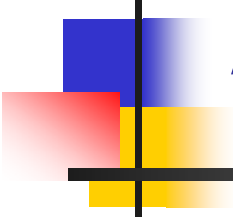


Regional Accreditation Requirements and Outcomes Assessment



Robert T. Mundhenk
Seton Hall University
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The Call to Assess

- 25 years of “encouragement”
- Incorporation in most accreditation criteria in late 1980's
- Minimal response from higher education
- Minimal reaction from accrediting agencies



A Tonal Shift--

- Greater emphasis after 2000
- Middle States revised *Designs for Excellence* in 2002:
 - Two standards—7 (Institutional Assessment) and 14 (Assessment of Student Learning)—infuse the rest
 - *Student Learning Assessment: Options and Resources* (2003)
 - *Assessing Student Learning and Institutional Effectiveness* (2005)



And Greater Urgency: The Spellings Commission

- Findings:

- “. . . the quality of student learning at U.S. colleges and universities is inadequate and, in some cases, declining.” (7)
- “Accreditation reviews are typically kept private, and those that are made public still focus more on process reviews than bottom-line results for learning or costs.” (15)



Spellings Commission Recommendations

- A “robust culture of accountability” with a “consumer-friendly database that provides access to institutional performance and aggregate student outcomes” (21)



Spellings Commission Recommendations

- “Accreditation agencies should make performance outcomes, including completion rates and student learning, the core of their assessment . . . to . . . allow comparisons among institutions regarding learning outcomes and other performance measures.” (23)



Spellings Commission Recommendations

- [Higher education should] “develop interoperable outcomes-focused accountability systems designed to be useful to students, policymakers, and the public ” (22)



The Secretary's Response

- Expand “effectiveness principles” of NCLB to high schools
- Streamline financial aid processes
- Create a “unit record” database to track students’ academic progress
- Reward states and institutions that collect and publicly report SLOs
- Convene an accreditors’ meeting to “move toward measures that place more emphasis on learning” (*Chronicle* 9/27/06)



ACE's Pre-emptive Response

- Use new technologies to contain costs
- “Make every effort” to calculate “net price”
- Improve teaching by employing new research on student learning
- “Coordinated national effort” to smooth the transition from high school
- Pay more attention to international issues in college curricula (*Chronicle* 9/22/06)



Accreditors on Learning:

- Quality defined by “how well [a higher learning institution fulfills its declared learning mission”
- Student learning documented by:
 - Setting clear learning goals
 - Collecting evidence of attainment
 - Applying collective judgment to meaning and utility of evidence



Accreditors on Learning

- Evidence is used to effect improvement
- Institution uses multiple sources and kinds of evidence
- Institutions shares results with stakeholders

(CRAC Statement, 2003)



Thus Institutions Should:

- Clearly define learning goals
- Clearly define learning outcomes
- Align learning outcomes with mission at institutional, course, and program level
- Plan curricula to develop outcomes



Institutions Should:

- Articulate criteria and measures for student learning artifacts
- Apply criteria and measures to student learning artifacts
- Use multiple measures
- Examine/interpret data
- Use the results



Using the Results:

- To improve learning
- To improve teaching
- To modify curriculum
- To assure institutional effectiveness
- To communicate results to stakeholders
- To improve continuously



The View from MSCHE:

- Assessment on two fronts:
 - Institutional Effectiveness (Standard 7)
 - Assessment of Student Learning (Standard 14)
- Assessment standards linked to “content” standards

(2002, 2006)



The Pattern of Assessment for MSCHE

- Articulating goals
- Implementing strategies to achieve them
- Assessing achievement
- Using results of assessment to improve and plan



MSCHE on Assessment of Student Learning

- “Developing clearly articulated *learning outcomes*: the knowledge, skills, and competencies that students are expected to exhibit upon successful completion of a course, academic program, co-curricular program, general education requirement, or other specific set of experiences.”



MSCHE on Assessment of Student Learning

- “Offering courses, programs, and experiences that provide purposeful *opportunities for students to achieve those learning outcomes*”
- “*Assessing student achievement of those learning outcomes*”



MSCHE on Assessment of Student Learning

- *“Using the results of those assessments to improve teaching and learning and inform planning and resource allocation decisions.”*

(Assessing Student Learning and Institutional Effectiveness, 2005)



MSCHE Characteristics of Assessment Processes

- Useful
- Cost-effective
- Reasonably accurate and truthful
- Planned
- Organized, systematized, sustained



Some Inferences:

- *Outcomes* describe what a student can *do* with what s/he *knows*
- *Outcomes* are a *result*; thus planning and design should consider the end of a course, program, or experience
- *Assessment* should focus on improvement, not reporting



Some More Inferences:

- Data-*based* but not data-*limited*
- Multiple measures, qualitative and/or quantitative
- Direct and/or indirect evidence
- No required methodology or instrument
- Information must be *used*
- *Learning assessment* is a part of the assessment of institutional effectiveness



Five Fundamental Questions

- How are your stated student learning outcomes appropriate to your mission, programs, and degrees?
- What evidence do you have that students achieve your stated learning outcomes?
- In what ways do you analyze and use evidence of student learning?



Five Fundamental Questions

- How do you ensure shared responsibility for student learning?
- How do you evaluate and improve the effectiveness of your efforts to assess and improve student learning?

(Higher Learning Commission, 2005)