Taking a Strategic Approach to Assessing Cultural Change

The New Norm of Faculty Flexibility: Transforming the Culture in Science & Engineering

ISU ADVANCE

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Moving an institution forward to create cultural change around work-life issues requires:

- Good programmatic and policy strategies
- On-going assessment of progress and impact of strategies
- My comments are based on:
  - Experience with evaluation studies
    - ADVANCE, CIRTL
    - Institutional Evaluations
    - Program Evaluations for Foundations
The Importance of Measurement and Assessment of Cultural Change

- Academe values systematic analysis

- Assessment is a catalyst for change
  - highlights problems, misalignments
  - challenges assumptions
  - motivates

- Data encourage shared understanding about changes necessary

- Assessment provides benchmarks

- Assessment findings aid in decision-making

- On-going periodic assessment fosters continued progress
  - Encourages celebration of successes
  - Highlights need for modifications or new priorities
Strategies for Assessing Cultural Change

- Many useful strategies
  - Quantitative and qualitative
  - Each evaluation approach has advantages and limitations

- Determine strategies on basis of questions/goals

- Decide assessment strategies based on these questions
  - **Goals**: What are we trying to achieve?
  - **Evidence**: What will tell us if we are successful or making progress?
  - **Process**: How can we best gather data?
  - **Who to ask**: Who can provide the most useful data?
  - **Who to involve**: Who can best gather/ask for data?
Qualitative Assessment Strategies: Examples

- Interviews
- Focus Groups
- Program Documents
- Committee Notes
- Organizational Map
- Exit Interviews
Quantitative Assessment Strategies: Examples

- Regular collection of specified indicators
  - (e.g., salary, # women, # appointment types)

- Routine benchmarking with peer institutions

- Salary regressions
Examples of Assessment Approaches that can Use Both Qualitative and Quantitative Data

- **Climate Studies**
  - What is current status? What is extent of change?

- **Teaching and Promotion Studies**
  - Trend data, experiences

- **Career Pathway Studies**
  - # women at various ranks and in appointments
  - Experiences in negotiating career paths

- **Network Analysis**
  - Who associates with whom?

- **Studies of:**
  - Use and impact of policies
  - Personnel decisions
  - Grievances filed
  - Levels of faculty satisfaction
Examples of Useful Questions to Guide Assessment Planning

Different questions are useful at different points in a change process

– To assess the current situation

– To guide implementation of strategies, programs, and policies and to monitor progress

– To help the institution continue to move forward in changing the culture
To Assess the Current Situation

- What is the pulse of the institution?

- What do faculty perceive as positive features of the culture or environment in regard to flexibility and work-life issues?

- What concerns do faculty have?

- What supports, challenges, and barriers confront faculty in specific fields in regard to flexibility?

- What changes in the institutional environment (including policies and practices) may be needed to more fully support faculty in regard to flexibility?
To Guide Implementation and Monitor Progress

- Are new policies and programs working as intended?
- How well do faculty and administrators understand new policies?
- Are there differences in implementation of policies across units? What is the effect on various groups?
- How is a policy having an impact on particular groups of individuals? On the institution as a whole?
- To what extent and in what ways has the institution changed over the past 2 years (5 years) in regard to flexibility and work-life issues?
- What concerns are faculty or administrators reporting in regard to flexibility and work-life issues? Who has what concerns?
To Help an Institution Continue to Move Forward

What are the next steps for improving the academic workplace in regard to flexibility? Which are “easy”? Which are more challenging?

What interventions, programs, or policies need to be improved? Why? How?

To what extent are effective policies and programs becoming institutionalized?

What would deepen institutionalization of effective programs and policies?
Using Assessment to Strengthen Cultural Change

Issues to Consider:

- Who to involve in evaluation decisions
- Logistics
- Dissemination
Using Assessment to Strengthen Cultural Change: Who to Consider Involving

- **Senior leaders**
  - They can help establish priorities
  - Their involvement can encourage their interest

- **Department Chairs**
  - They may have specific questions and can use data in decision making

- **Faculty members**
  - Inviting their involvement conveys respect and commitment to flexibility
  - Faculty have useful contributions

- **Internal Evaluators**
  - They know the institution well

- **External Evaluators**
  - They can get access to some data not accessible to internal evaluators
  - Objectivity and comparative perspective
Logistics

- Establish common terminology and standardized reporting
- Consider ease to participants
- Consider appropriate timing
- Consider confidentiality and professionalism
- Consider who can best collect data
Dissemination Considerations

- Share evaluation data and findings openly
  - Provide data routinely, publicly
  - Newsletter, web sites, meetings
  - Encourage sense of ownership

- Accuracy and accessibility of reports
  - Explain how to interpret data

- Timeliness of dissemination

- Develop conversations around findings

- Model ways to use data reports and findings
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