The 2006 Assessment Institute Recap  
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This year’s conference was highlighted by 9 primary tracks that provided attendees with the opportunity to network, explore, learn, and discuss the process of assessment from a variety of perspectives and interests. My interests and goals for attending this conference were to learn more about improving assessment in my own classroom and to identify strategies/resources to successfully carry out my role as the Assessment Fellow for my department, HRIM. In reflecting my experience, I feel that both of these goals were achieved by my participation in this conference. Below is a recap of the sessions I attended and the key concepts I have taken from them.

**Improving Assessment in My Classroom**

Several concurrent sessions that I attended were useful in accomplishing my first goal of improving my assessment practices with my students.

**On Campus, Across the Country and Around the World: The Role of Electronic Portfolios in Documenting and Representing Learners, Ecologies of Learning and the Interaction Between Them**

I was drawn to this session because of my interest and use of e-portfolios in my classroom for students to reflect on the lodging practicum experience that we provide in our curriculum. However, I found that the presentation was less about assessment than about the development of portfolios in education and the process involved with how e-portfolios are used. Many examples were provided that showcased student’s development as illustrated through the use of e-portfolios, which is a form of assessment. A main point taken from the presentation is that the effective use of e-portfolios as a pedagogical tool should move away from a presentation space to a working space for students. For me that was a new and important insight. For example, with this idea in mind, I will encourage my students to use their e-portfolios to demonstrate their academic and professional progression by including earlier academic work, work experience responsibilities, etc. and require them to spend time reflecting how they might think about this work/experience differently now that they have more experience. In the past I focused students to display their current practicum experience only. This session reformed my thinking regarding the use of e-portfolios in my classes and what student expectations and outcomes I will be looking for as students complete this project in the future.

**Assessing Learning Outcomes and Student Engagement**

This session was a recap of experiences of two programs that had community service activities as part of their curriculum. The session was interesting in learning how different student populations and disciplines were able to connect with community organizations.
Assessment strategies described in the case studies included daily and follow-up surveys, participant observation, narrative reflections and transformative activities. One transformative activity included the making of masks by students and community participants to express their experience. Since our program has recently implemented a service learning requirement stimulating thoughts taken from this session include the need to write specific outcomes of the student experience, reinforce these goals through activities, and to build the assessment into the curriculum/activities. While reflecting on the session, I have identified several strategies that will inform our work with students participating in both service learning activities and job shadowing at our hotel. For example, in the future I will develop clearer and specific outcomes that we expect from students during the job shadowing experience in the hotel, which we have never done. With these clearly defined outcomes will lead to better assessment activities. I believe a bonus of this effort will be improved student attitudes of the lodging practicum experience.

**Improving E-portfolio Assessment and Design: What Can We Learn from Myspace and Facebook?**

This was an interesting session that was presented as a panel. The session began as a historical perspective and rationale of the social networking phenomenon. Following this, each of the remaining presenters discussed various pros and cons of using e-portfolios and social network platforms for assessing college work. The consensus was that the social networks provide a service/need/outlet for students’ social lives and that faculty should not attempt to use this space for academic work. An open source e-portfolio/community solution was identified that was deemed more appropriate by the panel to be used for academic purposes. This session provided me with an opportunity to continue to reflect the use of e-portfolios and blogs as a means to stimulate student reflection and in assessing students in these activities. While many blogs are used as a personal social network, I will continue to work with my students to explore how blogs can be used to build a sense of community that benefits both the consumer and the hospitality organization. Today’s competitive market place is pushing hospitality organizations to increasingly strive to create a total experience for their guests. It appears the effective use of blogs can support these efforts.

**Doing Assessment as if Learning Matters Most: Simple, Practical Classroom and Course Level Approaches**

This session was clearly about how to stimulate student excitement and interest in course content while collecting useful assessment information. The leader of this session Dr. Thomas Angelo is a well-respected expert in the assessment field and is an excellent presenter. During a 1 ½ hour session he kept the session participants engaged while using his recommended strategies. This session provided a wealth of information that will influence my future classroom activities. Dr. Angelo’s excitement and commitment to student learning was definitely an inspiration for me. One of the more provocative information that was shared in this session was his “7 Transformative Guidelines for
Doing Assessment as if Learning Matters Most.” This guide started with a building a share trust, language, and motivation between the students. I believe the development and articulation of clear learning outcomes that guide assessment practices will yield success in achieving both a shared trust and motivation between students and instructors.

**Strategies/Resources to Successfully Carry Out My Role as the Assessment Fellow**

The following is a recap of sessions that I believe were useful in achieving my second goal of identifying resources and strategies to guide me in leading my department in our assessment process.

**What is “Good” Assessment? A New Model for Fulfilling Accreditation Expectations**

This session was one of the highlights of the conference. The presenter was Linda Suskie of MSCH and she really presented a good framework for thinking about assessment, which is very appropriate to the activities that I am leading in my department. She began by describing the Teaching-Learning Cycle (clear goals, learning opportunities, assessment, using results). This cycle is appropriate for individual courses as well as program curricula.

Linda presented her 5 dimensions of good assessment that include a) clear and important goals, b) that the results are used, c) the assessment activities are cost effective, d) that results are reasonably accurate and truthful, and e) the assessment is valued by the stakeholders. These points were informed from her analysis of many perspectives found in the assessment literature, of which she shared the perspectives and suggested readings through a handout. Additionally, Linda provided a checklist of her 5-dimensional model, which identified characteristics of good assessment results and processes that engage faculty.

**A Six-step F.A.M.O.U.S. Assessment Approach**

This session was an example of an assessment approach that is utilized at Florida A&M University. The acronym FAMOUS: Formulate, Ascertain, Measure, Observe, Use and Strengthen, provides the key steps in the assessment process. The presenter declared this process was an innovative multi-step process that streamlined the assessment system at her university. The presenter provided several examples from her school to illustrate each of the six steps. While this strategy parallels the model presented by Linda Suskie I believe it will be another good guide to follow as I continue to lead my department through our assessment cycle.

**Turning Rubrics Into Results for Colleges and Programs**

This session was actually the demonstration of proprietary electronic software to be used in developing and tracking student outcomes throughout the entire student’s academic career. The presenter (the developer of the software) provided several cases of the software use in the university environment. Following similar guidelines of good
assessment systems the software provide a platform that provided access for faculty to house assessment results that could be viewed by students and manipulated by administrators to confirm students’ progress throughout the entire academic career. The presented ended by suggesting that in using this system, at the time of graduation, the university would have a better understanding of each student’s success than is currently known by most schools. I would tend to believe that this is likely the case. I know from my own department, our faculty does a nice job in getting to know many of the students but could only discuss anecdotally what individual student’s academic achievements were.

Overall, I believe that the return on my investment in attending this conference will be large and will guide me toward improving my teaching and learning for my students while successfully leading my department in our program of assessment activities. I am very pleased and honored to have been given the opportunity to participate in the conference on behalf of the Provost’s office.