

## Formative Evaluation of Summer Institutes 2006: Grant Task 1.1.5

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### Assessment Institute

Dates: June 27, 28 and 29, 2006

Participants: 33 Teaching Faculty, Program Directors, Department Chairs and Administrators

Facilitators: [Barbara Walvoord](#), University of Notre Dame; UW-Stout Faculty and Title III Staff

#### Targeted Outcome and Logic of the Activity

As with all activities collectively addressing Objective 1, the Summer Institutes were intended to help *increase the retention and graduation rates* of students enrolled at the university. Towards these goals a series of Summer Institutes were deployed to serve specific areas of stakeholder development related to engaging students and facilitating their success. Embracing the Malcolm Baldrige philosophy that engaging students in quality education is the central pillar of student success and the core purpose of the university, UW-Stout was a pioneer in the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) that emphasizes agile and continuous improvement of curriculum and instruction. Since such ongoing improvement requires a comprehensive and current base of “institutional knowledge,” *the university strives to maintain and extend its operational knowledge by continually improving its assessment strategies, methods and measures*. Accordingly, institute activities were designed to increase participant knowledge, skills, abilities and resources as outlined below.

#### **Faculty Development Activities:**

- Review current “assessment in major” plans
- Create new strategies and methods for their programs. Emphasis placed on making program assessment manageable and valuable for students, instructors and program directors.
- Plan and development assessment electronic portfolio

## Executive Summary

Facilitated by a nationally recognized expert in the field of student assessment who was complemented by energetic staff and local faculty, the Assessment Institute was exceptionally well-received by participants. The Assessment Institute resulted in a significant improvement in the participants' self-reported knowledge and abilities related to simplifying assessment process for efficiency, and also using assessments to support a variety of decision making needs. Notably, participants were highly engaged throughout the majority of the activities, which is especially impressive given the size of the overall group. Additionally, engagement remained strong even during a critical incident that significantly disrupted the participants' ability to utilize the e-portfolio delivery tool; this continued focus was largely due to the ability of the institute facilitators and technical support staff to "fill the void" created by the collapse of service from the vendor. Besides increased understanding regarding assessment practices, participants left with tangible resources for planning, developing and implementing assessments for their courses/programs. Our central findings can be summarized as follows.

### Strengths of the Activity

- Participants much valued Dr. Walvoord's perspective and expertise, and they were much engaged through her methods of presentation and managing discussions. They also much appreciated learning from local colleagues and the support provided by the technical staff
- The level of engagement and interest throughout the institute is particularly encouraging in that it much supports the growth of the Baldrige "culture of assessment" that embraces the integrated use of local data to guide decision making across key organizational processes like instruction as well as program development and revision
- Exit polls indicate that the majority of the participants intended to continue learning more about how assessment relates to their level of operation in instruction (classroom, program, department) and several mentioned the need/desire for additional training or consultation
- Participants left with the basic foundations of individual action plans to implement what they learned ion the institute (see appendices for examples)

### Opportunities to Improve the Activity

- Better describe both the different applications of classroom and program assessments while also illustrating how they are hierarchically related
- Partition classroom assessment from program assessment training and align each to a more specified target audience
- Place greater emphasis on the *concept* of the e-portfolio versus the software delivery platform

### Action Plan for Improvement

- Tasking the institute facilitators with developing content and activities that would more *specifically target participants within each of several operational levels* within the university (classroom instructors, program directors, department chairs)

- Tasking the institute facilitators with developing content and activities that would more effectively *integrate participants across operational levels* within the university to better understand the vertical integration of assessment processes
- Tasking the institute facilitators with developing content and activities that present the conceptual foundations of the e-portfolio including distinctions between types of portfolios and their purposes, deriving assessment data from learning portfolios, embedded portfolio assignments and aligning/embedding portfolio review/assessment throughout the curriculum
- Developing and providing e-portfolio support resources for individuals and programs that are at various stages of e-portfolio conceptualization and deployment, and provide these separate from the Assessment Institute
- Renew and prioritize our review of alternative delivery platforms for the e-portfolio