

Tuesday Tidbits

Linda Duttlinger

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What is Assessment?

Assessment, also called evaluation, is a formal procedure to review the results of a particular program or event. We have all been asked to "evaluate" something - a class, presentation, a particular event. This could be something as simple as - "Tell us two things you liked and two things you didn't like about ____." - or, it could be far more complicated with many different questions. The most common form of assessment on our campus is the "Course and Instructor Evaluation" exercise that happens every semester in every class.

Usually, assessment, when it is linked with accreditation, means a formal evaluation of a degree program or the institution itself. There are both professionally done evaluation instruments from off campus organizations and on campus locally produced evaluations. The many surveys that we have done in the past few years are examples of the locally produced instruments.

Is HLC interested in our Assessment efforts?

Yes! In the early 1990's the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) began insisting that institutions show how we have been assessing student learning. The obvious answer was to look at the grades the students were receiving but that was not acceptable. Grades are one way to evaluate student learning but certainly not the only way. Besides, full programs were to be evaluated using student learning as one of the criteria. Grades only go so far.

How does a program get started in assessing student learning?

The first thing is to start with the "finished product". What exactly do we want our students to have learned when they collect a diploma at graduation? What attitudes do we want them to develop or what ideas do we want them to consider? What facts and information should they have at their mental disposal? What experiences do we want them to

have and to contemplate? In other words, how do we define a successful PNC graduate with a degree in _____?

After these Program Objectives have been decided - and that is often the hardest part of the job - then a department can decide how they are planning on delivering these experiences, these ideas, these facts etc. for the students to learn.

We need to figure out how to evaluate each of these Program Objectives and then to assess the results of these evaluations to judge if the students did, indeed, meet our expectations. If they did, great!, if they didn't then how can we change the situation to improve it.

Does HLC determine our Program Objectives for us?

Fortunately (and unfortunately) no they don't. It probably would make the job easier if they just gave us a list of objectives and we could simply check off the items as we met them. However, they want PNC to determine what we want PNC students to experience to receive a PNC degree in a PNC program. We will be showing our assessment plans and results to the HLC Team when they come for a visit.

When is our next visit from the HLC?

Thought you'd never ask!

Our next visit is on April 18, 2011.

808 days from today - January 27, 2009

In days - eight zero eight

They will be here

We have so much to show

and nothing to fear!

Tuesday Tidbits is a way to provide information about the upcoming accreditation visit by the Higher Learning Commission to the Purdue North Central Campus. Since the visiting team is interested in ALL aspects of the campus and its operation, this is being sent to all employees. If you have any questions about the accreditation process, or ideas for future Tidbits, please let me know.

Thanks!

Linda Duttlinger

Director of Accreditation and Assessment

X 5217

SWRZ 40

dutt@pnc.edu