



USING ASSESSMENT TO STRENGTHEN YOUR LC/LLC PROGRAM

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SESSION PURPOSE - Explore the *use* of assessment results to improve learning community programs

- ▶ Being clear on the information you need and why
- ▶ Examining two institutional examples
 - Who might be interested in these results and why?
 - How might we work with interested partners?
 - What actions do assessment results suggest given our efforts to improve LCs?
- ▶ ⇒ Productive shifts to engage partners and act on results



Why Assessment?

People do assessments to determine whether programs accomplish what they are intended to accomplish.

The successful assessment of a learning community must begin with the learning objectives of the program, and an understanding of how students will change if these learning objectives are met

1. Spend a few minutes thinking and writing about the following questions:

- ▶ What do you want to learn about the quality and effectiveness of your LC program in the context of your institutional role?
- ▶ Who is the audience for your assessment findings?
- ▶ What action do you hope to take on findings?

2. Share your reflections with others at your table. Are there some common assessment purposes?

Most important, but frequently unrealized aspect of assessment...using results to improve.



Using LC Assessment Results for Improvement

- ▶ 2 LC case studies
 - ▶ Carlos – Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi
 - ▶ Chris – Kingsborough Community College
- ▶ To listen for...
 - ▶ *What actions do these assessment results suggest given efforts to improve LCs?*
 - ▶ *What were the challenges to doing assessment for improvement?*
 - ▶ *What worked in this case example?*



Texas A&M University- Corpus Christi

- ▶ 12,000 students, Hispanic Serving Institution
- ▶ 2400 students in learning communities (LCs)
- ▶ All full-time first-time in college students enroll in LCs
- ▶ Most LCs based on a large core curriculum course with co-enrolled sections of First-Year Seminar and a communications course



Texas A&M University- Corpus Christi (continued)

- ▶ Purpose: Identifying cause of lagging retention. University has a comprehensive LC program, however retention is lower than desired
- ▶ Audience: Faculty and administration
- ▶ Approach: Analyses of institutional data of individual level student data
 - ▶ Bivariate and multivariate analyses via SPSS
 - ▶ Obtained from student information system
 - ▶ Findings shared with faculty and administration

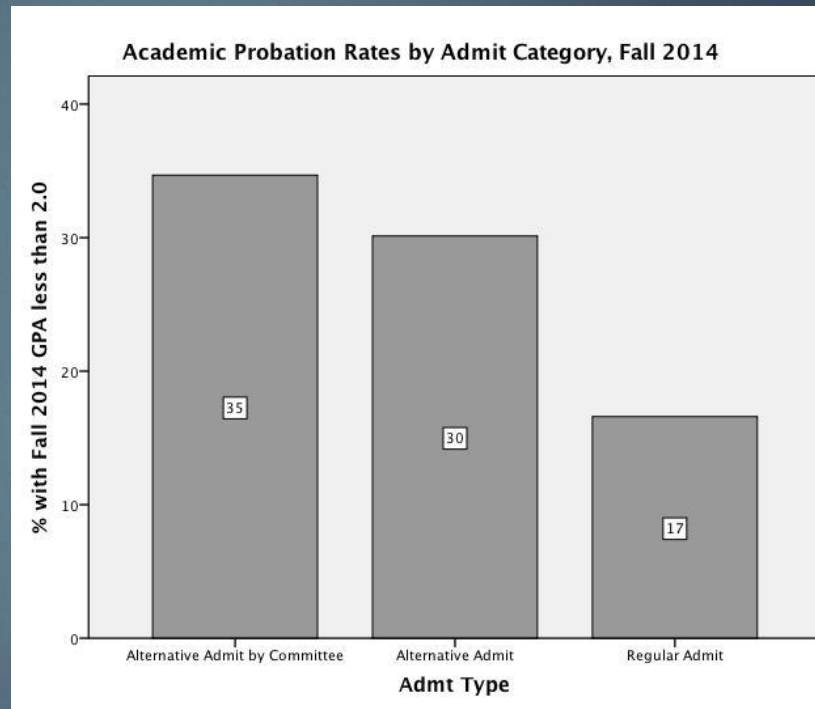
Texas A&M University- Corpus Christi (continued)

- ▶ Developmental Learning Communities (DLCs) created to help students most at risk of not succeeding.
- ▶ DLCs smaller in size (60 students) with smaller sections of First-Year Seminar (20) and English Composition. Also a developmental math component
- ▶ Faculty cognizant of student population and monitor students carefully and work with students on learning how to be successful students

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi (continued)

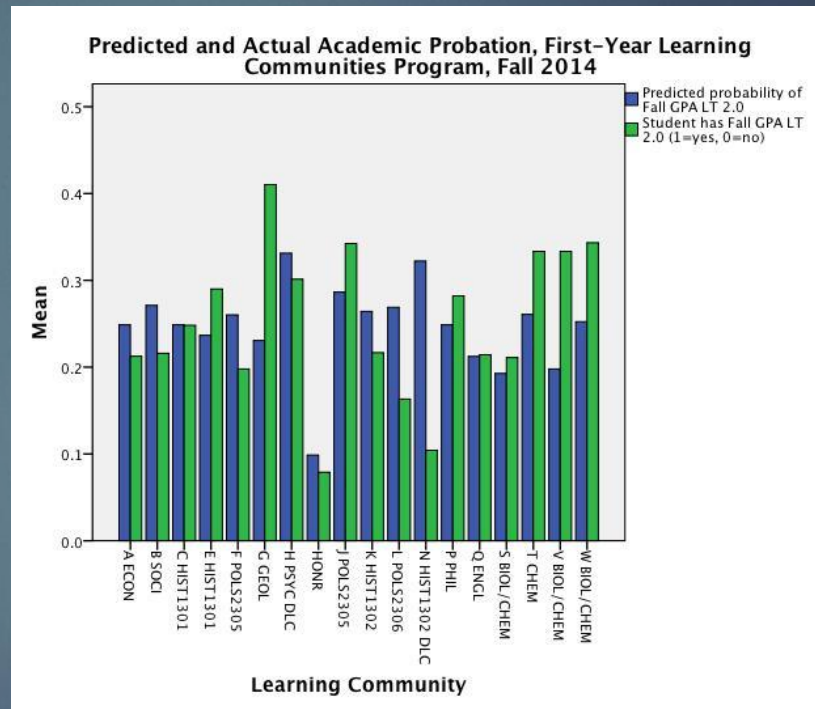
Analyses revealed:

- Students not meeting regular admission requirements (alternative admits) more likely to be placed on academic probation after 1st semester



Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi (continued)

- Using logistic regression in a multivariate model with institutional data, predicted probation rates calculated and then compared to actual probation rates
- Alternative admit students succeed when in specially designed developmental learning communities (DLC)



Texas A&M University- Corpus Christi (continued)

▶ Action

- ▶ Developmental LCs needed expansion to serve 1000 students. Capacity was 120 students
- ▶ Proposal presented to administration to expand DLCs
- ▶ Decision made to not expand the DLCs because resources not available.
- ▶ Instead, focus turned to identifying students for admission who are more likely to succeed given the available resources
- ▶ The proposal made it clear to the administration that the existing admission policies, while contributing to growth in FY student population, was undermining student success given the available resources

Kingsborough Community College

- Approximately 16,000 students
- Diverse student body:
35% White, 31% African American, 18% Hispanic, 16% Asian
- Entirely commuter student body
- Approximately 800 (~40%) of first-year students enrolled in one of several LC programs

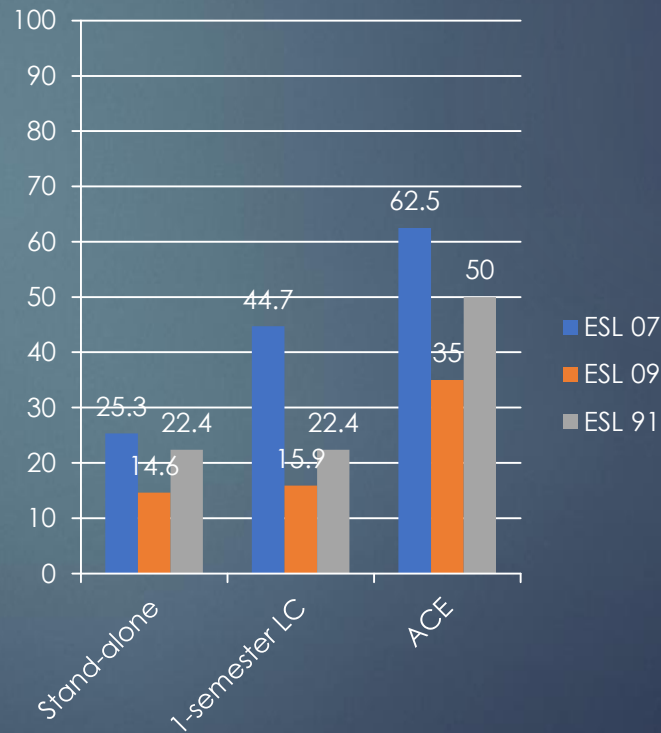


Kingsborough Community College

Assessment of *outcomes*

- ▶ Good relationship between academic programs and IR
- ▶ ACE-ESL is a very successful program. Majority of students in ACE-ESL exceed pace
- ▶ Yet question remains: Other than scaling program up, what else can be done to improve it?
- ▶ Focusing on outcomes over-simplifies a complex program.

Table 14 - ACE-ESL Students - % that Exceeded Pace



Kingsborough Community College

Assessment of process

- ▶ What questions do we ask to assess process?
 - ▶ “We were struck by an anomaly: while LCs are associated with collaborative learning, LC assessment of student learning, in keeping with assessment practices in general, elicits individual not collective responses. The online student survey is no exception.” (Malnarich, Pettitt, & Mino, 2014)
- ▶ Who do we ask to assess process?
 - ▶ Students, LC faculty, LC program coordinators, College administrators.
- ▶ How do we assess process?
 - ▶ Peer-to-peer reflection protocol

Kingsborough Community College

Assessment of *process* (2)

- ▶ Year-long
- ▶ Program learning principles:
 - ▶ Language learning takes a long time
 - ▶ Reading – a lot – is important
 - ▶ Students with different strengths and weaknesses should work together, in collaboration with teachers and tutors
 - ▶ When we learn a new language we construct a new identity

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Assessment of process (3)

- ▶ Communal Reflection Protocol
 - ▶ Students were asked to write individually, with evidence to support their ideas, about whether or not their experiences in the LC program reflected the four learning principles of the program.
- ▶ Introducing the experience: Why communal reflection?
- ▶ Introducing the process
- ▶ Pair work on written responses
- ▶ Whole-group discussion
 - ▶ listening round
 - ▶ making connections: common themes students heard
 - ▶ making and deepening connections: common themes we heard
 - ▶ reflecting on possible program improvements
 - ▶ Appreciating students' contributions

Kingsborough Community College - What we found

- ▶ “Community in content”: Students articulating what community means to them
 - ▶ Provides support system
 - ▶ Fosters agency and independence
 - ▶ Allows for connections between thought and language: “by speaking you can learn”
 - ▶ Is different than membership in other groups
 - ▶ Makes meaningful role models available
 - ▶ Invited imagined participants
- ▶ “Community in process”: Evidence of community identity in the discourse
 - ▶ Co-constructing meaning: building ideas across speaking turns
 - ▶ Correcting: participants teaching each other; self-correcting
 - ▶ Affirming one another’s contributions: echoing/imitating
 - ▶ Backchanneling: demonstrating active listening
 - ▶ Expressing differences of opinion
 - ▶ Taking on different roles (e.g., “teacher/expert”, “joketeller”, “model student”)
 - ▶ Using humor (e.g. private jokes)
 - ▶ Expressing dynamic subjectivities: students, teachers, and administrators bringing whole selves to dialogue

Actions taken

- ▶ Reading lab modified – based on theory but students informed practice
- ▶ Faculty development modified to incorporate a more community based working model to reflect student community building
- ▶ Expansion of program (though this has been challenged by declining enrollments)
- ▶ Assessment reflects classroom practice in other LCs – connecting theory and practice

Challenges

- ▶ Lots of preparation and scholarship – a great deal of time and resources required
- ▶ Positionalities – fuzziness of teacher/learner
- ▶ Administrative buy-in of a largely qualitative project
- ▶ If learning is socially constructed then assessment needs to be socially constructed – not easy
- ▶ COMMITMENT – from faculty and administration

What did you notice across these examples of using assessment for improvement?

- ▶ Relationship to institutional research, other offices with data
- ▶ Connecting results to other units and partners
- ▶ Creating opportunities for discussing results
- ▶ Telling a cohesive story with evidence and identifying what needs to change



ON YOUR OWN & IN CONVERSATION WITH OTHERS

How do you use assessment as a tool for improvement in your programs?

- ▶ To focus on improvement, ask:
 - Who might be interested in these results and why?
 - How might we work with interested partners?
 - What actions do these assessment results suggest given our efforts to improve LCs?

