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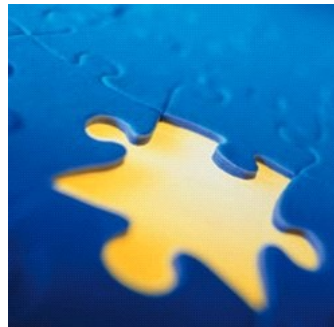
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## Program Review and Assessment

Program review and assessment are just two pieces of the overall puzzle of student learning. Sometimes used synonymously the two concepts really are different points of view regarding program and curriculum effectiveness.

Assessment is a very important piece of program review and focuses on student learning specifically. What are students learning in your program? This not the same as what is being taught throughout your program. Assessment serves not to evaluate faculty, but to assess the end result of what students learn.

Data collected from your annual assessment plan may be used to justify making changes in either teaching modality, curriculum or sequencing. Each yearly assessment



plan may serve as one-fifth of your 5-year program review cycle. Many disciplines use course assessment data from each semester to identify areas for improvement. Often these improvements may be relevant to the entire discipline

and suggest changes in the way the discipline is meeting students' needs. Many programs (e.g., Nursing) use certification exams and the end of the program to help assess student learning. Often data is used from the program level to identify and make changes in specific courses.

The point is whether you are a program assessing student learning from the program to the course level or a discipline assessing multiple sections of courses to inform the discipline, both are important components for ICCB's Program Review cycle.



A picture displaying the faculty member writing the faculty corner column

*“To catch the reader's attention, place an interesting sentence or quote from the story here.”*

## Faculty Corner - Julie Hernandez, PhD

### Get Onboard, Faculty! Assessment Is Here to Stay

Assessment. If you are an RVC faculty member, I know what you're thinking—ugh, oh no...not again, do I *have* to do it?, I hate it! As a faculty member myself, I understand the automatic disdain for assessment of student learning. There certainly are reasons for our negativity. Let me address a few.

First, everyone knows that the history of assessment at RVC has been rocky, to say the least. It seemed as though no one knew where to start with assessment, but everyone knew that something had to be done. Attempts were made to bring in “experts” to teach us about assessment, workshops during professional development days were provided, and department heads tried in vain to explain to us what needed to be done. But, alas, we faculty only ended up more confused. Inconsistencies in terminology were one source of this confusion. We were told that we had to do assessment, but no one really seemed to know how to do it. So of course we came to hate it!

And then there are the extra time and effort that are needed to develop assessment methods, incorporate them into our classes, and analyze the collected data. Most faculty, including myself, barely have enough time to cover all of the necessary content in their classes as it is, so adding more things to do is perceived as a burden. Many faculty members also are not aware of assessment methods that can be used instead of quizzes and exams, and only a handful of faculty have the knowledge for or feel comfortable with performing the most basic of statistical analyses. It's no surprise that we came to hate assessment!

Finally, with assessment comes the realization that the results may indicate that what we are doing in the classroom is just not effective, that we are bad teachers, that our most prized demonstrations, activities, and discussions are lost on our students. What a blow to our egos! Not only that, but we would actually have to *change* the way we do things in our classes! Thus, we came to hate assessment.

Up until this point, it probably seems that I am anti-assessment. Actually, I believe that the negativity that we as faculty members have developed in response to assessment needs to change. This negativity is based on perceived lack of guidance and/or actual lack of knowledge. I believe that we now have the leadership to guide us on the assessment path, and that RVC has ample resources for increasing assessment knowledge in its faculty.

## Faculty Corner - cont.

Whereas assessment at RVC may have inched forward without guidance in the past, it is now moving ahead with leaps and bounds. The HLC report was very well-received; no further reports to the HLC are required, and RVC will not have to undergo another comprehensive evaluation until 2013! Dr. Becherer, in referring to the report stated, "Using a baseball metaphor, we hit a grand slam." We now have the leadership to guide us on the assessment path, and we have administrators, faculty, and staff who are working hard to make our assessment endeavors successful. These people deserve faculty support. We can no longer claim that we are confused, have no guidance, or don't know what to do. Instead, we need to take advantage of the people and resources that are available to help us.

Some assessment methods can take up valuable class time, but most do not. For example, I along with my psychology colleagues developed multiple-choice questions on key course material and embedded them into our exams or quizzes. This method takes no additional class time. Students' responses to the questions also are easy to analyze using the new test scoring machines, which provide information on how many students responded incorrectly to each question. Other methods are easy to incorporate and take very little time. For example, students can write brief paragraphs on the "muddiest point" or "most important point" at the end of presentations, demonstrations, or videos. For such methods, no quantitative analyses are needed; you simply read the paragraphs to get the sense of whether students "got it" or not. Despite what many faculty members think, most assessment methods are brief and do not require statistical genius to be able to draw conclusions from them. Some assessment methods, such as asking students to respond to questions using clickers, can actually be fun and increase student learning!

For some faculty the real reason why they hate assessment is because they are afraid. They are worried that they will find out that they are not effective teachers, and they are terrified that they may have to change the way they do things in the classroom. All I can say to this is "Get over it". I hope that my colleagues at RVC want to be the best teachers they can be, that they actually *want* to know if they are wasting their own and their students' time in the classroom. It is our job, our obligation, as educators, to instill knowledge in others in the most effective way we know how. It is a given that we should have to show that what we are doing is effective. How could it not be? Instead of thinking of assessment as a means of finding out what we are doing wrong, perhaps we should think of it as a means of showing what we are doing right. I am proud of my colleagues at RVC, and I believe that assessment is a great way to showcase faculty talent. Of course, there is always room for improvement, and good faculty members know that teaching requires constant change to allow for this.

So, although I understand the reasons for faculty negativity regarding assessment, these reasons are...well, weak. Assessment is here to stay. We faculty might as well get onboard and make it a successful journey on the assessment path together.

## From Institutional Research...

Completion can and does mean different things, even within the context of Higher Education. The Federal government has us collect and report our “completion rates” through the National Center for Education Statistics in the IPEDS reporting venue. We are then required to make that “completion rate” available to the public in the “Student Right to Know” report.

That completion rate is based only on first-time, full-time students who indicate an intention to earn a degree or certificate, and do so within 3 years. As we know, there are few students who begin each fall at RVC meeting that description. Some transfer without obtaining a degree, some drop to part-time status and take longer than 3 years, some drop out for a while, some leave higher education altogether.

Community colleges across the

nation are challenging the assumption that reporting as if our student enrollment patterns are the same as those at 4 year (elite) schools for purposes of comparison.

Next time: RVC completion rates:

“In time limit” versus “beyond time limit, including other institutions”

## TracDat Tips & Updates

Have you ever wanted to create and online survey or score rubrics online? TracDat now has an application called data tools that allows you create surveys and rubrics right inside TracDat. Because they are created inside TracDat the exported data can be linked seamlessly to observations and means of assessment.. These tools do not require additional installation or license fees like some online surveys (survey monkey, etc.). Please contact RVC’s assessment coordinator

to have data tools added to your TracDat area.

In addition, TracDat will roll out its latest version towards the end of August. This new version will allow users to export reports in rich-text-format (.rtf) for ease inserting into reports or additional word documents.

Finally, Nuventive has added additional features related to ad-hoc reporting in TracDat. Ad-hoc reports allow users to sort and run reports on user-created fields within TracDat. For more information on ad-hoc reporting

and/or adding new fields in TracDat, please contact the assessment coordinator.



# Upcoming Conferences...

## **National**

### [Assessment Institute at IUPUI](#)

October 25-27 in Indianapolis, IN

### [7th Annual SC Formative Assessment Conference](#)

November 19 & 20th in Columbia, SC

### [Texas A&M Assessment Conference](#)

February 21-23 2010 in College Station, TX

### [Nuventive Users' Conference](#)

June 2010 in Pittsburgh, PA

### [AAC&U General Education & Assessment Conference](#)

February 18-20 in Seattle, WA

## **International**

### [The International Association for Educational Assessment](#) -

September 13-18 in Brisbane, AUS

### [8th e-Assessment Question](#)

Conference March 17 & 18 in London, UK



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