Program Assessment Conversation Calendar: Ideas for Program Faculty and Staff

A key strategy for keeping program improvement as a priority in your program is to make assessment a regular topic of discussion. Doing so can also make assessment less overwhelming by breaking the process down into manageable steps.

The calendar below provides ideas for monthly discussion topics *for faculty and staff directly involved in the assessment of the program*. The ideas align with the university assessment timeline and focus on making assessment efforts as useful as possible. Hopefully some of the ideas will generate productive conversations between you and your colleagues.

> With best wishes,
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August: What's assessment about, and what do we do first?

- Refresh your memory about the purposes and processes of program assessment.
- Read your previous year's assessment plan; identify any actions needed to implement the action plan, and delegate responsibility to appropriate individuals.
- If the plan includes collecting data in the Fall semester, notify colleagues of any information they will need to gather and submit. (See December for more detail.)
- Arrange for professional development in assessment by contacting the WSU Director of Assessment, attending workshops at the Office for Teaching and Learning, or watching video tutorials online.
- Request Compliance Assist access as needed from the WSU Director of Assessment.
- Remind colleagues of the September 1 rollover in Compliance Assist. (Mission statements, learning outcomes, curriculum maps, assessment methods, and reporting to stakeholders submitted by August 31 will roll over; all other information will not.)
- Look for assessment workshops, peer forums, and other activities at http://events.wayne.edu.

September/October: What should our students learn?

- Review your program's mission statement (1), learning outcomes (minimum 4), and curriculum map (1):
    - Do they accurately describe the current state of the program? If not, what updates or changes are needed?
    - Do they reflect best practices? Use the *Assessment Plan Feedback Rubric* to identify ways to improve the mission statement, learning outcomes, and curriculum map.
    - What specific changes will you make to each?

- Communicate the university assessment timeline to colleagues.
- Verify whether the previous academic year's report to stakeholders has been posted on the program's or department's website.

October/November: How will we know whether students learn what we want them to?

- Decide which two outcomes to assess this academic year. Consider what matters most to you with respect to student learning. Some questions to get you started include:
  - o Do the faculty/staff have common concerns about students' knowledge or skills in a particular area that you want to work on collectively?
  - o Are there outstanding examples of student knowledge or skill that you'd like to develop among more students?
  - o Do you wonder whether the right prerequisites or course sequences are in place?
  - o Are all subgroups of students (e.g., by demographics, academic pathway, or class standing) similarly successful iny our program?
- Review the previous year's assessment methods or choose new ones:
  - o Do they provide useful, credible data about student performance on the program's learning outcomes?
  - o What improvement(s) to the methods could be made? Use the *Assessment Plan Feedback Rubric* to identify ways to improve assessment methods or contact the WSU Director of Assessment if you'd like a consultation to explore assessment options.
- Add assessment methods (if needed) to bring the program up to the minimum number required (2).

December: What's my part in gathering evidence of learning?

- Put all updates to the mission statement, learning outcomes, curriculum map, and assessment methods into Compliance Assist as a record of your decisions.
- Remind colleagues:
  - o What assessment information, evidence, or data each person should submit for program assessment for Fall and Winter semesters
  - o Where/To whom/In what format that information should be submitted
  - o By when
  - o Who is responsible for aggregating and analyzing the submitted information
  - o Who colleagues should contact if they have questions
- Compile any Fall assessment data.

January: What's next?

- Identify any actions needed to implement the action plan and delegate responsibility to appropriate individuals.
- Carry out a first-pass analysis of any data gathered in the Fall semester
- Communicate the university assessment timeline to colleagues.

February: How can we use what we've learned so far?

- Submit a proposal about your efforts to an assessment conference or a journal in your field that publishes on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL).
- Discuss and record any problems encountered in your Fall assessment methods or results.

March: Sharing your findings with stakeholders

- Decide how you will report this year's assessment process and results to students and other stakeholders (in addition to posting them to your program's or department's website).
- Begin drafting the current year's report to stakeholders using placeholders for the current year's data and action plans.
  - Which outcomes did you measure this year? How successful was the program at meeting its targets? What actions will you take in the future to improve the program?
  - What updates to the previous year's action plan can you provide?

April: What does the data tell us about student learning?

- Aggregate and analyze all assessment data for the academic year.

May: How can we improve student learning in our program?

- Complete analyses of assessment data.
- Agree on an action plan based on the data for each outcome that was assessed.
- Set a timeline and delegate responsibilities for implementing the action plans.

June/July/August: Wrapping up / Recognizing good work

- Compile and analyze any Spring/Summer assessment data.
- Submit the committee's annual activity report, where you can recommend individuals to recognize for their assessment efforts. If a member of your assessment group doesn't receive an emailed link to the report form, please contact the WSU Director of Assessment.

Monthly routine ideas:

- "Promising practices" (IUPUI) – A committee member gives a brief (5-10 minute) presentation of any aspect of a program's assessment plan that provides a good example of assessment planning, processes, or use.
- Assessment news – A committee member summarizes an interesting article or conference presentation, announcements of funding opportunities, or descriptions of resources to support assessment. Assessment Update has short, practical articles that might be of interest.