Achieving Internal and External Accountability

Learning Outcomes Workshop
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“There is reason to feel that the general standards of college teaching in the United States have been, on the whole, commendably high. Unfortunately, when any one takes issue with this assertion, there is no convincing way of substantiating it. For college teachers have as yet devised no systematic means of having the results of their own work fairly evaluated. They have worked out no objective way of determining whether their work is good or bad.”
The Current Accountability Context

• Outcome-based rather than input- and process-based

• Increased interest in a standard assessment to find out what graduating seniors know

• Public reporting of performance information

• Rewards and sanctions
Accountability Dilemmas

- It is very hard to compare outcomes across universities because missions, goals, and student populations vary so widely.

- It is easier to measure student mastery of curriculum rather than cultivation of qualities.

- External accountability targets universities, but change is at the level of the individual or department.

- Accountability policies assume that external forces can cause universities to change internally.
External Accountability Alone Is Not Sufficient For Improvement

- Efforts to increase external accountability should be coupled with efforts to enhance department/university capacity

- Internally generated accountability can be a major source of cohesion within departments

- Accountability systems are only useful if they generate and focus attention on information relevant to teaching and learning
Cycle of Improvement to Improve Internal Accountability

- Set goals and align resources
- Instruct students
- Analyze data
- Gather and share data
- Use information to create action plans

Cycle of Instructional Improvement
Institutional self-accountability is what matters most
  ◦ Need to be clear about what our objectives are and whether we are achieving them
  ◦ Need to be willing to take ownership, empower individuals, and answer to results
Conclusion

“It is possible for us to assess ourselves in ways that will not only help institutions improve student learning, but might also create the norms and benchmarks that will enable us to move ahead nationally in our quest to improve the quality of undergraduate education.”

-- Katz, 2008, *Liberal Education*