

ASSESSMENT MATTERS

CLOSING THE LOOP ON ASSESSMENT

<http://www.manoa.hawaii.edu/assessment/resources/pdf/ToolsandTechniquesforProgramImprovement.pdf>

HOW DO YOU APPROACH DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION?

The American Association of Higher Education (AAHE) asserts in its “Nine Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning” (1992) that...

An assessment plan’s value to the department lies in the evidence it offers about overall department or program strengths and weaknesses, and in the evidence it provides for change (Wright, 1991). The key factors in attaining the real value of all your work is to make the most out of the information you collect through appropriate analysis and interpretation.

BEST WAYS TO ANALYZE AND INTERPRET ASSESSMENT INFORMATION*

In its faculty handbook on program assessment, the University of California at Chico (1998) recommends:

- presenting data in relation to identified goals and objectives;
- selecting and using appropriate procedures for data analysis;
- using both qualitative and quantitative methods to present a well- balanced picture of the program;
- tailoring your analysis and reporting procedures to the identified audience(s);
- identifying and elaborating on the strengths and weaknesses of the academic program; and

... assessment data can offer useful insight into department and program effectiveness when carefully analyzed and interpreted in the context in which it was collected—for overall program improvement.

- developing recommendations based on analysis of data, and using identified objectives as a framework within which to accomplish these changes.

**Adapted from the Southeast Missouri State University, Busy Chairperson’s Guide to Assessment (1997).*

ALSO CONSIDER THE EXTENT TO WHICH YOUR FINDINGS CAN HELP YOU ANSWER THE ***FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:***

- What do the data say about your students' mastery of subject matter, of research skills, or of writing and speaking?
- What do the data say about your students' preparation for taking the next step in their careers?
- Are there areas where your students are outstanding? Are they consistently weak in some respects?
- Do you see indications in student performance that point to weakness in any particular skills, such as research, writing, or critical thinking skills?
- Do you see areas where performance is okay, but not outstanding, and where you would like to see a higher level of performance?

These are compelling and central questions for faculty, administrators, students, and external audiences alike. If your assessment information can shed light on these issues, the value of your efforts will become all the more apparent.

Finally, assessment data can offer useful insight into department and program effectiveness when carefully analyzed and interpreted in the context in which it was collected—for overall program improvement. Data are misleading, and even threatening, when they are used for purposes other than originally intended and agreed upon. For example, data from assessment of student performance in a capstone course should be used to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses in student learning across the students' entire experience in the major. In this way, these data guide curricular modifications and departmental pedagogical strategies. These data should not be used to evaluate the performance of the capstone course instructor.

LOS ANGELES TIMES

PEANUTS CLASSICS By Charles M. Schulz



Any ideas for the Assessment Matters Newsletters can be sent to: evm@email.arizona.edu