ASSESSMENT AS SCHOLARSHIP: IMPROVING PROGRAMS, INSTITUTIONS, AND DISCIPLINES

Thomas P. Pusateri, Ph.D.
Florida Atlantic University
pusateri@fau.edu

Closing Plenary Session
13th Annual Georgia Conference on College & University Teaching
March 25, 2006

RESOURCES FROM JOSSEY-BASS

1990 Scholarship Considered (Boyer)
1997 Scholarship Assessed (Glassick, Huber, & Maeroff)
2001 Scholarship Revisited (Kreber)
2004 Assessment Clear and Simple (Walvoord)

ASSESSMENT IN THE NEWS
The Atlantic Monthly (November 2005)

WHAT DOES COLLEGE TEACH?

- How College Affects Students (Pascarella & Terenzini)
- Going to college makes a difference
- But no differences between colleges, controlling for student quality
- Hersh: Current assessment measures may not be picking up differences
- Who will control the agenda for assessing the worth of college?

U.S. Congress: Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act
40 State legislators: FL Board of Governors: Academic Learning Compacts
Bush administration: Commission on the Future of Higher Education

- Hersh: Institutions ought to take charge to assess cumulative learning
- Formative assessment: Carleton College (MN); Alverno College (WI)
- Value-added assessment: Wabash College (IN) study of 16 institutions

ASSESSMENT AS SCHOLARSHIP

- This presentation focuses on assessment for program improvement
  - Accountability: Track individual students
  - Program improvement: Aggregate the data
- Assessment is “action research” for “informed intervention”
  - Models from social science and education
  - Sampling; Pre-post differences; Comparisons
  - Quantitative and Qualitative data

GOALS OF THIS PRESENTATION

- Provide practical examples of assessment that you might adapt at your institution
  - Examples from Loras College and FAU
- Suggest strategies for communicating findings to colleagues (“Lessons learned“)
  - Graphing data; Conducting/Reporting audits
- Identify venues for presenting and publishing research on assessment
  - SoTL organizations, conferences, journals

EXAMPLE 1
MEASURING STUDENT ATTITUDES

- Loras College: Attitudes towards general education
  - Faculty developed 41 outcomes statements
  - “Loras graduates should be able to…”
  - (“understand” or “appreciate” disciplines)
  - Survey requested ratings on a 5-point scale from “Extremely important” to “No importance”
  - Most students completed the survey twice
  - Early in the first year and late in the senior year
- Comparison groups
  - Longitudinal (First Year - Senior) comparisons
  - Value added approach: Did students’ values change?
  - Comparison groups: FTICs to Transfer students
  - Did completing four years at Loras matter?
LESSON 1
MEANS CAN BE MEANINGLESS

- Recommendation: Graph frequency distributions
  - In Microsoft Excel, choose "100% Stacked Bar"
EXAMPLE 2
ASSESSING WRITING SKILLS
Loras College: Sophomore writing portfolios
• Phase 1: Assessment committee (2 summers)
  - Collected portfolios (3 papers from each student)
  - Read a subset of portfolios; wrote a scoring rubric
  - Evaluated remaining portfolios (interrater reliability)
  - Provided students feedback
• Phase 2: Faculty workshops (2 summers)
  - Training on using the scoring rubric
  - Evaluating portfolios (interrater reliability)
  - Discussing findings and applying to courses
  - Provided students feedback

Based on assessment by 21 faculty who read a subset of 49 student portfolios

LESSON 2
MISSED OPPORTUNITIES
Carleton College (MN): AAC&U News (December 2004)
Sophomore writing portfolio requirement
Students submit papers from at least 2 of 4 divisions
Faculty ratings: “Exemplary” “Pass” “Needs work”
14% 78% 8% (resubmit)

Evaluation criteria:
KEY WRITING SKILLS
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Report on observation</th>
<th>Analyze complex information</th>
<th>Use and document sources</th>
<th>Articulate and support thesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
QUALITY OF WRITING
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attend to audience</th>
<th>Clarity of prose</th>
<th>Clear organization</th>
<th>Use of evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Distinctive voice</td>
<td>Appropriate diction</td>
<td>Control of error</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data from faculty workshop on assessing student writing

Percentage of time each rating was awarded

Based on assessment by 21 faculty who read a subset of 49 student portfolios

LESSON 2
MISSED OPPORTUNITIES
REVISITED
University of South Carolina – Aiken
“Communicating Assessment Results Online to Promote Curricular Change” at SACS-COC 2005 Annual Meeting
Rising Junior portfolio
WRITING OUTCOMES/ EVALUATIVE RUBRIC
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clarity of Purpose</th>
<th>Quality of Thought</th>
<th>Organization of Content</th>
<th>Use of Sources</th>
<th>Language and Style</th>
<th>Grammar and Mechanics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

LESSON 2
MISSING OPPORTUNITIES RECLAIMED?

CARLETON COLLEGE
LORAS COLLEGE
USC AIKEN

AUDIENCE AND PURPOSE
Creativity/Voice/Audience
Clarity of purpose

DISTINCTIVE VOICE
Clarity of prose
Demonstrates critical thinking

CLARITY OF PROSE
Clear organization
Organizes the writing

PROSE ORGANIZATION
Use of evidence
Supports ideas with evidence

EVIDENCE USE
Appropriate diction
Uses standard English and effective prose

DICTION APPROPRIATE
Control of error
Grammar and mechanics

EXAMPLE 3
USING STANDARDIZED TESTS

Loras College: Assessment of General Education CAAP Tests in selected sophomore-level courses
- Reading
- Essay Writing
- Science Reasoning
- Mathematics

Loras College: Senior Majors in Psychology
- ETS Major Field Test in Psychology

LESSON 3
STANDARDIZED TESTS CAN BE USEFUL (IF SELECTED & USED APPROPRIATELY)

• Comparisons to other institutions
  Essay writing: Provided additional evidence for faculty concerns
  Mathematics: Supported the math department’s recommendation for a curriculum change
  Science reasoning & Reading: Added little of value
  Psychology: Provided useful information concerning the quality of content knowledge among majors

EXAMPLE 4
FLORIDA’S ACADEMIC LEARNING COMPACTS

2004 Florida Board of Governors resolution to implement Academic Learning Compacts for each baccalaureate degree program at 11 universities
- Discipline-specific knowledge/skills
- Communication skills
- Critical thinking skills

Each baccalaureate program must also
- Identify where and how students are assessed
- Provide students access to this information
- Monitor performance for program improvement
Implementing Academic Learning Compacts

- Review of past assessment plans
- Develop flexible definitions of outcomes
- Assist departments to
  - Identify discipline-specific outcomes
  - Identify location of student assessments
  - Courses (Core requirements; Gateway; Capstone)
    [Shared learning outcomes/ syllabi/ assignments]
  - Standardized examinations for some programs
  - Develop methods to track student achievement
    - Embedded questions on examinations
    - Scoring rubrics on shared assignments
    - Performance on standardized examinations

Examples of the assessment process in selected departments

SCHOLARSHIP OF ASSESSMENT

- Presentations at conferences
  - Using Psychological Expertise in College-Wide Assessment and Departmental Program Review presented at MACTOP '97
  - Assessing Classes, Courses, and Curricula presented at MACTOP '02, MISTOP '01, ITOP '00
  - Aligning Assessment for Program Improvement with Accountability for Individual Student Learning presented at SACS '05, NCSU '06 Assessment Institute

- Publications
  - Designing and Implementing Psychology Program Reviews (2004 Measuring Up book chapter)
  - A Decade of Changes since the St. Mary's Conference (2002 Teaching of Psychology interview)