Proposal #2/ Changing the Assessment Climate in the Education Unit

Assessment Working Group

August 01, 2014

I.   Executive Summary

A primary charge to the Assessment Working Group was to work on climate change related to assessment practices in the SCSU education unit as well as in the six partner districts. This initial proposal deals primarily with changing the climate in the education unit such that two events occur to measurable levels. First, data come to be regularly employed in the unit for program improvement. Second, existing data sources are critiqued thoughtfully such that members of the NCATE-Assessment Committee and the Assessment Working Group can work together to better meet data needs expressed by internal and external constituencies. These goals fall under the committee charge to "change the assessment climate in the P-16 partnership." Such a change would show improvements on several benchmarks set out in Bush Grant documents.

The proposal fits the TPI mission to produce effective assessment methods and to support effective use of the Common Metrics tools. In addition, the effort corresponds to the AWG's *Road Map* for effective assessment.

Several data sources suggest the need to upgrade assessment practices in the education unit. First, it is difficult for us to establish (as we are required to do) that programmatic and curricular changes in the unit can be traced to assessment data. Second, little evidence exists that program representatives regularly meet to go through disseminated data—with, of course, noteworthy exceptions. Third, and most importantly, data collected in the unit over the past half-decade triangulate to the conclusion that our candidates leave the unit with assessment as a particularly weak domain (Cooperating Teacher Study, Performance-based/Summative Study, EdTPA results, Supervisor Survey, Transition to Teaching Study).

The project is divided into three strands: (1) Applying resources to systematically institutionalize "organizational citizenship behavior" that demonstrably includes the use of data, the improvement of data collection and establishing connections between programmatic improvements and data analysis. (2) Specifically, the plan lays out a best-practice model for instituting regular data retreats (though these may operate under a different name), and (3) A tertiary strand lies in forging a systematic connection between the following entities: The AWG, The NCATE/Assessment Committee, program representatives, the Prepare Working Group, and P-12 partners designed to improve candidate preparation in the area of assessment (such that the benchmarks listed above demonstrably improve).

Support is requested in the following domains
- A survey and focus panels (or telephone interviews) looking at preferences for professional development and regular program improvement sessions and seeking to identify roadblocks to regular data use and via which to garner specific suggestions for program improvement in terms of assessment in the unit (50.00 participation stipends X 20 informants = $1,000 ($2,000 in-kind from TPI existing resources for project direction, analysis and write-up).

- $3,000 for a one-time sequence of professional development activities for planning and institutionalizing data use in the unit (refreshments and stipends for participation, and a speaker). The first speaker is to be an individual from the Council for Accreditation of Education Preparation to provide training on best practices in rubric development with an eye toward improving within-program benchmarks. *Note* This is a initial suggestion; the first professional development activity could change as a function of the needs analysis.

II.   Need & Objectives

Focus Area	Need	Objective	Current Outreach	Roadblocks
1. Coming to understand the desires of faculty members in terms of data use and systematizing understanding (in the unit) of factors producing resistance to the continuous improvement process mandated by NCATE	Low attendance at and interest in data retreats Less than desired levels of preparation for PERCA and other state and accreditation requirements Low (about 25%) returns on NCATE-approved data-use document	Study conducted and disseminated (formal focus panels, and/or structured interviews).	We have not systematically asked faculty members to this point about their attitudes toward data us in a continuous improvement model.	Unknown: Identifying roadblocks is one point of the exercise.
2. Increasing the skills and awareness of faculty members and other internal and external constituents regarding the importance of systematic use of data/ developing a system for data retreats (hereafter Internal Data Reviews, IDR).	Poor attendance at IDRs; difficulties noted with consumption of assessment reports and connecting programming to assessment data	Valuation of continuous (data-based) improvement increases by a statistically-significant degree from baseline rates (desired effect size = z = .33) (via a survey or systematic interview) X > 50% of unit faculty and staff members attend the first set of internal program reviews; attendance increases to 80% within two years	We have been utilizing a written data-use inventory (approved by NCATE in 2008). However, participation has decreased systematically.	The system may be viewed internally as "top-down" Scheduling of data retreats is frequently portrayed (during discussions) as disorganized and as [inappropriately] occurring on an ad-hoc basis; it proves difficult to plan around these ad hoc schedules
3. PD Activity #1: Management of transition points, key assessments, and developing defensible rubrics.	Approximately 9 in 10 program representatives reported experiencing difficulties managing assessment elements in completing their state (PERCA) reviews. Some support exists for looking at the possibility of a modifiable rubric that nonetheless (in general terms) is utilized across all key indicators across all programs	X > 50% of unit faculty members attend sessions related to transition points, key assessments, and rubric development during fall of 2014. Increases to over 70% within two years (e.g., by the beginning of 2017) X> 30% of faculty members report utilizing the assessment capabilities of Tk-20 either at the program or student level (e.g., in their courses	Individual technical assistance has been provided, but no specific training. The PD activities should obviate, to some extent, the need for support and thus encourage sustainability	Faculty members report a high level of stress over learning the new system Because many faculty members report the press of a heavy workload, attendance at both professional development sessions must be seen as meaningful and must receive institutional support

Focus Area	Need	Objective	Current Outreach	Roadblocks
4. PD Activity #2: Tk-20 and assessment	While many faculty members attended training sessions related to the institutionalization of TK-20 last year, these were presented at an introductory level. Thus, a great need exists to hone faculty skills related to tapping Tk-20 at the program and student level	X > 50% of unit faculty members attend sessions related to assessment uses of Tk-20 during fall of 2015. Increases to over 70% within two years (e.g., by the beginning of 2017) X> 30% of faculty members report utilizing the assessment capabilities of Tk-20 either at the program or student level (e.g., in their courses)	This is a continuation of activities conducted last year. It is appropriate for support because it is related to the conduct of assessment and *not* to use of Tk-20	Faculty members report a high level of stress over learning the new system Because many faculty members report the press of a heavy workload, attendance at both professional development sessions must be seen as meaningful and must receive institutional support

III.　　Recommendation(s)

Recommendation Strategies	Rationale
1. Design and carry out a systematic investigation dealing with the desires of faculty members in terms of data use and resistance to the continuous improvement process: We propose either focus panels or structured interviews.	Best practice models for assessment in education as well as in other organizations, suggest that the system must be consumer or stake-holder oriented (sometimes the objectionable term "bottom-up" is applied to this construct). In this spirit, we need to look systematically at the reasons that program representatives have not responded to the data-use format approved by NCATE. In addition, this will assist both Assessment Working Group members and Assessment-NCATE Committee members in their deliberations.
2. The instruments and methods will be approved by the AWG, the education unit Assessment Director, and the dean (SOE). The study will be completed by October 15, 2014 and disseminated through SOE and TPI channels.	See above
3. Members of the AWG, working with the education unit Assessment Committee, the university assessment committee, the dean and the provost come to an agreement about (a) a schedule for fall IDR system, and (b) a permanent schedule—putatively associated with faculty workshop—convocation days, and that integrate education unit and university processes	Best practice literature re the use of data for continuous improvement suggests that regularly-scheduled data retreats (to be entitled IPRs at SCSU) are necessary. For example, Bank Street College schedules assessment retreats on the 5th Friday of months having five Fridays—amounting to three full-day retreats per annum.
4. All named parties will plan two assessment workshops (BOTH during fall 2014) targeting the constructs of key assessments, key assignments, and the development of defensible rubrics. The notion of a unifying rubric across the unit will be explored (recommended presenter Stevie Chepko, representing CAEP)	We will not conduct these sessions if the assessment in Recommendation #1 suggests that it is not a good idea commensurate with faculty perceived needs. However, our data suggests that faculty members may desire a refresher on skills and knowledge related to key assessments, key assignments, and documenting these via rubrics.
5. All parties (named above) will plan two Tk-20 assessment workshops targeting faculty members' use of Tk-20 to tap assessment information—especially at the level of classrooms (early spring semester)	We will not conduct these sessions if the assessment in Recommendation #1 suggests that it is not a good idea commensurate with faculty perceived needs. We will instead design sessions more commensurate with expressed need. However, our data suggests that faculty members have not grasped the possibilities of tapping Tk20 for key assessments (assignments) and/or for use in tracking critical performances in their own classes.

IV.   Budget

1. **<u>Salaries</u>**:   NONE
    None; this is an in-kind donation from existing monies allocated by TPI and SOE (1/2 time TPI assessment and the TPI GRA, for example)

2. **<u>Fringe benefits</u>**:   NONE
    None. See argument above

3. **<u>Travel:</u>**   1,000
    Expenses for travel representative of CAEP (Stevie Chepko) to a session dealing with rubric development

4. **<u>Supplies, equipment, etc. as appropriate</u>**:   2,000
    Refreshments for Sessions X 4 at 500.00 each

5. **<u>Indirect costs:</u>**   NONE

    TOTAL   3,000

VII. Appendix

Language from the best Practices White Paper

Proposals briefly. A proposal has been written and submitted to the TPI CT team in regard to a starting point for Darling-Hammond's construct of systematizing assessment. We propose a model with at least the following elements (a) assessment of faculty preferences for data management, factors generating resistance to participation in regular data meetings, scheduling and the like that extends beyond what we have informally completed in the past. (b) An initial professional development session dealing with rubric development. This was an *anticipated* starting point—and will be reconsidered to the extent that an alternate suggestion is determined in Step A. We have received feedback that establishment of benchmarks and development of rubrics have proven difficult to navigate (c) Professional development sessions will be conducted related to use of Tk20 in assessment. (d) A special training for chairs on facilitation of and support for the regularly-scheduled IPRs. (e) Scheduling, managing, and evaluating the initial IPR (data retreat).

As second proposal consists of a process via which constituents can request technical assistance with assessment, program evaluation, and research.

Benchmarks briefly. Benchmarks related to increased use of Tk-20, increased participation in IPRs, and related cultural changes will be tracked and reported. Examples include surveys/ interviews of faculty valuation/ use of assessment data, participation rates, and qualitative analyses of connections between program changes and data. Weak areas will systematically improve (unit-wide and by program) while strengths will be maintained.

Interviews will reveal that the system for obtaining technical assistance functioned smoothly in a manner likely to be sustained post-grant and that alterations were instituted effectively.

Sustainability and the future. Though the "assessment climate change" will initially be concentrated on behavior within the education unit, we have been mandated to extend this to our P-12 partnership. We consider this process to have been initiated via the involvement of P-12 representatives in initial stages of culture change. However, co-participation of P-16 representatives and joint professional development around assessment will appear in forthcoming proposals. Involvement of chairs is designed to facilitate institutionalization of culture change and resources already exist to sustain these efforts, once the culture change has occurred. We recommend that administrators consider allocating resources to technical assistance in the unit after the grant ends.