

Assessment that Supports Learning Improvement: Stories and Strategies

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Learning outcomes for attendees—be able to:

- A. distinguish four different types of assessment use: monitoring, assessment procedure change, learning environment change, and learning improvement;
- B. name strategies to evolve the use of assessment from monitoring, assessment procedure change, or learning environment change to promoting learning improvement; and
- C. apply assessment design strategies for learning improvement at their home institutions.

Agenda

1:00-1:15	Welcome! Thank you for joining us. Introductions, ground rules, and types of assessment stories
1:15-1:45	Table discussion: Analyzing four vignettes
1:45-2:10	Table discussion: Developing strategies to support learning improvement
2:10-2:20	Group discussion
2:20-2:30	Wrap up

Table Discussion: Analyzing Four Vignettes

Read the following four vignettes. For each vignette, answer the following questions:

- a) What did faculty want students to learn?
- b) What evidence did faculty gather to assess the degree to which students were achieving these outcomes?
- c) What sense did faculty make of the assessment evidence they gathered?
- d) What action(s) did faculty take as a result of their assessment work?
- e) Did student learning improve in the vignette? How do you know?
- f) How is the kind of assessment described in this vignette helpful? Is the assessment payoff reasonable given the effort that went into it?

Vignette 1

Faculty from Volcano University's psychology program endeavor for seniors to hold an effective consultation meeting.

The program has defined effective consultation meetings as having the following components: A) building rapport, B) providing an overview of the consulting process, C) asking clients what they need help with, D) helping clients clarify their needs, E) encouraging clients to think through solutions to stated problem, and F) helping clients develop a plan of action. According to the program's curriculum map, these skills are targeted in PSYCH 280, PSYCH 380, and PSYCH 480 (consultation capstone).

All students, in the last semester of the program (typically 50 students per year), are evaluated on their consultation skills via a course-embedded mock consultation. Two faculty members review videos of the consultations and give scores to each element, A through F, listed above using a behaviorally anchored rubric from the department's professional organization. Each element is rated 1 for "beginning"; 2 for "developing"; 3 for "good"; and 4 for "excellent."

Here are the results from the past three years...

Student Consultation: Average Scores

	Rapport	Overview	Needs	Clarification	Solutions	Action Plan
2017 (n = 47)	2.3	3.1	3.3	3.1	3.0	2.9
2018 (n = 54)	2.1	3.2	3.5	3.2	3.0	3.2
2019 (n = 49)	2.3	3.1	3.3	3.3	3.2	3.0

The scores seem to be relatively stable across the three years, with students, on average, performing about a 3 ("good") or slightly better across the consultation elements. The one exception is "Rapport." The scores in this area are closer to 2 ("developing") each year.

The faculty are not sure what the issue is here or if there even is an issue. Although the scores on "Rapport" are lower than they would like, they appear to be stable. And faculty decided that the issues raised by the assessment data from the department's intro course were more pressing. Faculty decided they will continue to keep an eye on the "Rapport" rubric scores for now and focus their energy elsewhere.

Vignette 2

Faculty from Volcano University's psychology program endeavor for seniors to hold an effective consultation meeting.

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2019 (n = 49)	2.3	3.1	3.3	3.3	3.2	3.0

The scores seem to be relatively stable across the three years, with students, on average, performing about a 3 ("good") or slightly better across the consultation elements. The one exception is "Rapport." The scores in this area are closer to 2 ("developing") each year.

The faculty discussed these results and came to the conclusion that the descriptions of "Rapport" on the rubric did not match the elements they think are important for building rapport. For next year, they will tweak the rubric so that the "Rapport" element is better in line with their definition.

Vignette 3

Faculty from Volcano University's psychology program endeavor for seniors to hold an effective consultation meeting.

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2018 (n = 54)	2.1	3.2	3.5	3.2	3.0	3.2
2019 (n = 49)	2.3	3.1	3.3	3.3	3.2	3.0

The scores seem to be relatively stable across the three years, with students, on average, performing about a 3 ("good") or slightly better across the consultation elements. The one exception is "Rapport." The scores in this area are closer to 2 ("developing") each year.

The faculty discussed these results and agreed that students' rapport building was not where it should have been. Specifically, many students launched into the meeting overview without first making sure the client felt comfortable. Best practice suggests that social pleasantries are appropriate for the first two to three minutes of a 30-minute meeting.

Faculty then examined the curriculum relative to rapport building. Students were never given an opportunity to practice rapport in their classes, nor had they received feedback in this area.

Moving forward, the faculty decided to:

- 1. Model rapport building in PSYCH 280, 380, and 480.**
- 2. Give students at least FIVE practice opportunities regarding rapport building in PSYCH 380, and 480.**
- 3. Provide formative feedback using the rubric during these practice opportunities.**

Vignette 4

Faculty from Volcano University's psychology program endeavor for seniors to hold an effective consultation meeting.

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All students, in the last semester of the program (typically 50 students per year), are evaluated on their consultation skills via a course-embedded mock consultation. Two faculty members review videos of the consultations and give scores to each element, A through F, listed above using a behaviorally anchored rubric from the department's professional organization. Each element is rated 1 for "beginning"; 2 for "developing"; 3 for "good"; and 4 for "excellent".

Here are the results from the past three years...

	Rapport	Overview	Needs	Clarification	Solutions	Action Plan
2017 (n = 47)	2.3	3.1	3.3	3.1	3.0	2.9
2018 (n = 54)	3.1	3.2	3.5	3.2	3.0	3.2
2019 (n = 49)	3.6	3.1	3.3	3.3	3.2	3.0

The scores seem to be relatively stable across the three years, with students, on average, performing about a 3 ("good") or slightly better across the consultation elements. The one exception is "Rapport." **The scores have risen dramatically from 2.3 in 2017 to 3.6 in 2019.**

After the 2017 results, the faculty agreed that rapport was an issue, and that action needed to be taken. Specifically, many students launched into the meeting overview without first making sure the client felt comfortable. Best practice suggests that social pleasantries are appropriate for the first two to three minutes of a 30-minute meeting.

In 2017, faculty examined the curriculum relative to rapport building. Students were never given an opportunity to practice rapport in their classes, nor had they received feedback in this area. Over the next two years, faculty instituted the following changes to the program:

- 1. Model rapport building in PSYCH 280, 380, 480.**
- 2. Give students at least FIVE practice opportunities regarding rapport building in PSYCH 380, and 480.**
- 3. Provide formative feedback using the rubric during these practice opportunities.**

In 2018, seniors received the re-vamped PSYCH 480, and faculty attribute the 2.3-to-3.1 rubric score improvement to this curriculum change. In 2019, students had received the modified PSYCH 380 (as juniors) and PSYCH 480 classes. Faculty attribute the additional 0.5 rubric score bump to the "double" dose of rapport building in PSYCH 380 and 480.

Table Discussion: Developing strategies to support learning improvement

Work individually to select a few strategies that you would adapt or adopt on your campus.

- A) Frame learning improvement (LI) as an inquiry process. LI inquiry is a focused, long-term, evidence-driven process that involves meaningful examination of a change in the learning environment. It involves:
 1. Identifying an area of learning to investigate
 2. Assessing learning
 3. Identifying areas for improvement
 4. Implementing improvement actions
 5. Re-assessing learning
 6. Determining whether improvement occurs
- B) Form a team and identify who needs to be “at the table.” Involve people with varied expertise, e.g., curriculum, students, assessment, instructional design, and institutional politics.
- C) Start small and where people are (e.g., work one-on-one with faculty teaching the capstone course).
- D) Support a few pilot programs first with meaningful incentives (e.g., support for travel, course release, your strong support).
- E) Showcase best practices and examples.
- F) Involve students in the LI inquiry.
- G) Communicate the value and benefits of LI. Address faculty concerns, e.g., WIIFM (What’s in it for me?).
- H) Foster collaboration between assessment professionals and faculty professional developers.
- I) Cultivate champions of learning improvement. They can be existing curriculum leaders or experts in pedagogy, assessment, and/or instructional design.
- J) Enhance the dimension and scope of professional development
 1. Cultivate expertise in curriculum design and development on campus
 2. Enhance faculty skills in leadership, change management, and scholarship of teaching
 3. Build community of practice
- K) Provide support, resources, and time for faculty to engage in the focused, long-term, and evidence-driven LI inquiry.
- Other ideas of your own: _____

Activity continues on next page...

Describe in more detail how you would implement the strategies you selected on your campus.

Insights gained from group sharing.



The Learning Improvement Community

Website: <https://www.learning-improvement.org/>. This is our soft launch.

Email: hello@learning-improvement.org

We are a group of assessment practitioners, educational developers, educators, and scholars working to reshape learning outcomes assessment. Our purpose is to promote student learning improvement in higher education, with a focus on program and institution levels.

Accomplishments

- Formed a community (2017).
- Presented and published on assessment aimed at learning improvement (e.g., *Research & Practice in Assessment*, Winter 2018 volume, <http://www.rpajournal.com/archive/>).
- Held three successful summits that honed our understanding of ways to describe and demonstrate learning improvement and generated useful strategies to engage in assessment with learning improvement as a goal.
- Created a website with learning improvement stories that we're committed to growing.

Get involved!

- **Read and share stories.** Three currently available on the website: Computer Information Systems, Pacific Islands Studies, and General Chemistry.
- **Submit a story.** We want to feature more learning improvement stories. Submit via the website.
- **Volunteer.** (See Monica.)



Computer Info ...

Rubrics and Scaffolding
Across Courses to
Improve Learning in a
Computer Info Systems
program



Pacific Islands ...

Improving Undergraduate
Writing in an
Interdisciplinary Program--
Pacific Islands Studies



General Chemi...

General chemistry course;
exam questions and
grades; adaptive
courseware