



# Assessment Times

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**IN THE SPOTLIGHT ~ Drexel Assessment Conference**

**Faculty Assessment Insights**  
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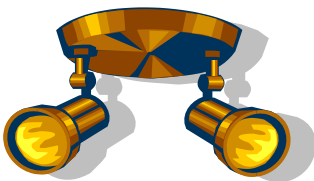
Few things in academia are less understood and appreciated less assessment. Eye rolls, crossed arms, glazed looks, and furrowed eyebrows are almost universally observed across campus when broaching the topic - there may even be a head scratch or two. For some faculty members, assessment means evaluation of their teaching. For some administrators, it is the castor oil the institution must swallow to maintain healthy accreditations. There often seems to be far more assessment data than is necessary or manageable to digest in a meaningful way. But these are just perceptions. The reality is much, much simpler...

In truth, faculty members already conduct assessments in every classroom, every semester. The real misunderstanding is less about what assessments are than how the assessment results are to be presented so that external reviewers (such as accreditors) can see the great work that faculty are already doing. For the last five years, Drexel University in Philadelphia has held an annual conference in September dedicated to best practices in assessment. Conference attendees often consist of assessment coordinators, administrators, institutional accreditation reviewers, and faculty. Last fall, a handful of faculty members (Charles Adams, Rochelle Daniel, Matasha Harris, Karima Haynes, Charla Bishop, and Art Vidrine) went to the conference along with two staff members from the Center for Academic Programs Assessment (CAPA).

While many of the topics discussed in the plenary and workshop sessions were familiar, there were quite a few assessment ideas that faculty had not thought of or tried before. For example, Rochelle Daniel began incorporating a digital assignment into the COMM internship course after attending LaGuardia Community College's session "Hands-on with Digital Communication". According to Daniel, "the assignment calls for [students] to use their cell phones to video tape their internship reflection and upload it into our Blackboard classroom. Although we ask them to complete a survey about their internship, I thought this assignment might be more intuitive for students who have better oral communication than writing skills. And therefore, we could gain more quality or added insight [from the student's internship experience]."

For Charla McKinzie-Bishop, who attended several sessions on assessing experiential learning, the conference "really turned assessment from a labor of love to a love of labor. I have new thoughts about how I understand my students' progress and make better use of existing forms of assessment that I never added to annual reports. For example, she said, "I make better use of the information from the field placement supervisors and spend less time compiling things due to better forethought and organization."

For the author, one takeaway from the sessions was to be as explicit as possible about how the Program Learning Outcomes or Student Learning Outcomes are connected to each assignment, whether verbally or in the syllabus. A best practice in this regard is to refer to related SLOs when introducing every major assignment to ensure that students are aware of the specific skill sets they are developing and practicing for that assignment. Additionally, students should be alerted to potential problems or previous areas of concern within an assignment in order to mitigate possible frustration when working on a project - a practice they have expressed as very helpful. Ultimately, the goal of assessment is to make what faculty already do incrementally better and easier to follow for external reviewers; that is, less like castor oil and more like olive oil - richer and more palatable.



In the next edition...  
Faculty  
Assessment Fellows



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