Context Matters: Cultivating Faculty Assessment Engagement in a Research-Intensive University
IUPUI Assessment Institute, October 24, 2017
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Overview

- The University of Florida Context
- The need for the research
- The research plan
- Phase 1 - Survey
- Phase 2 - Interviews
- Phase 3 – Focus Groups
- Findings and Improvements

The University of Florida Context

- About 54,000 students total
- Over 5,000 faculty
- Research 1, AAU member
- Educational Units:
  - 16 colleges
  - 496 academic programs
- Administrative Units:
  - 10 Vice Presidential units
  - 4 Senior Vice Presidential units,
  - the Libraries
  - the Graduate School, and
  - The Florida Museum of Natural History
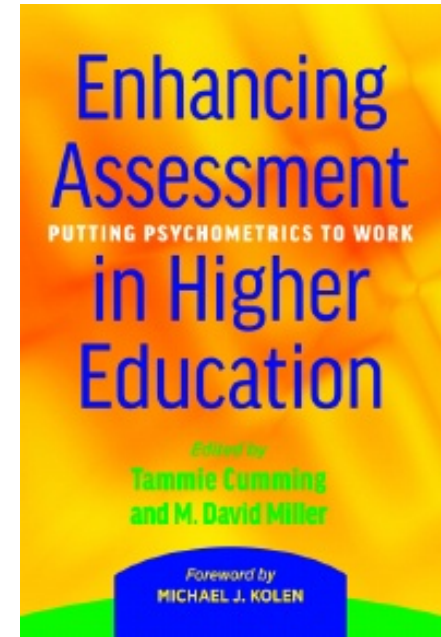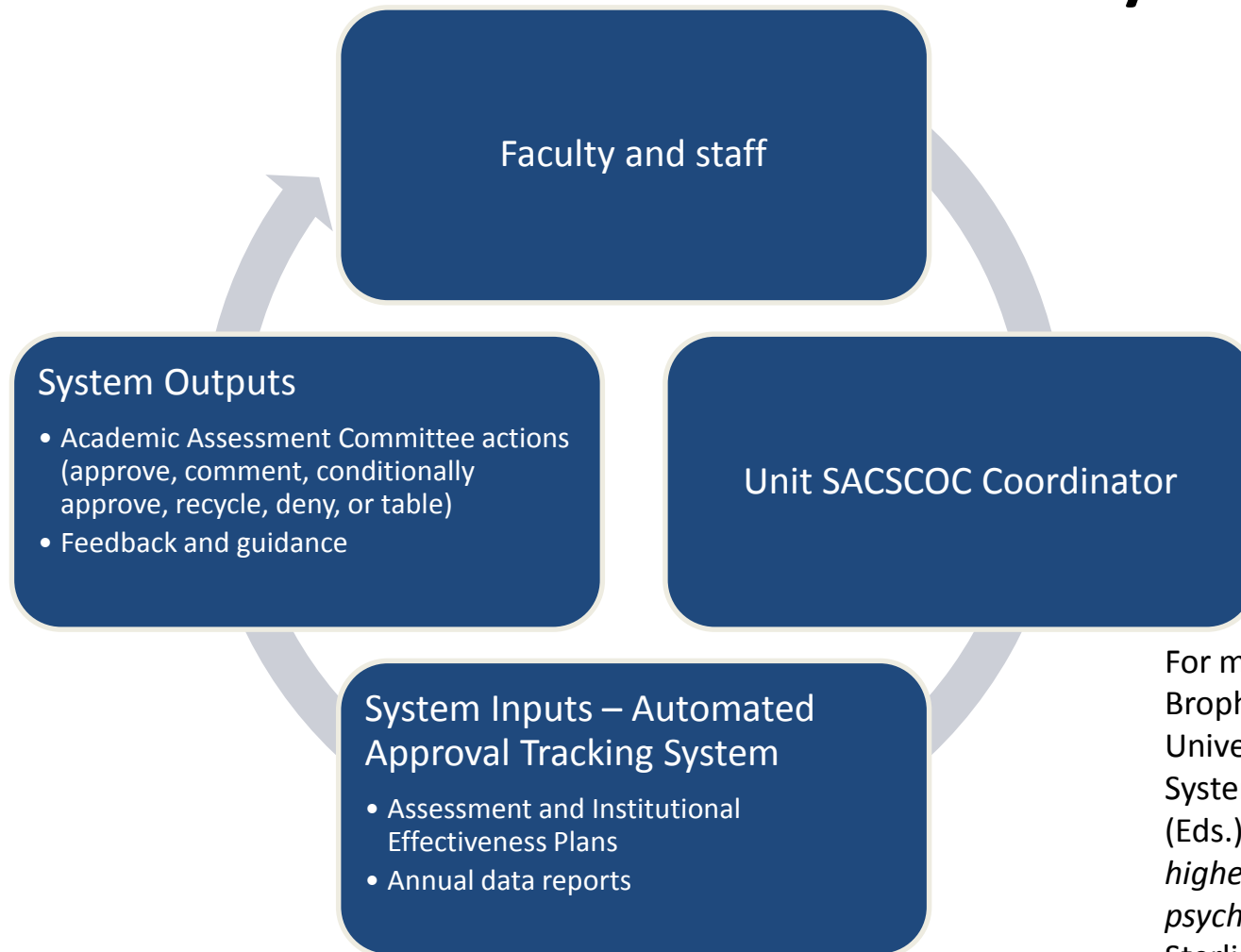- Over $700 million in annual research funding

Communication

We use a *distributed leadership* model

Each of our 16 colleges, 4 Senior Vice Presidential units, 10 Vice presidential units, the Graduate School, The Libraries, and the Florida Museum of Natural History all have appointed SACSCOC Coordinators

These individuals meet as a group when needed, usually twice a year

We communicate with them, they communicate to their faculty and administration

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UF Assessment System

Faculty and staff

Unit SACSCOC Coordinator

System Inputs – Automated Approval Tracking System
- Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness Plans
- Annual data reports

System Outputs
- Academic Assessment Committee actions (approve, comment, conditionally approve, recycle, deny, or table)
- Feedback and guidance

Enhancing Assessment PUTTING PSYCHOMETRICS TO WORK in Higher Education

Edited by
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For more information, see:
Brophy, T. S. (2017). Case study: The University of Florida Assessment System. T. Cumming & In M. D. Miller, (Eds.), *Enhancing assessment in higher education: Putting psychometrics to work* (pp. 184-202). Sterling, VA: Stylus.
Available in the Exhibition Hall at Stylus Publishing

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The Need for the Research

Patterns emerged from the annual data reports

- Inconsistencies across programs
- Lack of understanding of institutional processes

Anecdotal evidence from the SACSCOC Coordinators

- Individual reports from coordinators about activity in their colleges and units

Academic Assessment Committee interest

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Phase 1: Survey of the College SACSCOC Coordinators (Das & Gater, 2015)

1. Started with validated survey

- Welsh, J. F., & Metcalf, J. (2003). Cultivating faculty support for institutional effectiveness activities: Benchmarking best practices. Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 28(1), 33-45. doi:10.1080/02602930301682
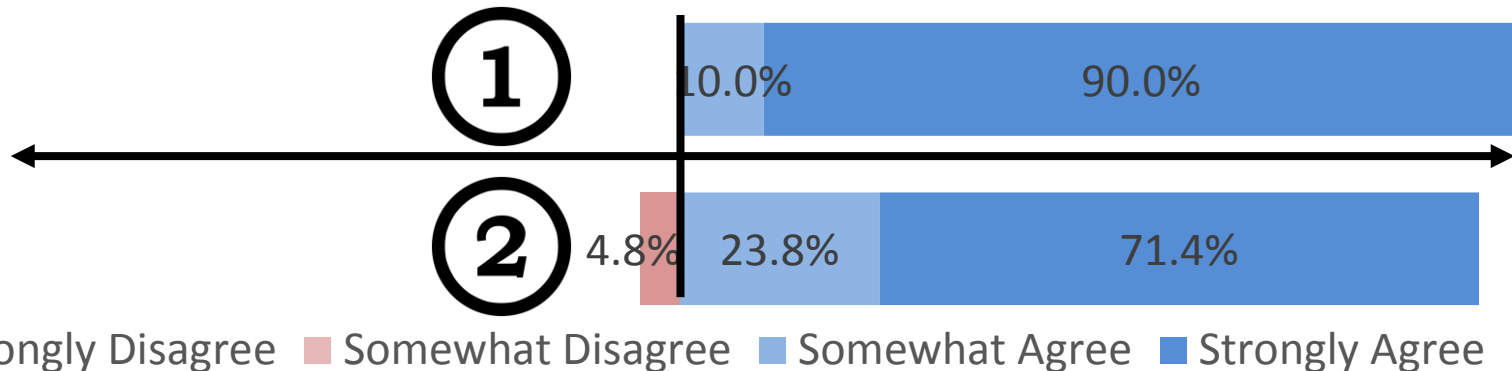
2. Modified to delete items and add our own items

3. Obtained IRB approval (IRB2 2014-U-0242)

4. Created on-line survey and sent link via e-mail

5. Response Rate = 11 out of 17 = 65%

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Survey Questions & Results

① Program goals and/or student learning outcomes will be an important component of SACSCOC accreditation well into the future.

② Efforts to evaluate the effectiveness of my college's degree program goals and/or student learning outcomes are worthwhile.

① 10.0% 90.0%

② 4.8% 23.8% 71.4%

■ Strongly Disagree ■ Somewhat Disagree ■ Somewhat Agree ■ Strongly Agree
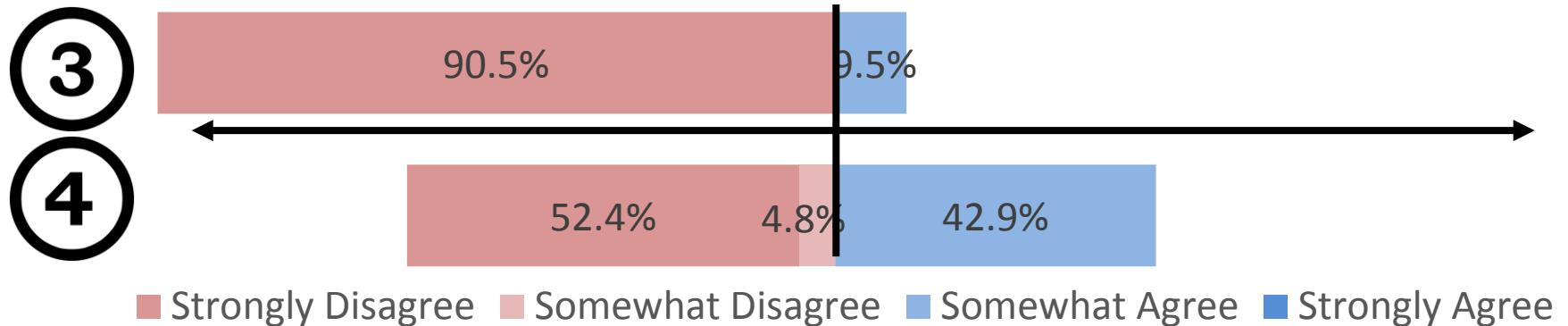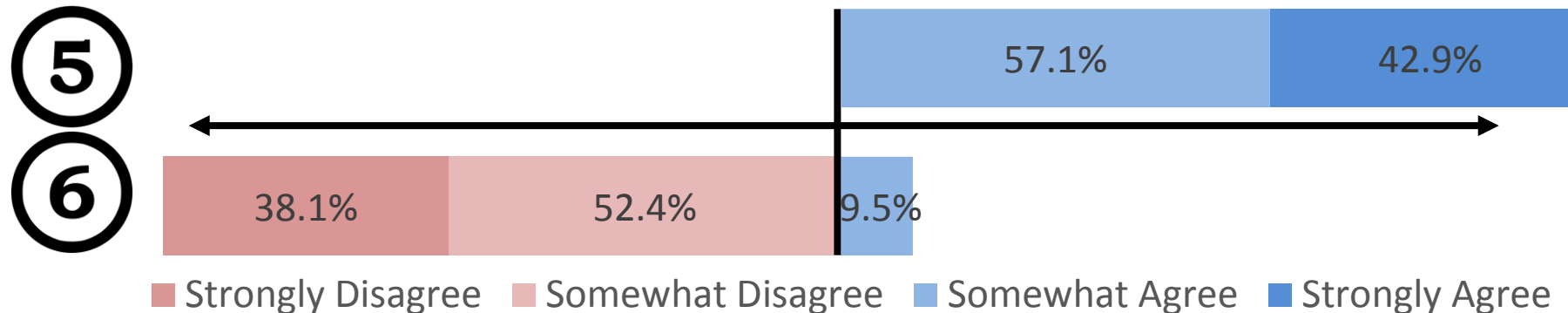
Survey Questions & Results

③ Analyzing program goals and/or student learning outcomes are not an important component of my job responsibilities.

④ Program goals and/or student learning outcomes are primarily the responsibility of university staff outside my college.

③ 90.5% | 9.5%

④ 52.4% | 4.8% | 42.9%

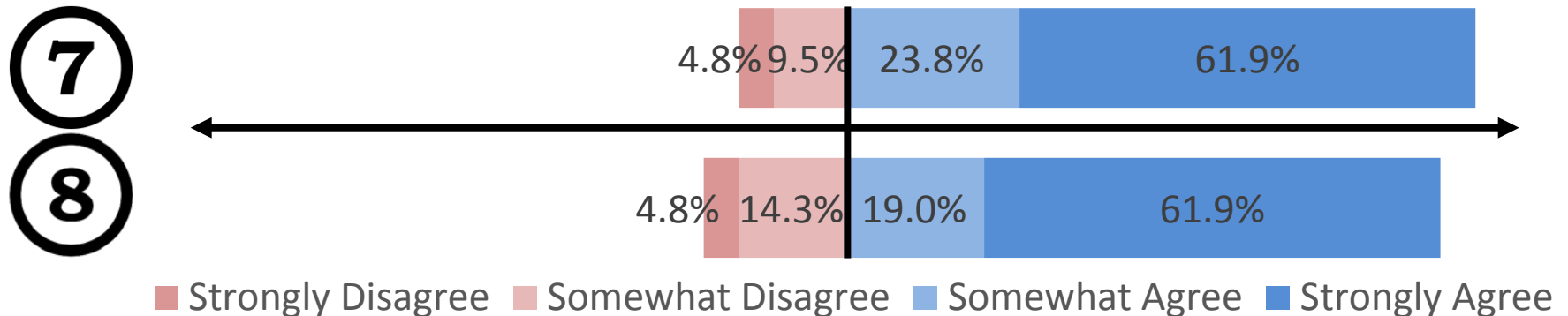■ Strongly Disagree ■ Somewhat Disagree ■ Somewhat Agree ■ Strongly Agree

Survey Questions & Results

⑤ Program goals and/or student learning outcomes in my college is, or would be, strengthened by active participation by faculty members.

⑥ Developing program goals and/or student learning outcomes is a fad that will likely be replaced by another area of emphasis.

⑤ | 57.1% | 42.9%

⑥ | 38.1% | 52.4% | 9.5%

■ Strongly Disagree ■ Somewhat Disagree ■ Somewhat Agree ■ Strongly Agree

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Survey Questions & Results

7 Documenting program goals and/or student learning outcomes should be an integral element to any college or department-specific SACSCOC accreditation criteria.

8 Resources dedicated to program goal and/or student learning outcome activities are investments in the long-term effectiveness of my college.

7 4.8% 9.5% 23.8% 61.9%

8 4.8% 14.3% 19.0% 61.9%

■ Strongly Disagree ■ Somewhat Disagree ■ Somewhat Agree ■ Strongly Agree

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Phase 1: Modifications

- Results led to change
- Office of Institutional Assessment modified annual professional development
  - Emphasized that we support PD initiatives in the field (one-on-one, small groups, telephone support)
  - Customized professional development to the extent possible

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Phase 2: Stakeholder Interviews (Das & Gater, 2015)

Structured interviews with college representatives, stakeholders responsible for assessment data

- What duties comprise your role/job?
- Describe annual data collection process.
- How do you handle training?
- How do you motivate faculty? New faculty?
- What do you do when data is not entered or entered inadequately?
- Any tips/advice?

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Phase 2: Stakeholder Interview Results

Evidence: Centralized data entry produces the highest quality results

Result: This is what we recommend as a best practice

Evidence: Training styles varied depending on the size of the department or college: regular agenda item in faculty meetings, one-on-one training, ad-hoc meetings, etcetera

Result: Data supports that we continue to offer training to comply with CS 3.3.1 in multiple formats: web, video, PDF, phone

Evidence: Some units did not use data collected for CS 3.3.1 for anything other than CS 3.3.1

Result: We shared ways other faculty used results (e.g., template for other accrediting bodies, program improvement processes)

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Phase 3: Faculty Focus Groups

The Das & Gater findings revealed a need to better understand faculty engagement with assessment

Why Focus Groups?

Focus groups are effective for the exploration of topics of interest, and for generating impressions of the process of interest.

Focus group participants are selected purposively because they can provide the information that the researcher is seeking, and are often homogeneous to promote discussion (Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Stewart, Shamdasani, & Rook, 2009)

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Participants

16 focus groups (one in each college), N = 146

Tenure and tenure-track faculty; all were invited to join groups

Specific days and times were set

Doodle polls sent out, and focus groups established based on availability and interest

Delimitation:

Limited to faculty who were available at the scheduled times in each college
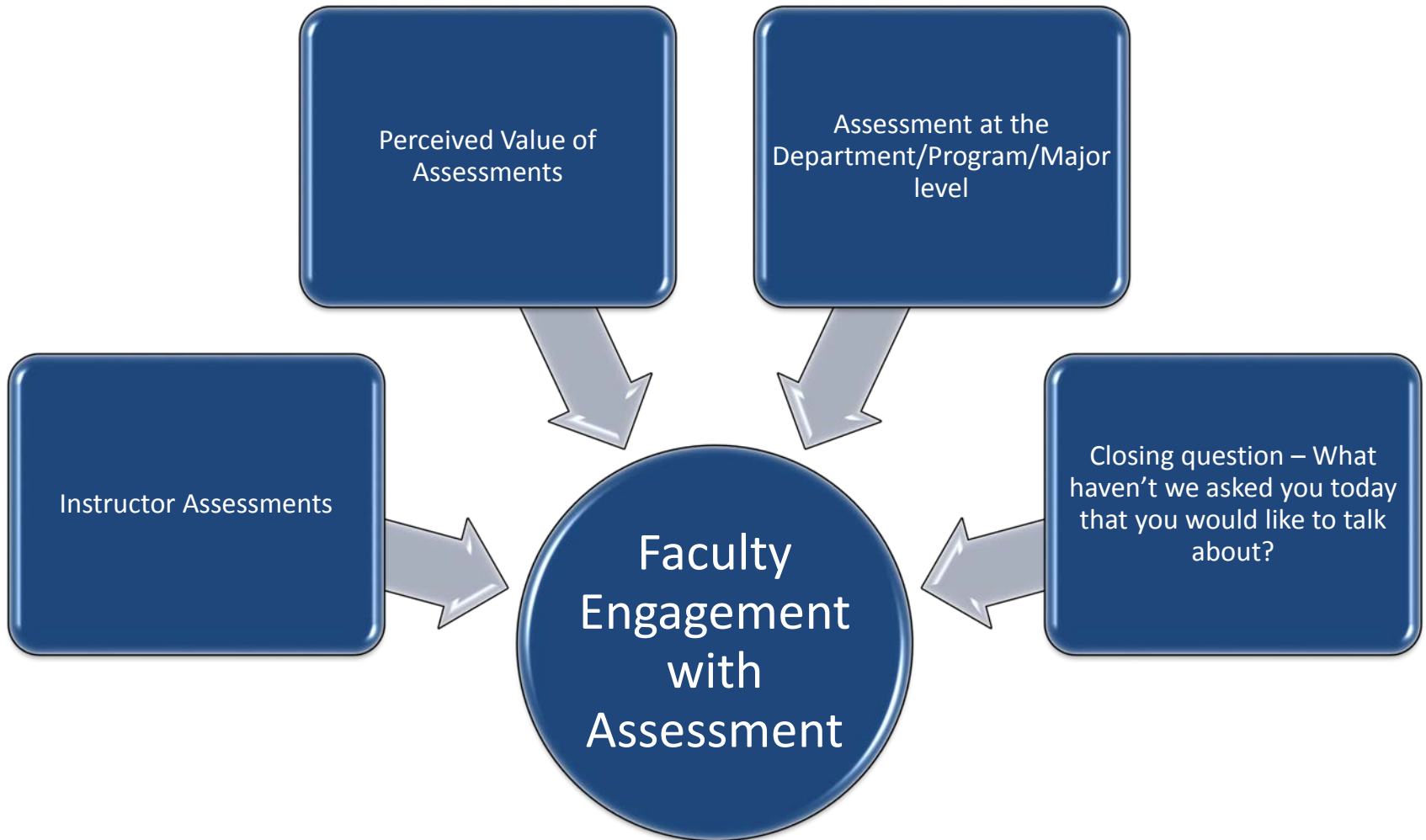
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Research Questions

Academic Assessment Committee developed these research questions:

How are UF faculty engaged in academic assessment processes at the University of Florida?

In what ways could this information lead to the modification and improvement of institutional assessment processes?

Question Categories

Methodology

Protocol developed and determined to be IRB exempt

Faculty were anonymous – name tents with letter names as identifiers; Participant A, B, C, etc.

Moderators read the standardized introduction and guidelines

All sessions were recorded and moderators took supporting field notes

Assessment Definition

Assessment is the collection and evaluation of student-learning data obtained from diverse sources in order to ascertain the degree to which students have achieved faculty-established outcomes.

The process culminates when assessment results are used to improve subsequent student learning or program effectiveness.

Results

34 sets of data – field notes, recordings

Loaded into NVivo11

Coded first for response categories

8 response categories and three themes emerged

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Response Categories

Data Category	Description
Assessment methods and processes	Various assessment types used for the assessment of student learning
Challenges	Issues that impede assessment or make it challenging
Concerns	Areas that cause concern or are barriers to assessment they would like to do
Context	Factors that influence assessment that faculty cannot control
Data gaps	Information that faculty would like to collect but cannot or do not
Needs	What faculty would like to have to facilitate their assessment processes
Use of Results	The ways that faculty use the results of their assessments
Value	What faculty value about assessment

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Theme 1: Assessment is Valued

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Faculty quotes

"If you don't determine they're learning, why are we here?"

"There is value in seeing students succeed, and assessment provides information that is used to re-examine student knowledge."

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Findings

The value of assessment is often directly associated with standards of the field

Use of results is consistent but purposes and methods vary

- Most prevalent: assessment data used to modify instruction to advance student learning
- Open dialogue is a primary assessment methodology for those who teach/mentor in one-to-one teaching situations

Faculty want to learn from their peers – sharing assessment methods and processes is valuable

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Theme 2: Influential Conditions

Faculty quotes

"The type of assessment I use depends on the size of the class."

"Our disciplinary accreditor requires a set of national exams that all of our students must take. Why can't we use these as outcome measures?"

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Findings

Two conditions that impact assessment were common across the colleges:

Class size

Disciplinary accreditation

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Class Size

Primary driver for assessment methodology: number of students in the class

Large classes constrain assessment choices to large scale measures (such as exams scored electronically)

There is a tension between what faculty want to do to assess their students and what they feel they must do because of class size

Disciplinary Accreditation

Disciplinary accreditors often require student learning measures and some prescribe student learning outcomes

Some disciplinary accreditors have established assessment standards

Frustrations:

- Aligning disciplinary accreditation requirements with SACSCOC requirements
- Appropriate use of required third-party exams

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Theme 3: Misconceptions about Accreditation (SACSCOC) Reporting

Findings

We didn't ask, but…

Accreditation reporting was raised in nearly every college

Three misconceptions emerged:

- All student learning must be quantified
- Academic assessment is limited to specific categories and types
- The data "disappears"

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Misconception 1:
All student learning must be quantified

"Our faculty are very engaged in gathering anecdotal evidence, but push back with quantification of student learning information."

"Subjective data cannot be quantified."

- Likely arises from a UF requirement to provide a rubric
- We ask for summary data; for some, this has been conflated with quantification of student learning data

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Misconception 2: Assessment is limited to specific categories and types

> *"The criteria for SACSCOC are limited; I feel like my hands are tied."*

- Florida regulations require certain categories of student learning outcomes
- The UF Graduate School also has established outcome categories
- However: additional categories are permitted

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Misconception 3: The data "disappears"

Faculty related concerns about not knowing what happens to the data they report

Data reporting is done in our accreditation module from a third party provider

Access is limited to those who have a "role" in the software program

This is a legitimate concern

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CULTIVATING ENGAGEMENT: ACTIONS TAKEN BASED ON OUR ANALYSIS

Recommendations for Action

Finding	Recommendations
Value 1. **Share assessment work across colleges**	1. Continue the UF Assessment Conference, and develop an online mechanism for faculty to share their assessment work with others.
Influential conditions 1. **Class size** 2. **Disciplinary accreditation**	1. Develop faculty workshops in conjunction with the Office of Faculty Development and Teaching Excellence on using Canvas assessment tools to facilitate data collection for multiple assessment methods. 2. Work with specific disciplines to maximize use of student learning data collected for disciplinary accreditors for regional accreditation reports.

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Recommendations for Action

Finding	Recommendations
Misconceptions 1. **Quantification of student learning data** 2. **Limitations on assessment outcomes and measures.** 3. **Faculty are not clear on how the data they report is used at the institutional level, nor do they have ready access to it.**	1. Develop online tools to clarify what can be reported. 2. Develop online tools to clarify assessment types. 3. Develop an accessible view of student learning data reports, perhaps through visualization.

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Current Visualization Projects
(in progress)

- [General Education](#)

- The Quality Enhancement Plan

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Questions and Discussion

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