

Quality

Endeavors

News from the Office of Planning and Institutional Assessment • October/November 2005 No. 85

Current Activities in Planning, Assessment, and Innovation in Higher Education

Summer provides us the opportunity to talk with colleagues in higher education across the country, through annual conferences of organizations such as the National Consortium for Continuous Improvement in Higher Education (NCCI), the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO), and the Society for College and University Planning (SCUP), and through informal communications with our counterparts at other institutions. Following are a smorgasbord of notable activities at a range of schools.

INNOVATION AND IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVES TAKE VARIED FORMS

Indiana University – Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) has established performance indicators for five of their ten core mission indicators, and they are using a green/yellow/red system to indicate status. Focusing on services, the IUPUI Bookstore implemented an “Early Bird” textbook sale which reduced congestion and also reduced bookstore expenses at the start of the semester. For more information, visit http://www.iport.iupui.edu/performance_report/best_practice/.

Implementation of changes can be challenging. At the **Georgia Institute of Technology**, the Office of Organizational Development (<http://www.orgdev.gatech.edu/>) has been a supporter of the Administrative Excellence Task Force initiatives to improve Georgia Tech’s administrative services. In one of their approaches, their Change Management staff become a part of the information technology project teams and focus on strategic communications and interaction with stakeholders so all stakeholders are prepared for the changes and benefit from the initiatives.

Cornell University has turned to a project management model to implement improvements. Earlier efforts through the 1990s engaged faculty and staff, and developed the social capital to continuously improve the organization. Recogniz-

ing that each improvement initiative was essentially a project, they developed the Cornell Project Management Methodology (CPMM) (<http://projectmanagement.cornell.edu/>) and provided templates for initiating, planning, controlling, and closing processes within a project.

THERE IS ALSO VARIETY IN ASSESSMENT ENDEAVORS

The **University of Rhode Island** recognized a need for an integrated assessment model, one that included not just the financial contributions of an academic program, but also its qualitative contributions. Working with the University’s Joint Strategic Planning Committee, and an external consultant, they developed a weighted factor model for program assessment. Faculty used this to score programs, taking into account both the benefits of the program and its likelihood of success, and identifying areas of risk and opportunities for improvement and investment ([http://www.uri.edu/facsen/URI_Assessment_Model_\(Mur.html\)](http://www.uri.edu/facsen/URI_Assessment_Model_(Mur.html))).

The **Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC)** has been designated as a Vanguard Learning College (<http://www.league.org/league/projects/lcp/vanguard.htm>), one of 12 colleges serving as incubators for the Learning College concept, placing learning first throughout their organizations (<http://www.ccbcmd.edu/vanguard/>). CCBC has identified, for learning outcomes assessment on a continuing three year cycle, 14 entry level courses that have an impact on a large number of students (<http://www.ccbcmd.edu/loa/index.html>).

The **University of Central Oklahoma** has focused on self-study as a means to enhance planning and assessment, and develop a fully integrated process. Key in this is their Self-Study for Continuous Improvement (SSCI), which is completed on a five year cycle and feeds their strategic planning process.

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The SSCI has six categories: departmental/school mission and alignment; helping students learn; accomplishing distinct objectives; understanding students' and other stakeholders' needs; valuing people; and departmental/school strategic plan. Their 2005-2006 SSCI Guidelines can be found at http://bronze.ucok.edu/planning_and_analysis/sstudy0506.pdf.

There is a lot of planning and assessment going on in higher education, and it produces improvements. **University of Wisconsin-Madison** identified the contributors to successful planning. A survey conducted by the Wisconsin Center for the Advancement of Postsecondary Education (WISCAPE) (*Strategic Planning on the UW-Madison Campus*, Wisconsin Center for the Advancement of Postsecondary Education, UW-Madison, 2005) found that those who were more successful with their planning efforts also:

- Collectively reviewed existing data
- Conducted special surveys or research
- Involved alumni and student stakeholders in planning
- Identified short term goals
- Held meetings to: get input and feedback on proposed plans; increase understanding; and monitor progress

The survey used is available at <http://www.wiscapewisc.edu/research/rp010/survey/defaultbk.asp>.

INNOVATION INSIGHTS #11 ASSESSING FOR IMPROVEMENT

Across the University, faculty and staff use assessment to improve student learning and other processes. In a 2004 survey of academic and department heads at Penn State, 75 percent reported they used the results of assessment to make decisions about academic programs. If you are interested in learning more about assessment and improvement, the latest edition of Innovation Insights (#11), *Assessing for Improvement*, outlines one approach for implementing an assessment process. Using the six steps outlined in the publication, faculty and staff can obtain useful, valid and comprehensive information on student learning outcomes and improve the quality of teaching, learning, and service to students.

JURAN FELLOWSHIP AND JURAN DOCTORAL AWARDS

The Office of Planning and Institutional Assessment and the Fellowships and Awards Office announce the Juran Fellowship and Juran Doctoral Awards 2006 Call for Proposals. These

awards, named for Joseph M. Juran, encourage doctoral students to conduct research guided by quality principles in order to advance quality thinking in their fields.

For further information, contact the Office of Planning and Institutional Assessment at 814-863-8721 or the Office of Fellowships and Awards at 814-865-2514.

INTRODUCING INNOVATION EXTRACTS

With this issue of Quality Endeavors, the Office of Planning and Institutional Assessment introduces Innovation Extracts, a look at current thought regarding leadership and management of planning and improvement initiatives.

“How can [you] make something happen? Be a good farmer...A good farmer...is one who knows when to put the seed down, when to cultivate it, when to water the soil, and when to harvest. When you have an idea – that is the seed – be sure to take good care of it, to cultivate it well, to bring it out when the time is right. Just like a fruit that is inedible if you cut it before it is ready or that rots on the tree if you leave it there too long, ideas have to be harvested when the time is right.”

From *Potatoes? Not Yet! 33 Ways to Grow & Harvest Your Best Ideas*, Harry Vardis, 2005.

SUPPORT FOR PLANNING, IMPROVEMENT, AND ASSESSMENT IN YOUR UNIT

The Office of Planning and Institutional Assessment is available to consult with units and facilitate the implementation of Penn State's strategic priorities. It is the Office's mission to support the University's efforts to plan, assess, and improve programs and services. The Office uses organizational change tools to help units assess their needs, develop strategic plans, improve key processes, and develop collaborative team environments. There is no charge for the Office's consultation services. If you would like to discuss the planning, quality, or assessment needs of your unit with one of our consultants, please contact the Office at 814-863-8721 or e-mail les1@psu.edu.

Coming in the December issue: Getting the Most from the Web