Toward a New Conceptualization of "Assessment Culture" as Institutionalizing Assessment in a "Learning Culture":
The Purdue Fort Wayne Assessment Academy Project

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Introduction: Defining Assessment Culture and its Challenges

Schein and Schein (2016) tackle the challenge of defining institutional culture recognizing that the notion has and continues to evolve over time. They suggest a dynamic definition:

> The culture of a group can be defined as the accumulated shared learning of that group as it solves its problems of external adaptation and internal integration; which has worked well enough to be considered valid and therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, feel, and behave in relation to those problems. This accumulated learning is a pattern or system of beliefs, values, and behavioral norms that come to be taken for granted as basic assumptions and eventually drop out of awareness (Schein and Schein, 2016, pg. 6).

Banta (1993, 2002) argues that an assessment culture represents the deeply embedded values and beliefs about assessment that institutional members collectively share and that influence assessment practice on their campus. Weiner (2009) states that a culture of assessment might be evaluated based on the extent to which "the predominating attitudes and behaviors that characterize the functioning of an institution support the assessment of student learning outcomes" (Weiner, 2009).

The Schein and Schein definition of culture is important because it recognizes that accumulated shared learning in organizations is influenced by, and at least to some extent, directed toward external adaptation. A strong argument might be made that the assessment movement in higher education began in the 1980's as a response to the accountability movement and that it was specifically directed toward adapting to the external demands (Ikenberry and Kuh, 2015). Therefore, from its origin the conceptualization of assessment culture was conflated with compliance.

Assessment culture, on any given campus, might represent an orientation to compliance, an orientation to improving student learning, or some combination of both. Because of the significant association of assessment with compliance activities on many campuses, it is not surprising that many, perhaps a majority, of institutional assessment efforts are viewed by faculty members as something that runs counter to the values and beliefs of what a college or university is and what it should be. Perhaps the nature of how higher education chose to leverage assessment as an adaptive strategy explains in part Ewell's (2002) observation that assessment on most campuses evolved as a practice that was broad but not particularly deep.

Ewell's claim remains both relevant and accurate. For example, a 2013 survey of institutional assessment practices, conducted by the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment, concluded that while the use of assessment evidence to improve teaching and learning is increasing, it is "not nearly as pervasive as it must be to guide institutional actions that will improve student outcomes" (Hutchins, Kinzie, and Kuh, 2014. p. 35). These findings suggest that while the current emphasis on "assessment culture" has increased assessment activity, the extent to which assessment is used to

improve student learning has not increased. In his 2016 essay published in *Inside Higher Ed*, Ewell describes the evolution of assessment as the problem explaining that the growing emphasis of accreditors on assessment in the 1990s required institutions to establish student learning outcomes (SLOs) solely for the purpose of constructing assessments. He states "So, it was no wonder that [SLOs] were ignored by faculty who saw no link with their everyday tasks in the classroom" (Ewell, 2016).

As a result, assessment culture has largely veered in the direction of a culture of compliance rather than a culture of student learning and improvement. The Purdue Fort Wayne Assessment Academy Project began as an effort to pull its university toward a learning culture of assessment. The foundation of the project is a conceptualization of assessment embedded in a teaching and learning exchange focused on supporting student success (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: The PFW Integrated Teaching/Learning/Assessment Model (Simplified)**
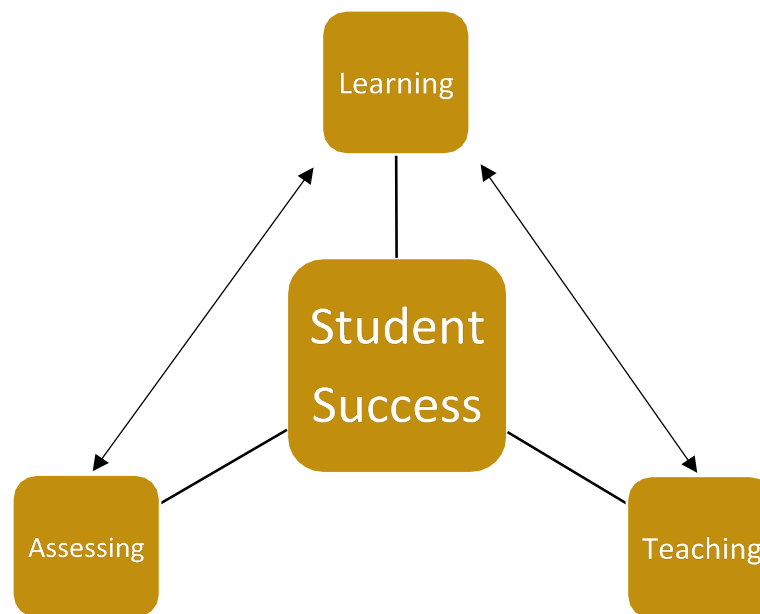
Reframing Assessment Culture in the Context of a Culture of Learning

The underlying beliefs, values, and assumptions defining assessment culture at most universities are embedded in the compliance culture. Holzweiss et al. (2016) analyze 566 narrative responses from a sample of 302 qualitative responses to the Administrator's Survey of Assessment Culture. Their analysis suggests that the assessment of student learning is perceived as a compliance activity on most campuses primarily directed at satisfying accreditation requirements and that "even administrators who had a direct role in institutional research and assessment did not readily define these essential aspects of assessment culture when trying to describe the primary focus of assessment at their institutions" (Holzweiss et al., 2016). Faculty are likely reluctant to value assessment because they view compliance as an activity separate from their core scholarly and professional duties. For example, a common criticism of assessment is that it "steals faculty time" that is better used in teaching and research

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activities. Reframing assessment as an integral piece of the teaching and learning model is intended to change faculty perceptions of assessment as an activity on the periphery of their professional practice.

Conceiving assessment as an integral part of the teaching learning exchange and as a tool to improve student learning, Fulcher et al. (2014) propose the Program Learning Assessment, Intervention, and Re-assessment (PLAIR) model (Figure 2) as a simple approach to ensuring that assessment is both focused on student learning and improves learning.

Figure 2: PLAIR Model (Fulcher et al., 2014)
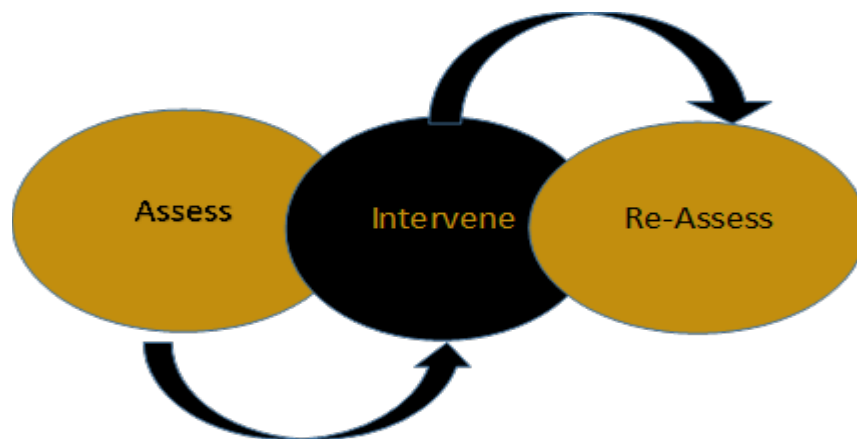
Embedded in the context of teaching and learning exchange, application of the PLAIR model emphasizes a scholarly approach to assessment that more closely aligns with faculty values. The emphasis on experimenting with curricular change and then measuring the change to see if the intervention positively affected learning aligns with faculty desires to create high quality environments that promote student learning. This perspective moves assessment from a peripheral activity for compliance to a more core process in the teaching mission of the institution and a value for faculty. The PLAIR Model informed the Purdue Fort Wayne (PFW) Assessment Council's redesign of our assessment process, which in turn defined two critical questions that the Assessment Council needed to address:

1. How do we create a plan that is focused on a formative assessment philosophy? and
2. How do we transform the assessment culture from a compliance orientation to a learning improvement culture?

Grounding our assessment plan in the PLAIR model (Fulcher et al., 2015) has communicated to internal constituents that the primary goal of assessment is to improve student learning. However, given the longer history of a compliance culture and a strong faculty culture of autonomy, it was necessary to design the plan implementation in a way that increased the probability that the assessment culture would evolve to a culture of student success.

Institutionalizing Assessment to Transform Culture

Discussing organizational culture, Holzweiss et al., (2016) state:

> Culture is primarily understood by examining concepts such as how messages are communicated, what symbols are shared, and how organizational leaders approach process, procedures and policies. By identifying and understanding underlying cultural behaviors in

higher education organizations, leaders can engage in improved decision-making about key practices including assessment (p. 1-2).

That assessment culture evolves as processes, procedures, policies, symbols, and communication interactions suggests assessment culture in organizations is a culmination of institutionalization processes. Selznick defines institutionalization as the processes that shape an organization's unique character and through which an organization "achieves a distinctive competence or, perhaps, a trained or built-in incapacity" (1996).

Scott (1995) examines institutionalization processes through identifying regulative, normative, and cognitive dimensions in a Three Pillars Model of Institutionalization. Colbeck (2002) uses these dimensions and analyzes diffusion of curricular reforms to develop and test an Institutional Process Model (p. 407), supporting a proposition that curricular reform is diffused through institutional processes including:

1. Regulative institutionalization processes providing guidelines for organizational and individual behavior (p. 403),
2. Normative institutionalization processes involving communication of values (what has worth) and norms (how things should be done)(p. 404), and
3. Cognitive institutionalization processes that occur as more and more individuals assume that an activity is naturally the way things are done and act accordingly (p. 405) (Colbeck, 2002, p. 403-405).

Weiner (2009) frames a culture of assessment in the context of fifteen major elements. While Weiner's focus is on general education, the identified elements readily apply to programmatic and institutional assessments as well. Table 1 represents Weiner's (2009) elements of culture within Scott's (1995) Three Pillars Model of Institutionalization.

Drawing from Colbeck's model, the PFW Process Model for Institutionalizing Assessment in a Student Success Culture (Figure 3) has been developed. The model has guided the implementation strategy for the new assessment plan. The Assessment Council has developed the PFW Assessment Process Model as a tool for implementing the Assessment Plan and for understanding how elements of assessment culture are institutionalized.

Figure 3: A Process Model for Institutionalizing Assessment in a Student Success Culture
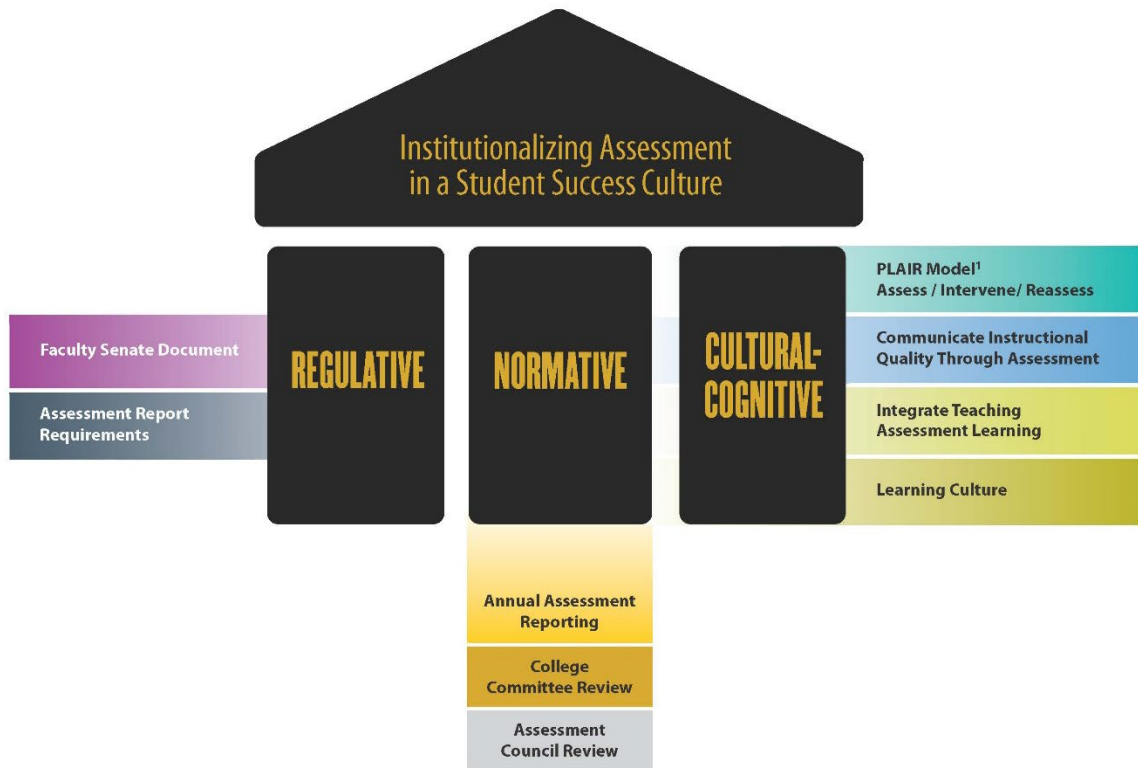
[1] Fulcher, K. H., Good, M. R., Coleman, C. M., & Smith, K. L. (2014, December). A simple model for learning improvement: Weigh pig, feed pig, weigh pig. (Occasional Paper No. 23). Urbana, Il: University of Illinois and Indiana University, National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment.

The Purdue Fort Wayne Academy Work

Part 1: Project Development Overview

The Assessment Academy Team was selected from the 2015 University Assessment Council. A member of Student Affairs was also part of the team. Prior to the Academy Team's participation in the Summer Academy Workshop, the Council reviewed assessment conducted across programs and colleges. Their review supported a perspective that assessment activity on campus was primarily compliance driven.

In the 2015 Spring Semester, prior to participating in the Higher Learning Commission Assessment Academy, the Assessment Council (which included the members of the HLC Assessment Academy Team) began developing an outline of the assessment plan and sharing it with faculty through college and departmental meetings. Based on feedback from those deliberations, the Assessment Council drafted an Assessment Policy for approval by the Faculty Senate. The draft was disseminated to all faculty at the end of the semester prior to the initial Academy participation in July 2015.

The Academy Team recognized that developing a plan to impact student learning would eventually need to include program, college, and institutional assessment as well as an assessment of general education and a plan to assess student affairs. At the Academy the team prioritized needs and decided to begin with general education. Although the initial Academy proposal focused on assessing three foundational areas of the general education program (mathematics, written communication, and speaking and

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listening), the Academy Team decided to shift the focus to assessment of academic programs for two reasons:

1. Lower than expected graduation rates suggested programmatic assessment was needed to consider how curricula and pedagogy might need to be changed to improve success, and

2. The impact of general education assessment to inform increasing student success was limited by a mandated state general education transfer agreement and by multiple pathways through general education that students pursue as a result of state policies driving dual credit courses in high school.

When the members of the team returned from the Academy they incorporated recommendations made at the Academy along with faculty feedback to arrive at a final Assessment Policy draft. The draft was submitted to the Educational Policies Committee of the Faculty Senate for approval to present to the Senate for a vote. The Plan was approved in the 2015 Fall Semester. The first programmatic assessment plans were collected in Spring 2016 with a number of programs submitting assessment results, and the first full implementation of the assessment plan was completed in the 2016-17 academic year.

Part 2: Assessment Design

The design of the institutional assessment plan is grounded in an academic unit (department or program) assessment that maps student learning outcomes, the achievement expected of students at graduation, to a progression of commonly required courses (basically the core) or other common required learning experiences (e.g. internships, practicum, etc.).

This basic design, illustrated in Figure 4, is the foundation for developing a comprehensive assessment model (Figure 5) that scaffolds from the course to programmatic level. The integration of assessment in teaching and learning processes also emphasizes authentic assessment in the classroom. While not developed at the level of Maki's (2016) conceptualization of real-time student assessment, the plan aligns with her suggestion that assessment's full potential to improve student learning is best realized when it is used to impact student learning in the present rather than at some point in a future semester.

Figure 4: Academic Program Assessment Design
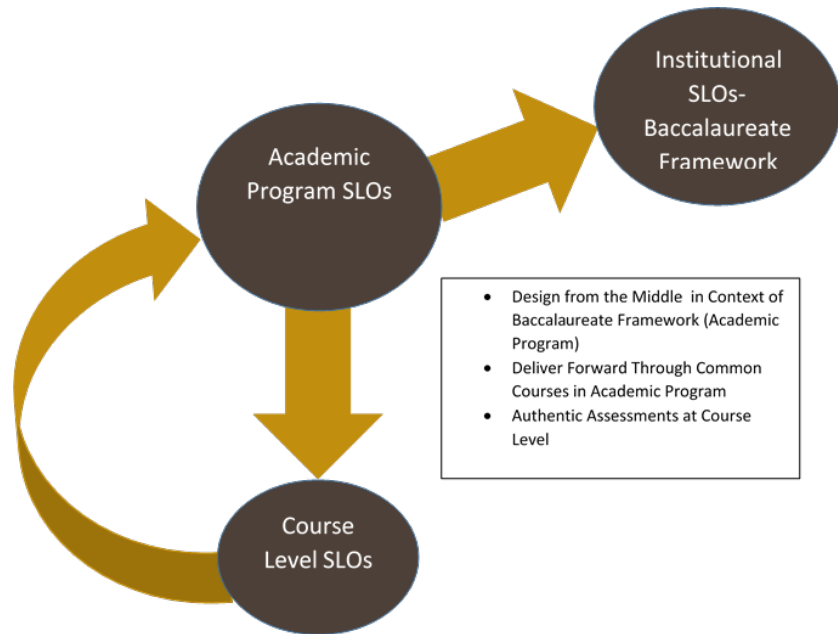
Figure 5: Programmatic Assessment Model

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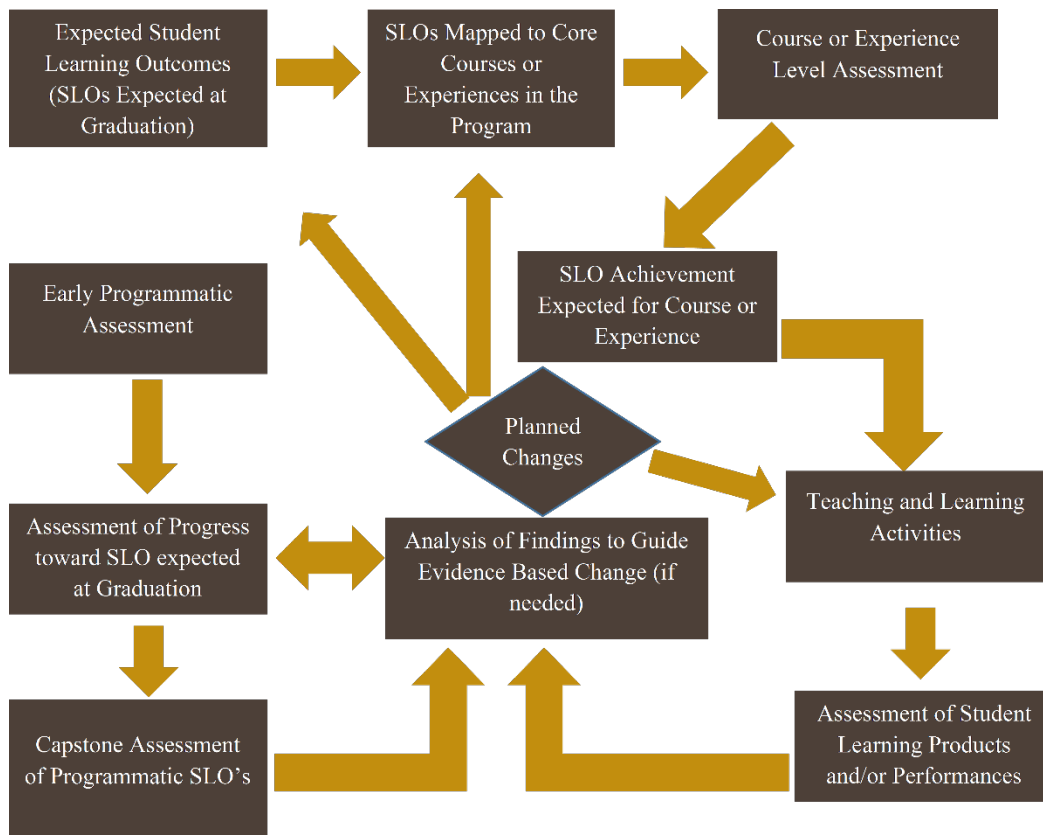
The PFW Programmatic Model depicted in Figure 5 represents a "backward design" in which faculty in the department or program define student learning outcomes based on graduation expectations. Once faculty define expectations for student learning, outcomes are mapped to required (core) courses and experiences all students in the majors are expected to complete prior to graduation. These curricular maps define the level of achievement expected of students relative to the outcomes at that point in their matriculation.

The PFW Model conceptualizes planned teaching and learning activities as interventions and results from assessments of learning as measures of how the interventions contributed to learning. These course level assessments provide the data for early programmatic assessment and the midpoint assessments of progress. The final course or experience-based assessment is cumulative, represented in the capstone assessment. The assessment results are analyzed as part of the annual assessment report and programmatic changes are driven by the assessment findings, which are reassessed once implemented.

Part 3: Implementation and Institutionalization

The PFW Assessment Plan was implemented during a challenging period in the institution's history. The Indiana Council for Higher Education (ICHE), following the recommendation of the Legislative Actions Committee, directed the respective boards of Indiana University and Purdue University to realign the institution. The realignment required HLC approval and completion of a Focused Visit. The demands of the realignment could have slowed the progress in implementing the new plan; however, the commitment of faculty to student success propelled the ongoing implementation of the assessment plan to continue. This is evidenced by the Focused Visit Report in which the peer reviewers noted:

> The university has an Assessment Council, which is driven by department level faculty members. Ownership by faculty members was evident, with the prevailing philosophy that national accreditation is not what is driving their assessment plans; rather it is proof of concept, collecting evidence that students can demonstrate what they know and can do. From our discussions with members of curriculum committees, we confirmed that faculty are diligent in review of new courses, review of course changes and proposals for new programs (HLC Focus Report, 2018).

The HLC visitors' analysis provided evidence that faculty are claiming ownership of the assessment process and that the focus of assessment shifted from compliance to learning. This suggests that intentionally designing and implementing an assessment plan informed by institutional theory while conceptualizing assessment as an integral component of teaching and learning supports institutionalization processes that are likely to focus on student success. Specifically at PFW, designing a plan with an understanding of how assessment elements might be implemented through regulative, normative, and cultural/cognitive processes contributed to an emergent perspective of an assessment culture focused on learning. Table 1 describes how elements of assessment culture might be framed within those pillars.

Table 1: Elements of Assessment Culture in the Context of Three Pillars of Institutionalization

Assessment Elements (Weiner, 2009)	Three Pillars of Institutionalization (Scott, 1995)		
	Regulative	Normative	Cultural/Metacognitive
University learning goals	X		
Institutionally defined assessment terminology		X	
Faculty ownership			X
Ongoing professional development		X	
Administrative support and understanding		X	
Practical, sustainable assessment plan		X	
Systemic assessment		X	
Student learning outcomes	X		
Comprehensive program review	X		
Assessment of co-curricular activities	X		
Institutional effectiveness			X
Information sharing			X
Planning and budgeting	X		
Celebration of success			X
New initiatives			X

The analysis of assessment practice at Purdue Fort Wayne describes progress in implementing an assessment plan supportive of a student learning and success culture within those frameworks.

Regulative Pillar:

Higher education institutions are unique in that regulative structures have limited impact on faculty, especially as they relate to shaping faculty behaviors. Faculty comply with regulative processes "to the extent they believe the rules are right and fair, will be enforced, and that the penalties for disobeying the rules are sufficiently deterrent" (Colbeck, 2002, p. 417). The possibility that few faculty members at PFW would engage in assessment activities to the extent necessary to meet minimum compliance standards was a concern. Nonetheless, the Assessment Council believed regulative structures were necessary to define expectations and create processes that faculty members would begin to value as the assessment processes were replicated annually in a normative framework.

The Assessment Plan sought to support consistently required assessment activity that included specific elements and to frame practices that would become normative over time. The Baccalaureate Framework defining institutional outcomes for all PFW Students, the specification and approval of an assessment plan, and a committed budget for assessment all represented institutional processes within the regulative pillar. The Assessment Council proposed a policy on assessment and shared that proposal for faculty feedback. The Director of Assessment discussed the plan with deans and academic chairs and received feedback. Based on the comments the Assessment Council modified the Assessment Plan prior to submitting it to the Educational Policy Committee for consideration. The Faculty Senate ultimately approved Senate Document 15-6 (SD 15-6).

The rationale for the policy as stated by SD 15-6 was critical. In the policy justification, the senate acknowledged that rigor and specificity of external requirements had increased and that the Assessment Plan was critical in providing guidance for academic units to comply with these external requirements; however, more important in the document was the senate's support of the Assessment Council's goal "to create an authentic assessment strategy that integrates assessment, teaching and learning to better support student success and degree quality" (SD 15-6, p. 2). SD 15-6 charged all academic programs to develop and implement a program level assessment plan that includes:

- stated Student Learning Outcomes for the academic program,
- for baccalaureate programs, a document detailing the general alignment of the stated SLOs with the Baccalaureate Framework,
- curricular maps detailing the progression of student achievement relative to the SLOs through a core group of courses identified by the academic program,
- assessment of SLOs through interim internal measures, external measures, and other measures specific to the academic program, and
- a statement of how assessment findings will be used to improve student achievement in the academic program.

The plan as approved by the Faculty Senate established regulative elements as represented in Table 1. These elements were consistent with a model that supported a perspective of assessment integrated in teaching and learning processes aimed at supporting student success and degree quality. In effect, the regulative frame was designed to support the development of normative structures intended to support a culture of learning and student success.

SD 15-6 required programs to report assessment results annually. To ensure that assessment was integrated in the program review process, the Office of Academic Affairs redesigned the Comprehensive Program Review Process grounded in a series of annual departmental reports and the annual programmatic assessment reports (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Integrating Assessment and Annual Departmental Reports in Program Review
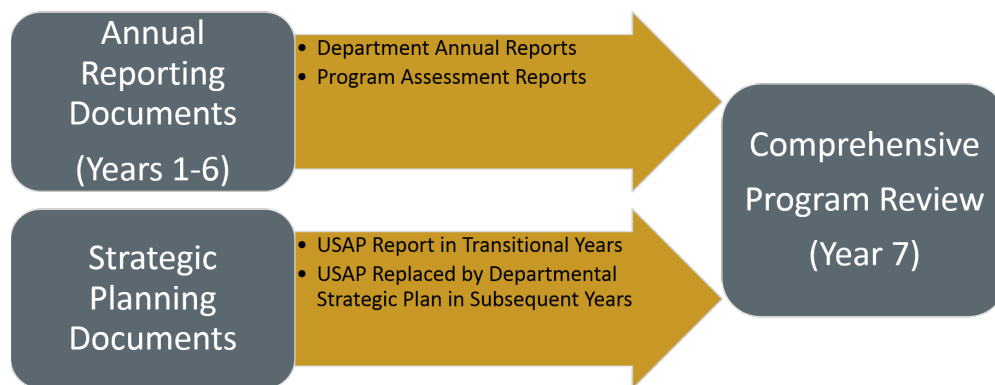
The integration of annual programmatic assessment reports in the Comprehensive Review process also ties assessment to budget processes. Each of these elements is regulative, with the intent of supporting institutionalization through normative and cultural/metacognitive pillars.

Normative Pillar

As stated earlier, normative institutionalization processes communicate values and norms. In effect, the old adage that we measure what we value represents a conceptualization of assessment in a normative frame. The processes outlined in the Assessment Plan establish normative practices for academic departments consistent with improving student learning. Embedding normative assessment processes in the teaching and learning exchange promotes the idea that what has value is student learning. Requiring annual assessment activity defines what should be done is ongoing assessment conceived as activity focused on student learning and success.

The Assessment Plan implementation provided normative structures to support these critical aspects of what is valued and what should be done. As the plan was operationalized, a common terminology was developed on campus and disseminated through a series of Assessment Academy Workshops and through the Assessment Handbook, Assessment Workbook, and a series of Assessment Templates (each resource mentioned can be reviewed by clicking the hyperlink associated with the resource).

Consistent with the framework in Table 1, the assessment process is practical and sustainable. The initial implementation of the plan included the careful construction of resources in the form of templates. The professional development workshops used the templates to support both learning terminology and developing the departmental plans. The annual assessment reports, which are posted in the "Reports" tab on the Assessment Website, provide further evidence of the sustainability of the plan. The consistent reporting and the breadth of the reporting across all departments and colleges demonstrate the systemic adoption of the Assessment Plan consistent with the definition of assessment elements in the institutionalization frame. The College Level Reviews noting improving quality of the assessment effort, as evidenced by the quality of the program reports and the use of assessment findings to inform student learning and success efforts in multiple programs, suggests early movement from the normative to cultural/metacognitive frame.

Cultural/Metacognitive Pillar:

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Institutionalization at the cultural/metacognitive level occurs as the activities become so embedded in the organizational life that they are integrated in the conceptualization of organizational identity. This process to identity transformation occurs in universities when faculty and staff feel ownership of assessment activities, understand its contributions to institutional effectiveness, initiate new assessment activities focused on improving student success, share information, and celebrate successful assessment efforts. Institutionalization in the Cultural/Metacognitive frame happens slowly and is the pillar most affected by faculty attitudes on the value of assessment. The PFW Plan was designed to foster an environment that supported assessment as a faculty owned process, and based on the Visitor's Report from the realignment discussed earlier faculty perceive ownership and a purpose of assessment tied to their core professional responsibilities.

The PFW Assessment Academy was designed as an institutional space for sharing information across programs and exploring innovations in assessment practice. Sessions already provided included a signature assignment workshop which has impacted the proposed redesign of the general education program. An area of weakness in the plan that we are addressing is the lack of recognition for high quality assessment work. Presently, the institution is exploring how to best use the Assessment Academy as a vehicle to celebrate efforts aimed at improving student success in the future.

Institutional Impact:

Suskie (2015) argues that the initial attempts at assessment in the United States, asking the faculty to begin at the program level to gather evidence and make improvements, was an unnatural progression that stalled the assessment movement. She suggests that had assessment in the United States started with "disseminating and applying research on classroom teaching practices and curriculum design" the focus of assessment would have shifted to "good assessment practices in the classroom, and then to program level and general education curricular design, assessment, and improvement" (Suskie, 2015, p. 47). The Assessment Academy work provides the institutional space for rethinking assessment practice and how it might evolve from a compliance to a learning paradigm. Its design parallels Suskie's recommendation. At its core, the Assessment Plan supports a learning improvement scaffold from classroom to program to institution. This scaffold was replicated in the assessment of general education leading to the use of classroom level data to assess general education and resulting in a proposed redesign of the general education curriculum aimed at increasing coherence and meaning.

Academic Program Impact

The transformation to a learning culture is not complete; however, the progress made in such a short time period suggests that designing and implementing an institutional assessment plan embedded within a university's teaching and learning model contributes to institutionalization of assessment that advances learning culture. As PFW has completed the fourth and final year of Academy participation, the institutional impact is significant.

The assessment process is supporting a culture that moves beyond a compliance orientation. This has been an explicit goal since the beginning of its design. The design and implementation have paid careful attention to the need for promoting faculty ownership as evidenced by the process of moving the plan through individual and collective faculty processes. The assessment reports in a majority of programs demonstrate that assessment is leading to specific curricular changes ranging from course level changes to interventions aimed at changing how students matriculate through courses, including what the

required courses should be. For example, assessment has informed changes underway in the structure of courses in the business majors. Multiple programs in the College of Arts and Sciences have used assessment to modify their academic core. Engineering programs have utilized the assessment results to guide curricular changes. The College of Visual and Performing Arts has used assessment to make improvements in their theater, music technology, and visual arts programs.

The implementation of the assessment plan is in its early stages. It is presently in its fourth year and, as a result, programs have had limited opportunities to assess changes made as a result of prior assessment findings. Therefore, the emphasis in the next several cycles of annual assessment reporting will focus on evaluating the effectiveness of interventions as measured by student achievement.

*Student Support Areas Assessment Impact*

The university is in its second year of assessing the quality of advising. The first year's evaluation has led to changes in the structure of advising. Specifically, the assessment findings provided momentum to centralize advising and add pathways for targeted groups of students who have either not settled on a major area of study or who have not yet met admission standards for their professional programs. Once students transition to their majors, advising is conducted within the college by both professional and faculty advisors as determined by the individual college.

Because of leadership transition in Student Affairs, our efforts to assess how student life activities contribute to student success have been limited. NSSE and FSSE were conducted this year to provide some evidence, but that analysis will be conducted this summer.

General Education Impact

The assessment of general education courses supported the perception that general education was not working as an actual program. Rather, in its current state general education is best represented as a series of courses that emphasize general education outcomes to differing degrees. As evidenced by evaluations of course level assessments, the learning outcomes are inconsistent and student achievement relative to the outcomes is measured in such a broad array of strategies that it is impossible to define the extent to which students are achieving the General Education SLOs. The assessment findings have led to the design of a new general education program that leverages the assessment of common signature assignments across thematic streams of courses as well as a keystone signature assignment to help create a coherent and meaningful general education program supporting student success. The new assessment plan model (Figure 7) is being completed by a Faculty Senate General Education Sub-committee (GES) this summer so that the GES can begin discussing the plan with faculty in early Fall 2019, anticipating submission to Faculty Senate for approval by November.

Figure 7: Proposed General Education Model
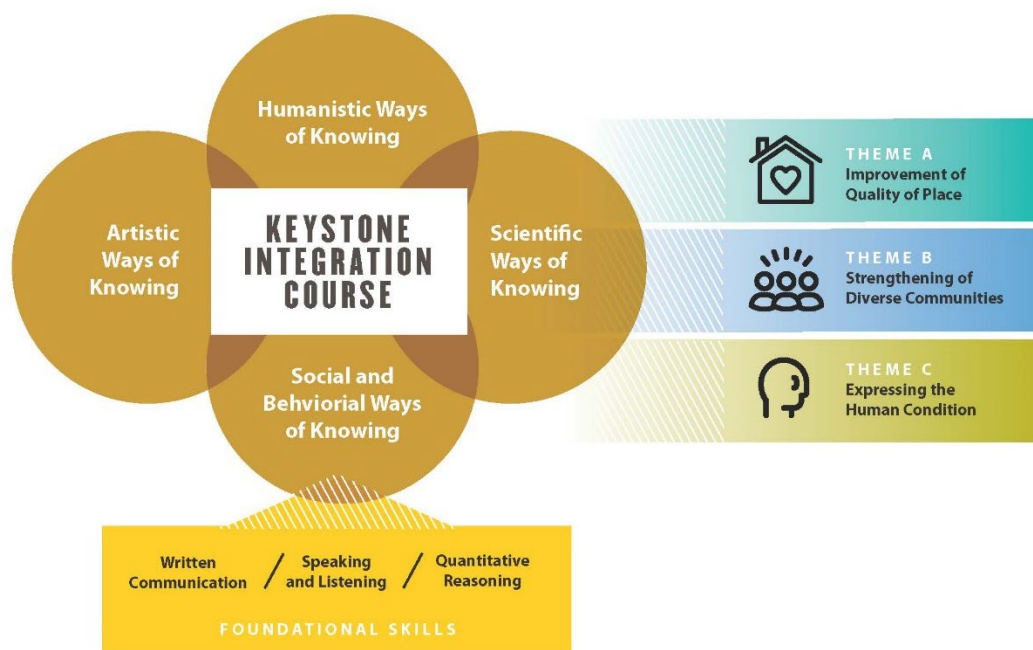
The use of themes and signature assignments assessed using common rubrics was recommended consistent with the goal to integrate assessment in teaching and learning processes. The themes for the initial implementation were aligned with aspirations stated in a newly developed strategic plan. The process for designing assignments will be grounded in NILOA's Charrette Process and the process for assessment will build on the AAC&U Value Rubric Rater Training Model.

The importance of this approach for general education is its potential to transform instructional strategies and curricular design across a broad group of courses as a model for integrated assignment and assessment design in academic programs.

Challenges, Opportunities, and Conclusions

During discussions at the Assessment Academy, a team member noted that while academic units' engagement in the integrated teaching, assessment, learning model is increasing, as is faculty focus on student success, references to teaching, learning, and assessment in the new Strategic Plan were limited to high impact practices in lower division and high enrollment classes. The need to link the PFW Model to strategic planning is evident. Therefore, the team plans to meet with the strategic planning leadership to discuss how assessment might be more explicit in the Strategic Plan.

The quality of the college level reviews of programmatic assessment and the evaluation of college level reports by the Assessment Council is improving; however, the PFW Assessment Academy stalled. The primary challenge for sustaining progress was the amount of time and attention faculty and administration were required to place on realignment, the HLC change in organization process, and organizational adaptation to a major period of institutional change. In addition, the planned cohort model, in which a group of interdisciplinary faculty would enter the Academy to jointly develop

programmatic assessment plans, did not attract faculty participation. Therefore, the Assessment Office shifted emphasis to engaging individual academic programs and colleges in designing and implementing assessment plans in the new model. Workshops offered through the Academy continued focusing on equipping faculty for curricular and programmatic designs that supported the PFW Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Model. The departmental focus inhibited opportunities for collaboration across disciplinary units, which likely limited some opportunities for knowledge transfer and dissemination in support of improved student learning. Based on the evaluation of the workshops, the Academy Team reconsidered the prior approach in the designed re-launch of the Academy. The major change in the Academy is a two-tiered approach in which a workshop on a specific theme is supported by a faculty learning community. The learning community will engage in a collaborative design process within the workshop theme. The workshops will provide support. The new learning communities focus on assignment level design using the NILOA Charrette Model.   The first three workshops linked to faculty learning communities focus on three areas that we wish to emphasize, areas that support our integrated teaching, learning, and assessment model:

1. Signature Assignments to integrate assessment, teaching, and learning in an authentic learning model: Preparing courses for the general education program revision
2. Real Time Assessment: An Exploration of how Maki's (2017) model might be applied in PFW Courses and Programs
3. Re-assess: Continually improving student learning through assessing interventions

The Signature Assignments Workshop focuses primarily on building signature assignments for the proposed general education revision. If successful, the general education strategy of using signature assignments as a foundation for authentic assessments has the potential to inform assessment practice across academic programs. This creates the potential to expose students to high impact practices throughout their matriculation to degree completion and transform the learning experiences of students. This ties to our new Strategic Plan emphasis on increasing student success as expressed through retention and graduation. Our success in institutionalizing assessment in the context of student learning and success should be an important activity in support of this strategic activity.

The workshop on Real Time Assessment builds on Maki's (2017) recent work to address a concern that the current reporting timeline potentially creates bottlenecks in creating curricular interventions to improve student learning. The Assessment Council will explore the reporting timelines as part of the 2019-20 Agenda. The Real Time Assessment Workshop is a faculty focused developmental workshop aimed at engaging peer groups of faculty in applying assessment results to explore and implement course level innovations that have the potential improve student learning and success.

The Re-Assess Workshop is geared to supporting assessment and evaluation of curricular changes made as a result of prior assessment findings. The initial audience will focus on developing learning communities primarily populated by departmental chairs. The goal is promoting collaboration between academic programs that leads to improved assessment and transfer of knowledge on practices that are likely to improve student learning.

The re-launch of the Assessment Academy, the use of signature assignments as a formative tool to understand student learning, and the next phase of the Assessment Plan, focused on assessing curricular changes made to identify and understand what types of interventions are likely to improve student learning, represent opportunities to institutionalize assessment in an improvement culture focused on

student learning and success. How do we increase the liklihood these initiatives sustain in ways that build a learning culture? Jankowski and Marshall (2017) argue that higher education initiatives fail because they are enacted with an inplicit rather than explicit theory of change. The early success of the PFW Assessment Plan is, in part, attributable to the intentional use of the PFW Process Model for Institutionalizing Assessment in a Student Success Culture as an explicit theory of change guiding the plan's implementation. The sustainability of the plan rests on building the cultural pillar. The Academy Reboot is intended to reinforce faculty ownership and sharing promising practices for improving student learning as a foundation for building the cultural/metacognitive pillar. In addition, the Assessment Council is exploring how best to celebrate faculty and departmental success.

Finally, the sustainability of organizational change efforts are dependent on balancing continuity of process with new initiatives. One possible model for understanding how to balance continuity with change might be grounded in a relationship of scripts in organizations (Gioia and Poole, 1984) to institutionalization (Scott, 1995). Typically, one might assume that organizational behavior normalized and valued to the extent they are barely noticed by organizational members represents both a strong organizational script and institutionalization at the meta-cognitive level. However, this would also presume that at some point organizational behaviors, even those directed toward organizational improvement, become static. Like the classic restaraunt scenarios in script theory (host seats customer at table, waiter helper brings water and menu, waiter describes menu and takes order, waiter delivers food, waiter brings check, customer pays, customer leaves), the mere expectation of an experience becomes so routine that even the assess-intervene-reassess model becomes stagnant. An alternative rhetorical device might be to conceive of assessment as a sort of generative loop in the schema of teaching and learning (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Assess-Intervene-Re-assess as a Generative Scirpt
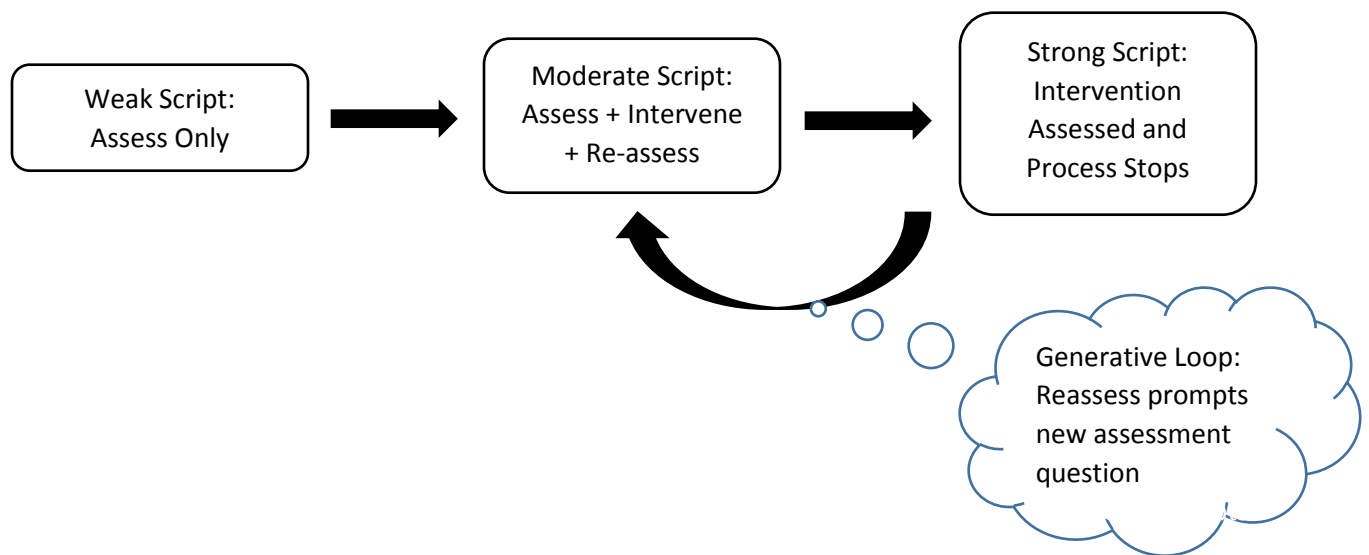
This conceptualization of assessment as a generative loop supports the ongoing development of new initiatives to improve student learning consistent with the institutionalization of a learning culture. It could also be represented as continuous organizational learning in the illusive ideal of learning organizations.

The PFW Assessment Academy experience at the Higher Learning Commission provided an opportunity to explore how assessment might improve student learning over a four year period. The initial analysis of the experience suggests that the PFW Model integrating the Weiner (2009) conceptualization of elements of assessment culture and Colbeck's (2002) application of Scott's (1995) institutionalization pillars provides a model for implementing an institutional approach to assessment that is likely to become institutionalized in a culture of teaching and learning. Further conceptualizing assessment as a generative loop to support continuous examination and improvement of learning environments adds continuity to the PLAIR Model (Fulcher, et.al., 2014) supporting a continuous learning environment focused on student learning and success.

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