

Assessment Task Force Report

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Purpose:

This task force will propose steps toward a 'culture of assessment' at OSUL. This could include exploring a variety of assessment methods; defining 'capital' in the library environment and proposing metrics for success; and identifying ways to build assessment into our decision-making processes.

Definition

A culture of assessment is a commitment to actively pursue improving performance throughout the organization in effort to enhance the customer experience and to promote academic and research excellence.

A culture of assessment influences decision-making and planning and it requires:

- examination of established processes and systems
 - infrastructure for successful execution
 - staff engagement
 - feedback loops and transparent processes
 - ongoing cycle of gathering, assessing, and responding to data
 - change responsiveness
 - sustainability
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Value Statement

Making the assessment process interesting, transparent, enjoyable and non-threatening will ultimately nourish a culture of assessment and facilitate staff participation from the roots to the fruit. Broad support and encouragement is required from all individuals within the organization. By empowering library personnel to contribute data from their day to day experience and provide creative input into its collection, evaluation and interpretation, OSU Libraries can improve its service to the University Community.

Why we think Assessment is important to the University Libraries and community

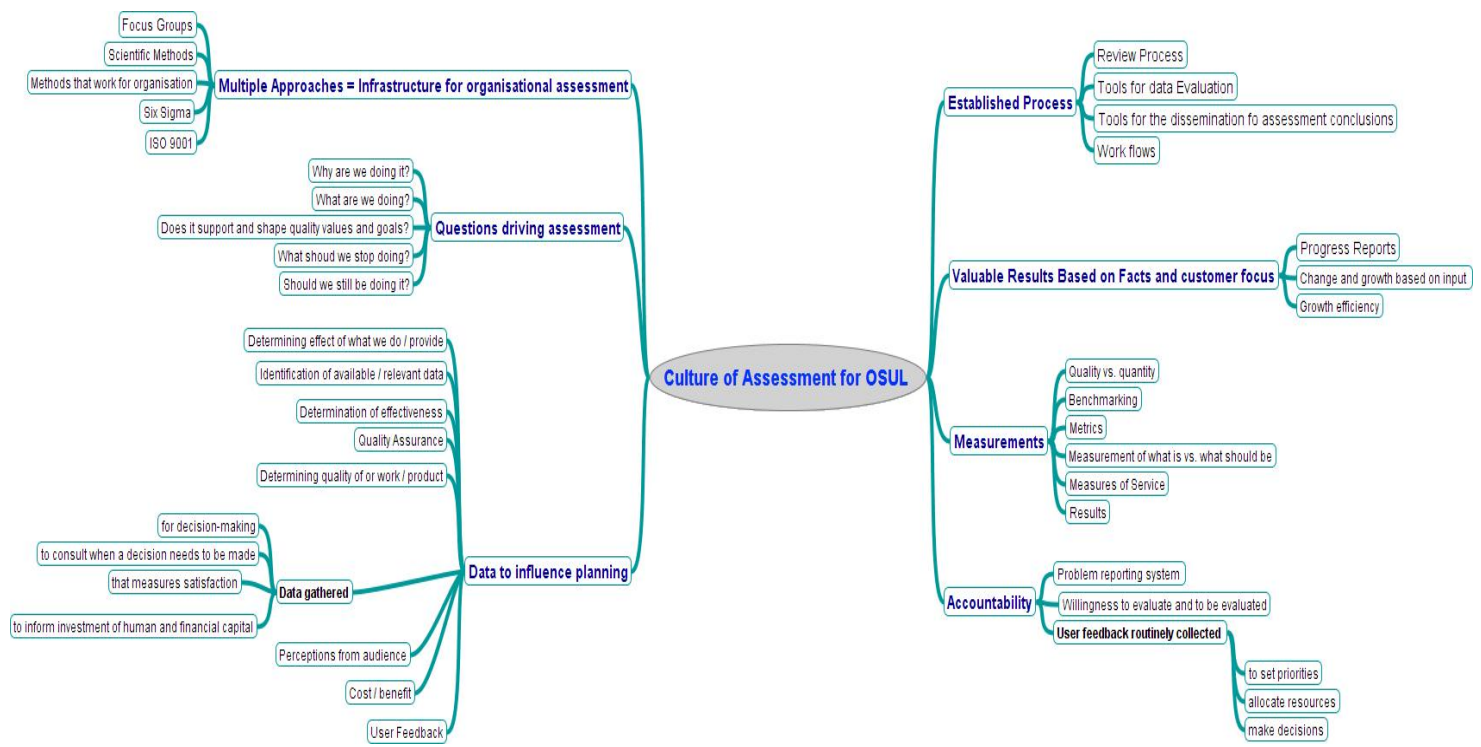
Because of the change in the current information landscape, the OSU Libraries needs to examine current and future initiatives in order to provide the most strategic allocation of resources. Questions to ask include . . .

- What are we currently engaged in?
- What impact are the Libraries having at a university level?
- What services do users need?
- What services do users want?

Such questions recognize that enterprise-wide buy in from the entire University Community is required to sustain current library operations and respond to the changing library and information needs of the University Community. Further, assessment is a critical component of carrying out other taskforce recommendations. Assessment practices also help to identify and promote OSU Libraries' unique resources.

Exploration

Defining our Culture of Assessment



Appreciative Inquiry

AI was developed as a result of a 1980 project in which "The Cleveland Clinic became the first large site where a conscious decision to use an inquiry focusing on life-giving factors forms the basis for an organizational analysis. The term 'Appreciative Inquiry' was first written about in an analytic footnote in the feedback report of 'emergent themes' by David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva for the Board of Governors of the Cleveland Clinic. The report created such a powerful and positive stir that the Board called for ways to use this method with the whole group practice."

(<http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/intro/timeline.cfm>) The Cleveland Clinic is world renowned for its accomplishments in its mission "to provide compassionate healthcare of the highest quality in a setting of education and research."

(http://my.clevelandclinic.org/about/overview/mission_history.aspx); The Cleveland Clinic focus on the patient care experience is one that resonates for libraries in considering users/customers as our priority. AI has been used for many different kinds of organizations and initiatives including educational, religious, community, corporate, diversity, health industries, social services,

military, and finance. There are a number of definitions of Appreciative Inquiry at <http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/intro/definition.cfm>, all of them building from what works, what is good in the organization. Definitions include: "Appreciative Inquiry is the cooperative search for the best in people, their organizations, and the world around them. It involves systematic discovery of what gives a system 'life' when it is most effective and capable in economic, ecological, and human terms. AI involves the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system's capacity to heighten positive potential." (Cooperrider, D. L. and Whitney, D. "Appreciative Inquiry: A Positive Revolution in Change." In *The Change Handbook*, P. Holman and T. Devane, eds., Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., p. 245-63.)

"AI is an exciting way to embrace organizational change. Its assumption is simple: Every organization has something that works right -- things that give it life when it is most alive, effective, successful, and connected in healthy ways to its stakeholders and communities. AI begins by identifying what is positive and connecting to it in ways that heighten energy and visitation for change. "...AI recognizes that every organization is an open system that depends on its human capital to bring its vision and purpose to life." "AI is important because it works to bring the whole organization together to build upon its positive core. AI encourages people to work together to promote a better understanding of the human system, the heartbeat of the organization." (Cooperrider, David L., Diana Whitney, and Jacqueline M. Stavros, *Appreciative Inquiry Handbook*, Lakeshore Communications, 2003.)

AI involves, in a central way, the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system's capacity to apprehend, anticipate, and heighten positive potential. It centrally involves the mobilization of inquiry through the crafting of the 'unconditional positive question'" (Cooperrider, David L., et al, *Appreciative Inquiry: Rethinking Human Organization Toward a Positive Theory of Change*, Stipes Publishing, 2000).

According to founder David L. Cooperrider, the differences between problem solving and appreciative inquiry are:

Problem solving	Appreciative inquiry
Identify Problem	Appreciate "what is" (What gives life?)
Conduct root cause analysis	Imagine "What might be"
Brainstorm solutions and analyze	Determine "What should be"
Develop action plans	Create "What will be"
Metaphor: Organizations are problems to be solved.	Metaphor: Organizations are a solution/mystery to be embraced.



David L. Cooperrider, "Appreciative Inquiry: The Positive Core of Change."
[http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/uploads/AI%20at%20Univ.of%20St%20Thomas%20and%20MN%20OD.PPT#317,4,Slide 4](http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/uploads/AI%20at%20Univ.of%20St%20Thomas%20and%20MN%20OD.PPT#317,4,Slide%204)

Columbus Metropolitan Library

The Columbus Metropolitan Library has created a Project Management and Quality (PMQ) department which serves as a support unit for all library operations. While CML started pursuing quality management two years ago, the project management focus was added ten months ago.

Currently, there are about 125 projects in progress throughout the CML system, ranging from staffing the Homework Help Center to setting-up and managing a call center for the entire CML library system. Projects are driven by the CML leadership team's tactical objectives and project teams are generally established by CML's leadership group. The PMQ department's basic purpose is to serve as a quality consulting group. In some instances, the PMQ department supports the project teams, answering specific questions via email and phone. In other instances, employees in the PMQ department actually sit on the project team, depending on the scope and importance of the project.

CML projects are currently operational in nature, focusing on process improvement through incremental change. CML tends to utilize Lean philosophies and techniques along with the Deming Plan-Do-Check-Act approach to maximize customer value for issues that involve working directly with the public, as they've found Six Sigma tends to work better for issues pertaining to Technical Services and Circulation processes. Further, with the variety of projects they have underway, CML does not want to dedicate itself to one methodology. It was noted, however, that ISO9001:2000 is being considered for some units, particularly finance.

The PMQ department consists of the department manager, a senior business analyst, and a quality improvement specialist. The department budget line mainly covers salaries. CML does have an enterprise wide license for the Microsoft Project and Visio software.

Toward a Culture of Assessment

Mrs. Cheryl J. Mason-Middleton

2 July 2008

Looking at the concept of a "culture of assessment," this writer took a generally simplistic approach to her research on the premise that the concept of assessment is a "tabula rasa" in the minds of most of the staff, and even some of the faculty in the libraries' system.

This "great unknown" carries with it all the implications of threatening unwanted change, and a diminishing of the importance of individuals and their

contributions; and has in all veracity, been seen to demonstrate a capacity for these dehumanizing qualities, even when such a view is unjustified and the true intention is to simply figure out what works and what does not. The tools of assessment are only designed to provide statistical results that indicate where change is beneficial. The development of these tools and their use in a *transparent environment* that involves the individuals who will be most effected by the data that is collected and analyzed is key to setting aside this atmosphere of the "great unknown."

That being said, and with an eye for uninformed simplicity, this writer began her research with the simply search phrase "library assessment methodology" and applied it in the Altavista search engine:

<<http://www.altavista.com/web/results?itag=ody&q=library+assessment+methodology&kgs=1&kls=0>>.

In this search, she came upon the Syracuse University, Office of Instructional Research and Assessment (OIRA): <<http://oira.syr.edu/oira/>>. OIRA presents a one-stop-shopping location that provides, is the simplest of terms and broadest of avenues, support and oversight of the development of assessment projects, as well as an informational resource that defines the scope of assessment at Syracuse University (SU).

There are a few things that stand out:

1. The potentials and implications are clearly defined and transparently presented to anyone interested and involved in assessment at SU.
2. Services are put in place and are made available for the support of departmental assessment projects, as well as leading assessment projects directly from OIRA. This includes an online form for groups developing an assessment project to fill in and submit for evaluation and guidance in their project.
3. A library of resources is available through OIRA that provides literature and research resources leading to the development of assessment projects, as well as reporting on the progress and results of assessment as SU.

Among the resources available through the OIRA web site the following grace their main menu of options:

- Institutional Research and Assessment Coordination (coordination through the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment)
- Accreditation (assistance in the development and review of accreditation self-studies)
- Assessment (support for faculty and staff)
- Internal Research (OIRA conducted research on topics of importance to the University)
- National Research Studies (support for participation in studies external to SU that assess nationally gathered data)

- Institutional Reporting (coordinating the collection and reporting of data for a variety of external and internal purposes)
- Sponsored Research (provide support in the development and the implementation of assessment or evaluation plans)

The implications for the development of a "culture of assessment" that OIRA represents for the modeling of an assessment support system in the OSU Libraries are apparent in these avenues for further study:

- Can we develop an in house system of support for individual department assessment studies, providing the resources for collection, development and evaluation of data, and allowing the departments themselves interpret the data for their benefit?
- Can we provide a link to a "resource library" gleaned from our already extensive OSUL collection that points to literature related to developing studies and interpreting their data? (Keyword: Library Assessment Methodology)
- Can we make a fully transparent program of assessment that encourages faculty and staff to make use of its resources and set aside concerns generated in the "great unknown?"

These are just a few preliminary thoughts that might promote the kind of encouraging "culture of assessment" that may be beneficial to the Libraries and to our entire faculty and staff.

Ohio State University's Goals and Comparisons with Peer Institutions: How Does the Libraries Fit in?

Assessment takes place within a broad context that includes both institutional goals and a comparative framework providing perspectives on the assessment.

The Ohio State University's [Office of Academic Affairs](#) web site presents the evolving goals of the university and the process by which OAA measures progress toward those goals in comparison with benchmark institutions.

The Budget System Advisory Committee's [Final Report](#), one of the recent additions to that web site, includes the following statement as its first recommendation: "All University resources should be used to promote academic and research excellence."

OAA's Office of [Institutional Research and Planning](#) maintains comparative metrics and "serves as a resource for the university on assessment issues." IRP compiles annually a progress report on [Strategic Indicators](#) which was 233 pages in 2007. Some library services were monitored in questionnaires.

An assessment program within the Libraries should focus, at least in part, on OSUL services that relate to the **Key Initiatives** listed on the OAA web site:

1. [Strategic Planning](#)
2. [Targeted Investments in Excellence](#)
3. [Internationalizing the University](#)
4. [Undergraduate Curriculum Reform](#)
5. [Colleges of the Arts and Sciences Review](#)
6. [Doctoral Program Review](#)

Another context within which OSUL operates is the emerging [University System of Ohio](#). [OhioLink](#) is linked from USO's web site and mentioned in the [USO Strategic Plan](#) that includes a number of measures that will be monitored for progress toward goals.

In order for the Libraries' collections and services to be incorporated into institutional metrics such as those used by OAA and USO, they must be related to the kinds of outcomes that they are increasingly stressing. For example, rather than emphasizing course enrollments, BSAC looks at how many OSU graduates are admitted into elite law and medical schools. USO also values Ohio State as the "flagship" university, but also stresses the added value to the state that comes from the interconnectedness of Ohio's colleges and universities.

Implementing a "culture of assessment" within the Libraries provides an opportunity to connect the dots between investments made in library and information resources/services and the outcomes that impact the university's strategic indicators and the USO's strategic plan. A communication plan to report on assessment activities undertaken throughout the Libraries is needed, so that the Libraries contributions to the university and the state are better understood and appreciated.

ISO 9001 - virtues

There are a number of reasons for thinking that ISO 9000 might be worth considering for OSU Libraries. In addition to successful applications within organizations concerned with information management (see above), ISO 9000 has a number of notable virtues, including the following:

- Facilitate a systematic and effective approach to planning, doing, checking and acting so as to deliver excellent customer service
- Accountability - empowers employees
- Transparency - shows everyone what you are doing:
- Audit program - cyclical internal quality checks which are integrated into the work process are less likely to cause disruption and may produce more meaningful results
- Procedures and guidelines - facilitate the monitoring and measuring of an organization's performance and allow for implementing changes where needed
- Provide a set of non-prescriptive and flexible standards that can be applied to existing and new work practices as they arise

Social Capital

Ultimately, a positive culture of assessment will increase social capital, both within the Libraries and in communities beyond. However, certain elements are needed to establish this culture.

Using the World Bank's Social Capital Implementation Framework (<http://go.worldbank.org/BSM1HUUIT0>) as a guide, below are their five dimensions of social capital and how they are essential to the Libraries' culture of assessment:

Groups and Networks - organizational structure which includes both the formal, official hierarchy of an institution, as well as more informal social networks - each person must understand their position in relation to the Libraries as a whole - what is their role? How are they, personally, important to the Libraries' success?

Trust and Solidarity - essential for groups to resolve conflicts and reach agreements - builds slowly over time as people are appreciated and treated with respect - people need to know their work is important and appreciated - everyone, especially leaders, must be held accountable.

Collective Action and Cooperation - group effort of concerned, mindful individuals to make improvements on a larger scale - as individuals are involved

in decision-making and produce positive results; others will see those results and want to become involved as well.

Social Cohesion and Inclusion - working together, not in-fighting - eliminating barriers (physical, social, etc.) so that all may participate - knowing our co-workers in other departments helps to humanize interactions, instead of dealing with faceless operations.

Information and Communication - information must be accurate and complete - treat others with respect - open dialog and transparent decision-making processes are the lifeblood of an organization - honest communication without condescension - when people are kept "in the dark" and excluded from communications, trust is destroyed and this framework collapses.

Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation Assessment Initiative

The primary intention of the Dodge Assessment Initiative is to 'help organizations "measure what matters" most to them, operating on the principle that "if you measure what you value, then people will value what you measure."' One of the initiatives funded by the Dodge Foundation is the Center for Whole Communities which is trying to redefine success in land conservation and "takes a holistic, systems-thinking approach to land preservation, community building, and social justice." The Center for Whole Communities *Whole Measures* Guiding Principles:

1. Process is as important as product. Measurement and assessment processes should empower participants and contribute to the positive benefits we seek (i.e., not just measuring "justice and fairness," but actually building them through the use of the tool).
2. Reflection and articulation - both individual and collective - of what matters most to us and the impacts of our actions are essential parts of any change process.
3. The practice of dialogue (including openness, listening for understanding, speaking honestly, and suspending judgment) contributes to understanding, learning and developing new ways of thinking and working together.
4. Relationships are primary. Our tools and processes must help us see and better understand the relationships between the parts and the whole; the relationships among our activities/programs, our organizational mission and the larger vision we have for our culture and society; and the relationships between the health of the land and the health of the people.
5. Individual, organizational and community change will be sustained more effectively when we inspire, model and make visible positive action, not prescribe or demand it.

6. We respect and honor the capacities and assets of all people. Assessment processes can and should be people-focused, accessible and democratic.
 7. People learn and engage in different ways. Our tools and processes should promote the fullest and most diverse participation possible through.
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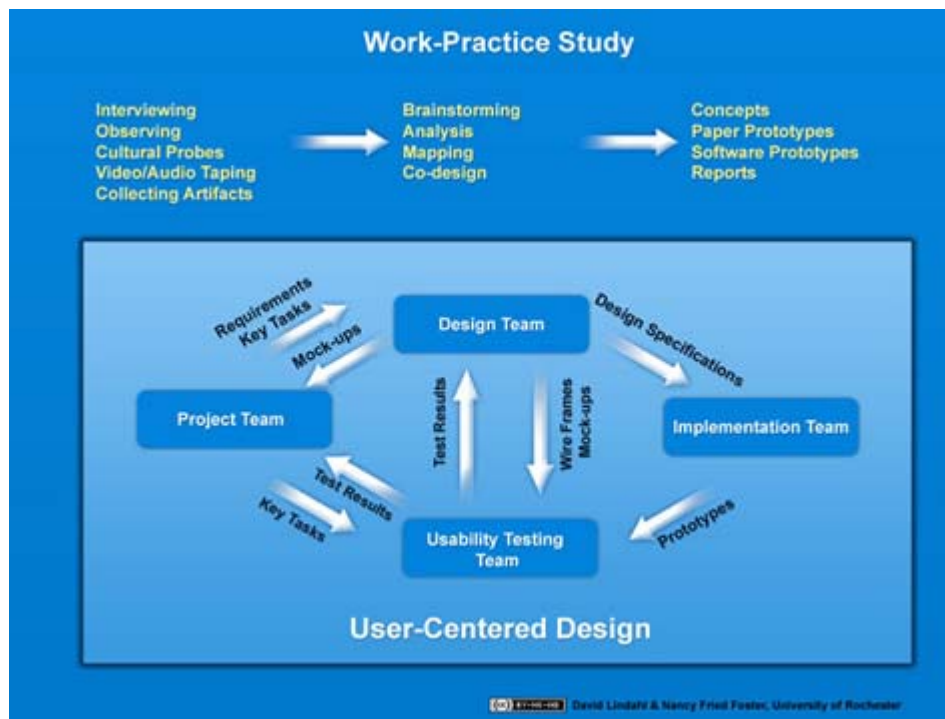
Qualitative Research

Includes: Ethnographic Studies; User Studies; Work Practice Studies; Action Research, etc

Working on the U Rochester's Extensible Catalog user study team at Ohio State, several OSUL faculty and staff are being trained in ethnographic/qualitative research methods that could be used more broadly at OSUL.

This approach relies on in-depth interviews with a small number of users, followed by penetrating analysis of the interview video and audio tapes and transcripts of the interviews. The resulting analysis then is used during an assessment cycle, ultimately feeding into system or service design. At UR these methods have been used in designing everything from systems to web pages to the arrangement of furniture in their library (See: [Studying Students](#)).

A graphic in the article [Participatory Design of Websites with Web Design Workshops](#) By Nancy Fried Foster, Nora Dimmock, and Alison Bersani (The Code4Lib Journal no. 2) provides an overview of the methodology and how various phases fit together:



Blue Sky Vision

Our Blue Sky Vision of a culture of assessment for OSU Libraries is one in which assessment is at the core of its vision, goals and objectives. Much can be done to encourage conscious efforts to maintain high quality standards and improve performance, both on individual and organizational levels. We found the theory and practice of *Appreciative Inquiry* to be inspirational for fostering long term positive change. This flexible approach supports an environment in which multiple assessment strategies can be deployed at appropriate times in order to best meet the identified needs.

Our assessment culture should be based on demonstrating and communicating our value to the University and the community at large. Trust, transparent decision-making, clear communication, and cohesion throughout the system at all levels needs to be present at the onset to establish a positive culture of assessment.

Programming - Quick Hits and Long Term Recommendations

1. Creating a Culture of Assessment

Quick Hit: Recommend that the charge of the *Assessment Committee* support the proposed definition of a culture of assessment for OSU Libraries.

Quick Hit: Appoint a member of the executive committee to serve as ex officio on *Assessment Committee*.

Long Term Recommendation: Propose an administrative level position for Assessment, Planning and Organizational Development.

Significant responsibilities of the position include:

- support OSU Libraries' culture of assessment
- represent the goals and objectives of OSU Libraries strategic assessment planning process
- enable assessment projects to go through the appropriate methodology cycles
- advocate continuous change and response to assessment outcomes
- promote continuous staff development in assessment methodologies
- create guidelines and templates for current and future assessment
- remain current in the field of assessment in general
- monitor current assessment initiatives and projects in and around OSU community
- build a knowledge base of assessment practices

Quick Hit: Create an Online suggestion box with timely responses.

Long Term Recommendation: Develop and implement an ongoing program to ensure that we are listening and responding to the voice of the customer.

2. Piloting Appreciative Inquiry Methodology

Quick Hit: Identify and support an appropriate OSU Libraries representative to take David Cooperrider's *Appreciative Inquiry* online course in Fall 2008.

Quick Hit: Representative to deliver train the trainer session on *Appreciative Inquiry* methodology.

Quick Hit: Identify a unit to undertake *Appreciative Inquiry* pilot project.

Long Term Recommendation: Invite David Cooperrider to give a seminar at OSU Libraries on *Appreciative Inquiry*.

Long Term Recommendation: Expand use of Appreciative Inquiry as the basis of OSU Libraries' culture of assessment which may also accommodate other appropriate assessment methodologies (Lean, Six Sigma, ISO 9001 certification and others).

Long Term Recommendation: Provide incentives program to recognize and encourage quality assessment.

3. Evaluate Current Performance Assessment Processes

Quick Hit: Reevaluate spot bonus effectiveness and consider alternatives.

Long Term Recommendation: Revise performance review process to incorporate responsibility for assessment at the individual level.

4. Marketing of Culture of Assessment

Quick Hit: Kickoff event for AI with assessment success stories with wide representation throughout OSU Libraries.

Quick Hit and Ongoing: Create a website on assessment, place to advertise successful projects and to display results of assessment practices.

Long Term Recommendation: Market OSU Libraries' culture of assessment to OSU and other communities.

Long Term Recommendation: Establish relationships with Assessment Communities such as the Appreciative Inquiry Commons and contribute to the field of assessment.

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