Linking Institutional Assessment and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

Thomas F. Nelson Laird
Alexander C. McCormick
Indiana University

Richard A. Gale
Mount Royal University

Presentation at the 2011 Association of American Colleges & Universities Annual Meeting
Topics for Today

1. Conceptually linking institutional assessment and scholarship of teaching and learning
2. Doing scholarship of teaching and learning at the institution level
3. Possible links across levels
4. Linking at Mount Royal University
5. Some lessons and thoughts
CONCEPTUALLY LINKING INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENT AND SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING
Scholarship Described

- Scholarship of teaching and learning generally includes: rigorous, systematic, and evidence-based study of student learning in one’s own course; the understanding and improvement of student learning and/or teaching practice as its ultimate goal; commitment to disciplinary and/or interdisciplinary peer review and appropriate public dissemination; impact beyond a single course, program, or institution – advancing the field of teaching and learning to build collective knowledge and ongoing improvement.

- Mount Royal University Institute for Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (mtroyal.ca/isotl)
Cycle of Inquiry

- Observation
- Investigation
- Dissemination
- Validation
- Examination

The diagram illustrates a cyclical process where each stage leads to the next, and the cycle begins again with observation.
Implications and Applications

• For student learning
  ▪ Observation-based inquiry
  ▪ Fine-grained data collection
  ▪ Practice-based improvement
  ▪ Learning-centric investigation
  ▪ Public, peer-reviewed, and widely disseminated
  ▪ “Understanding and improving student learning”
Implications and Applications

For institutional assessment

- Coordinating and triangulating with other campus assessment initiatives
- Connecting with complementary evidence of outcomes and achievements
- Working toward significant impact on student learning (locally and beyond)
- Asking questions that matter (to students, to academe, to our culture, to our world)
Trajectories and Opportunities

• Coordinating approaches to understanding and improving student learning
• Using what we already know, or are trying to know, as a guide to evidence-based research
• Complementing and dovetailing with other sources of data being gathered
  ▪ student evaluations, program reflection and review
  ▪ campus assessment, institutional analysis and surveys
  ▪ NSSE, FSSE, CLA, and others
DOING SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING AT THE INSTITUTION LEVEL
Scholarship of Teaching & Learning at the Institutional Level

• **Systematic inquiry into the conditions that promote learning**
• **Affords comparisons against:**
  - Peer institutions
  - Absolute standard
  - Prior years’ results
• **Identifies accomplishments and opportunities for improvement**
Scholarship of Teaching & Learning at the Institutional Level

What’s missing?
- Dissemination (part way there)
- Advancement of the field

Why?
Inquiry Examples (NSSE)

- **How do we compare to peers?**
  - NSSE benchmarks
  - Deep learning scales
  - High impact practices
  - Individual survey items

- **Are we satisfied?**
- **Are we improving?**
- **Who is least engaged?**
Academic Challenge vs. Peers

First-Year

State U  Reg'l Public  Carnegie  Sel. Peers
High Expectations

In your experience at your institution during the current school year, about how often have you...

- Worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor’s standards or expectations? [FY]
FY Student-Faculty Interaction Over Time

- '01: 37.9
- '02: 39.0
- '03: 39.9
- '04: 41.0
- '05: 42.0
- '06: 43.8

Yearly interaction scores show a positive trend from 2001 to 2010.
FACULTY PERCEPTIONS OF INSTITUTION-LEVEL SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING
Faculty Views of Institutional Assessment Efforts

• 75% indicate institution is involved “Quite a bit” or “Very much”

• 65% indicate results are disseminated effectively

• 61% indicate that institutional assessment efforts are useful to them
That’s Pretty Good, But...

Dissem. Effectiveness

10%  54%
29%  7%

Usefulness of Findings

1  2  3  4  5
Findings Used?

- Faculty who indicated that institutional assessment informed teaching and learning improvement activities “Quite a bit” or “Very much”
  - 47% for department activities
  - 44% for institutional activities
Accreditation Matters?

• Faculty members’ perceptions of institutional assessment efforts vary by field

• Professional fields have more positive views than arts and sciences fields
CONNECTING DIFFERENT LEVELS OF SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

TOPIC 3
CLASSROOM TO INSTITUTION
Example Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Project

- **IU History Learning Project**
  - Diaz et al., 2008

  48% of students in history courses identified memorizing as the way they study for history exams.
Related Institution Questions

• How much do our students think our courses emphasize memorization?

• **NSSE-specific:** What percentage of students indicate that their courses emphasize memorizing “Quite a bit” or “Very much”?
Courses Emphasized Memorization “Quite a bit” or “Very much”

- 1st Yr Students: 69%
- Seniors: 62%
Courses Emphasized Memorization “Quite a bit” or “Very much”

- 1st Yr: 69%
- LD Faculty: 33%
- Seniors: 62%
- UD Faculty: 23%
Challenges

• Who knows what their faculty are finding from their classroom investigations?
  ▪ How should the information be gathered, summarized, and shared?

• How do findings from faculty investigations in their classrooms find their way to those in charge of institutional assessment?
INSTITUTION TO CLASSROOM
Institution finds...

Active & Collaborative Learning--FY Students
Possible Follow-Up 1

• Working groups of faculty investigate…
  ▪ What methods of instruction are used in our introductory courses?
  ▪ How do students work in groups, if at all, in our courses?
  ▪ What effect do collaborative learning activities have on our preferred outcomes? What happens to responses on active & collaborative learning items when pedagogical changes are made?
Possible Follow-Up 2

- **Individual investigation in class**
  - How much do my students participate in active and collaborative learning?
  - How do their responses fit with my preferences for these activities?
  - How can I effectively increase student learning by using active practices?
Possible Follow-Up 3

• Investigations in Key Departments
  ▪ Departmental investigations of the incorporation of active and collaborative practices in large classes
  ▪ Testing of pedagogical changes to promote active learning
  ▪ Use of student evaluation system to launch widespread classroom investigation of collaborative practice
Challenges

- Effectively disseminating institutional findings
- Key players making results useful to faculty
- Faculty paying enough attention and using institutional findings to inform their efforts
WE KNOW FACULTY ARE ENGAGED IN SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING... BUT NOT EVENLY SO
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scholarship of Teaching &amp; Learning Engagement Items</th>
<th>Very little</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Quite a bit</th>
<th>Very much</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using assessment findings to inform changes made to your courses</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systematically collecting information about the effectiveness of your teaching beyond end-of-term course evaluations</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborating with colleagues on improving teaching and learning</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publicly presenting information about teaching or learning</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publishing on teaching and learning</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Who does more scholarship of teaching and learning?

- **Tenure-track instructors** (even though they report less inst encouragement)
- **Those teaching graduate students**
- **Those who report higher levels of institutional encouragement**
- **Those in Education**
TOPIC 4

MOUNT ROYAL UNIVERSITY AND THE INSTITUTE FOR SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING
Case Study – Backstory

- **Institute for Scholarship of Teaching & Learning**
  - 100-years as Mount Royal College
  - University status and the role of research
  - Establishment of a research institute to promote a developmental approach to systematic scholarly inquiry into student learning
Case Study – Programming

• Institute for Scholarship of Teaching & Learning
  ▪ Teaching and Learning Scholars Program
  ▪ Scholars Writing Residencies
  ▪ Engaging Departments Initiative
  ▪ Scholarship in Progress Series
  ▪ Scholarship Network
  ▪ Canadian Forum (Calgary AB each May)
  ▪ Centennial Symposium (Banff AB each November)
Case Study – Integration

- Institute for Scholarship of Teaching & Learning
  - Scholar projects identification and scaffolding
  - Engaging departments in review and development
  - Harvard Assessment Seminar coordination
  - Office of Institutional Analysis and Planning
  - Office of the Provost and Academic Vice President
  - Recognition of integration in the academic plan
Case Study – Statistics

- **Institute for Scholarship of Teaching & Learning**
  - Full-time tenured faculty scholars – 45%
  - Full-time tenure track faculty scholars – 40%
  - Part-time faculty scholars – 15%

- **Institute for Scholarship of Teaching & Learning**
  - Assessment Seminar participation – 15%
  - Engaging Departments participation – 12%
  - Campus leadership (chairs, managers, etc.) – 33%
Case Study – Push-points

- **Institute for Scholarship of Teaching & Learning**
  - Faculty leaders and mentors
  - Departmental review and accreditation
  - Program and degree development
  - Institutional research committees
  - Campus initiatives and data conduits
  - Aspirations and distinctions
Preliminary Lessons (1)

• Scholarship of Teaching & Learning and institution-level assessment have much in common

• Yet rarely are they in conversation
  ▪ Structural issues?
  ▪ Lack of mutual awareness?
  ▪ Cultural issues?
  ▪ Lack of common language or purpose?
Preliminary Lessons (2)

• Build linkages between scholarship of teaching and learning & assessment groups on campus

• Schools/colleges and departments as a nexus or trading zone
  ▪ Partnership in common cause
  ▪ Link learning goals at multiple levels
  ▪ Create opportunities to share interests, findings, project ideas
Preliminary Lessons (3)

- Does accreditation influence faculty perceptions (and practice?)
  - Bring professions and arts & sciences into conversation about assessment, scholarship of teaching & learning

- Further challenges at both levels
  - Going public
  - Advancing the field