

Chapter XIX: ASSESSMENT AND MOTIVATION

General editor: Motivation for students to do well, especially in the area of tests, is of particular importance, if we are to receive credible assessment information: The following is a 1995 report on possible methods of motivation made by the Subcommittee on Motivation. Obviously, not all that is suggested here is feasible; nevertheless, it is a topic that continues to need more attention.

Here are some recommendations and suggestions relating to how to improve the motivation of those involved in assessment:

It is the general consensus of the committee that lack of motivation is a substantial problem today in the assessment program. This lack of motivation (particularly by students but also by faculty, administration, and staff) leads to a lack of good faith effort in completing assessment instruments (such as tests and surveys). This lack of effort results in a decrease in the reliability of the information that we receive from these assessment instruments. And, in turn, the decreased reliability makes it more difficult to improve the curriculum and learning environment of the university and to demonstrate accountability to the public and to the state.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

In order to improve motivation, it is crucial that faculty, staff, administrators, and students realize the importance of assessment information in the decision-making of the university. This means that the administrators, divisional and discipline committees, Faculty Senate, Graduate Council, Undergraduate Council, etc., must use assessment information and communicate to others their use of assessment information. Some steps to improve this have occurred in the last year, but more must be done.

Assessment information must be more visible to faculty and students. One step in doing this would be to institute an assessment newsletter that regularly communicates assessment information and use to students, faculty, and staff. Such a newsletter could be included in *Truman Today* on a regular basis.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON TESTING:

1. Proctoring of the tests must be done in a professional manner. If the proctors make light of the tests, students will not take the tests seriously. One suggestion was to use GTRAs from counseling. Also, faculty presence (particularly at senior tests) would be helpful.
2. The testing environment is also important. The size, lighting, sound characteristics, etc. can contribute to the effectiveness of test taking. Perhaps one room or several rooms can be designed especially for this purpose.

3. Obviously a letter explaining the rationale of the testing should be sent to students; this is being done. Perhaps a five-minute video on the use of testing information could be shown prior to the test. Also, assessment information should be included as part of the students' socialization to the University through Admissions literature, presentations, and part of the orientation during Freshman Week.
4. Students who do well on the tests should be honored by the university. The honor should be within the range of most students. The committee discussed having two levels of honors: say, one at the 60th percentile level and one at the 80th. Students could note these honors on their resumes. The committee discussed whether the honor for the second general education exam should be based on increases in scores; however, the committee thought that would lead to "punting" the first exam.
5. The committee also discussed other incentives for doing well on the tests. One suggestion was to waive a student's graduation fees. Other suggestions related to honorary scholarships or book-fee scholarships. Another was that success on the test could result in scholarship-work being waived. We realize that these types of incentives may be controversial, but they should be seriously examined. (It is important to remember that the university itself is receiving funding from the state based on test results.)
6. Much of resistance to assessment occurs because it is done outside of a course context. Students may feel less resistance if assessment activities were embedded in particular courses. For example, the first general education test could be given in a freshmen seminar and the second, in a junior seminar. The senior test could be given in the senior capstone course; the committee discussed whether it should be allowable for the senior test score to count toward the grade in the capstone course. In some situations, if the test is given early enough, the faculty member could discuss the results of the test with his or her students.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON SURVEYS:

1. Some of the surveys could also be embedded in courses. This could increase the return rate for the ISS. If the surveys are given early in the semester, the students might be interested in seeing the results.
2. Students and faculty need to see how the survey information is used and can be used. Many might be impressed to see how survey information helped lead to improvements in the library, recreation center, etc.
3. If the surveys are not given in courses, other methods to increase the ISS return rate should be used. These methods might include posters or follow-ups by postcards and telephone.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON SOPHOMORE WRITING EXPERIENCE:

1. Sue Pieper reported that currently, faculty are considering proposing that the SWE be a prerequisite to enrolling for the junior year. This might cut down procrastination.
2. The number of steps to complete the SWE need to be reduced. Some measures to accomplish this are now being considered.
3. Again, student resistance to the SWE might be lowered if it was part of a course. Perhaps it might be one part of a junior-level interdisciplinary seminar. The writing sample would be on the topic of the course and thus would serve "double duty."

*The Subcommittee on Motivation consisted of:

Bryce Jones	Business and Accountancy
David Hoffman	Student Affairs
Sue Pieper	Director of Writing Assessment, Sophomore Writing Experience
Candy Young	Social Science (President of Faculty Senate)
Rebecca Ems	Student
Kyle Cope	Student
Jeff Weiland	Student