

THE “A” WORD DISPELLING THE MYTHS

DR. JO-ELLEN ASBURY, ASSOCIATE PROVOST FOR INSTITUTIONAL PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT

DR. FREDRIK DEBOER, ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT MANAGER

A IS FOR “ASSESSMENT”... (and sometimes anxiety)

- Assessment of student learning is a core function of any college or university, but it can be a touchy subject, with faculty often fearing that the assessment process is arbitrary, time consuming, and punitive
- Effectively assessing student learning is indeed a major undertaking, but if planned carefully, it can provide useful information without unduly burdening faculty or staff
- To address this anxiety, we're going to go through some of the most common myths about the assessment process



MYTH #1

ASSESSMENTS ARE ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL AND ARE ALWAYS QUANTITATIVE

- Sound assessment principles require carefully matching assessment tools to particular learning outcomes, courses, and disciplines. Assessment is often thought of as a purely numbers-based approach, but this is not the case. Best practices frequently call for mixed methods and using a variety of means to investigate student learning. Qualitative methods used in assessment include interviews, focus groups, and case studies
- Visit the Assessment Commons: <http://assessmentcommons.org/> for a wealth of suggestions in designing your assessment approach.



MYTH #2

ASSESSMENT MEANS FACULTY GIVING UP CONTROL OF CURRICULUM

- Shared governance and faculty control of curriculum are essential values in the American university system and at Brooklyn College specifically. Assessment practices are not intended in any way to jeopardize faculty ownership of curricular decisions
- Faculty members know best what needs to be assessed – what it is important for students who complete their course/program to know or to be able to do.



MYTH #3

ALL ASSESSMENT DATA IS USEFUL DATA

- “There is surely nothing quite so useless as doing with great efficiency what should not be done at all.” – Peter Drucker
- If assessment does not evolve from organic interest in how students are performing, then it becomes an exercise in administrative box checking
- We need to strive for authentic, meaningful assessments with a defined purpose and area of interest



MYTH #4

ASSESSMENTS EVALUATE INDIVIDUAL INSTRUCTORS

- Academic assessment is not intended to evaluate or critique any individual teachers; rather, the purpose is to find where students are excelling or struggling in their studies and adjust our programs to better serve them
- In most assessment systems, identifying individual professors or their students would be impossible, and we will typically anonymize student and class section data anyway
- The interest of both the MSCHE accreditation agency and the Academic Assessment office lies in programmatic and institutional assessment

MYTH #5

YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN

Office of Academic Assessment

Brooklyn College
1216 Boylan Hall
2900 Bedford Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11210-2889
P: 718.951.5280

Jo-Ellen Asbury
Associate Provost for Institutional Planning and Assessment
Jo-Ellen.Asbury@brooklyn.cuny.edu

Fredrik deBoer
Academic Assessment Manager
Fredrik.deboer@brooklyn.cuny.edu

