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Closing Equity Gaps with Intrapersonal Competency Outcomes-Based Assessment

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WHAT IF YOU COULD CONNECT YOUR OUTCOMES-BASED ASSESSMENT DATA TO a performance indicator, such as the reduction of academic probation rates for first year, first time, commuter students? And what if the way in which you collected your data informed the re-design of a one-unit university seminar course, so that you could know which learning outcomes could be influenced within that course and which learning outcomes significantly predicted cumulative grade point average (GPA)? It's possible. And here is why...

Many institutional leaders make decisions on what we call “above-the-surface” kind of data. This kind of data is like the tip of an iceberg; it contains quickly identifiable comparative performance indicators. “Above-the-surface” data are easy to collect and use to identify trends. They often include cumulative grade point average (GPA), academic probation rates, persistence rates, and graduation rates. Other easy-to-identify data also include standardized test scores. We equate this kind of data to “above-the-surface” data using the iceberg analogy because many leaders see this data—often made readily available to them—and subsequently react to it. And just as a ship's captain would do upon seeing the tip of an iceberg in the ocean, higher education leaders might change their direction as quickly as possible; that is, of course, if they think that direction is likely to put their organization and students in harm's way.

Building on the iceberg analogy, if organizational leaders don't take time to look below the surface and inquire into what contributed to the “above-the-surface” performance indicators, they may still cause harm to themselves and their students by steering the organization in the wrong direction. Leveraging Otto Scharmer's (2009) organizational change Theory U, this kind of below-the-surface inquiry requires a deeper dive into exploring what types of organizational beliefs, values, and ways of being and doing contributed to those easy-to-identify above-the-surface indicators. This necessitates critical dialogue, collaborative planning, and outcomes-based assessment of the efforts that often go unseen and do contribute to creating the performance indicators. With regard to what lies below the surface in the learning and development context, in addition to the aforementioned organizational behaviors, are students' learning

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Assessment Institute Insights

Preparing for the 2021 HIPs in The States Track at the Assessment Institute

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HIPS IN THE STATES, CREATED IN 2017, is a community that promotes research into high-impact practices (HIPs) and their effect on student learning and success. In 2020, after three years of independent conferences, HIPs in the States joined the Assessment Institute in Indianapolis as a separate track. The collaboration opened the HIPs in the States community to new voices and ideas, and in 2020 we gathered to share research-based strategies and commiserate on the challenges related to delivering and sustaining HIPs—especially during a global pandemic. When the Assessment Institute announced that its 2021 conference would similarly be online and free, we came together with Ken O'Donnell and Jerry Daday to develop a four-week workshop throughout the month of February. During this series, participants would hear their colleagues' ideas in a community of practice—potentially finding opportunities for cross-institutional collaboration—and find the time, space, and support to develop their conference proposal.

Members of the HIPs Community of Practice identified four priorities as we planned the February professional development series:

- delivery and assessment in online or hybrid modalities,
- social and racial justice,
- institutional scaling and assessment, and
- specific faculty professional development, inclusiveness, and universal design.

As the series began, we recognized that these priorities are the fertile ground for current and future research in HIPs.

To practice what we preach, we decided to adapt the eight features of HIPs

described by Kuh, O'Donnell, and Schneider (2017) into our workshop design:

- high expectations appropriate to an academic conference,
- concentrated effort over several weeks of a workshop series, instead of a one-off workshop,
- interactions with the HIPs community of practice about substantive matters,
- experiences with colleagues at diverse institutions working on a broad range of HIPs,

types, including two-year colleges, regional comprehensives, minority-serving institutions, and PhD-granting universities. Of the 39 panels accepted for the 2021 HIPs in the States track at the Assessment Institute, 12 included at least one individual who participated in the professional development series. Three of those 12 were multi-institutional collaborations, which was another goal of the series. Only 11 participants completed our post-survey, but they were largely enthusiastic about the ex-

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- feedback via small group discussions and a peer review activity,
- relevance to local contexts and national conversations,
- submission of a proposal as a “public” demonstration of competence, and
- opportunities to reflect on learning during breakout sessions and a final post-survey.

With these eight features in conjunction with the four priorities, we aimed to develop strong proposals for the 2021 Assessment Institute through four professional development workshop sessions in which participants heard from thought leaders, drafted and refined their ideas, and received peer feedback on their developing proposal.

Participation and Results

Eighty people joined us for the series, representing a wide range of institution

experience, with 10 agreeing that it was a good use of time. One participant who was new to the HIPs community of practice praised the collegial, welcoming atmosphere, and added, “I found it so helpful to hear about cutting edge work in this field, and to network.” This participant pointed to two of our primary goals for the series: to foster cutting-edge research and to promote new networking opportunities.

Below are conversations from each of the four priority topics in the series along with an upcoming panel that will feature the topic in greater detail.

Online/Hybrid Modalities

The pandemic provided a crash course in the benefits and challenges of delivering and assessing HIPs in online or hybrid modalities. The rapid change allowed creativity to adapt or try new methods, yet the transition was

time-consuming and training opportunities were often underutilized. These modalities allowed for more personal connections and increased collaboration within and across institutions, but that came with Zoom fatigue and reduced connections for some populations. Finally, flexibility and fewer barriers to participation improved access for some, yet reduced access for others and presented additional inclusivity challenges. What will we keep from this unplanned experiment, especially in the context of using course-based HIPs to scale and improve equity and access? How can we use assessment on learning and participation to create or improve our HIPs? Learn more at the panel “The Student Experience: Online HIPs during a Pandemic,” led by Colleen M. Smith (University of Central Florida).

Social and Racial Justice

George Kuh’s (2008) original HIPs research suggested that HIPs are especially meaningful for underrepresented and minoritized students. Some questions about diversity, equity, and inclusion have persisted ever since: How do we increase access for underrepresented students? How do we ensure the faculty and staff who deliver HIPs are as diverse as the students who benefit the most—without putting an undue burden on them? Additionally, the uprisings for social and racial justice of the last year have raised new, urgent questions about the role of HIPs in promoting justice in higher education: How might we leverage HIPs for antiracist or anti-oppressive transformation on our campuses? How can we assess HIPs in ways that do not privilege ways of communicating and learning that are historically coded as White? Learn more at the panel “Assessing the Impact of High-Impact Practices: A Critical Quantitative Approach to Assess Access, Equity, and Outcomes of HIPs Participation,” led by Kaitlyn N. Stormes (UCLA), Kelly Young (CSU, Long Beach), and Kerry L.B. Klima (CSU, Long Beach).

Scaling and Efficacy

In her 2019 article, Ashley Finley notes that “the term ‘high impact,’ almost always *assumes* efficacy.” It is easy to assume that the name alone confers inherent quality that can be infinitely scaled, but practitioners know that quality and scaling require substantial institutional support. Questions concerning how to provide quality, effective HIPs at scale persist. Participants raised the following questions about scaling and efficacy: How do practitioners distinguish between programs that call themselves “high-impact” and those practicing HIPs with fidelity? How do institutions develop HIPs at multiple sites without falling into the trap of offering HIPs in a “cafeteria” model? How do institutions develop meaningful taxonomies to guide efforts at scaling? Considering the many challenges faced during the past year, HIPs in the States members also ask how institutions can provide meaningful HIPs at scale while also offering HIPs in online and remote modalities. Learn more at “HIPs and hipS: Scaling High-impact Practices Across Campus,” presented by Tsu-Ming Chiang (Georgia College and State University), Patrick Lucas (University of Kentucky), and Mark St. Andre (University of Utah).

Professional Development

HIPs professional development covers a range of issues, including how to create a shared institutional language with clear definitions for HIPs, encourage faculty and staff in new contexts and at different stages in their careers to join or build HIPs communities of practice, recognize work related to HIPs (e.g., compensation, tenure, and evaluation processes), guide faculty in assessing how HIPs impact students, and help faculty and staff turn their experiences with HIPs into scholarship of teaching and learning projects. The pandemic has made professional development both harder and more necessary, leading us to

ask how we do this work when budgets are being tightened and faculty and staff are on the brink of burnout. How do we design professional development that can sustain us? One panel addressing these issues is “HIP Health: Taking the Pulse of High-Impact Practices,” presented by Taunya Dressler (University of Utah), Kathie Campbell (Salt Lake Community College), and Shari Lindsey’s (University of Utah).

In Closing

Joining the Assessment Institute and expanding the reach of HIPs in the States has provided opportunities to come together as a community and welcome colleagues from other tracks who are new to HIPs. We were able to find common struggles and bright spots as we discussed our experiences in this new professional development series. We look forward to continuing these discussions and opportunities to connect and reflect in our conference sessions and throughout the year. These are important topics to collectively consider as our institutions evolve and we face new challenges and opportunities to create high-quality, high-impact practices and experiences for all students. ■

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