Responding To The Call For Greater Transparency And Accountability For Student Outcomes: How Did The University Of North Carolina System Do It?

- Muktha Jost, North Carolina A&T State University
- Christine Robinson, University of North Carolina at Charlotte
- John Frederick, University of North Carolina at Charlotte
Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA)

- Public universities to supply straightforward, comparable information on the undergraduate student experience through a common web report
- Three objectives
  - Demonstrate accountability, transparency
  - Support innovation in the measurement, reporting of student learning outcomes
  - Use as a search tool for informational and comparison purposes (College Portrait Website)
Student Learning Outcome (SLO) Component of the VSA (past)

• Use results from one of the required instruments to assess campus-level outcomes
  – ETS Proficiency Profile critical thinking and written communications sub-scores
  – CLA performance and analytic writing tasks
  – ACT CAAP critical thinking and writing essay modules
• Results can be no more than three years old
Rationale for Change

• VSA: Issues with required instruments
  • Test administration
  • Number of participants

(per Teri Hinds’ “Excellence in Campus Assessment” webinar on 3/2/16)

• Institutions and faculty: Validity issues
• Disconnected from the instruction and assessment processes
• Is the data useful in decision-making? Tied to accreditation efforts?
VSA’s New Student Learning Outcome Component

• SLO reporting is no longer restricted to specific instruments
• The National Institute of Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA) Transparency Framework was adopted as the preferred reporting method
  • Greater flexibility in assessing student learning
  • Greater clarity in messaging to stakeholders
  • Matches what institutions are already doing; or design their own assessment system; consolidated user-friendly content
• Required to report on the components of the Transparency Framework and link to the University’s website by October 2016
NILOA Transparency Framework

Benefits of the Transparency Framework

• Standardized exam is no longer required to assess campus-level outcomes
• Supports regional and discipline compliance requirements for SLOs
• The following may already be in place:
  • Student Learning Outcome Statements, Assessment Plans and Activities, Evidence of Student Learning, and Use of Student Learning Evidence for Programs
  • Assessment Resources
Organizing assessment persons
Formation of Assessment Council

• Board of Governors’ goals: 1) use student learning outcome data to improve curricular effectiveness and 2) UNC System to lead nationally in assessment of student learning

• To achieve goals, it was recommended that the UNC General Administration serve as the convener of individuals across the system who have the primary responsibility for assessment (Assessment Council) and faculty and academic administrators of the UNC system adopt a systematic method for assessment such as the NILOA Transparency Framework

• A small group of assessment leaders (Dr. Christine Robinson from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Dr. Muktha Jost from North Carolina A&T State University, Dr. Jodi Pettazzoni from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Dr. Erin McNelis from Western Carolina University, and Dr. Michelle Soler from the University of North Carolina General Administration) agreed to serve as a steering committee to facilitate discussions for campus assessment directors
Gauging Interest

• Steering committee identified possible priorities born out of assessment concerns on our three campuses
• Surveyed Council members about priorities and asked them to rank order topics based upon their interests
• Survey results indicated that “Adopting the NILOA Transparency Framework as the preferred reporting method to the Voluntary System of Accountability” was an important topic of interest
• First conference call of the Council members revealed that few had an understanding of the Framework and what was required for compliance
• An in-person meeting was scheduled for all Council members to learn from and engage with each other
• The NILOA Transparency Framework was a significant topic of the two-day discussion
Big Question: If there are common elements that all institutions can use to support the Framework, what are they?
Identifying Resources

• Steering Committee planning
  • Dr. Jillian Kinzie, a national speaker who addresses the use of the NILOA Transparency Framework, presented about the Framework’s background
  • A steering committee member, Dr. Robinson, had led her institution in a discussion about how it would address the Framework
  • Dr. Robinson volunteered to organize a presentation about her institution’s discussion and an activity to engage participants in discussions
  • Steering Committee members provided input on the activity
Engaging in discussions

Small groups of five were formed to answer the following:

1. What is the **minimum** amount of details that should be included in publications?
2. What details cause you concern if published to the public?
3. Where should documentation be published and in what formats?
Outcomes Publication Resources


- Model #2: BYU - https://learningoutcomes.byu.edu/Courses/program-courses/483634/Communications+BA+Public+Relations/1173
Visual Public Displays


- Infographic #2: http://snaap.indiana.edu/snaapshot/#location.

- Infographic #3: https://www.luminafoundation.org/files/resources/funding-for-better-outcomes.pdf
Purpose of the Council

- Create a community of assessment leaders sharing best practices, providing support, and serving as peers (Share);
- Serve as resources regarding assessment and educate others in the system about assessment (Educate);
- Advocate for best practices in assessment (Advocate);
- Serve in an advisory capacity to the Board of Governors and UNC General Administration (Advise); and
- Build bridges between all stakeholders and connect all involved in assessment across the campuses (Communicate)
Summary of Results

- A description of the assessment process at a level of understanding for multiple audiences was necessary
- Only aggregated outcomes data would be reported
- Use of visual displays rather than narratives of results was preferred
- Paradoxes in trust and transparency
- Identification of the role and functions of the Assessment Council
NILOA Transparency Examples

- UNC Charlotte [http://assessment.uncc.edu/student-learning-outcomes-0](http://assessment.uncc.edu/student-learning-outcomes-0)
- UNC Greensboro
  [http://assessment.uncg.edu/TransFrame/](http://assessment.uncg.edu/TransFrame/)
- UNC Wilmington
Questions?