Summary Report January - May 2014

In January 2014, the Institutional Assessment Council approved the following goals to be completed by June 2014:

(1) Communication strategy for sharing campus assessment work and answering the question, “Why Assessment?”
(2) Inventory current assessment work, including documentation of effective assessment practices
(3) Create goals, timeline and work plan for promoting effective assessment practices across campus

Goal (1) Progress: Communication Strategy for sharing campus assessment work and answering the question, “Why assessment?”

Goal (1) Phase One: Foundation and Planning

Assessment Report  The IAC’s planning process for communication was informed by the considerable experience of its members, foundations from previous IAC efforts, and a report on PSU’s assessment activities created by Dr. Bill Rickards, consultant in higher education research and evaluation. During summer and fall 2013, Dr. Rickards conducted telephone and in-person interviews with PSU faculty, staff and administrators, examined institutional documents, and reviewed website materials related to institutional assessment. The report outlined Portland State’s assessment history, select practices and examples across colleges, principle considerations for future assessment activity, and recommendations for next steps in the form of immediate, mid-range, and long-term priorities (Appendix A, Rickards Report).

Foundation Building  As part of his immediate recommendation to examine commitments and principles of learning, Dr. Rickards suggested a period of foundation building for the IAC. In order to answer the question “why assessment” for the campus, he suggested that the newly reformed membership of the IAC might itself engage in an extended process of answering the question; the rationale for doing so was to surface and clarify precepts and assumptions that would serve as a foundation for future planning. The method for doing so was critical examination of one or more case studies (vignettes) included in the final report. Discussion of two of the five case studies resulted in overall consensus on the following assumptions that would inform future communication and planning efforts:

The IAC will be intentional about setting the tone for the overarching story and conversation related to assessment (ex: assessment in the context of learning and teaching)

The IAC will be clear and transparent about its approach – case study 2 surfaced the seemingly competing demands of a machinist (mechanistic approach) or ecologist (systems) approach, as well as a top down vs. ground level up approach. We will be strategic in how to combine these approaches according to need.

The IAC is not charged with making radical or immediate changes - it will instead:

* learn from past efforts, build from past work (adapting those foundations to current context);
* be clear where past efforts have informed current work (give credit to those whose work informs current progress);
* keep goals manageable within resources, keep plans simple; and
* start small and gradually build from successes.

As much as possible the IAC will try to integrate assessment work into relevant questions about student learning as expressed by programs.

The Council will form long-term (in two year phases) goals and work backwards, then actualize into a strategic plan.

**Goal (1) Phase Two: Implementation**

After reviewing past assessment communication successes, outlining current communication needs, and reviewing diverse examples of assessment communication strategies from several campuses, the Council decided to build upon previous IAC communication and web presence efforts by creating an interactive online assessment resource. This online resource will continue the progress of IAC membership during the years 2008-2012, who developed a website that included communication from the Council, resources, guidelines, and examples of best practices. The new website will continue the level of transparency created by the previous Council, and will also include interactive technology for sharing models across programs, multimedia examples of effective work across units and colleagues, and links to relevant offices. The site is currently under development with the goal of launching (phase one) in fall 2014.

**Goal (2) Progress: Inventory of Current Assessment Work**

**Goal (2) Phase One: Foundation and Planning**

Assessment Coordinator Suzanne Matthews, OAI, is creating a framework for organizing an inventory of program assessment practices and outcomes. In the course of this planning, the need for a long-term technical solution for documenting assessment efforts became apparent. This solution is currently in the discussion phase. In the interim, the focus of this work is on mapping current assessment practices with the eventual goal of comparison to previous documentation of program assessment work completed between 2008-2010 under the leadership of the Center for Academic Excellence and the Office of Institutional Research and Planning.

**Goal (2) Phase Two: Implementation**

The implementation of a technical solution is included in the IAC planning document; meanwhile, the following efforts have begun:

1. Provost Challenge Projects: meeting with stakeholders to collect data and narratives on Provost Challenge projects within the focus of program assessment.
2. Updating departmental program assessment information.
3. Exploring ways to supplement or expand upon prior base information collected (ex: template D) to expand the “picture” of how individual departments are developing program assessment.
4. Additional efforts that support organic and sustainable assessment practices.

**Goal (3) Progress: Goals, Timeline, Work Plan for Creating Effective Assessment Practices**

**Goal (3) Phase One: Foundations and Planning**

The Council discussed the need to clarify the IAC charge as part of preparation for the creation of a two-year timeline and work plan. Ambiguity about some aspects of the charge, as well as the overall perception of a shift in the focus of assessment work led to the recommendation that the charge be revised and a draft of the revision be submitted through the appropriate approval processes.
Goal (3) Phase Two: Implementation
The Council created goals to be completed in two years, working backwards to complete a segmented timeline. Actualizing the timeline into a strategic plan is currently in process and will be completed over the summer in conjunction with the work of Standard Four: Assessment Steering Committee.

Institutional Assessment Council Revised Charge

The Institutional Assessment Council (IAC) will promote and advocate for the continued implementation of assessment across the campus, working closely with: Undergraduate Studies, Graduate Studies, Institutional Research and Planning, Office of Academic Innovation, and Enrollment Management and Student Affairs. The IAC will create principles and recommendations for assessment planning that are sustainable and learning-focused, and provide counsel aimed at enhancing the quality of student learning through assessment activities.

In cooperation with the ex-officio members, the Council will design a framework for promoting assessment long term and will provide guidelines for implementation. It will serve as the primary advisory mechanism for institutional planning and will coordinate with the assistant and associate deans group the implementation of systemic annual reporting by the schools and colleagues. It will create an annual document on the status of assessment that will form the basis for institutional reports, such as those required by the PSU faculty senate and the regional accreditation body, NWCCU.

IAC Goals: June 2014-June 2016 (DRAFT)

Assessment not a technical additive but human will to learn from what we’re trying to achieve (Angelo, 2003)

(1) Evidence of program level assessment increases (breadth & depth)
   (Note: More specifics/parameters on breadth and depth needed)
(2) Process/procedure that makes visible assessment results/partnerships between programs
   * Ex: ABET
(3) Established assessment interest groups
(4) Campus-wide inventory/mapping of assessment activity
(5) Visible mechanism for highlighting assessment work (communication platform established and in place); highlight model assessment plans
(6) Centralized resource coordination of best practices and campus models
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<tr>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Resources/Actions Needed</th>
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| September 2014 (3 months) | * Focus and strategy for Council work and roles completed  
* OAI online assessment resources updated  
* Revised IAC website outline  
* Steering Committee Standard #4 identifies data and material for internal review | Communication to Associate Deans; RFP                                                                                                     |
| By January 2015 (6 months): | * Faculty Fellows for Program Design begins  
* Inventory of program assessment information is 50% complete  
* Robust program assessment plans have been identified  
* Draft Steering Committee Standard #4 complete  
* “Point person” in each program who can provide feedback, communication, summarize progress to constituents identified | TBD: Technology platform? Includes syllabus review? Format for documentation - for example, adaptation of existing templates?  
Consider productive overlap with Provost Challenge interest groups |
| By June 2015 (1 year): | * Campus-wide inventory of current assessment activity complete  
* Visible mechanism for highlighting assessment work and communication platform in place  
* Infrastructure in place  
* Data for report for internal review | Strategy for identification of appropriate point people: nomination process in IAC? Other?  
Infrastructure is defined as ... How can IAC and related offices help with the ABET goal? |
Inventory identifies evidence of change and implications for infrastructure

Could operate behind IAC website OR OAI website (ongoing highlighting teaching, learning and assessment efforts)

* Data plan recommendations: Steering Committee #4 with IAC counsel

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<tr>
<th>By November 2015 (1.5 years):</th>
<th>* Faculty Fellows for Innovative Program Assessment (cohort 2) in progress</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Program assessment plans: process for regular updates</td>
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<td></td>
<td>* Organized data repository complete</td>
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<td>* Summary program assessment data complete</td>
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<td>* Resource: Exemplary models of assessment plans</td>
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<td></td>
<td>* Documentation: Evidence of increased depth and breadth in assessment work</td>
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<td>* Common interest groups formed</td>
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<td>* Documentation of collaboration across programs</td>
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Communication platform exemplars diverse enough to have relevance across colleges and programs

Define parameters of “depth” and “breadth”

Define indicators: for example, comparison of template information? Qualitative indicators over time within depts? Etc.

What is meant by collaboration across programs? At what level/how much work in this area would we like to see?

**Additional Items to be Addressed by IAC**

Actualize work plan and focus of specific assessment projects; confirm within context of reporting requirements

**Question:** Role of campus learning outcomes in relation to core themes

Process for tying assessment work into relevant initiatives. Examples included: Provost Challenge projects, future reThink efforts, program review cycles (when established), employment outcomes.

Requested: A clear statement about what IAC members will be doing connected to 2 year plan.

**Questions:**

What are the assistant and associate deans doing?

What are the different offices doing?