

SCHEV, Spellings and Accreditation:



The Promise and Challenges Of Accountability Mandates

Accountability: A Key Ingredient in Winning

“The very word *accountability* conjures up bad memories of bureaucracies run by bean-counters who create excessive rules, measure everything, and stifle innovations.

But those fears are the fears of losers”

Kanter, 2006 (p. 208)

Overview

- The state of the U.S. educational system
- Accountability: Efforts to renew the streak
- A player short: Did someone forget to invite the boss?
- Strategies for reaching decision makers
- Establishing VAG as a player in practice and policy

From First to Twelfth: An End to the Winning Streak?

- Historically the U.S. “educated more people to higher levels than any other nation.”
- Literacy among graduates has declined
- Graduates are increasingly described as lacking workforce skills
- Other countries are now educating more people at higher levels than the U.S.

U.S. Department of Education (2006)

Taking Success for Granted

- Winning streaks end when “confidence turns into complacency and arrogance” (Kanter, 2006).
- “We remained so far ahead of our competitors for so long, however, that we began to take our postsecondary superiority for granted” (U.S. Department of Education, 2006, x).

Accountability: Efforts to Renew the Streak

- Accountability, in winning organizations, is embedded into formal structures
- Accountability is a mirror
- Accountability is a behavior that supports confidence

Kanter, 2006

Calls from the Spellings Report

- “...change from a system of reputation to one based on performance.”
- Serious accountability measures
- ”Value-added”
- Comparative data
- Transparency
- Transformation of accreditation

U.S. Department of Education (2006)

Calls from the State Council

- Core competencies
- Direct measures
- Value-added
- Statistically valid samples
- Diversity
- External evaluators

State Council of Higher Education in Virginia Assessment Taskforce

Call from Accreditation Agencies

- Removed *learning outcomes* from CS 3.4.1
- CS 3.3.1 sent to review:

The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses whether it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results in each of the following areas:

3.3.1.1 educational programs, to include student learning outcomes at the program and the individual level

- CS 3.3.1 interpreted to encompass learning outcomes in the interim

Commission on Colleges (2007)

Other Voices Emerge: NASULGC

- “...meaningful and manageable set of accountability measures...”
- Improvement
- Value-added
- Transparent
- Comparability (Diversity)
- Opposed to indices

National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (2006)

A Player Short: Did Someone Forget to Invite the Boss?

- Legislatures are convinced
- (Most) Assessment professionals are convinced
- Many institutional decision makers are not

What we can do: Strategies for Reaching Decision Makers

- Read (better yet, Write!) what decision makers read
- Publish in venues decision makers read
- Present in venues decision makers attend
- Practice the 30, 5, 10 rule
- Investigate questions decision makers ask or are asked

What decision makers read

- Not always what assessment scholars read
- Books related to topics of *leadership* and *decision making*
- Heavily influenced by business literature
- Periodicals on policy, issues and trends

Where decision makers go

- Not always where assessment scholars go
- Accreditation Conferences (SACS)
- Conferences focused on policy, advocacy, and leadership

Practice the 30, 5, 10 Rule

- Develop a 30 second message
- Develop a 5 minute message
- Develop a 10 minute message
- Always be prepared to deliver them!

Investigate Questions Decision Makers Ask

- Psychology of the Examinee Variables
 - How hard do students try on the assessments?
- Issues associated with design
 - Do students at schools who mandate participation perform better?
 - Does approach to data collection (A-days, walk-ins, capstone course) impact scores?

Can we establish VAG as a player in practice and policy?

- Not an issue of “can” but “must”
- Virginia has some of the best scholars in the country
- Virginia has some of the best practitioners in the country
- Virginia has AT LEAST 20 years of Commonwealth-wide cooperative work in assessment (VAG)

Establishing VAG as a player in practice and policy

- Participate in dialogues at national events with a unified voice
- Engage institutional leaders where they are
- Partner with established and emerging groups
- Engage in federal as well as state discussions

References

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