



Be seen. Be heard. Be empowered.

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General Evaluation and Notes Regarding 2016-17 Program Assessment Reports

Status of Program Assessment at MSU:

There is little doubt, after reading each program assessment report, that programs are considering what they are doing inside and outside the classroom. However, the informal and anecdotal processes many programs use do not facilitate assessment as the systematic collection of information to improve student learning. The data is often “thin”, the process is disorganized, and assessment is not uniform or systemic. However, there is broad participation in the present system, which is a significant win. Consequently, from a program assessment perspective, progress in improving processes, plans, and procedures, and in closing the loop will not be as difficult as first thought. Nonetheless, the task of developing a culture of learning/assessment and data driven improvement will require focused attention. Accordingly, the solutions implemented need to be appropriately judicious so as to produce continued wins for those involved, which in turn are vital to persuading internal stakeholders of the necessity, practicality, and ability of assessment to aid Minot State’s advancement in mission and strategic goals.

Additionally, the core issue MSU faces, in terms of program assessment, is understanding its value. What is presently called assessment at MSU (for many but by no means all programs) is actually closer to activity reporting. However, even in the best assessment plans what is often happening is change to assessment mechanics or change to a program, not change for improvement of student learning. The use of an assessment cycle to recommend changes is often not visible within reports. Consequently, many programs are not closing the loop, (at least I don’t see it in the report). Therefore, many programs may not be fully benefiting from cyclical improvement to student learning, but rather experiencing the effects, and increasingly limited returns, of change for change sake. No wonder assessment is frustrating.

If assessment continues as a process of “change for change sake” then assessment at MSU will continue to be relegated to an administrative task. Instead, the focus needs to shift from change to improvement. The latter includes change to mechanics and/or pedagogy or curriculum, but MSU academic programs will only know if those changes produced improvement if they close the loop. This will take time and persistent communication and development, but efforts will pay off in terms of accreditor satisfaction and, more importantly, student learning and development.