From Perfunctory to Profound

Establishing a culture of assessment
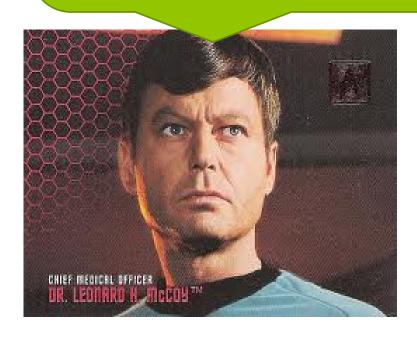
Spock meets Dr. McCoy

Dr. McCoy, it is logical to want to document students' learning at our institution. Therefore, assessment is a valuable activity to allocate one's time to. How will you be assessing student learning in your program, Doctor?

But Doctor, we must assess. It is required of us by (<u>fill in the regulatory/accrediting agency of your choice</u>). We lose (<u>fill in the resources of your choice</u>) if we do not assess. Therefore it is logical to conduct assessment.
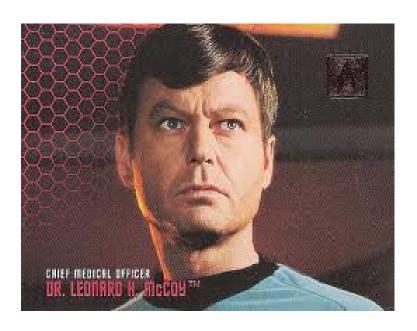
Result:

- Data are meaningless
- Nothing of value is measured
- Interventions are random and do little to improve performance
- Wasted time & wasted money
- Everyone is irritable

At the end of the day…

- Identify strategies to marshal the
  - talents
  - culture
  - resources
  - allies

  Of your institution to advance a commitment to quality improvement & student success
- Recognize progress

At the end of the day…

- How to hold meaningful conversations with the non-data inclined

Terms and Definitions

Assessing Where?

- Academic
- Co-curricular/Student Affairs
- Administrative

  - CR 3.3.1

Assessment

- Establishing clear, measurable outcomes

- Ensuring that appropriate actions have been taken to achieve those outcomes

- Systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well we have achieved those outcomes

- **Using the resulting information to understand and improve effectiveness**

Assessment

- Establishing clear, measurable outcomes

- Ensuring that students have sufficient opportunities to achieve those outcomes

- Systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well student learning matches our outcomes/expectations

- **Using the resulting information to understand and improve student success**

- Establishing clear, measurable outcomes

- Ensuring that students have sufficient opportunities to achieve those outcomes

- Systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well student learning matches our outcomes/expectations

- Using the resulting information to understand and improve student learning

Assessing What?

Program vs. Course vs. Student
Unit vs. Activity vs. Employee

Program/Unit

vs. Course/Activity
vs. Student/Employee

Learning Outcome

- Measurable statements of what students have learned as a result of participating in the program.

Effectiveness Outcome

- *Retention rates*
- *Graduation rates*
- *Time to degree*
- *Grade distribution*
- Articles published
- Participation rates
- # of errors/reworks
- # served
- Processing time
- Activity level

"Buy in"
or "ownership"
or does it matter?

Authentic, Purposeful Assessment

- Value the process as a tool to achieve excellence, to improve student learning, to serve our students better
- Focus on the most important
  - key responsibilities of the unit
  - primary skills, knowledge and values of the program
- Integrity of process
- *Fearless* analysis and interpretation of findings
- Taking <u>courageous </u>action based upon findings
- **Sustain identifiable improvement**

It's…

- One-on-one
- Complex
- Micro-situational
- Macro-situational
- Personality Driven
- Discipline & Unit Driven
- Heavily influenced by how individuals see themselves within the broader institutional community

What does not work:

- Using the _(administrative level of your choice) as the big hammer
- Tattling
- Sticks vs. carrots
- Inconsistency

Seek First to Understand

Live where they live

- Understand their values, goals
- Understand their insecurities & stressors
- Value their strengths
- Acknowledge their efforts and contributions

Living the Life

- I teach
- I research, publish & present
- I collect & analyze data
- I write assessment plans & reports
- I work on academic & student affairs implementation committees
- I work student affairs events
- I read colleagues' research and articles
- Party with them when I can

Most successful when assessment:

- Is consistent
- Meshes well with culture & values
- Debunks insecurities
- Reduces stressors
- Advances progress toward stated goals
- Takes advantage of program or unit strengths, processes, culture & expertise

Find your allies

- Early adaptors
- The thoughtful critics/ the open minded
- Highly effective faculty
- Junior faculty
- Intellectually curious
- Adjuncts

Take Advantage of Existing Structure & Strengths

- What evidence is already being collected?
  - Does it infer a program or unit goal, value or outcome?
    - Is that goal/value/outcome explicitly stated in the Program Outcomes?
      - If not – should it be?
  - Do we collect that information simply because it's "expected?"

- Are there organizational structures that can be taken advantage of?
- Is there expertise that can be tapped?

Streamline where ever possible

- Measure ONLY what is valued
- Measure ONLY as often as absolutely necessary
- Collect ONLY information that we are able to act upon
- Adopt the appropriate level of rigor
- Technology
- Sampling

Data Collection:

- **Eliminate** those data sets that are flawed, not closely tied to v/g/o, that are never used

- **Preserve** only those data collection processes that are explicitly linked to program values, goals, and outcomes

- **Refocus** data collection that is flawed or poorly designed

Reporting

- Minimize the complexity of reporting
    - Bullets vs. prose
    - Just the facts
    - Let assessment instruments speak for you
    - Assume the reader can connect the big dots
- Explicitly identify what needs to be included in the reports

Allow **Quality** to trump quantity

- 1 well measured, important outcome trumps10 poorly measured unimportant outcomes

- 1 substantive, well-implemented initiative that directly addresses the problems trumps10 random initiatives

Point 'em in the right direction…

and let 'em run

Just Say Yes

(whenever it possibly makes sense)

Keep Moving Forward

- Something is more than nothing
- It's rarely all or nothing
- Seek compromise and consensus
- There's always another bite at the apple tomorrow

Spotlight the Good….

- Recommend their methodology/process to others
- Use as an exemplar
- Request there assistance
- Encourage presenting/publishing

Lead by Example

- IE Assessment Plan
- Sharing of IE program's assessment data widely
- Seek input on improvement

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