

Taking Stock and Building Rapport: Key Ingredients in Strengthening the Culture for Meaningful Assessment of Student Learning

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About Franz

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Agenda

- Significance of meaningful assessment of student learning
- Typical views and perspectives around assessment
- Explore the concept of taking stock and building rapport
- Building and operationalizing a blueprint for meaningful assessment
- Lessons learned from 10+ years doing this work
- Key ingredients and considerations for strengthening your assessment culture
- Open discussion

Who Do We Have In the Room?

What is your current role?

- Assessment/IE Professional
- Faculty
- Other administrator with responsibility for assessment
- Other

Current # of years doing assessment work

- 0-3
- 4-6
- 7-9
- 10 or more years



It would not be an assessment talk without learning outcomes...

By the end of this session you will:

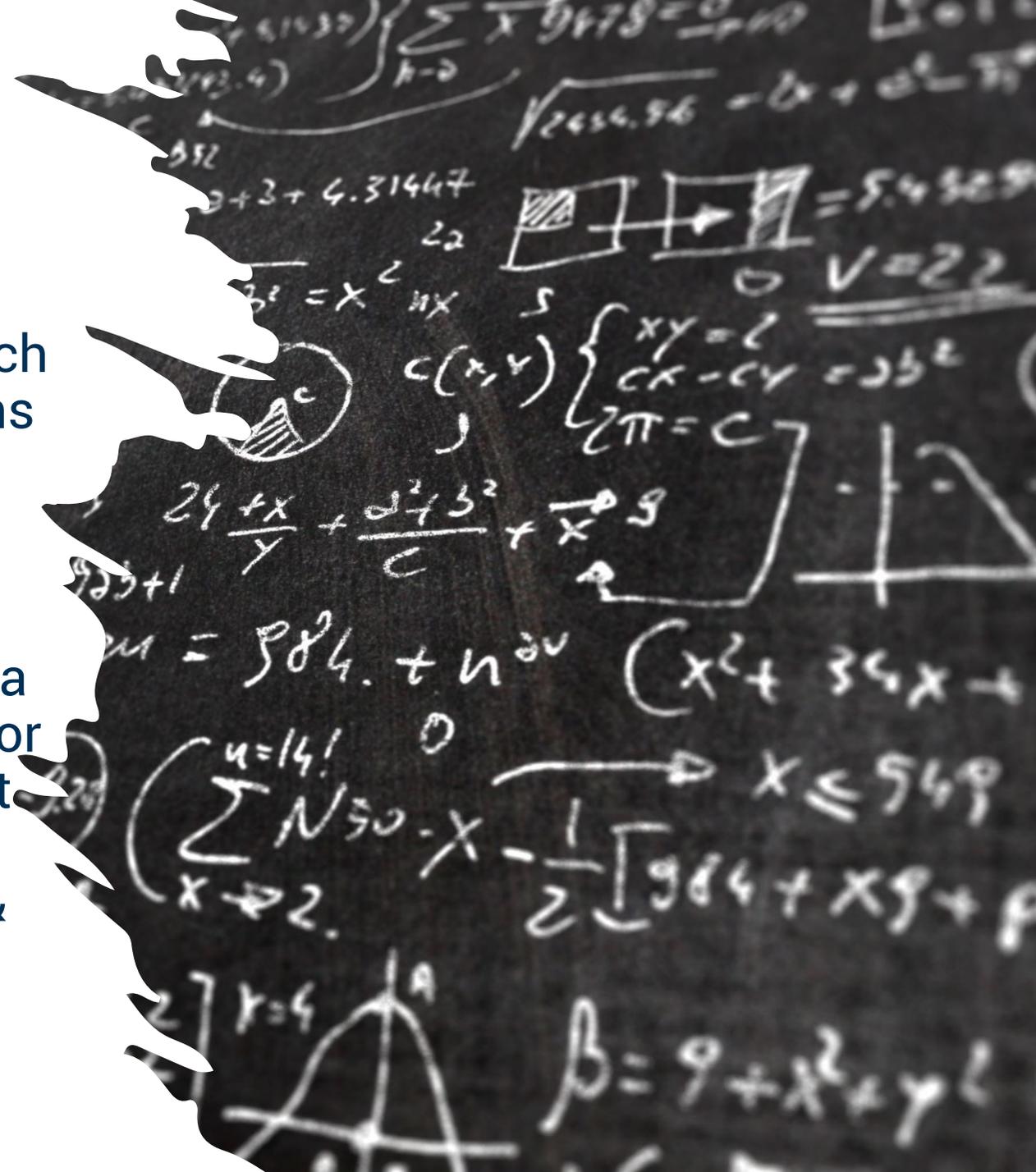
1. Know the significance of meaningful assessment of student learning within the post-secondary context.
2. Know the typical views and perspectives of assessment.
3. Know strategies for taking stock and building rapport as tools for strengthening your assessment culture.



Significance of Meaningful Assessment of Student Learning

What is Assessment?

- Assessment is a **systematic process of gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence** to determine the extent to which outcomes meet established expectations (*Suskie, 2004*).
- “Educational assessment is at heart an exercise in evidentiary reasoning. From a handful of things that students say, do, or make, we want to draw inferences about what they know, can do, or have accomplished more broadly.” (Mislevy & Riconscente, 2005, p. iv).



Why this work is important

- Helps institutions in evaluating the extent to which students are achieving intended learning outcomes and essential knowledge and skills relevant in their field of study.
- Helps to identify potential gaps in student learning/curriculum.
- Promotes **excellence** and **continuous quality improvement** in student learning outcomes.
- Can provide insights to help strengthen teaching effectiveness.
- Supports evidence-based decision-making which can impact student success and retention
- Strengthens the institution's reputation and competitive edge.

Why this work is important cont...

Accountability with state expectations, programmatic and institutional accreditation

e.g., Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC)



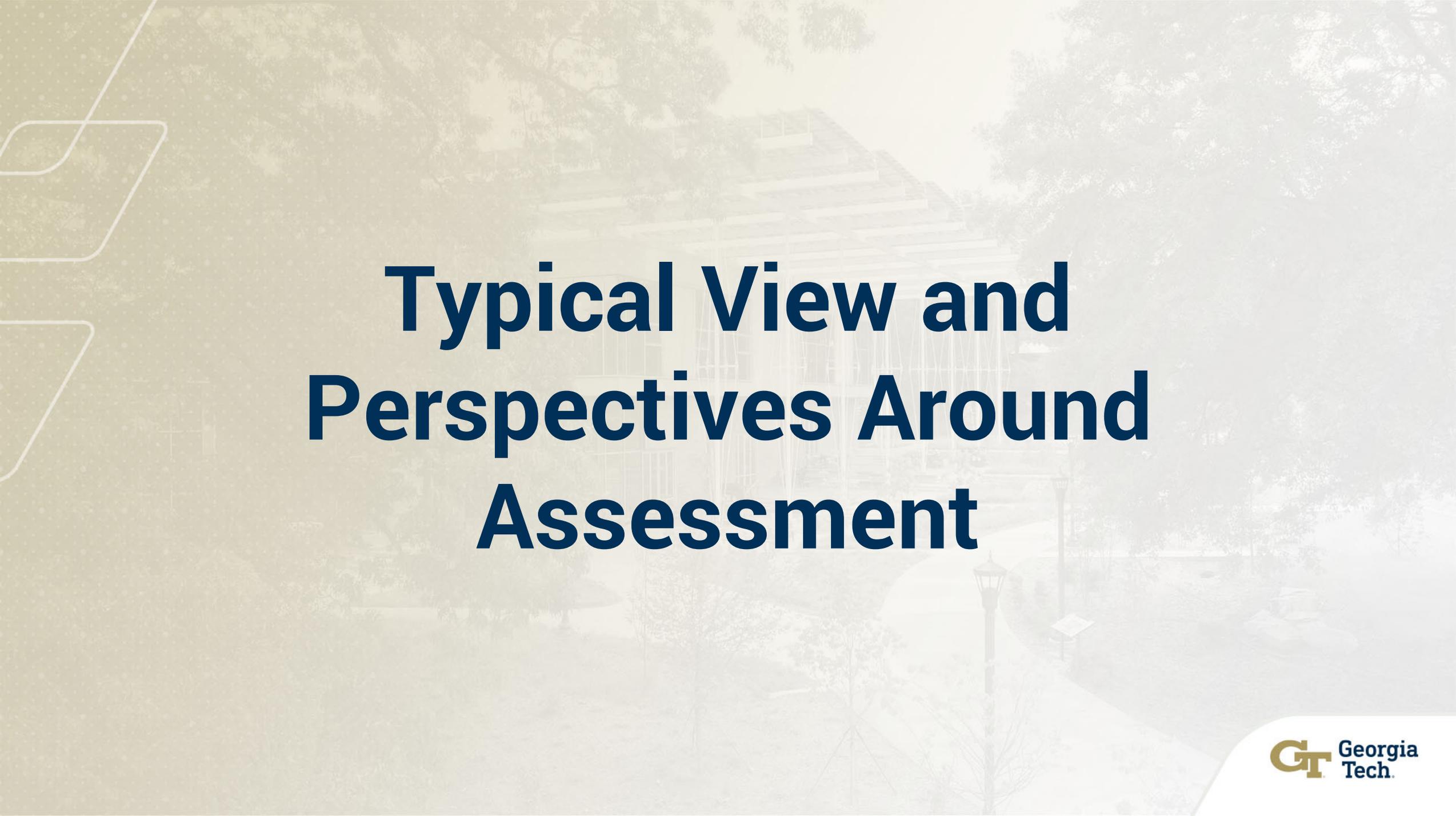
Select standards related to assessment of student learning

8.2 The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of seeking improvement based on analysis of the results in the areas below:

- a. Student learning outcomes for each of its educational programs. (Student outcomes: educational programs)
- a. Student learning outcomes for collegiate-level general education competencies of its undergraduate degree programs. (Student outcomes: general education)
- a. Academic and student services that support student success. (Student outcomes: academic and student services)



The primary driver should be Student Success



Typical View and Perspectives Around Assessment



Typical view of assessment

- -- hard work
- -- extra work
- --does not work

Commentary You Have Likely Heard



Listen - I am not rewarded or compensated for this work, so you get what you get when you get it.



Vanessa
Political Science
Faculty

Franz let's be real, this work does not contribute to my tenure and promotion buddy.



Joe
Engineering Faculty

Look you cannot tell me about assessment. We have CAEP. CAEP is more important for our program and we do not have time to fill your bureaucratic request.



Peggy
Education Faculty

I am sick and tired of hearing that this is important for accreditation. If it was important we would have more resources to do this work.

You should know that I just had an article published in Nature.

Here comes the accountability police again, what do you need now?

I am wearing 15 million different hats. I will get to it when I get to it.

I do not have time for this work as my research and scholarly pursuits are more important.



Jose
Biology Faculty



Brandon
Chemistry Faculty



Ken
Sociology Faculty



Danny
Computer Science
Faculty



Positive Moments of Trust

(Our north star)

This process is important for our school as it allows us to gauge where students are with respect to their learning by the time they leave our programs.



Grover
Business Faculty

Our leadership is serious about this work and provides the time, space, and resources to do it and to do it well.



Raima
Education Faculty

Your engagements have caused us to shift our thinking about this process. We are now taking an equity-minded approach in our assessments and focusing on learning gains.



Steve
Biomedical Engineering
Faculty

Our faculty drive this process. At every faculty meeting, we talk about assessment. It has become a part of the fabric of our program. It is what we do.



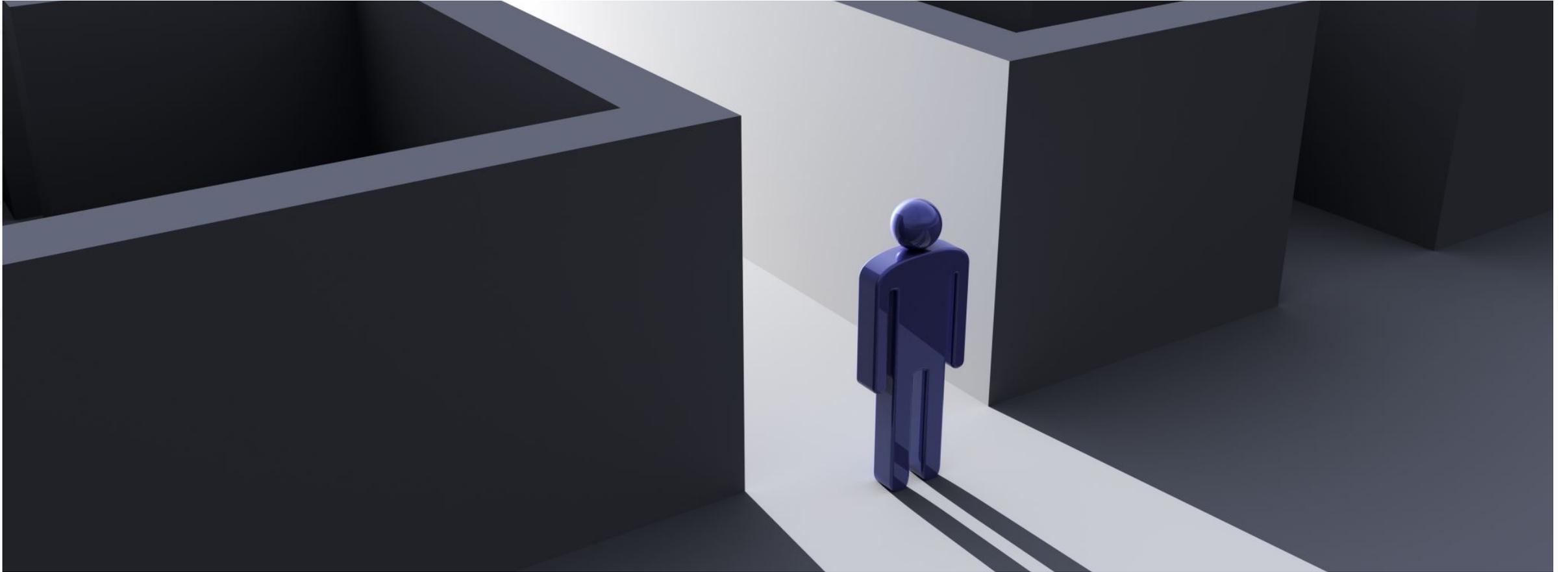
Richard
Psychology Faculty

Going through the curriculum and assessment mapping exercise has helped us to identify redundancies and gaps in our curriculum and has highlighted why students are falling short of meeting our learning expectations in research design.

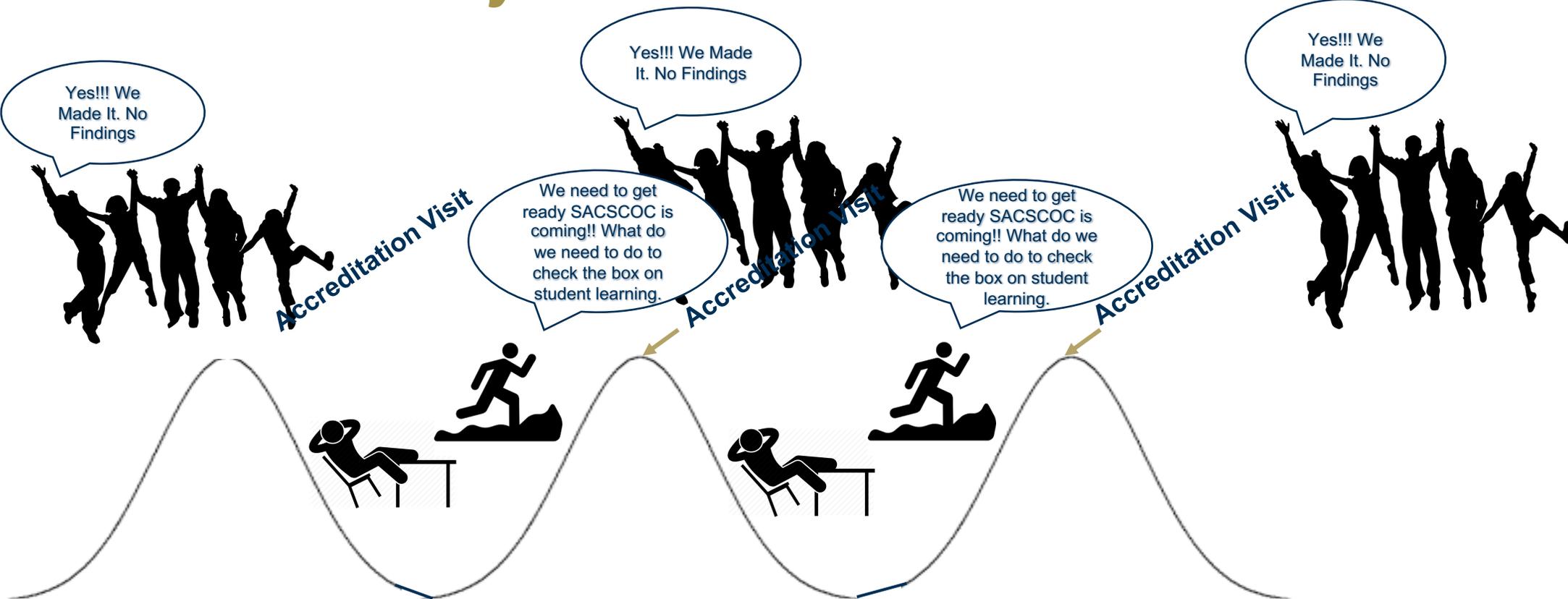


Sarah
Urban Planning Faculty

Reality on the Ground



What Oftentimes Play Out



If we desire a different outcome we need a different approach.



Exploring the Concept of Taking Stock and Building Rapport

Taking Stock

Sometimes we need to **stop**, **smell the roses** and **reflect** on where we are with our assessment processes and where we would like to be.

Intentionality

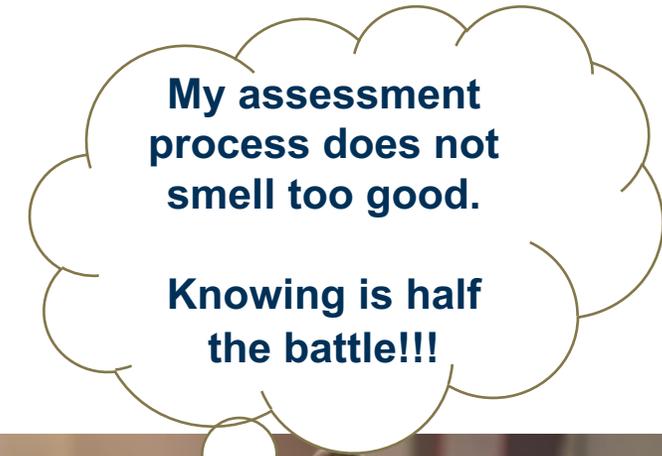


Image source: <https://www.indiewire.com/2020/06/soul-trailer-pixar-first-black-led-animated-feature-1234570057/>

Taking Stock Cont...

Objective and transparent evaluation of your assessment process.

Step I

Comprehensive review of assessment process to include an in-depth review of multiple cycles of assessment reports

Guiding Questions to Consider

- Is the institution's approach to assessment based on good-practices?
- What is the cycle for assessment?
- How does the institution evaluate the quality of the assessment process?
- What is the quality of the assessment plans and reports?
- What is the timeliness of the submission of assessment plans and reports?
- What are the existing resources for supporting the assessment process and how are they being leveraged?.....

Step II

Comprehensive review of most recent institutional and where appropriate specialized accreditation reports

Guiding Questions to Consider

- Where were the areas of strengths and weaknesses based on your objective review?
- Are those areas of strengths and weaknesses in alignment with what reviewers had to say?

Step III

Where available, conduct review of external consultant feedback report

Guiding Questions to Consider

- Where were the areas of strengths and weaknesses based on your objective review?
- Are those areas of strengths and weaknesses in alignment with what the external consultant(s) had to say?

Step IV

Conduct interviews and Focus Groups with the people on the ground (i.e., faculty, department heads, college and school leadership, students, existing assessment committees...) *this is where you learn about the pain points, the players, the gate keepers and naysayers.*

Key Considerations

- Develop interview and focus group protocols informed by the insights you have gained to this point.
- Focus should be exploratory (i.e., learning from the people who are doing this work on the ground)
- Do your research – learn something about the players before you engage.
- **This is the start of rapport building.**

Develop a data-informed plan of attack based on what you learned in the evaluation process coupled with best-practices in assessment

Strategies for Building Rapport

Active Listening

Listen with intent, give your full attention, ask clarifying questions.

Empathy

Show genuine concern for what others are feeling or may be going through. *Empathetic communication strengthens interpersonal relationships.*

Authenticity

Be yourself and be transparent.

Respect

Goes without saying. This is the foundation of building trust.



Strategies for Building Rapport Cont...

Common Interests

Find shared interest to create a sense of connection.

Remembering Details

Show that you care by remembering and referencing important details. Names are important.

Communication Style

Adjust your communication style to match the preferences of others. *Ability to code switch can be very beneficial.*

Show Appreciation

Expressing gratitude and acknowledging others' efforts/contributions.



Strategies for Building Rapport Cont...

Use Humor

Appropriately use humor to create a relaxed and welcoming environment. *Push back on being seen as the police.*

Active Support

Offer assistance and follow-through on commitments.

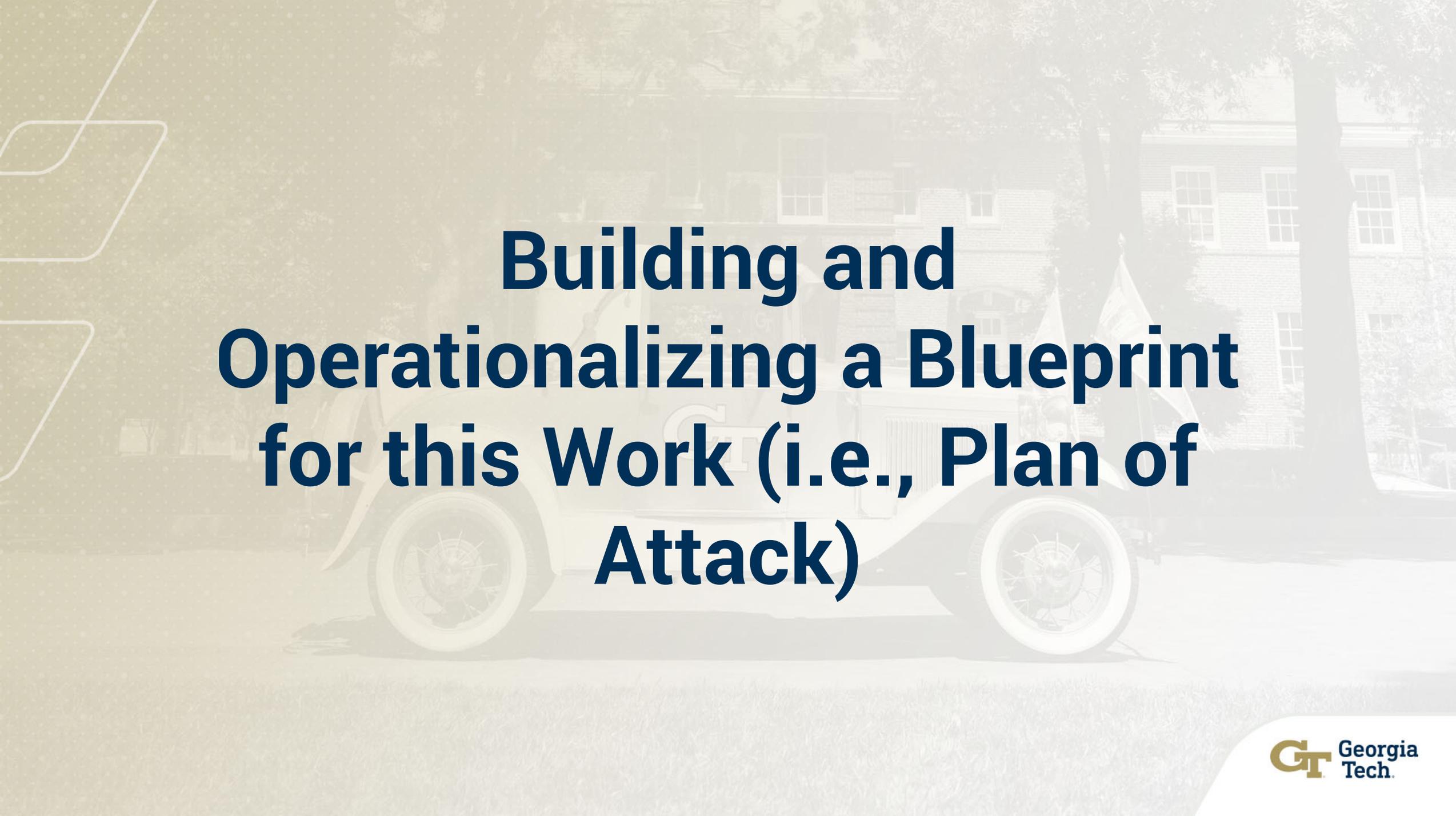
Consistency

Be consistent and communicate to build trust.

Regular Communication

Maintain regular contact to strengthen connection.



The background of the slide features a faded, light-colored image of a vintage car, possibly a Lincoln Continental, parked on a lawn. The car is facing forward and has two flags mounted on its front fenders. In the background, there is a large, multi-story brick building with several windows, partially obscured by trees. The overall scene is set in a well-maintained outdoor area.

Building and Operationalizing a Blueprint for this Work (i.e., Plan of Attack)

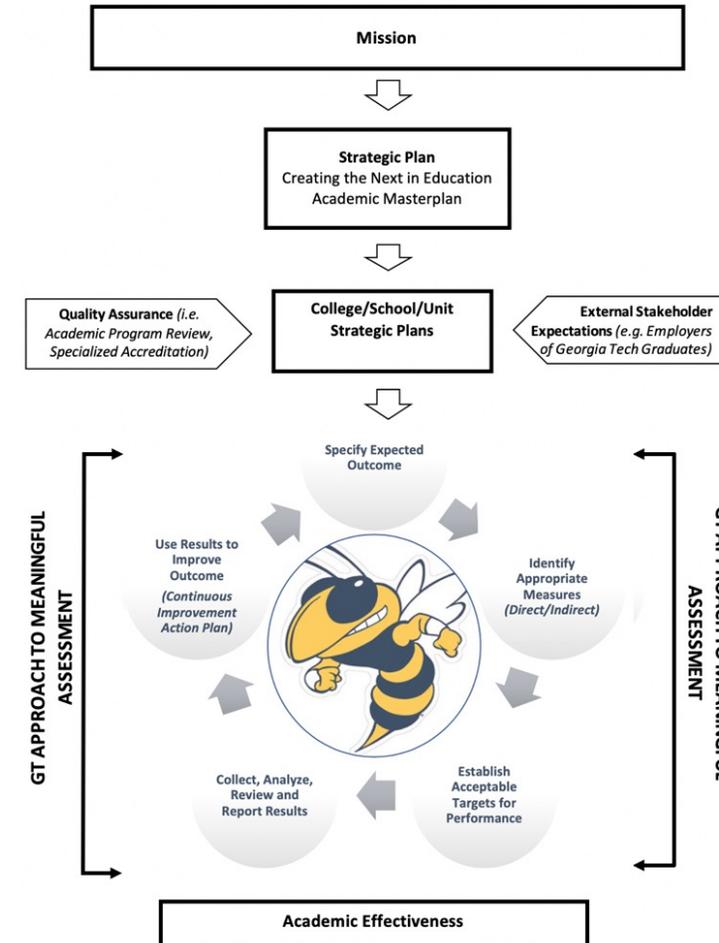
Plan of Attack

To this point, your “Taking Stock” exercise should have provided insights that inform your plan of attack.



Plan of Attack: Leveling the Playing Field

- If you do not have one, flesh out an institutional framework for the assessment of student learning
- Help folks to connect the dots
- Help folks to understand how what they do contribute to the big picture (i.e., mission)



Plan of Attack: Developing Tools for Navigating the Process

- Ensure planning and reporting templates are developed and in alignment with good practices in the assessment process.

CURRENT CYCLE ASSESSMENT PLAN AND REPORT:

Step 1: Specify Expected Outcome	Step 2: Identify Appropriate Measures (Direct/Indirect)			Step 3: Establish Acceptable Targets for Performance Aligned With Each Measure/Method	Step 4: Collect, Analyze, Review and Report Results			Step 5: Use Results to Improve Outcomes (Continuous Improvement Action Plan)
(i.e., Program Level Student Learning Outcome)	Measures/Method	Direct	Indirect		Actual Results (Specifically state actual results for each measure/method.)	Target Performance Level Achieved	Target Performance Level not achieved but improvements realized when compared to performance in previous cycle	Target Performance Level not achieved or performance decreased or remained the same as in previous cycle.
1.								
2.								
3.								
4.								
5.								

Plan of Attack: Developing Tools for Navigating the Process Cont...

Example of a Defined Curriculum & Assessment Map

Courses and Experiences	Program Learning Outcomes			
	Students will be able to apply critical thinking skills in the analysis of case studies in Biological Sciences.	Students will be able to apply disciplinary knowledge and skills in the design and implementation of research-based experiments in Biological Sciences.	Students will demonstrate the ability to communicate effectively in both written and oral forms appropriate to the biological sciences.	Students will demonstrate knowledge of quantitative research techniques used in the study of Biology.
Course A	I	I		I
Course B	R	R	I	
Course C	R	M, A	R	
Course D	M, A		M, A	R

Key: "I"=Competency Introduced; "R"= Competency Reinforced/Practiced/Emphasized; "M"= Mastery; "A"= Competency Assessed (i.e., assessment evidence collected)

Collaboration for Success

Socialize your plan of attack to include your framework, associated templates etc., with key **gatekeepers** to include deans, associate/assistant deans, faculty and other college leadership to get **buy-in and support for your plan**. Remember language is important (know your audience).

Remember strategies for building rapport.



One-Stop-Shop Toolkits

Develop and pull together resources easily accessible by stakeholders (e.g., assessment toolkit)

Develop and provide lots of examples of good assessment work.

Assessment Toolkit



<https://academiceffectiveness.gatech.edu/assessment-toolkit>

Road Show



- Engage stakeholders (i.e., specifically folks on the ground doing the work). **This is not a one and done.**
 - Consider – Wave approach (i.e., one college/school/department at a time)
 - Small group and individual engagements (meet people where they are)
 - ***Again, language is important – be consistent and try to eliminate jargons.***



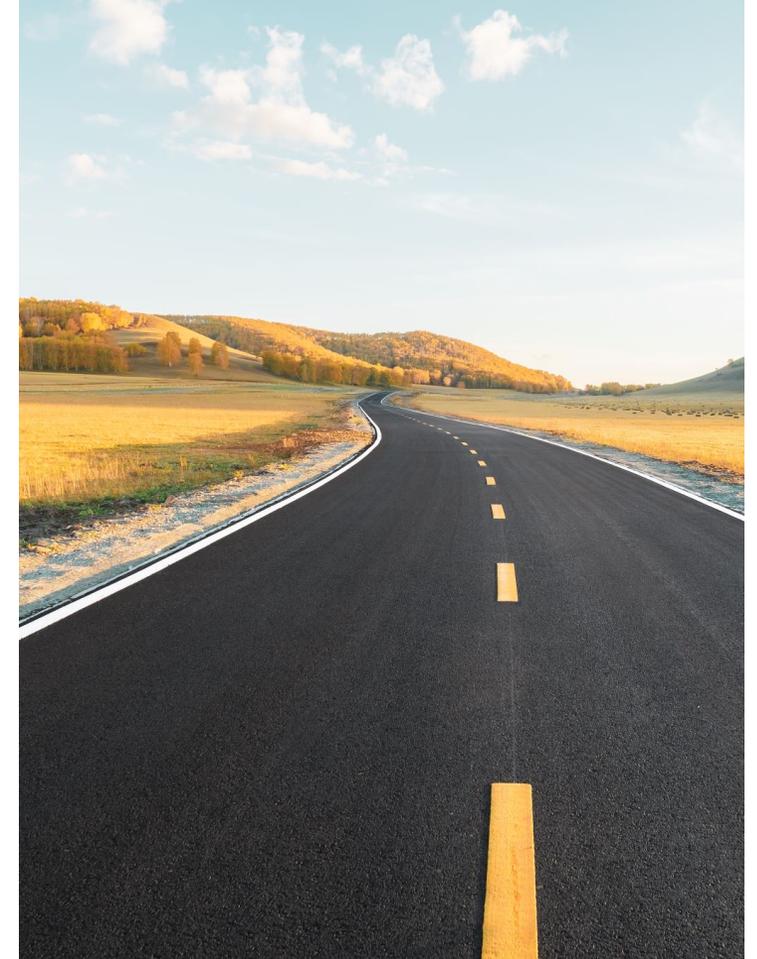
- Curriculum and Assessment Mapping is key – backbone of meaningful assessment of student learning



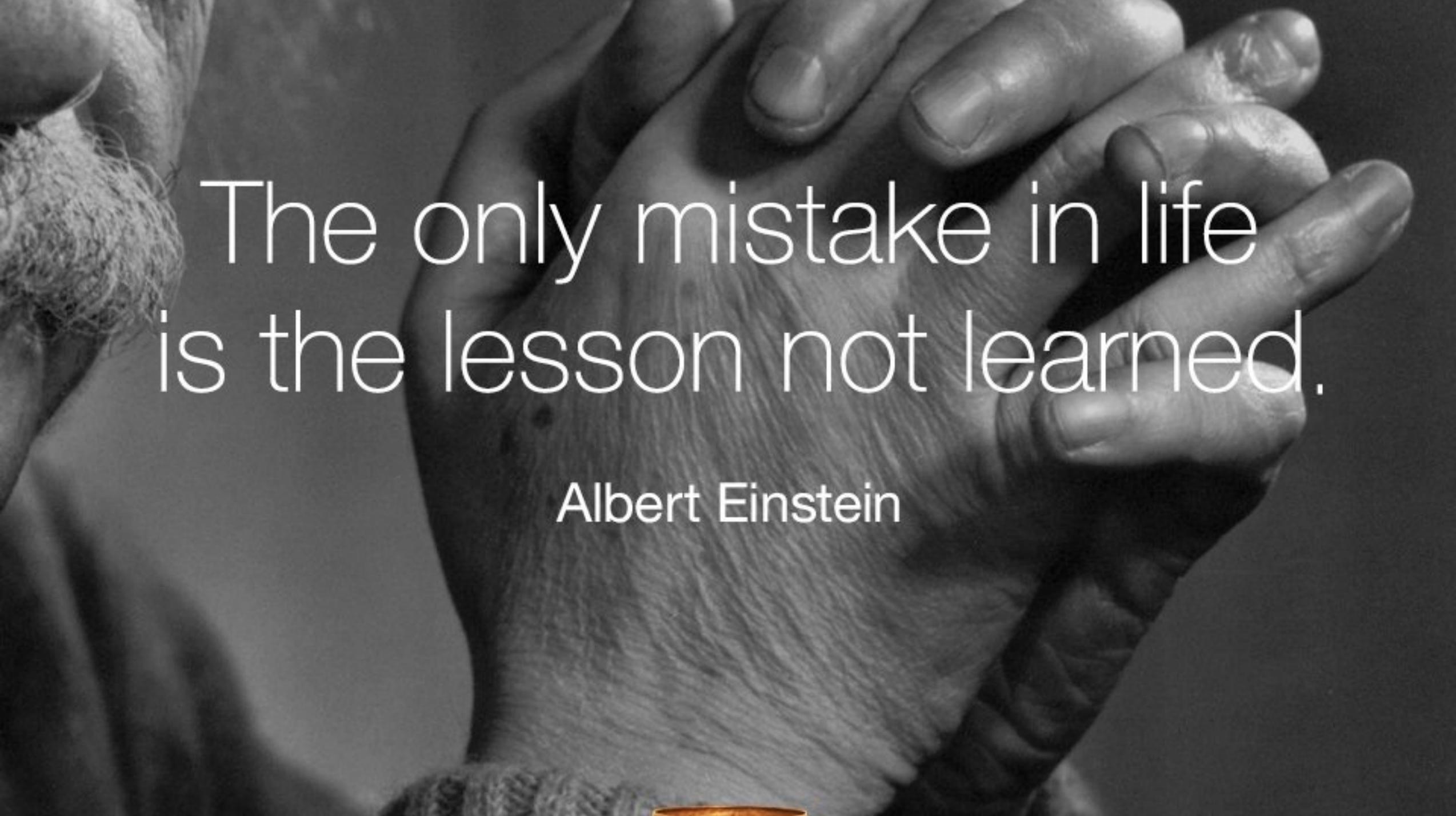
- Provide a lot of examples of work/reports that align with good-practices in assessment.



- Intentionally message the 3Ms of assessment (i.e., meaningful, measurable, manageable)
 - Encourage program, school, college level assessment committees



Lessons Learned and Key Ingredients for Strengthening Your Assessment Culture



The only mistake in life
is the lesson not learned.

Albert Einstein

Lessons Learned....

- Every setback is an opportunity to learn and overcome
 - Build/Participate in communities of practice
- People feed on your energy. Be present, be ready, and learn to **be flexible**
 - Retreats
 - Faculty Meetings
 - Coffee breaks
 - Lunch
 - Research labs
 - Assessment engagements.....
- **Inspect what is expected. Provide meaningful, actionable and timely feedback**

Lessons Learned....

- “Rome wasn’t built in a day” – be strategic and intentional about the culture you want to foster
- Understand that small changes over time lead to sustainable practices that ultimately contribute to strengthening the culture for this work.
- Consider establishing an Institutional Level Assessment Committee
 - Representation from across colleges/schools
 - Meta assessment process



Lessons Learned....

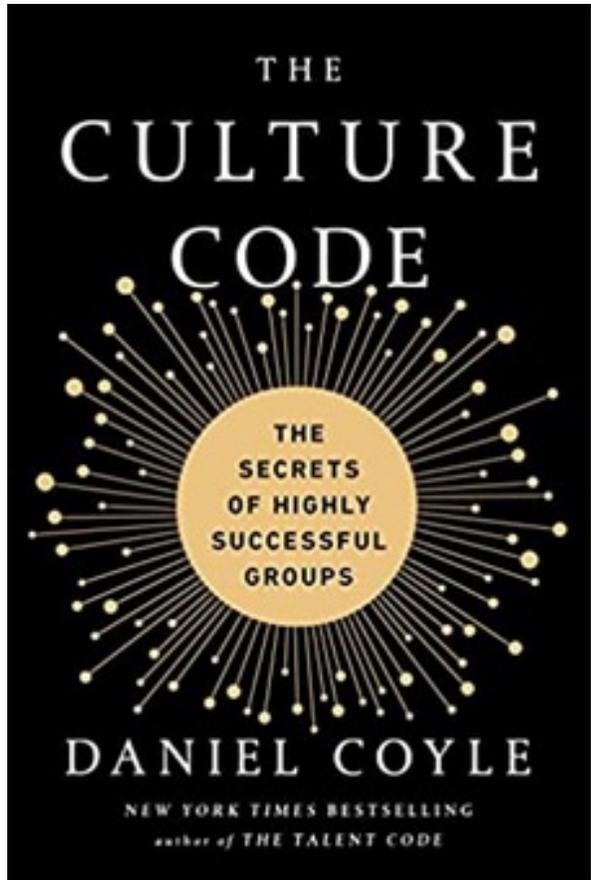
- Building a culture for meaningful assessment of student learning should be pursued in the true spirit of continuous improvement.
- Don't drink the **Kool-Aid** or buy into the hype – build out your process, ensure broad-based support/understanding then leverage technology for efficiency.
- Take time to celebrate the small wins and be generous with recognition
- Spotlight folks that are doing this work well at your institution
- More than anything, resist the urge to **check the box**.





Key Considerations as You Traverse the Culture Road

Key Considerations



No matter how **detailed, well informed** and **solid** your plan is (i.e., world class), if stakeholders do not buy-in, you are likely to fall short.

- *“Culture isn’t the enemy of strategy, but an equal player in the game” (Coyle 2013).*
- A balanced approach is important to success.
- Meet people where they are in the process and begin to **build and maximize relationships** through collaboration.
- Think with the end in mind and pursue this work in the true spirit of **excellence** and **continuous improvement**.

Q & A

Discussion

Thank You

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