Academic Assessment Council Minutes  
Thursday, December 12th 2013, 2-3:30pm  
Kimmel 914  
Kimmel Center for University Life, 60 Washington Square South

Attendance:

1. Announcement and Updates
   Diana Karafin - Assistant Director, Office of Academic Assessment

   Three members of the Academic Assessment Council attended the December Middle States conference in Philadelphia: Russ Hamberger, Jessica Sears, and Diana Karafin. Several possible changes were proposed at the conference regarding standards for student learning outcomes assessment. OAA will keep the Assessment Council up to speed regarding relevant changes. Assessment reporting cycle reminder: academic assessment update reports are due on April 30th 2014, unless otherwise negotiated.

   OAA has been working to update the website to create a more user friendly homepage. When the new webpage goes live there will be 6 different buckets on the homepage. From the homepage you will be able to download past presentations and meeting minutes. Several Assessment Council Members have volunteered to test drive the site prior to the actual launch (names recorded by Melody Cherny). The spring Academic Assessment Council Symposium has been re-scheduled for May 2nd from 10am-2pm in Kimmel 905-907.

2. Presentation: Supporting what Faculty Do Best
   Dr. Jeannine Pinto - Assessment Officer, Office of Institutional Research, Fordham University

   Academic Assessment at Fordham University
   Dr. Pinto is trained as a researcher in experimental psychology; her experience as a faculty member has provided perspective of working with assessment, and helping facilitate results with increased faculty buy-in. Fordham University has many similarities to NYU including the variety of schools and programming. Fordham has ten different schools across three campuses, including one undergraduate business school, three undergraduate liberal arts colleges, and multiple graduate programs.
Fordham is highly decentralized; individual Dean’s offices are responsible for assessment within their own schools. Previous assessment measures were rolled out approximately 10 years ago. Schools A, B, and C, are used to display different attitudes and approaches towards assessment. Similarities include that all schools were initially resistant to assessment; however, the perceived threat of lost accreditation provided motivation for change.

School C
School C was very resistant to change until they found out they were about to lose accreditation; this was the catalyst for change. Accreditors specified standards, and faculty committee was organized to collect data to address standards. Collection of data was very thorough and systematic. School C choose to compile a computer database for data collection of all objectives at every level and semester, however, the system was too detailed and time consuming to be sustained and was not maintained over the long term.

School B and A
These schools took a different approach and started focusing on assessment in anticipation of the perceived threat. Both schools A and B hired faculty coordinators to conduct annual assessments, and determine measures.

School B
School B planed the assessment goals and competencies that would be their focus, and used these goals to develop assessment plans. Because school B specified their area of focus they provided limited training in assessment measurement strategies. Assessment reports went to a low level administrator and were rarely implemented. It was difficult to get faculty buy-in because faculty could see that plans and results were used rarely. School B’s process meets accreditation requirements, and was clean and bureaucratic, however, did not have a long term impact.

School A
School A’s approach focused on individual priorities of specific programs. Instead of directing assessment reports to a low level administrator, the reports were used and implemented. Assessment reports went to the Dean not a low level person, and there was greater faculty buy-in because faculty knew their reports would be used. This approach recognized no one was going to agree on standardized learning goals for use across every school. Individual departments focused instead on picking the most important goals. Meaningful assessments were emphasized over standardized form. Schools were required to submit assessment reports and to use learning goals to help with outcomes achievement. This approach helped programs dictate priorities.

Differences Between A and B
School B’s approach met the accreditation requirements but the school was not using results. School B’s approach was clean and bureaucratic, however, there was difficulty getting faculty motivated. School A had a different experience; they had less formal structure for constructing learning goals and assessments; this allowed departments to construct reports in a way that was programmatically meaningful. Once assessment
reports were submitted, lack of standardized structure made the administrative process of disaggregating data more difficult; however, this yielded more meaningful results for departments and faculty. The high faculty buy-in from School A can be related to the knowledge that assessment plans were utilized.

**Take-Away Points:**

- Importance in faculty doing what they do best: teaching and scholarship. The main priority is to keep faculty engaged intellectually and creatively in teaching and scholarship.
- Faculty do not necessarily need to know specific assessment language. It is more important to create a relevant and usable assessment strategy than to know assessment lingo.
- Faculty members who feel that their reports are valued by their Dean and department will likely take assessment more seriously.
- Creating a pedagogy about assessment, teaching, and learning
- Relevance of using assessment to provide data showing need for new programs and funding; backing up program need with numbers.
- When working with faculty skeptical of assessment, it is important to address their concerns and how assessment can help, not change the department.
- The Fordham Psychology department initially had difficulty embracing assessment, but later used assessment to help. Because assessment had shown need to document how the department was preparing students for success upon graduation, the department was able to ask for funding to hire a graduate student to help distribute an alumni survey. The survey captured data regarding how the program had prepared students for success, and areas for improvement.
- Reducing standardization of assessment reports will require greater judgment from administrators, and is more time consuming but will produce more meaningful results.