able to achieve at completion. Data can be obtained and evaluated to provide valuable feedback to improve curriculum, pedagogy, and the creation of needed services through student affairs (Schuh, & Gansemer-Topf, 2010).

Stewardship includes the health, well-being, and effective use of resources at an institution (Suskie, 2014). When a college implements assessment of resources through student

affairs, institutional effectiveness can demonstrate stewardship. Leadership skills, communication skills, and critical thinking are all outcomes that employers seek in graduates and can be measured with assessment of student affairs services (Elkins, 2015). Although meeting the needs of students and stewardship are closely related in terms of demonstrating student learning, they are distinct areas requiring assessment to ensure specific course learning outcomes and larger institutional learning outcomes are achieved.

Accountability includes the fulfillment of institutional obligations demonstrating quality and effective effort (Suskie, 2014). Students and the community assume that learning will occur if enrolled in a course, attendance is consistent, and assignments are complete. If there is not an assessment process in place, there is no evaluation of student learning because assigned grades demonstrate knowledge of the questions asked not a skill set understood. Furthermore, an assigned grade does not demonstrate an area that is deficient creating an opportunity to improve pedagogy (Perrine et al, 2010). To be accountable to students and the community, institutions must perform assessment to demonstrate quality and effective efforts to achieve student learning.

In conclusion, there is no proof that students' needs have been met or stewardship or accountability are present without assessment. There is no guidance for improvement or framework for advancement. Kahn (2008) stated that curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment are all required to achieve institutional effectiveness and student centered higher education. Therefore, I conclude that assessment is a valuable, necessary component to demonstrate and develop institutional effectiveness in higher education.

A position in higher education I hope to obtain in the future in which I can optimize the use of assessment is Program Director for the Physical Therapist Assistant Program at San Diego Mesa College. I have temporarily served as the Acting Program Director and have realized the

importance of effective assessment within the program and strongly feel the content in CCHE 687 will improve my ability to assess courses I instruct, the program as a whole, and support services I would like to create to improve successful learning for my students. Two examples of how I will use this information is in the program review process and through our external program accreditation.

Program review is the responsibility of the program director and includes assessment of courses, resources such as equipment and technology, and staffing needs. The purpose of program review is to reflect and understand the strengths and weaknesses of the program, foster accountability, and ensure connection to the institutional goals (Crawford, 2017a). To optimize assessment, I will participate and encourage other faculty members to participate in training workshops in the creation of student learning outcomes. At these workshops, all faculty will learn how to write effective outcomes, assess those outcomes, and see support from myself as leader for the program and the larger institution. This purpose is to develop an understanding of effective student learning, establish a supportive, enabling environment, and ensure current issues in each class are being addressed (Astin et al., 1996). Recognizing that not all faculty may be open to learning about assessment at an institution workshop, an alternative is for me to create a mini-workshop at our program meeting relating the information to our specific content making it easy to understand and fostering a passion for program improvement.

A second way I can optimize assessment as program director is through our external program accreditation visits. I have had the privilege of participating in our accreditation process and have seen the assessment requirements. Our state has just approved new curriculum for our program and we have no history of assessment on any courses and minimal history with the old curriculum. I have begun the required assessment of all new courses but must wait for the

completion of the current cohort to finalize assessment of large scale outcomes such as critical thinking with their Capstone projects. I plan to optimize assessment by ensuring it is multidimensional with course assessments and program assessments, completed consistently over the time, and that I include the experiences within the program such as volunteer requirements and directed clinical practice (Astin et al., 1996).

Finally, I hope to use the information I gather from assessment to drive the addition of a Bachelor's of Science degree in Physical Therapist Assistant at San Diego Mesa College. We are lucky to be involved in the pilot program of Bachelor's degrees in community colleges in the state of California and I would like to expand and progress the field of physical therapy and offer my students an affordable, career ready degree.

Resources

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