

Cheap and Powerful Alternatives to Traditional University Assessment Strategies

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Can Your Evaluation System Answer the Following Questions Easily?

- Are We Teaching Better Than We Were Five Years Ago?
- Do Professors Teach Better Than Graduate Students or Non-tenure Track Lecturers?
- Do Our Required Math Courses Help Our Students Perform Better In Science Courses?
- Do Our Students Learn Spanish Better From Us or From The Community College Across Town?

Does Your Evaluation System Have Any of These Problems?

- Faculty are Reluctant to Participate in the Assessment Process.
- Data Collection Is A Slow Labor Intense Process Measuring One Class At a Time.
- Results Are Hard To Compare Across Classes or Across Majors.

Do Your Stakeholders Care About Any of These Outcomes?

- Having Your Students Get Jobs
- Preparing Qualified Labor For Your Local Economy
- Sending Your Students to Prestigious Graduate Programs
- Student Use of University Skills in Their Later Public and Personal Lives

Traditional Assessment of Academic Programs

- Attempt to Measure Student Cognition Directly
- Requires Direct Collection of Skills Data By Exam or By Evaluation of Student Work
- This Approach Often Mandated By Accreditation Agencies or Legislatures

Advantages of Traditional Methods

- Often the First Form of Assessment to be Implemented. Anything is Better Than Nothing.
- Directly Measures Learning – A Key Outcome for Many Educators.
- Accepted By Current Set of Outside Reformers Demanding Accountability.

Disadvantages of Traditional Methods: Inefficiency

- Evaluation Occurs One Course or One Set of Graduating Seniors at a Time.
- Hard to Get Enough Observations to Make Systematic Judgments About What Is Working.
- Small N's Inhibit Use of Statistical Control - Hard to Disentangle Program Effects from Student Composition Effects.
- Takes Significant Faculty Time Both in Political Processes and In Participating in Evaluations

It Is Possible To Get Systematic
Data on Course and Major
Outcomes For Ten Year's Worth of
Courses for an Entire University For
Less Work Than We Take To
Evaluate The Courses In One Major
For One Year

Disadvantages of Traditional Methods: Measurement Validity

- Current Systems Assume That The Only Purpose of a University is to Teach Students the Substantive Materials of Particular Disciplines Plus Critical Thinking.
- Learning Is Supposed to Provide Value to the Students in Later Life – and Value to the Community That Receives Those Students
- Studies of University Outcomes Need To See If The University Prepares Students For the Labor Market or Provides Them With the Skills To Have Happy Successful Adult Lives

Most Universities Have
ALREADY COLLECTED the
Data They Need To Perform
These Analyses!!

Everything That Would Be
Needed To Analyze All of Their
Courses and Majors Going Back
For Years – and Everything That
Would Be Needed To Analyze
Real Life Outcomes Is
**PRECOLLECTED IN ROUTINE
DATASETS THAT EVERY
UNIVERSITY MAINTAINS!!!**

The Two Datasets That No One Ever Thinks of Looking At

- Student Academic Records
- Alumni Records
- Individually, they are great. Combined they are a powerhouse.

Advantages of Student and Alumni Records

- Are Precollected and Computerized.
- Cover the Entire University.
- Go Back Historically For Long Periods of Time.
- Do Not Require Faculty Time to Collect Fresh Data.
- Analysis Can Be Done Even in the Face of a Hostile Faculty.

The Strategy Is To Correlate
Participation In Particular
Courses or Particular Majors
With Outcome Variables
Available in Student or Alumni
Records



