Response from Frederick Burrack: Kansas State University

First Question (7 minutes each)

- Prompt: *Each of you will highlight practices for enhancing assessment or improvement at scale. Please summarize your project (purpose, approach, and results), and share a few key takeaways for the audience.*

Burrack Summary

The project I wish to share relates specifically to enhancing the usefulness of assessment processes to impact student learning directly. But the scope of the project is important to consider as to the value of the process for understanding the impact of instructional practices and quality of learning that results.

Context & Purpose

Beyond the learning outcome defined by each academic and co-curricular program, Kansas State University focuses on a process that is useful for immediate and long-term decision-making. More than confirming the quality of learning, the aspect of the assessment process that becomes prevalent is identifying specific contributions and challenges to learning within and across the curriculum. The first step was for every academic and co-curricular unit to identify specific assessable indicators within defined outcomes through which students demonstrate learning. One purpose was to encourage programs and units to explore how students make sense of and apply what has been taught.

Challenge

One consistent challenge of effective learning assessment is the collection of data that directly reflects how students make sense of and apply the learning that results from their educational experiences.

What Worked Well

Kansas State University has overcome this challenge by aligning scoring devices (rubrics, questions, etc.) for assessable indicators of outcomes directly with assessment tasks within the students' learning experiences (such as assignments, internships, field experiences, research projects, etc.) using technologies such as the Canvas Learning Management System, Qualtrics, or other data collection technologies. This process automatically collects student achievement data directly from the scored learning experience with a high level of effectiveness. This is contingent upon the assessment task and measurement device being confirmed as valid and reliable.

The data is automatically collected and saved in the university data warehouse directly from the scoring device. The collected data in the warehouse is connected to dashboard tables, graphs, and other analytical structures and is visible to stakeholders (faculty, staff) within 24 hours after scoring.

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Results & Impact

Program and unit leaders, faculty, and staff use this data to identify the effectiveness of the overall curriculum, current instructional practices, and, most importantly, challenges students are experiencing in their learning to make timely decisions and possibly interventions that can facilitate enhanced learning. The greatest impact on the assessment process is the efficiency of access to relevant data that comes directly from the learning experiences provided by the programs and units. It also gives ownership of the assessment processes to the faculty and educational team leaders who design and lead students through the educational experiences they provide. Programs often use data to make decisions are to the structure of course instruction, and to restructure curricular sequence of courses and content.

Obstacles & Solutions

One of the obstacles we had to overcome is also one of the rewards of the process, which is the faculty and the program/unit directors having to look at their curriculum and instructional processes within the framework of what students attain from the experiences they provide and their learning reflects the intended student learning outcomes, as well as the mission of the program. We meet with each program and unit to provide guidance on analyzing the data they collect, and encourage ownership of the overall assessment process.

Another obstacle that was addressed was in aligning the analysis of student learning with the overall program strategic plans and program reviews, tying data on student learning into broader programmatic decisions. When the analysis of student learning data was added to the overall program review, the instructional needs tied to student learning became the leverage that supported other programmatic decisions.

Lessons Learned

This process reinforced that the data needed for institutional reporting is much more useful when aggregated from individual program and unit data through alignment with the broader reporting constructs. When institutional data originates from the source of student experiences that occur within academic and co-curricular unit data, the decisions that result will have more meaning for the educational decisions that are made.

Second Question (2 minutes each)

Scaling good practices from a small setting to a large one is challenging. Please share one (additional) tip for successfully scaling your approach.

It is essential in whatever assessment process that is being implemented that it be tested, problems addressed, and its usefulness in effective decision-making confirmed with examples before bringing it to full implementation. If any new process is implemented and

doesn’t work, it will be nearly impossible to get faculty and staff behind re-implementing the process. Another aspect to remember is that those implementing any assessment process must understand its usefulness for them, their curriculum, and their students. There is no need to implement or administer any assessment processes for which the results are not going to be used.