

How Institutional Research and Assessment Work Together

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Concordia College

Moorhead, MN

- Four-year liberal arts college
- 2,724 students
- 188 full-time faculty members
- Institutional Research and Assessment are integrated into one position (reporting to VPAA)

Advantages of Integrating IR and Assessment

- Supports strategic planning across all levels of the college
- Supports accreditation
- Maximizes the value and use of information
- Information is more likely to be viewed within the context of student learning
- Personally rewarding

Disadvantages of Integrating IR and Assessment

- Not everything gets done
 - Institutional Research: Retention/enrollment forecasting, salary projections, Board of Regents reports, benchmarking projects, etc.
 - Assessment: Student learning in the core curriculum, student learning in majors, assessment of programs/projects such as first-year experience, study abroad, etc.
 - Integrated into both functions: Accreditation, strategic planning, academic excellence, etc.
- Limited time to work with faculty
- This arrangement may not be sustainable

Changing Role of IR

- Assessment is becoming central to higher education—it is part of everything we do and is no longer an “add on.” It is relevant to every academic discipline and every administrative function.
- Position descriptions on the AIR web site often included planning, assessment, and IR.
- AIR is emphasizing assessment in its conferences, institutes, and is co-offering a summer institute on first-year assessment.

North Dakota State College of Science

- 2nd oldest two-year college in the nation
- 2147 students on a residential campus, 34 buildings on 130 acres
- 80% of students are in career and technical programs, 20% transfer

Assessment and IR at Community Colleges

- Joint office/responsibilities
- Data collection for IR often used as indirect support for Assessment purposes
- Assists in creating linkages among departments
- Enables more holistic approach to improvement

Learning is at the Core

- Assessment of student learning begins with admittance into college and ends with alumni success
- Virtually touches everything at an institution from entry-level placement, first-year experience, retention, advising, success in the major, and graduation to budgeting and strategic planning

Responsibilities

- Assessment
 - Assessment reports at the program/major level
 - General education assessment
 - Entry level placement
 - Assessment workshops/training
- IR
 - Survey distribution
 - Survey analysis
 - Report generation
 - Environmental scanning
- Strategic Planning

Accountability

- Public demand for accountability and increasing pressure on accrediting agencies at the federal level will continue to increase requirements on Institutional Research and Assessment of Student Learning Departments
- Implications for profession?

North Dakota State University

- Carnegie of high research activity
- Over 12,000 students (14% graduate)
- 106 baccalaureates, 51 masters, 38 doctoral
- 630 faculty (76% with terminal degree)
- Land-grant institution

Structure - NDSU

- Office of Assessment and Intutional Research
- Office of Institutional Research and Assessment
- And Office of Accreditation and Assessment
- Both directorships
- Current directors have same longtime career paths of assistant professors to mid- to higher-administration
- Two meet with provost twice per month

Structure cont. - NDSU

- Assessment/Accreditation Director chair of University Senate Assessment Comm.
- IR director ad hoc member of A/A Comm.
- A/A Director ad hoc on General Education Comm.
- Both attend deans and directors' meetings
- Mandated surveys from state system

Impact of structure on Student Learning - NDSU

- Directors are equals
- Bad cop, good cop routine
- Reinforce each other; two people saying the same things
- Successfulness as faculty and administrators allows for greater risk taking
- Refer to each others Web sites
- IR can run (hide) in the background
- More time for IR (many misc. requests, in-depth analyses, COACHE for example)
- Academic involvement with IR doctoral program

Strategies for Strengthening - NDSU

- Geography! At least in same hallway, preferably in same office area
- Start a Campus IR Advisory Board for which the Accreditation and Assessment Director and other assessment representatives are members – form follows personality
- Mutual selection of peers for comparison

Specific Examples - NDSU

- NSSE 2002 was a huge data set with exquisite, exhaustive analyses; SSI also; lay in background
- Body of evidence built up over five years
- Presentation to deans, provost to deans, provost to University Senate, provost to faculty; and now pilot Student Rating of Learning (having two separate offices allowed for sustained depth)
- First year experience survey, in depth data analyses, General Education Comm., task force; (but then out of the scene, disadvantage of separation)

Specific Examples Cont. - NDSU

- Deans now willing to over sample 1,700 students with NSSE 2007
- Previous years' work sets stage for administering the College Learning Assessment, institutionalizing campus wide measurement of student learning
- Graduate student retention and graduation rates

University of North Dakota

UND is located in Grand Forks, ND



University of North Dakota

- Close to 13,000 students
- 89 Undergraduate programs
- 57 Master's programs
- 23 Doctoral Programs
- 2 Professional Programs (Law, Medicine)
- Doctoral/Research-Intensive
- Energy & Environmental Research Center

Structure of UND-IR as it relates to Assessment

- Office of Institutional Research
 - Supportive role to Assessment
 - Director is VPAA Appointee (non-voting) of the University Assessment Committee
- Assist Provost for Assessment and Achievement (Academic Affairs Office)
 - Campus coordinator of Assessment
 - VPAA Appointee (voting) of the University Assessment Committee

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Support Role in Assessment & Strategic Planning

- Administrative assistance helps..
 - Set up meetings
 - Send out agenda, takes minutes
 - Assist with the Assessment Website
- Departmental Annual Reports – a requirement under the Strategic Plan
- Surveys

Departmental Annual Reports

(web template)

For each level (UG, GRD, Prof, Cert) of an academic program, departments report on their assessment of student learning goals & activities for the year

1. “State your student learning goals..”
2. “Describe your assessment methods (in reference to goals)”
3. “What have you learned” (results).
4. “What improvements/changes have/will you make.”

Surveys

IR administers a number of surveys each year, then reports and distributes the findings

- Assessment
 - The Assessment Committee provides a written review of each survey (based on IR's report)
 - IR tracks the feedback from these reviews
- Strategic Planning
 - IR tracks/reports on certain Strategic "indicators" relative to survey findings

Summer IR Meeting

- Share best practices
- Discuss challenges
- Brainstorm



Thank you for attending!

Questions 

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