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Inside this issue:

IN THE SPOTLIGHT	1
Assessment	
1st Faculty Assessment	2
Middle States	2
Drexel Assessment Conference ~ 2020	Z
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On the Horizon



In the next edition... Faculty Assessment Fellows



How to contact us...

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Assessment Times

IN THE SPOTLIGHT~ Drexel Assessment Conference

Faculty Assessment Insights Submitted by Art Vidrine, Assistant Professor of Art

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.



On The Horizon:

The Center for Academic Programs Assessment (CAPA) is pleased to announce its first Faculty Assessment Fellow (FAF), Art Vidrine, Assistant Professor of Art, in the Department of Fine and Performing Arts. He will be providing faculty members with assessment coaching and training, and will be gathering resources on best assessment practices and tools to share with faculty. Please check out the website for more information: https:// www.bowiestate.edu/ academics-research/provostand-vice-president-for/centerfor-academic-programs-a/

$\bigstar \bigstar \bigstar$ ★ "Education is the \bigstar \bigstar most powerful \bigstar ☆ weapon, which you ☆ ☆ can use to change $\begin{array}{c} \bigstar \\ \bigstar \\ \bigstar \\ \bigstar \\ \bigstar \end{array}$ ☆ the world." ☆ - Nelson Mandela ☆ \bigstar $\bigstar \bigstar \bigstar$



First Faculty Assessment Training Day ~ August 2019

As an Excellence in Assessment (EIA) designee from the National Institute on Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA), Bowie State has been afforded the opportunity to host a NILOA faculty assessment mentor. The Center for Academic Programs Assessment (CAPA) is pleased to host Dr. Nancy Quam-Wickham, Ph.D., from California State University, Long Beach, where she serves as a Professor of History. She is a former senior assessment specialist as Washington State University and has served as a NILOA coach since 2014 as well as an EIA reviewer.

This assessment training day, August 19th, provides faculty assessment coordinators, as well as deans and chairpersons, the opportunity to engage in collaborative activities, guided by Dr. Quam-Wickham. This will build upon the grassroots faculty assessment initiatives for which BSU was recognized in 2018.

Middle States Self-Study Kick-Off ~ September 2019

During the past spring semester the Middle States Reaffirmation Steering Committee (Gayle Fink, Gail Medford, Makeba Thomas, and Becky Verzinski) drafted the self-study design and successfully hosted a half-day visit from the Middle States liaison. Middle States not only accepted BSU's self-study design, but they requested that the report be *shared as a model for other institutions* attending the fall 2019 Middle States Self-Study Institute held annually in Philadelphia. The self-study design is available on the Provost's website under 2021 Middle States Self-Study.

The self-study will begin with workgroups, led by faculty and staff co-chairs, that will examine Bowie's compliance with Middle States standards, examine additional areas specified in the self-study design, and collect evidence. Approximately 150 faculty, staff, administrators and students will be engaged in self-study! The workgroup kick-off is being planned for the middle of September. To keep the entire campus involved, the Steering Committee is teaming up with University Relations and Marketing to provide periodic self -study updates in the BSYou newsletter.

The self-study process is an opportunity to be engaged in evaluating the University and making future recommendations. The success of the study and reaccreditation lies in the consistent participation of the university's constituents at all levels. Reaffirmation is an important milestone in the Race to Excellence for Bowie State University. More information is available at: <u>https://www.bowiestate.edu/academics-research/provost-and-vice-president-for/2021-middle-states-self-study/</u>

Drexel Assessment Conference ~ September 2020

Faculty Members ~ Are you interested in finding out if students are developing the skill sets you are teaching them through assessing the quality of classroom discussions or the quality of the research papers, math problems, or tangible projects that you have assigned? Do you struggle with how to improve student weaknesses identified by the assessments you utilize in the classroom? Are you interested in learning how to make minor adjustments to how you teach the related content or skill set in order to improve student learning? IF SO, then please consider joining us for the next Drexel University Assessment Conference in Philadelphia in mid-September 2020. If you are interested, please email Lynn Harbinson at lharbinson@bowiestate.edu.



