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Assessment and Change Leadership in an Academic Library Department: A Case Study

Introduction

Governmental concern, public accountability, and competition from other institutions require colleges and universities to demonstrate their value (Michael, 2005; National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment, 2008). Not immune from this obligation, academic libraries have developed and adopted numerous assessment practices to measure their impact on student learning (Oakleaf and Gilchrist, 2012); and, in response to this growing “sense of urgency,” the Association of College and Research Libraries’ (ACRL) maintains a resource portal for libraries through its *Value of Academic Libraries Initiative* (ACRL, 2010a; ACRL, 2010b, p. 6-7). Ideally, cultures of assessment should emerge from these efforts. A culture of assessment – a concept covered extensively in higher education literature – can be defined as:

“An organizational environment in which decisions are based on facts, research and analysis, and where services are planned and delivered in ways that maximize positive outcomes and impacts for customers and stakeholders” (Lakos and Phipps, 2004, p. 352).

Despite the pressure to prove value, in reality few libraries have fully and systematically integrated assessment into their organizational cultures (Farkas, 2013).

Through the lens of library, higher education, organizational culture, and change leadership literature, Meredith Farkas (2013) explores both organizational culture and cultures of assessment in a recent theoretical article. She suggests the use of a business change model, specifically one developed by Dr. John P. Kotter (1996), to build and sustain cultures of assessment within academic libraries. Change models carry various names within the literature including organizational change models, leadership change models, and change management models. Farkas (2013) recognizes the potential of Kotter's model (1996) for ushering in change within academic libraries as it supports leadership without positional authority – a common occurrence for the many non-administrative librarians delegated to lead change. It also emphasizes changes in behavior as a means to transform culture, rather than waiting on a cultural shift (often led by administration) to change behavior – this is particularly valuable for libraries with imperfect organizational cultures.

Dr. John P. Kotter, considered a foremost expert and prolific writer on leadership and management (*Thinkers50*, 2011), outlines his eight-step change process in *Leading Change*, a top-selling management book since 1996 (Basic Books, 2011; Covert and Sattersten, 2009). He follows-up with *The Heart of Change: Real-Life Stories of How People Change their Organization* (Kotter and Cohen, 2002), as well as offers guidance on his company's website, *Kotter International* (n.da.). In a *Harvard Business Review* article that served as the precursor to *Leading Change*, Kotter (1995) stresses the importance of completing each of the eight steps for effective organizational change. The steps that he advocates, and that should be used in sequence (although overlap is typical), are: 1) establish a sense of urgency; 2) create a guiding coalition; 3) develop a vision and strategy; 4) communicate the vision and strategy; 5) empower broad-based action; 6) generate short-term wins; 7) consolidate gains and produce more change; and,

8) *anchor new approaches in the culture* (Kotter, 1996). Despite exceptional reviews of Kotter's (1996) method, Farkas (2013) finds few examples of its implementation in academic libraries (Horn, 2008; Nussbaumer and Merkley, 2010; Sidorko, 2008), and none that use leadership change models to build cultures of assessment. Farkas (2013) encourages libraries that have effectively put Kotter's (1996) method into practice for the purpose of creating and sustaining cultures of assessment to share their experiences. This case study attempts to answer Farkas' (2013) call, reporting on Auburn University Libraries' (AUL) efforts to incorporate course-integrated information literacy assessment into its library instruction program, using a methodology that reflects Kotter's (1996) eight-step process.

Seventeen librarians, most of whom are members of the reference department, together teach an average of 600 to 700 library instruction sessions per year. The university solidified AUL's involvement in the assessment of student learning with the addition of information literacy as a general education goal in 2007. This real-world narrative follows AUL's assessment journey, examining both successes and bumps encountered during each step of Kotter's (1996) process. Although the creation of a culture of assessment within AUL's instruction program could be considered a work in progress, libraries interested in applying Kotter's method to initiate change will hopefully gather applicable information from this case study. Every effort was made to craft a linear dialogue of the progression through Kotter's process (1996), but overlap between the steps occurred; in his words, "...one normally operates in *multiple phases at once...*" (Kotter, 1996, p. 23). For AUL, the steps tended to coincide in threes, making a clear delineation between each difficult. Therefore, the narrative has been divided into phases: a one-year planning process, a two-year implementation period, and a discussion of the current status and future plans for classroom assessment at AUL (Figure 1).

Culture, Assessment, and Information Literacy at Auburn University Libraries

A land-grant institution in east Alabama, Auburn University comprises around 25,000 students and almost 5000 employees. The organizational culture at AUL can be characterized as one with a fervent commitment to the success of these constituents. The Libraries' dean has strengthened this commitment since her arrival in 2005 with the formation of an assessment steering committee and the development of a five-year (2007-2012) strategic plan based on user feedback and assessment (the Libraries is currently working on a strategic plan for 2013-2018). The 2007-2012 plan outlines specific measures that will be used to assess the stated goals and objectives, including LibQual+®; student and faculty surveys developed in-house; benchmarking with peer-institutions; reference and gate counts; and – the most relevant for this case study – assessing library instruction's impact on student learning (Auburn University Libraries, 2007).

Before 2001, information literacy received little notice on Auburn's campus (Rumble and Noe, 2009). Change began, however, with ACRL's adoption of the *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education* (2000). The standards provided academic libraries with formal backing in their pursuit to integrate information literacy into the curriculum, as well as a framework for assessing it. The following year, while the university was preparing for a visit from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) accrediting agency, the Libraries began an effort to extend ownership of information literacy across campus. Through diligence and data collection – including AUL's participation in the test pilot of Project SAILS – information literacy had been added as a general education goal by 2007 (Auburn University Core Curriculum Oversight Committee, 2008; to read about the entire approach, see Jenkins and Boosinger, 2003 & Rumble and Noe, 2009). With this development, the Libraries accepted a large role in the assessment of information literacy.

AUL's instruction coordinator would lead these assessment efforts for the instruction program. Under her direction, the Libraries continued to administer Project SAILS biennially. This standardized test measured student learning at the institution- and program-levels. Reference librarians also took part in peer-observations and student evaluations of their teaching. While important, these methods fell short in assessing student learning outcomes at the individual session-level. In order to holistically assess students' performance in information literacy, the coordinator recognized that course-integrated assessment was crucial. And, although her colleagues dedicated themselves to the students and faculty, she also knew that disrupting the status quo may not be met with enthusiasm. This group of professionals maintained busy schedules with collection development and liaison duties, reference desk hours, planning and teaching instruction sessions, contributing at meetings, and completing research and service requirements. Further, the instruction program had just recently undergone a philosophical shift from lecture-style classes to sessions that incorporated active learning. This change had required retooling of lesson plans and a transformation of the classroom environment. Though the dean's increase in assessment efforts had yet to significantly affect reference librarians' daily job duties, course-integrated assessment would. The coordinator would need a persuasive *vision* and *strategy* that convinced, motivated, and empowered her colleagues to embrace classroom assessment.

Phase One - Planning, 2009-2010

Step One: Establish a Sense of Urgency

Lakos and Phipps (2004) – librarians well-versed in both organizational culture and cultures of assessment – define organizational culture as the “values, beliefs, and assumptions that, over time, become shared and taken for granted through a continuous, collaborative learning

and influencing process” (p. 348). “Values,” “beliefs,” and “assumptions” express both thoughts and feelings that shape behavior. Kotter and Cohen (2002) contend that behavior must change before culture can successfully change, and behavior changes most effectively when not only thoughts, but feelings change. Individuals must often be convinced, however, that change is crucial. Therefore, transforming organizational culture demands a *sense of urgency* that speaks to individuals’ values, inspires them to *win*, and affects both their thoughts and feelings, or in Kotter’s words, their *heads and hearts* (Kotter International, n.db.). If executed correctly, a *true sense of urgency* should not evoke fear or panic, but should instead motivate, subduing feelings of complacency, apprehension, and reluctance (Kotter and Cohen, 2002).

In early 2009, about a year-and-a-half after the university added information literacy as a general education goal, AUL’s instruction coordinator, with assistance from fellow members of the *guiding coalition* (the formation of this group is discussed fully in step 2), began the process of introducing course-integrated assessment into the instruction program. Their change message required a *sense of urgency* compelling enough to appeal to the value that their colleagues placed on student success, but not one that would cause unnecessary worry. After much discussion and deliberation, the *coalition* chose to place emphasis on the improvement of teaching as a professional development opportunity, delegating the Libraries’ duty to gather data and statistics for the university’s assessment efforts as a secondary reason (although one that could not be ignored and that would later help to bolster the *urgency*). Members of the *coalition* hoped the professional development approach would speak to their colleagues’ dedication to student learning. Throughout the implementation period, the reference librarians would hear about the advantages of closing the assessment loop (Oakleaf, 2009) from the *coalition*: instead of basing teaching methods and lesson plans on assumptions about student learning – as was the situation

at the time – classroom assessments would help to uncover the facts. Through this process, adjustments could be made to their teaching, resulting in improved student learning.

Step Two: Form a Guiding Coalition

AUL's dean and associate dean of public services supported the introduction of course-integrated assessment into the instruction program, but the instruction coordinator knew that a mandate from administration would seem heavy-handed. As pointed out by Farkas (2013), one advantage of Kotter's (1996) method is that the leader of a change initiative does not require positional power within an organization. The instruction coordinator held a degree of power, but not at the same level as the deans. Kotter (1996) maintains, however, that a change process cannot be successfully planned, led, and executed by the leader alone, regardless of the amount of power that person holds; it should instead be guided by a *coalition*. The reference department already had an instruction team– a group of four reference librarians who led instruction initiatives and devoted a larger percentage of their time to teaching. The team's members seemed like a natural fit for leading this change, possessing *key characteristics* essential for a *guiding coalition* (Kotter, 1996). (Due to the continuing nature of this process at AUL, description of the *guiding coalition* below is written in present tense).

The first *key characteristic*, *position power* (not to be confused with positional power), is achieved when enough *key players* support the change so that others cannot hinder progress (Kotter International, n.da.). The *guiding coalition* derives *position power* from librarians at a variety of professional levels – two administrators, one non-administrative librarian with influence, and three non-administrative reference librarians:

- *Dean of the Libraries and Associate Dean for Public Services*: Although not active members of the *guiding coalition*, they provide crucial support for classroom assessment.

- *Instruction Coordinator*: A tenured librarian who serves as leader of the guiding coalition. She holds some administrative influence, but not positional power equal to the deans.’
- Guiding Coalition Member #2: An untenured librarian who works closest with the instruction coordinator to manage the change process. Her job duties include research and development of classroom assessment.
- Guiding Coalition Member #3: A tenured librarian responsible for administering Project SAILS.
- Guiding Coalition Member #4: An untenured and relatively new academic librarian.

As the second *key characteristic*, a guiding coalition should comprise members with a variety of expertise and viewpoints (Kotter International, n.da.). This includes at least one member with strong leadership skills and a second member who brings good management skills to the group (Kotter, 1996). Leaders must have a sophisticated understanding of an organization’s culture in order to develop and communicate the vision for change (Kotter, 1990). As the member with the longest tenure at Auburn, the instruction coordinator meets this criterion having a keen understanding of the reference department’s culture. Managers, on the other hand, ensure that a structure exists for change to occur, organize the change, and handle complications that may arise along the way (Kotter, 1990). Though the instruction coordinator played both roles early on, she now shares managerial responsibilities with member #2, who has gained more knowledge about course-integrated assessment and greater confidence as a manager. This was part of the instruction coordinator’s greater vision, as she had encouraged member #2 to attend ACRL’s Immersion Assessment Track and tasked her to serve as the go-to person in whom colleagues sought advice, bounced around ideas, and shared concerns. Reference librarians have responded positively to member #2 serving in this capacity, possibly because of her untenured

and/or non-administrative status. Member #3 handles the biennial administration of Project SAILS and sits on the Libraries' assessment steering committee. Her formal-training as a philosopher is an added bonus, as she raises issues not always considered by other members of the coalition. Member #4 is new to AUL. The group benefits from her opinions that reflect beyond departmental complacency.

Credibility is Kotter's third key characteristic, meaning that individuals involved in a change process respect members of the guiding coalition, taking their message seriously (Kotter International, n.da.). Regardless of viewpoints regarding classroom assessment, AUL's reference department benefits from a mutual respect among colleagues. Therefore, the issue of being taken seriously has not surfaced. Lastly, a guiding coalition needs "enough proven *leaders* to be able to drive the change process" (Kotter International, n.da.). As explained above, the instruction coordinator, who has many years of experience serving in leadership roles, heads the coalition.

Step Three: Create a Vision and Strategy

The first draft of a vision frequently begins with a single individual's idea (Kotter, 1996). In the case of AUL, the instruction coordinator envisioned a culture in which assessment existed as an intrinsic part of course-integrated instruction classes. Reference librarians would assess students' success in applying specific learning outcomes in order to gain a complete picture of student learning in information literacy. Additionally, the Libraries' now had an obligation to gather and report data to the university. The guiding coalition took these dual purposes of assessment into consideration. Members also took into account the difficulty in reallocating a portion of already limited classroom time to assessment. In early 2010 the group began to flesh out their vision and settled on two assessment practices they believed would meet the needs of

the program: classroom assessment techniques (CATs) (Angelo and Cross, 1993) and authentic assessment.

The team compiled examples of CATs from Angelo and Cross (1993). CATs can be administered at any time during a class to quickly evaluate student learning, allowing for immediate deviations from the lesson plan or for follow-up afterwards. Since this method only requires two to five minutes of classroom time, the *coalition* did not expect strong objections from their colleagues. The integration of authentic assessment, however, would be more complicated, demanding the group to conduct extensive research and discussion, along with experimentation over a period of months; Kotter (1996) estimates that a *guiding coalition* could spend a few hundred hours in this stage of the process. Throughout summer and fall of 2010, the *guiding coalition* refined its idea of authentic assessment for AUL, settling on the assessment of active learning components (usually in the form of worksheets) already used in instruction sessions. The team chose to focus on one outcome at a time and began with students' development of keywords and synonyms for use when searching library databases – one of the most common outcomes taught in AUL's instruction classes. Individually, *coalition* members tested a variety of worksheets in their own classes before introducing the idea to their colleagues (Carter, 2013).

If the *coalition* had waited until it perfected the *vision*, classroom assessment would have never begun. After a year of planning, it was time for the group to communicate the change message to their colleagues. *Coalition* members believed that the end product as of December 2010 – when the *vision* was first communicated to the reference librarians (step 4) – held up acceptably with Kotter's (1996) characteristics of an effective *vision*: 1) It was *imaginable* in that reference librarians would be able to visualize themselves incorporating assessment into their

classes; 2) of the six characteristics, *desirability* would be the most difficult to convey. In the long-term, assessment would improve teaching and student learning, as well as provide the data required by the university. The *vision* represented a desirable strategy, but one they knew may not be an immediately popular one with the entire department; 3) introducing the plan in a progressive and slow manner would present the change as manageable and *feasible*; 4) the types of assessments chosen were *focused* enough to guide classroom and teaching decisions; 5) librarians would have *flexibility* to create their own assessments; and 6) the plan was *communicable*, and *coalition* members would frequently repeat it in multiple forums over the next two years.

Phase Two – Implementation, 2010-2013

The next three steps took place over a period two years. During this time the *guiding coalition* slowly increased the complexity of the change message through presentations, workshops, and one-on-one meetings. They provided continuous communication, *empowerment*, and *short-term wins*. The first communication of the *vision* and subsequent training sessions will be shared in detail to accurately show the various ways in which the *vision* and *strategy* were conveyed.

Step Four: Communicate the Vision and Strategy

Towards the end of 2010, members of the *guiding coalition* prepared to share their *vision* for course-integrated assessment with the reference department. By this point, however, word had already spread that change was on the horizon, making it vital to quell any incorrect speculations. Further, the time invested and significance of assessment called for a creative message that introduced the idea both clearly and gradually; if not, complacency could overpower the *vision*, as explained by Kotter (1996):

“Yet after they are done with the most difficult work, those on a *guiding coalition* often act as if everyone else in the organization should be clear and comfortable with the resulting *vision* in a fraction of the time. So a gallon of information is dumped into a river of routine communication, where it is quickly diluted, lost, and forgotten” (p. 88).

Member #2 of the *coalition* gave the initial presentation at a departmental meeting, stressing the professional development function of assessment, but still including the Libraries’ obligation to assess as a secondary purpose. Although some points covered in this session may seem overly basic, no assumptions were made about prior knowledge of course-integrated assessment. The presentation outline illustrates this *strategy*:

- What is assessment? a) It is not student or teaching evaluations. While these provide feedback on the quality of teaching methods, they do not measure student learning; b) “Assessment is an ongoing process aimed at understanding and improving student learning (Angelo, 1995, p.7); c) “Knowing WHAT you are doing, knowing WHY you are doing it, knowing what students are LEARNING as a result, CHANGING because of the information” (Gilchrist, 2001); d) It is not extra. Assessment should be considered a standard part of class.
- Why assess? a) Assessment will improve teaching; b) Assessment will improve student learning; c) Information literacy is a general education goal, and the Libraries must prove that students meet the outcome.
- How to assess? a) Through informal and formal assessments [For simplicity, the *guiding coalition* had labeled the CATs as informal and the worksheets as formal.]; b) What is authentic and outcomes-based assessment? [In hindsight, it may have been too early to introduce these terms – Kotter (1996) recommends the avoidance of jargon.]; c) Because

existing active learning components will be assessed, this approach should not require a significant amount of classroom time.

- The assessment cycle (Oakleaf, 2009) was shared to visually depict the process of closing the loop, along with the article “2010 Top Trends in Academic Libraries: A Review of the Current Literature” (Association of College and Research Libraries Research Planning and Review Committee, 2010), which underscored the demand to prove value within the profession as a whole.
- With the introduction of a LibGuide (Carter et al., 2010) that included the coalition's pre-tested assessments, reference librarians were encouraged to try out the examples or to develop their own. [The LibGuide would become an important communication tool throughout the process.]
- The presentation included a hands-on activity in which members of the department examined and discussed keyword worksheets already completed by students.
- Although empowered with information and tools, reference librarians were not yet required to take part. Therefore, to ensure that the process moved forward, the coalition recruited a few volunteers to conduct assessments during spring 2011.

After the presentation, those who volunteered were eager to experiment in the classroom, but not everyone was convinced. Despite the guiding coalition's appeal to the heart, department members exhibited conflicting reactions, ranging from cautious enthusiasm to indifference to apprehension. The concerns expressed were fairly common in academia: assessment signified another task to fit into their workflow (and classes); assessment was a means for administration to encroach on individual teaching styles; and, assessments that indicated poor student performance could be held against them during annual evaluations (Farkas, 2013; Kramer,

2009). Although the Libraries needed to gather and report data about student learning, the *coalition* and associate dean wanted their colleagues to grow more comfortable with assessment before making decisions regarding annual evaluation requirements, so had yet to determine the method for aggregating this data at the course-integrated level. Skepticism also surfaced – could assessment represent another cyclical trend? In subsequent workshops, member #2 (who became the designated presenter) would persistently offer evidence that assessment was here to stay. Lastly, as pointed out by Lakos and Phipps (2004), libraries already provide services for the good of society. It is presumed that users value these services, so some reference librarians questioned why they must be formally measured. AUL reference librarians also understood, however, that the mounting calls for assessment did not originate with the *guiding coalition*, instruction coordinator, associate dean, or even the dean. Whether the request came from the government, the public, accreditation agencies, or the university itself, the mission to prove value was an unavoidable opportunity or obligation, however they chose to view it.

Step Five: Empower Broad-Based Action and Step 6: Generate Short-Term Wins

Mixed feelings at this early stage were expected. The instruction coordinator knew that the change process could take months, if not years, to fully complete. Kotter (1996) maintains that to sufficiently *empower* people to act on change, the *guiding coalition* must repeat the *vision* multiple times and accompany it with training. The *coalition* followed this advice, simultaneously acknowledging their colleagues' good work and progress. In Kotter's (1996) words they *generated short-term wins* to prove how assessment can pay off for the department and the students.

Fall 2011

At AUL, spring is the busiest semester for the instruction program. Because members of the *guiding coalition* maintain the heaviest teaching loads, they had little time to repeat the *vision* to their colleagues during this period; at least not in a formal way. To regain momentum, the instruction coordinator reconvened the group in summer 2011. At this time, the members recognized that in order to move forward with course-integrated assessment, they could no longer rely on volunteers – they needed the participation of the entire department. For fall 2011, the team asked all reference librarians to conduct at least two Quick SLAs (at this point the team had changed the names of the assessments from informal and formal to Quick Student Learning Assessments and Student Learning Assessment Worksheets, shortening them to SLAs). The associate dean backed this requirement.

Throughout the fall, members of the *coalition* reminded their colleagues of the Quick SLA examples on the LibGuide, and encouraged questions about using them. This culminated in an end-of-the-semester workshop led by member #2. To underscore the event's importance, the associate dean funded a catered breakfast as well as a space for the department to meet outside of the Libraries. The holiday-themed workshop would double as a celebration for completing the first semester of assessment. Major points discussed at the session included the following:

- Reasons for assessment were repeated. Member #2 stated that course-integrated assessment would hopefully become part of the culture and reviewed the concept of closing the loop (Oakleaf, 2009).
- Reference librarians completed anonymous one-minute papers so that member #2 could address any remaining questions about Quick SLAs. Everyone shared the specific Quick SLAs they had used during the fall, along with what was learned from them; some librarians

admitted surprise over what they thought the students were learning in class as opposed to the results of the assessments. This was the first time that the more reluctant in the department acknowledged the possible benefits of assessment.

- Although still unsure of what method they would use to aggregate the course-integrated assessment data needed by the university, the *coalition* members, along with the associate dean, felt that it would be beneficial for reference librarians to reflect on their teaching and classroom assessments in narrative-form. Therefore, this requirement would be added to annual evaluations, in addition to teaching observations and student evaluations already provided to the dean on this yearly cycle. To help their colleagues visualize the instruction components expected for annual evaluations, member #2 introduced a new portion of the LibGuide called “instruction ingredients.” The “ingredients” included current practice – teaching observations from peers (untenured librarians are observed by the associate dean and instruction coordinator) and student evaluations – with instructor surveys to be added later. Student learning assessments made up the fourth piece. While not everyone welcomed this new task, several in the department expressed relief to know what would be expected for annual evaluations and were reassured that assessments would not be used against them, but rather as a method to set yearly goals for improvement.
- Member #2 briefly reviewed the purpose of SLA Worksheets and reiterated that they serve dual roles – that of an active learning component and an assessment. She showed a new set of worksheets that the *guiding coalition* had developed for determining student performance in evaluating sources, but also encouraged her colleagues to create their own (and to experiment with authentic assessment other than worksheets; the *coalition* had yet to find another method that fit into classes as well). Reference librarians then worked in pairs to create and share

authentic assessments based on other common ACRL outcomes taught at AUL. At the conclusion of the workshop, department members were asked to conduct at least two Quick SLAs and two SLA Worksheets during spring 2012.

2012

Throughout spring 2012, *coalition* members encouraged their colleagues to post worksheets and activities on the LibGuide for others to use. Also, member #2 met with individuals to create or review results of assessments; she also began posting teaching tips to the LibGuide based on what the department was learning from the assessments. A luau-themed workshop took place in May, in which librarians shared their spring assessments, and a best practices session kicked-off the semester in August. After the first round of annual evaluations that required a narrative on assessment, department members requested guidelines for writing the piece, which member #2 provided.

Phase Three – Current Status and Future Plans, 2013

Step Seven: Never Let Up

By 2013, most of AUL's reference librarians had overcome their early skepticism and apprehension about assessment. After two annual evaluation cycles, the *guiding coalition* had made progress, but as Kotter (1996) argues, this was not the time to *let up*; the group should instead employ earned *credibility* to enact larger changes. Further, the *urgency* must be kept high and the *coalition* must regularly share successes (Kotter International (n.da.)). AUL's *coalition* communicates these messages to their colleagues through the departmental sharing sessions, one-on-one discussions, emails, and the LibGuide. In fact, due to the rich data gathered about student learning and teaching from the sharing sessions, the *coalition* has chosen to permanently conduct biannual workshops. Farkas (2013) recommends this type of ongoing discussion amongst

colleagues regarding how to conduct assessments and what to do with the results. In AUL's case, not only are individual librarians discovering ways to improve teaching, but through these routine sharing sessions, the departments' teaching philosophy and methods are advancing as well.

These improvements, particularly at the group-level, could be described as not just closing the loop (Oakleaf, 2009), but also boosting "the quality of each assessment cycle," creating what Wehlburg (2007) describes as an "assessment spiral" (p. 1). Wehlburg (2007) argues that assessment is an upward spiral that never ends; as it spirals up after each feedback loop, consequential changes should occur with not only student learning, but also with the outcomes and how they are measured. For instance, at AUL, students' difficulty with the development of research topics for freshman composition had been a troublesome issue; an issue confirmed through reference librarians' authentic assessment of keyword and synonym worksheets completed in library sessions. Obviously, students could not choose acceptable keywords to search when they had yet to develop realistic topics. In response to these assessment results, the instruction team created an online module for topic development. This module, which has had mixed results so far, requires students to complete a mind map of their topics before instruction classes. The team will continue to explore ways to improve student learning based on results of classroom assessments, most of which so far has been communicated best during the departmental workshops. These improvements can only assist the *coalition* in its continuing mission to demonstrate the advantages of assessment.

Step Eight: Anchor New Approaches in the Culture

Cultural change does not happen until step 8, after behavioral change has occurred. During this stage the *guiding coalition* completes its work by *anchoring* the change into the

organizational culture (Kotter, 1996). The coalition wants to avoid overconfidence at this point, however: “You may think you have built a sturdy house, yet not notice that the walls are being held in place by the construction crew” (Kotter and Cohen, 2002, p. 164). The change must eventually be sustained without the guiding coalition (Farkas, 2013), or “construction crew.” According to Kotter’s (Kotter International (n.da.)) general rules concerning cultural change, the task of embedding assessment into the culture will require members of AUL’s guiding coalition to prove that conducting assessment is better than not conducting assessment, as well as clearly communicating the success of the change to their colleagues. The group has conveyed these points to a degree through the departmental workshops, but AUL’s coalition views the transition from the implementation phase to the sustaining phase as a crossroads; they are presently examining the big picture, evaluating the process, documenting successes, and plan to make necessary adjustments. Kotter may suggest enacting changes earlier in the process and, while they made small modifications along the way, coalition members needed the two-year implementation phase to see how their plan would work on a yearly cycle – one year as practice and the second year after their colleagues had a better understanding of the process.

Through their examination of the process, members of the group can claim a partial victory. Although the vision has not been fully realized, the instruction program now possesses several of the characteristics listed by Lakos and Phipps (2004) as indicative of an assessment culture: 1) externally-focused policies and planning; 2) leadership supports assessment; and 3) methods of assessment are included in departmental goals. Two additional characteristics require further work: 4) staffs recognize the value of assessment and engage in it as part of their regular assignments; and 5) data is routinely collected.

- Recognizing the value of assessment Progress on this characteristic is apparent – particularly in reference librarians’ confidence with the creation and use of assessments, as well as their increased interest in what assessment reveals about student learning. However, the original *sense of urgency*, although fashioned with good intentions, did not prove *urgent* enough to win over both *heads and hearts*. Reference librarians viewed the integration of assessment into their classrooms as a significant transformation, not just a professional development opportunity, challenging the *coalition* to bolster the *sense of urgency* along the way using the “proving value” argument. AUL reference librarians recognize why they must assess, but it has yet to be determined if *hearts* can realistically be transformed.
- Data collection The main holdup to winning over *hearts*, changing behavior, and changing culture stems from the annual evaluation requirement. Department members trust they will not be penalized for less-than-stellar results of student performance, but find it burdensome to include written summaries of assessment work within their annual evaluations. After two cycles of reporting, this method of data collection may be reconsidered. One possible strategy would follow Virginia Tech University Libraries’ model for implementing teaching evaluations for professional development, as was the *guiding coalition*’s original purpose, but not use them for evaluation purposes. Virginia Tech found this strategy created stronger staff “buy-in” (Ariew and Lener, 2007, p. 514). However, the associate dean finds great benefit in department members using their assessment narrative to craft the following year’s instructional goal, so a solution is still under discussion. Further, the *coalition* has only recently agreed on a possible method for collecting data from the assessments for university reporting. In hindsight, the reporting structure in general, both for personal improvement and to prove the program’s value, could have been more clearly defined by the *coalition* earlier in the process.

One final limitation in AUL's use of Kotter's (1996) method concerns the *guiding coalition*. Kotter and Cohen (2002) stress the importance of creating trust and commitment among members of this group. AUL's instruction team had already benefitted from this, so it was not a hurdle they had to overcome. This approach carries pros and cons, however, as the group may have traded greater diversity for built-in trust. While tapping members of the instruction team to lead the effort has worked well, in retrospect the group could have represented a truer democracy by *pulling* others in – a tactic in which those selected realize the value of the project by being chosen (Kotter, 2002). This strategy would have given others in the department more influence over the change, perhaps generating greater support from the beginning.

Conclusion

Despite a less-than-perfect application of this method, the members of the *guiding coalition* and their colleagues within the reference department have made tremendous strides towards embedding course-integrated assessment into AUL's instruction program. The reference librarians have worked diligently to learn about course-integrated assessment, develop their own classroom assessments, and have participated fully in the biennial workshops. When the *coalition* resolves the lingering issues surrounding annual evaluations and reporting data, the change will most likely be considered complete. The question arises though: has behavior changed? As part of their job duties, yes – reference librarians have integrated assessment into their daily work and classes. But has the *coalition's* message affected their *hearts* as well? This remains questionable, and could be possibly blamed on missteps made by the *coalition*; or, it could signify issues out of the *coalition's* control.

Most literature on cultures of assessment does not doubt their existence. Daniel Ennis (2010) provides an alternative position to this assumption, however – a position that could possibly apply to AUL’s situation. In Ennis’s (2010) words: “‘Assessment culture’ is code for not just doing assessment, but *liking* it” (p.1). The “liking” part corresponds to Kotter’s (1996) appeal to the *heart*. While some individuals can be convinced to “like” assessment, not everyone will, especially if participation is not voluntary. Can people who do not “like” assessment, or even refuse to take part, hold an organization back from achieving an assessment culture? Ennis (2010) describes a culture of assessment as an “idealized” (p. 15) concept and defines assessment as “a series of protocols; a cycle of data collection, collation, and response” (p. 15-16). This definition parallels with what has been created within the AUL instruction program. So perhaps the *coalition* has done all it can. Not every individual will “like” doing assessment (or in the case of AUL, reporting on it), and that is just a reality.

Other libraries concerned with assessment will hopefully learn from AUL’s example. A few things to take into account regarding assessment, organizational culture, and Kotter’s (1996) method: 1) Although Kotter’s (1996) process proved a viable method for change, changing the behavior of individuals – in AUL’s case, seventeen reference librarians – is challenging. Particularly if the change message must affect *hearts*; 2) Farkas (2013) argues that an entire library must embrace assessment in order for it to become part of the culture. At AUL, assessment has taken center-stage due to efforts by the dean. However, this case study only focuses on one department; applying Kotter’s (1996) process for change on a larger scale may prove more successful; 3) Farkas (2013) sees one advantage of Kotter’s (1996) method as positional authority is not required of the change leader. AUL’s situation corroborates this point. However, following Kotter’s (1996) model, support from positional authority in the form

of the dean and associate dean proved crucial; 4) Kotter's (1996) method has received criticism for its rigid approach. And, while Farkas (2013) encourages libraries to apply his process, she acknowledges that it may not work for every situation.

Dr. Kotter offers an immense amount of theory and guidance regarding leadership and change – much more than can be covered here. This narrative hopefully strikes a balance between a generalization and comprehensive review of his process. Regardless if Auburn University Libraries has established a culture of assessment, by breaking the process down into specific steps and actions through the application of a leadership change model, successes and failures can be clearly seen and the *vision* and *strategy* properly adjusted.

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