Program Assessment Committee Conversation Calendar: Ideas for Department- or College-level Committees

A key strategy for keeping program improvement as a sustainable, useful activity in your program is to make assessment a regular topic of discussion. Doing so can also make assessment less overwhelming by breaking the process down into manageable steps.

The calendar below provides ideas for discussion topics **within committees comprised of members representing multiple programs**. The ideas align with the university assessment timeline and focus on making assessment efforts as useful as possible. Hopefully some of the ideas will generate productive conversations between you and your colleagues.

> With best wishes,
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August: What's assessment about, and what do we do first?

- Refresh your memory about the purposes and processes of program assessment.
- Identify goals for this year's committee work (e.g., provide feedback to programs about their assessment plans, monitor program's progress along the university assessment timeline, increase departmental knowledge and skill in assessment, offer peer mentoring, recognize exemplary assessment work)
- Review feedback from the University Assessment Council or from other sources if one of your department's or college's programs was selected for review.
- Request Compliance Assist access as needed from the WSU Director of Assessment
- Remind colleagues of the September 1 rollover in Compliance Assist. (Mission statements, learning outcomes, curriculum maps, assessment methods, and reporting to stakeholders will roll over; all other information will not.)
- Look for assessment workshops, peer forums, and other activities at http://events.wayne.edu.

September/October: What should our students learn?

- Communicate the university assessment timeline to colleagues.
- Review one or more program's mission statement (1), learning outcomes (minimum 4), and curriculum map (1):
  - Do they accurately describe the current state of the program? If not, what updates or changes are needed?
  - Do they reflect best practices? Use the *Assessment Plan Feedback Rubric* to suggest ways to improve programs' mission statements, learning outcomes, and curriculum maps.
  - What specific recommendations could you make to the program's faculty or staff?
  - *An alternate approach is to read all programs' mission statements and learning outcomes one month, and all the curriculum maps another month, for example.*
- Verify whether the previous academic year's report to stakeholders has been posted on the program's or department's website. (It will be due in December.)

October/November: How will we know whether students learn what we want them to?

- Review programs' assessment methods:
  - Do they clearly align with the stated learning outcomes?
    - Is the description of the assessment methods informative enough that you understand what information will be gathered, from whom, and how it will be evaluated? (See What to write in each section of Compliance Assist for a list of simple questions.)
  - Will the methods provide useful, credible data about student performance on the program's learning outcomes?
  - What improvement(s) to the methods could be made? Use the *Assessment Plan Feedback Rubric* to suggest ways to improve programs' assessment methods.
- Verify that each program has the required minimum number of outcomes and assessment methods in the assessment plan and whether the previous academic year's report to stakeholders has been posted on the programs' or on the department's website.
- Based on the committee's review of assessment plans so far, arrange for professional development in assessment by contacting the WSU Director of Assessment, attending workshops at the Office for Teaching and Learning, or watching video tutorials online.

December: What's my part in improving assessment practices?

- Share examples of good assessment planning with department and college colleagues. More than 30 WSU examples are available on the WSU Assessment website.
- Communicate with colleagues:
  - What suggestions for improving the assessment plan(s) does the committee have for their colleagues?
  - What resources are available to help them improve their assessment efforts?
  - Who should colleagues contact if they have questions?

January: What does assessment have to do with accreditation?

- Communicate the university assessment timeline to colleagues.
- Continue reviewing assessment plans and providing feedback to programs.

February: How can we support our colleagues?

- In lieu of a meeting, committee members meet with the faculty, staff, and students of the programs they represent to provide individual support and ensure that the assessment plan is on track.
- Invite the WSU Director of Assessment to your meetings to start a dialogue, answer questions, provide feedback, or give a workshop tailored to your unit.

March: How do our assessment knowledge and practices compare to other schools' and colleges' trends?

- Discuss the WSU Assessment Annual Report and its implications for your department or college and committee.

April: What does our unit's data mean in the aggregate?

- Strategize: How can you use your department's or college's cumulative assessment data to promote your programs, support requests for resources, recruit students, improve processes, etc.?

May: When can everyone work together?

- Organize an assessment day on which colleagues get together to complete their submissions to Compliance Assist. Invite the WSU Director of Assessment to serve as tech support and to answer questions if you like.

June/July/August: How can we use the results from multiple programs to improve learning and recognize good work?

- Review assessment findings and action plans across programs or departments to identify any shared successes or needs that can inform decisions made at the department level or beyond.
- Submit the committee's annual activity report, including recommendations of individuals to recognize for their assessment efforts. If nobody on your committee receives an emailed link to the report form, please contact the WSU Director of Assessment.

Monthly routine ideas:

- "Promising practices" (IUPUI) – A committee member gives a brief (5-10 minute) presentation of any aspect of a program's assessment plan that provides a good example of assessment planning, processes, or use.
- Assessment news – A committee member summarizes an interesting article or conference presentation, announcements of funding opportunities, or descriptions of resources to support assessment. Assessment Update has short, practical articles that might be of interest.