

# CREATING A CULTURE OF EVIDENCE AMONG FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATORS

Worth Pickering  
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## Faculty Concerns

- Promotion
- Tenure
- Scholarship
  - Research
  - Teaching
  - Service
- Furthering the work of their discipline



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## Issues in Higher Education [Concerns of Administrators]

- Access
- Assessment
- Accreditation
- Accountability
- Retention and graduation rates



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## Responding to Issues in Higher Education

- Transformation to a learning institution
- Creating a culture of evidence based decision making
- Focus on student learning versus teaching
- Improving student success
- Continuous quality improvement (CQI)
- Institutional Effectiveness



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## Who's Responsibility?

- President? Provost?
- Director of Assessment or Director of Institutional Research – traditionally respond to requests from accrediting, state, and federal agencies
- Faculty – primarily responsible for student learning



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## How does one change the culture?

- Basic change process (Lewin)
  - Unfreezing from the current position – focus on promotion, tenure, scholarship, etc.
  - Moving to the new position – focus on assessing & improving student learning
  - Refreezing in the new position
- Preconditions for refreezing
  - Strain or stress, conflict, discomfort, cognitive dissonance
  - Valence or payoff
  - Potency – belief in one's ability to change



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## How does one change the culture?

Changing the culture to focus on assessing and improving student learning creates a conflict between traditional / perceived role of faculty and new / expected role



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## Conflict Resolution / Management

- Types of Conflict
  - Values – conflict between person's beliefs and expectations of the group to which they belong (e.g., teaching vs. research vs. service)
  - Tangible – conflict over something that can be counted or measured (e.g., money / resources)
  - Interpersonal – conflict between people (often a result of other conflicts)
  - Boundary – conflict over boundaries
    - Boundary penetration occurs when someone else tries to take over your job or area
    - Boundary expansion occurs when someone else tries to expand your role
  - Perceptual – conflict resulting from poor communication and mutual misunderstanding



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## Conflict Resolution / Management

- What type of conflict best characterizes the conflict between administrators and faculty over assessment, accreditation, and accountability?
  
- How can it be resolved?



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## Conflict Resolution / Management

- Can this conflict be resolved or only managed?
- Conflict management strategies:
  - Accommodating or Smoothing – letting the other side win and preserving the relationship
  - Dominating or Forcing – taking control of the situation (and relationship) to impose your solution



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## Conflict Resolution / Management

- Conflict management strategies:
  - Avoiding – ignoring the conflict and giving up on the relationship
  - Compromising – working together toward a solution in which everyone gives up something
  - Problem Solving or Collaborating – working together to solve the conflict to the benefit of both and preserving the relationship (win / win)
  - Expanding resources
  - Appealing to a super-ordinate goal – student learning
  - Restructuring the organization – tenure
  - Agreeing to third-party intervention – mediation
  - Communicating and giving feedback



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## Conflict Resolution / Management

- Basic change strategies (Bennis):
  - Power-coercive – “I am the boss, so just do it”
  - Rational-Empirical – change based on logic or evidence
  - Normative-Reeducative – search for the payoff



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## Conflict Resolution / Management

What is the best way to resolve or manage the conflict between administrators and faculty over assessing and improving student learning?



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## Engaging Faculty in Assessment

- Since the beginning of the assessment movement in 1980's, we have often heard that assessment needs to be implemented through a top down approach
  - Sounds like **dominating / forcing**
  - Sounds like **power-coercive**
  
- I prefer a grassroots approach



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## Engaging Faculty in Assessment

- “Faculty are independent contractors”
  - So, allow them to continue in their same roles
  - Sounds like **accommodating / smoothing** or **avoiding**
- I try to meet them where they are; on their territory
  - Scholarship of assessment
  - Responsibility to discipline, students, and institution (**communication**)



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## Engaging Faculty in Assessment

- Collect data on an institutional level
- Work with the President and Provost to mandate faculty participation
- Complain
- All sound like **avoiding**
- I look for opportunities to help faculty on their projects
  - Specialized accreditation studies
  - Grants
- Make deals with faculty
- Pay / reward them for their participation (**expanding resources**)
- Both sound like **compromising**
- This works for me sometimes but is not my preferred solution
  - Limited resources
  - Limited responsibility



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## Engaging Faculty in Assessment

- Shared responsibility
- **Problem solving / collaboration**
- This is my preferred solution
  - Part of faculty scholarship
  - Responsibility to their discipline and students
  - Promotion and tenure
    - Work with President, Provost, and Deans to value different types of scholarship / tenure
    - **Restructuring the organization**



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## Engaging Faculty in Assessment

"...you can't mandate a drive to improve, and all the tools in the world are beside the point if there's no sense that improvement is an urgent need. So where does the drive to do better come from? How can it be prompted? How does it get built into the culture?" (Hutchings, p.8)



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## Engaging Faculty in Assessment

Other ideas???



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