
A Cross-Sector Initiative: Outcomes Assessment

Background:

Understanding and implementing assessment measures is a regional accreditation priority as higher education addresses issues related to the assessment of learning outcomes. Specifically, accredited colleges and universities are expected to implement an assessment process to evaluate and improve “the total range of programs and services” (*Standard 7* of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education’s Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education, 2006), as well as to assess student learning outcomes (*Standard 14, Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education, 2006*).

The Middle States Commission’s standards on assessment would suggest a comprehensive approach, including support and collaboration across campus, an understanding (among faculty, staff, administration) of roles in assessment, campus-wide involvement in assessing programs and services, and using assessment results to improve student learning and advance the institution. While accredited programs may be centrally involved in assessment, sectors across the campus may have little experience in aligning assessments and using results to improve and advance their work and that of the general vision, mission, and goals of the institution.

The Initiative:

It becomes clear that the organization must facilitate a cross-sector, interdisciplinary approach to develop assessment models that will result in the assessment and use of data in keeping with these assessment expectations from the regional accreditation body. The planning, analysis, and discussion require substantial involvement from the offices/functions across campus that form core dependencies for assessment processes. The range of expertise, experience, and commitment is varied – from those with outcomes assessment requirements and assessment systems for program accreditation to those for whom the assessment of outcomes is a new aspect of their responsibility/reporting.

What approaches would you use to create and engage your team?

What are the motivational approaches you would use?