Assessment is about telling a story. A story of what you are doing, how it is working, and how it can work better. Therefore, to end the academic year, we have some assessment stories to share. We hope you find them not only entertaining, but enlightening. Assessment is important to help maintain the integrity and quality of all programs. Once upon a time…..

Once upon a time, in OIA land, the Assessment elves ungleefully noted that many units on campus were not doing annual updates of their assessment webpages. So the elves set out to find what evil forces were at bay. Eventually, they learned that the dragon guarding the assessment webpages made updating cumbersome and confusing. They also learned that the old leaders were gobbled up by the dragon before they could pass along existing assessment information to new heads or directors, so the new leaders were often starting from scratch. The elves held a tribunal and decided it was time to take action and slay the assessment dragon beast. One elf, Elaine Marchello, began the quest for a tool that would help the elves manage assessment of learning outcomes and rid the campus of its fiery dragon. After several vendor presentations, the elves settled on Taskstream, which will also help us with reports for our upcoming HLC accreditation visit (another dragon to slay). Because of that, the OIA Assessment elves will be working to move all units’ assessment reporting into Taskstream. When this task is complete, and the evil assessment dragon is vanguished, we will finally have a central location for units to store their assessment reporting, which will allow us to better track their progress and allow units continuity in their assessment of student learning outcomes.

Once upon a time, the GIDP, Second Language Teaching & Acquisition, wondered how they could accomplish learning-outcomes assessment, as the program only has volunteer faculty members and no assigned staff. Every day, as their Academic Program Review was “looming in the headlights,” they worried how they would be able to develop learning outcomes and assess them. One day, they decided that coordinating their program-wide assessment needed to be the new responsibility of a single Program Coordinator, with input from the Director and Executive Council. They also reached out to the OIA for help in developing their learning outcomes and assessment activities. Because of that, they learned about direct and indirect measures of student learning outcomes. Because of that, they did some “real hard thinking about what a learning outcome was, what an assessment tool was, whether it was measuring what it was supposed to, and how to go about implementing it.” At every step, the Program Coordinator said, “Whew! I’m glad that is finished!” Until finally they realized that “we were not finished. Assessment never ends! It is not something that you do and then are finished with until your next APR. Student learning outcome assessment could not be treated separately from our daily running of the program.” SLAT now has a robust system for collecting assessment data, utilizing Qualtrics surveys. And they were the only unit in this year’s APR cohort to earn 4s in all four of our rubric criteria!

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