Engaging Others in the Program Improvement Process

California State University, Long Beach
College of Education
Learning · Evidence · Decisions
Assessment Office

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Overview

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The assessment process collects data from many people to help us understand the strengths of our programs and the areas in which we can improve. These same audiences can also be involved in helping us understand and ***interpret*** the meaning of the data that we collect from them. The purpose of this document is to serve as a resource for ways to engage others in helping us build the strongest programs we can.

When to Engage Others

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The program improvement process is a simple 4-step process: 1) we design our outcomes and assessments; 2) we collect data on candidate performance; 3) we convene to interpret the meaning of the data; and, 4) we act, based on our findings, to improve our programs and student success. The chart to the right gives a sampling of the kinds of things we do at each stage in which others, beyond the full-time faculty, might be involved.

Who Might be Involved?

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Below is a sampling of those closely related to our work, and some ideas for how they might be engaged in the improvement process.

- Current Students and Alumni: Students should be aware of SLOs and signature assignments. They can also help ***interpret*** the data, sharing explanations for data and program improvement faculty may not have considered. Alumni can play a similar role in data interpretation.
- Part-time Faculty: Part-time colleagues can identify needed skills, help shape outcomes and create assignments. If data review meetings are held in the early evening, these colleagues help interpret data too.
- District/School Partners and Employers: District/school partners can give us insight into the observed skills of our students and alumni, as well as feedback on our curricula and the emerging skills and knowledge professionals should have.

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Designing	• Give feedback on *needed* skills or knowledge • Identify or review/revise SLOs • Help design signature assignment/ rubric
Collecting	• Provide data on student performance (e.g., fieldwork, signature assignments) • Be informed/aware of relevant SLOs, assignments, rubrics, etc. • Be aware of SLOs, assignments, etc.. (for students)
Interpreting	• View and help interpret performance data • Give feedback on *observed* skills or knowledge • Give feedback on curriculum, services, supports, etc. • Evaluate quality/utility of signature assignment/rubric
Acting	• Participate in the (re-) design of curriculum, services, advising efforts, etc. • Serve as (peer-) mentors for students

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What Is Already Happening?

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In the College of Education and Affiliated Programs, our programs are already engaging others in assessment in the following ways:

- Providing feedback on e-portfolios, capstone projects, and fieldwork experiences.
- Giving input into the market for the degree, workplace needs, etc.
- Identifying community needs and connecting those to necessary skills and knowledge for our graduates.

- Clinic Clients: As clients of our services, clinic participants can give us feedback on the effectiveness of our students and their professional dispositions.
- Advisory Board/Community Members: Like employers and district partners, advisory board members give us insight into our students' and alumni's performance, necessary skills and knowledge, and the kinds of services our programs and unit should be providing. They can also help us as we revise and improve our curricula and services.
- Campus community (e.g., Faculty Development, Provost Office): Campus offices can be valuable sources of support for us as we develop our teaching (e.g., use of technology) and consider ways to create an environment that supports our students (e.g., advising, services).

How Can We Engage ***Students*** in the Process?

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Here are some quick and easy ways to engage students in the assessment process and in program improvement:

- Share program SLOs in recruitment meetings and materials.
- At orientation, walk students through program SLOs and the curriculum map. This gives them a "road map" for what they'll do and learn in the program.
- Reflect with students on what they learned after completing a signature assignment and/or how the assignment might be improved.
- Share class-level data on signature assignment performance (both overall scores and criteria scores) after as part of the above reflection process.
- Share class-level data on signature assignment performance from ***past*** classes, so students can see where the most challenging parts of the assignment might be and explore ways to address these.
- Hold student focus groups to ask about course alignment, services, advisement, etc.
- Present SLO and survey results to students. Ask them to help you interpret strengths and weaknesses.

How Do We Get Started?

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- Contact the Assessment Office for what might work best for your program.
- Contact your department chair to explore funding for incentives (e.g., food), arranging space, and securing parking for any off-campus guests.