Matthew B. Fuller, Ph.D. assessculture@shsu.edu

The Survey of Assessment Culture

Conceptual Framework

Introduction

Higher education assessment practitioners face an increasingly complex state of affairs. A wide array of methods represents the core of knowledge regarding the practice of assessment and there is no shortage of handbooks and "best practice" guides pertaining to how to conduct assessment (See Allen, 2004; 2006; Bresciani, 2006; 2007; Bresciani, Gardner, & Hickmott, 2009a; 2009b; Bresciani, Zelna, & Anderson, 2004; Maki, 2010; Suskie, 2009; Upcraft & Schuh, 1996; Walvrood & Anderson, 2010). Technological advances have enabled a plethora of surveys, new media for interview methodologies, and advanced abilities to collect and store artifacts of student learning. Statistical analysis software packages are now mainstays in offices when two or three decades ago, such resources were rare and usually housed in exclusive research centers on campuses. Furthermore, scholarly efforts have firmly entrenched a variety of valid and reliable methods for collecting data on student learning, development, ethics, engagement, spirituality, and numerous other constructs (See for example Astin, 1991; 2004; Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Colby et al., 2007; Gonyea & Kuh, 2009; Higher Education Research Institute, 2011). Surveys, interviews, video artifacts, written essays, standardized exam scores, demonstrations, document analyses, and portfolios have emerged as accepted and widely-used methods with which most assessment practitioners are familiar.

This strong methodological foundation for assessment has allowed many advances in the role of assessment in institutions. Each semester a great deal of energy and resources are expended gathering, analyzing, interpreting, disseminating, and using results from assessment processes supported by a strong body of scholarly literature regarding effective methodologies and practices.

Because of this strong methodological guidance, assessment has evolved from a useful tool for exploring student learning to a professional expectation in contemporary higher education.

Yet, the precipitous advent of assessment in higher education warrants a deeper consideration of its philosophy and logic. The strong body of methodological guidance has overshadowed the deeper, philosophical reasons assessment is done. The advancement of methods into common assessment practice has outpaced the exploration of questions regarding the meaning and value of assessment, leaving assessment practitioners with much guidance on how to do assessment and little guidance on why assessment is done. Why does assessment exist in the manner it does on certain campuses? What are the major social discourses assessment serves? Does assessment serve student needs, accountability, or business models in higher education? How and under what circumstances are the foundations of an institution's assessment practices laid? These and many other questions are explored under a thread of scholarly literature dealing with a *culture of assessment in higher education.*

What is a Culture of Assessment?

Popularly theorized by noted assessment scholar, Trudy Banta (1993, 2002), a culture of assessment, refers to the deeply embedded values and beliefs collectively held by members of an institution influencing assessment practices on their campus (Banta & Associates, 2002; Banta, et al., 1996). A culture of assessment is the primary and often unexplored system undergirding assessment practice on a campus. It is the system of thought and action reinforcing what "good" conduct of assessment looks like on a campus. Weiner (2009) defines a culture of assessment as the extent to which "the predominating attitudes and behaviors that characterize the functioning of an institution support the assessment of student learning outcomes" (para. 1). She further organizes a culture of assessment according to fifteen major elements: 1) General education goals, 2) common use of

assessment terms, 3) faculty ownership, 4) ongoing professional development, 5) administrative support and understanding, 6) practical, sustainable assessment plan, 7) systematic assessment, 8) student learning outcomes, 9) comprehensive program review, 10) assessment of co-curricular activities, 11) institutional effectiveness, 12) information sharing, 13) planning and budgeting, 14) celebration of success, and 15) new initiatives. With her focus on general education and (to a lesser extent) co-curricular activities, Weiner's model is very specific to form and predominantly focused on undergraduate education, though, arguably, the benefits of Weiner's kind of culture of assessment would also support graduate education. Moreover, Weiner's definition assumes that student learning is the reason assessment is done. While certainly a focus on student learning is critical to meaningful assessment, many institutions focus their assessment efforts on other purposes (i.e. accreditation, accountability, institutional politics, or control), often to the detriment of student learning assessment. To neglect the exploration of these other forms neglects the exploration of the primary contrasts to assessment of student learning and does not equip assessment practitioners to make meaningful change on their campuses.

Another useful and meaningful framework—one describing a culture of assessment more broadly—is Maki's (2010) *Principles of an Inclusive Commitment*. Maki's *Principles* describe the structure of institutional partnerships, which, when operating efficiently, indicate a commitment to assessment of student learning. Maki (2010, p. 9) writes:

> An inclusive commitment to assessment of student learning is established when it is (1) meaningfully anchored in the educational values of an institution—articulated in a principles-of-commitment statement; (2) intentionally designed to foster interrelated positions of inquiry about the efficacy of education practices among educators, students, and the institution itself as a learning organization; and (3) woven into roles and responsibilities

> across an institution from the chief executive officer through senior administrators, faculty leaders, faculty, staff, and students. (p. 3)

Maki then extends her description of meaningful anchors for assessment; that is, forces that provide assessment with much of its meaning in a variety of institutional cultures. For example, accountability, accreditation, reputation, access to financial resources, and inquiry into what students learn may all provide meaning to assessment given the multitude of institutional contexts (Maki, 2010). Drawing from Maki's work, a culture of assessment is defined (in this research endeavor) as the *overarching ethos that is both an artifact of the way in which assessment is done and simultaneously a factor influencing and augmenting assessment practice.*

The assessment methods and activities an institution chooses to employ or engage in are a reflection of institutional values, pressures on the institution, and assumptions about learning and, as such, are perhaps the best source of evidence about an institution's culture of assessment. Courts and McInerney (1993) argue "the approaches to assessment we choose to adopt, adapt, or create will reflect our assumptions about the nature of learning and the roles of the participants" (p. 27) and Astin (1991) states "an institution's assessment practices are a reflection of its values" (p. 3). The connections between assessment activities and institutional values speak volumes about what an institutional community finds worthy, what it is concerned about, how it intends to conduct itself, and what it celebrates, supports, or disdains. These activities reveal, in part, the root purposes of assessment on a campus. By exploring how an institution's assessment activities reflect its values and commitments, researchers and practitioners can begin to explain what institutions truly value in assessment. Do an institution's activities demonstrate clearly that the institutional community values and is committed to student learning? When students, parents, and community leaders are first introduced to assessment activities, what messages about the institution's commitments do they

receive? Do an institution's assessment practices demonstrate a commitment to supporting students' learning and development? Or, are they indicative of a culture of compliance with external mandates?

Assessment culture is often assumed to be a positive force because its purported benefits are highly desirable. In reality, an assessment culture can be strong while also being detrimental to student learning. A strong culture of assessment is touted to lead to improved participation in assessment processes, improved results, and, perhaps, most importantly, improved student learning (Ewell, 2002; Banta, 2002; Maki, 2010, Suskie, 2009). However, a strong culture of assessment might also be committed to the rote compliance with external mandates or warding off fears of external "intrusion." Those cultures that preclude or "offset" a focus on student learning in assessment are often important, powerful, and highly symbolic. It is important to recognize the necessity of balance in the cultures and anchors of assessment (Maki, 2010). Often, assessment is criticized (especially by faculty) for an exclusive focus on meeting bureaucratic ends; serving accountability, finance, and accreditation for example (Driscoll, de Noriega, & Ramaley, 2006; Banta & Moffett, 1987). In contrast, assessment that serves only the aims of improving student learning often neglects important institutional processes such as program review, accreditation, or planning. Instead, a healthy balance of assessment cultures is needed and a tool capable of exploring and measuring this balance is needed.

Overview of the Problem

Despite a respectable amount of literature, the culture of assessment on a campus is so integral to assessment practice it often remains unexplored and tacitly explained. While the literature on assessment voluminously advocates for the advancement of a culture of assessment—proffering several key benefits of this advancement—little mention is made in the literature about the logic

underlying how, precisely, a culture of assessment influences student learning. Most of the literature appears to be founded on the assumption that a strong culture of assessment—however operationalized or defined—will result in improved student learning. This tacit assumption has yet to be studied in any great detail or by focusing on representative samples of assessment practitioners. In fact, numerous authors (Astin, 1991; Gunzenhauser, 2003; Mentkowski et al., 1991; Peterson & Vaughan, 2002; Postman, 1995) advocate for additional explorations into the logic and philosophy of assessment.

Without a more comprehensive exploration, the concept of "a culture of assessment," will continue to operate as what Gunzenhauser (2003) terms a "default philosophy" (p. 52): a philosophy entrenched in a phenomenon simply because no other philosophy is defined. Under such situations, the cultural hegemony of "that's the way we've always done assessment," remains firmly entrenched with little criticism of the anchors, forms, and purposes of assessment and its role in a campus community. How does a culture of assessment influence student learning? What are some key components of a strong or weak culture of assessment? How can a campus' culture of assessment be augmented and with what effect? These questions are at the heart of why a culture of assessment is considered so powerful, yet equally unexamined. These are challenging questions and conditions upon which to reflect and assessment practitioners have been provided ample pressure to engage in such reflections of their practice, yet little insights into what other colleagues are doing and how assessment culture is developed. While the focus of scholarly discourse has turned to forms of assessment (i.e. the usefulness of survey or tests in higher education), the usefulness of various forms of assessment will never be fully realized without a comprehensive understanding of the contexts in which assessment operates; that is, an institution's culture of assessment. Postman (1995) posits

> [A philosophy of education] has nothing whatsoever to do with computers, with testing, with teacher accountability, with class size, and with the other details of managing schools. The right answer depends on two things, and two things alone: the existence of shared narratives and the capacity of such narratives to provide an inspired reason for schooling. (p. 18)

What shared narratives do a culture of assessment engender in faculty? Staff? Students? Parents? How are these shared narratives instilled? How does a culture of assessment act as a binding ethic that draws everyone together in support of assessment and, thus, high-quality student learning? Until the assessment profession considers its shared narratives, it is likely to remain a null-event; a process with little or no effect on the quality of higher education.

The fact that assessment often results in so little of value is a challenge addressed by numerous scholars (Astin, 1991; Mentkowski et al., 1991; Peterson & Vaughn, 2002). Mentkowski et al. (1991) contends one of the reasons assessment has failed to have the impact many practitioners had hoped it would is that institutional cultures do not "allow other ways of knowing to surface in the assessment process. There is a hegemony of traditional psychometric theory and ways of knowing" (p. 17). Scholars, such as Banta and Moffett (1987), Bresciani, Gardner, and Hickmott (2009), and Suskie (2009) have also noted the difficulty in "proving" assessment makes a difference in improving student learning as the relationship of assessment to student learning is situated at a critical nexus of the complex relationship between the institution and students. Given the myriad influences on and complexity of assessment, proof in the form of a causal relationship will likely not emerge.

This situation is detrimental to many assessment practitioners and the scholarly literature on assessment for many reasons; the most dubious of which is the fact that without a more clearly

articulated logic assessment practitioners will continue to struggle to instill a culture that will likely never "measure up" to expectations of how a strong culture of assessment should look. While the literature touts the benefits and necessity of a culture of assessment—urging pursuit of a strong culture of assessment—practitioners are simultaneously left with little guidance on the factors that influence the emergence of a strong assessment culture. How can assessment practitioners confront the challenges, the slow evolution of a culture of assessment, or struggles for excellence in higher education, without guidance and scholarly theories pertaining to this phenomenon?

Why is the *Survey of Assessment Culture* a Valid Solution to this Problem?

More information is needed regarding how institutional values and attitudes advance or hinder assessment practices that favor student learning. American assessment scholars and practitioners are currently operating with a dearth of information about how assessment culture is developed, the factors influencing assessment culture, and means of augmenting institutional contexts to support assessment. While much is known about how assessment is done, little is known about how assessment acts as a phenomenon in institutional contexts to precipitate change.

To this end, the *Survey of Assessment Culture* gathers information about the status of institutional contexts and assessment culture on America's college and university campuses. The survey is designed using Maki's (2010) *Principles of an Inclusive Commitment* and gathers information on participant's roles and responsibilities in institutional assessment. Since assessment is not administered or structured the same from institution to institution, allowing participants the opportunity to qualify their role in assessment is vital. The *Survey of Assessment Culture* also focuses on a population of higher education leaders with highly meaningful and insightful perspectives: assessment practitioners. The *Survey of Assessment Culture* makes use of a new research construct and term; the idea of a *Chief Assessment Officer*. This person is the primary contact for assessment-related

issues on a campus; the person whose sole responsibilities are the administration of an institution's assessment program. By surveying the extent to which a participant matches this role description, researchers can explore the state and development of assessment culture as the Chief Assessment Officer is often the primary change agent in assessment culture. Using public and electronic information resources, a unique population of institutional leaders—many of whom are Chief Assessment Officers—can be developed and procedures for developing and surveying this sample of participants are discussed in greater detail below.

Research Questions

This long-range study focuses, first, on defining the state of assessment cultures on America's college and university campuses and, second, exploring the factors that influence these cultures. What does a strong culture of assessment look like? How is it developed and who leads these developments? What are specific forms of assessment cultures and what are their aims, anchors, strengths, or weaknesses? This study explores these and other questions; comprehensively examining the state of assessment culture on a representative sample of college and university campuses. This initial exploration is meant to serve future studies and explorations of issues related to the development of assessment culture and the emergence of cultures of commitment or compliance. Using exploratory and later, confirmatory factor analysis methods, this initial study will develop models for theorizing and discussing cultures of assessment in a novel way. The description of these factors using empirical evidence will be a meaningful contribution to the literature on assessment cultures.

In the future, additional studies will be conducted and the potential to address a variety of other issues related to the description, development, and study of a culture of assessment is high. Comparisons and descriptions of differences in assessment cultures—say, for example, according to

institutional type, funding support, or a variety of other factors—could prove useful in theorizing about a culture of assessment. These comparisons and resulting literature will be useful in understanding the current state of assessment culture and in offering a platform for scholarly dialogue. Moreover, explorations of relationships between a culture of assessment and factor contributing or hindering its advancement will also be beneficial to the community of assessment scholars and practitioners.

Sample and Population of Interest

Most studies related to assessment practices have utilized samples of convenience; surveying scholars on listserves, members of professional organizations, or professionals in a given, limited regional area or a single campus. Very few studies (Kuh & Ikenberry, 2009) call upon a representative sample of academic leaders at institutions across America. Many of limitations of prior studies—and professional inabilities to theorize and discuss a culture of assessment—stem from the challenges in identifying and contacting a representative sample of assessment practitioners. Moreover, assessment is not administered, organized, or structured in any standard form from institution to institution. Nonetheless, this situates assessment to best respond to a variety of institutional contexts, a complex array of missions, and unique pressures of the diverse populations American higher education institutions serve. At any one institution the presence and prevalence of assessment may range from non-existent, to being administered in several decentralized locations or one central office, or led by multiple organizations with complex relationships (Bauer, 2003). Compound these diverse approaches by seeking advice from multiple institutions across the nation and, quickly, one gets the sense of how challenging solicitation of assessment practitioners' perspective could be.

The primary method to manage this challenge rests with the unit of focus of this survey: *the institution*. The culture of assessment should be a collective institutional commitment (Maki, 2010). At minimum, it is a phenomenon that can be studied as an institutional context; an aspect of an institution's organization, its people, and its values. By establishing the institution as the unit of analysis, a variety of assessment and educational leaders can—regardless of rank or role—contribute to this research. By offering participants opportunities to qualify and explain their role in assessment, useful and valid information may be collected and, if needs be, data can be sorted according to institutional role, rank, or designation as a Chief Assessment Officer for example.

The population of institutions for this survey is constructed using The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (2010) and the Higher Education Directory (2010). First, the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education was used to identify all undergraduate and graduate degree-granting institutions in America. Institutions without a Carnegie classification or with no enrollment were removed from the population list. At this point, the Higher Education Directory was used to identify directors of institutional research and/or assessment at all institutions and email, mailing, and phone contact information was imported into the population file. Certainly, many institutional research directors will have assessment as their responsibility, though some may not. Since the Higher Education Directory does not currently have a field of Chief Assessment Officer contact information in its institutional profiles, Directors of institutional research are likely to know whom serves in this capacity if they do not serve as such. From here a stratified sample of institutions was developed, stratifying based upon undergraduate and graduate degree status, Carnegie full-time enrollment classification, and geographic region. In regards to the geographic region, institutions were categorized according to their regional accreditation association. However, regional accreditation is a voluntary process and, in order to include those institutions not

regionally accredited, geographic region reflected accreditation region so as to maintain the presence of non-regionally-accredited, degree-granting institutions in the population.

The Higher Education Directory is a voluntary publication, to which many institutions subscribe and in which many professionals' contact information can be found. However, not all institutions on the Carnegie Classification list submit contact information to the Higher Education Directory. Institutions that did not include information the Higher Education Directory, but were sampled for participation underwent a status check using institutional websites to determine if these institutions were eligible for participation in the study and to gather contact information for participants. If an institution was selected for participation, but was found to be ineligible for participation based upon the aforementioned criteria, another institution in same cell as the ineligible institution was randomly selected from the stratified sample matrix. In order to ensure the best chance to receive a useable and representative data, the population was over-sampled by a factor of three times the necessary sample size; a technique favored by Suskie (1996).

Some institutions did not have a director of institutional research or assessment listed in the Higher Education Directory or on their institutional webpage. In this instance, the Provost was selected as the participant for this institution. In choosing assessment or institutional research directors, the hope was to identify and solicit feedback from individuals for whom institution-level assessment was their primary responsibility. Ideally, the person whose sole responsibility is administering the institution's assessment functions—the Chief Assessment Officer—would be the primary participant for this survey. However, not all institutions employ a Chief Assessment Officer or employ anyone with institution-level responsibilities for assessment. Most, institutions do, however, employ a Provost or President for whom assessment activities are pertinent. The survey opens with a series of questions that asks participants to describe their role in assessment and to

identify the person on campus whom serves as the Chief Assessment Office. Originally-invited participants can provide the name of a Chief Assessment Officer who, once identified, will be invited to receive the survey. As the unit of analysis is the institution and not a specific academic leader, a plan for dealing with such "gatekeeper" participants must be developed. If a participant identified another employee on their campus as the Chief Assessment Officer, this new participant is sent a copy of the survey. The original participant and the newly invited participant can both complete the survey as, again, the level of analysis is the institution. It is likely that many institutions will have no Chief Assessment Officer, but will have Directors, Provosts, and Presidents whom lead institution assessment efforts (i.e. assessment is not their sole responsibility). In this event, when an institution is sampled for inclusion in the participant database, if a Director of institutional research or assessment cannot be identified, the Provost is included in the participation file. In extremely rare instances, the President of an institution may serve as the Provost/Chief Academic Officer. In such instances or in rare instances in which a Provost is not available, the President is selected as a participant.

Following data collection, responses will be filtered to ensure that every responding institution has one and only one response. In the event of a mutli-response conflict, responses will be filtered to include only the responses of the single participant at the lowest level of hierarchy in the institution; the person "in the trenches." This is done because the survey asks questions about senior leaders such as Provosts and Presidents. While having Provosts and Presidents respond to their performance in engendering a culture of assessment may still provide useful data, the most valid responses will come from those leaders best situated in the institution's structure to comment on the culture of assessment and on the Provost or President's leadership in this area with less self-investment. That is, in regards to filtering data, preference will be given to the response of the

Chief Assessment Officer, followed by the Director of assessment, then the Director of institutional research, the Provost, and, finally, the President.

Limitations in this Kind of Inquiry

Few studies explore assessment culture and those that do lack the empirical foundation vital in garnering assessment practitioners' support. A more detailed exploration is necessary, but no research can possibly answer all questions about a phenomenon beyond a shadow of all doubt. The great diversity of American institutions of higher education is not a limitation of our educational system, though it does present educational researchers with many challenges. This diversity necessitates flexibility in research endeavors. Thus, the present study has several limitations, including 1) the lack of clear guidance on constructs and variables for exploration form the scholarly literature, 2) challenges in indentifying and contacting participants, and 3) limitations of self-reported data. Each limitation is discussed in greater detail below.

As this study is designed to explore the factors that typify a strong culture of assessment, there are no noted instances in which a prior study of this kind and magnitude can be validated. Maki's (2010) *Principles of an Inclusive Commitment* represents the most useful paradigm for developing a study of assessment culture, perhaps the best "jumping off point," for this topic. Using indicator statements related to Maki's principles, the initial administration of the survey explores and attempts to construct factors related to a culture of assessment. These factors will undergo explorations of construct validity and future reliability studies. Additional studies following this initial phase of exploration are outlined below in the section titled *Long-Range Plan*.

There is no uniform, universally-ideal culture of assessment against which an institution can judge its merits and there is no desire to move the scholarly discourse down a path of theorizing a "one right" model for the conduct of assessment. There is no—nor should there ever be—a mold

to press upon colleges and universities in their quest for a culture of assessment. However, many practitioners will benefit from a deeper understanding of what such a culture looks like and how it might be developed. Gaining a better sense of the most meaningful participant pool for this study will be a challenge. Many of the challenges related to identifying and contacting assessment practitioners to serve as participants in this study have been discussed. The use of the Higher Education Directory and web-based resources to contact practitioners aides significantly in averting many of these challenges. Similarly, by collecting demographic information and asking participants to provide the contact information for the Chief Assessment Officer, data can be filtered following collection processes that do not exclude valuable perspectives. It is likely that no perfect database of Chief Assessment Officers will ever exist given the great diversity in which assessment is administered. As this survey is exploratory in nature, this limitation does not impede the exploration of this phenomenon. Instead, it is precisely because of this challenge that this sampling procedure offers a significant advancement over previously-used convenience samples. Nonetheless, this survey only offers initial insights into Chief Assessment Officers' and other assessment leaders' perspectives and even if no perfect sampling procedure can be derived, these participants' perspectives are valuable to the assessment profession even if interpreted cautiously.

Finally, the data collected in this study rely on professionals' self-reported perceptions about a culture of assessment on their campus. The use of self-reported data in educational research is common practice and may be, in fact, the only means of measuring more esoteric, attitudinal constructs (Kuh, 2003). The validity of self-reported data has been scrutinized extensively (Berdie, 1971; Bradburn & Sudman, 1988; Brandt, 1958; Converse & Presser, 1989; DeNisi & Shaw, 1977; Gershuny & Robinson, 1988; Hansford & Hattie, 1982; Laing, Swayer, & Noble 1989; Lowman & Williams, 1987; Pace, 1985; Pike, 1995; Wentland & Smith, 1993). Outlining the best review of this this concern, Kuh (2003) offers the following five conditions under which self-reported data are

likely to be valid: 1) information must be known by the participants, 2) questions and directions are clear, 3) questions refer to recent activities, 4) the participants think the questions merit a thoughtful, meaningful response, and 5) there is low risk of embarrassment or loss-of-privacy to the participant. Assessment professionals are knowledgeable, they lead assessment processes and think about the culture of assessment on their campus daily, and they are likely to view this study as relevant and meaningful to their work. This study addresses the limitations in unique ways so as to collect valid and reliable data on assessment culture.

Survey Constructs

The *Survey of Assessment Culture* was developed using Maki's (2010) *Principles of an Inclusive Commitment*. The Survey explores 1) Shared Institutional Commitment, 2) Clear Conceptual Framework for Assessment, 3) A Cross Institutional Responsibility, 4) Transparency of Findings, 5) Connection to Change-Making Processes, and 6) Recognition of Leadership or Involvement in Assessment. Indicator statements for these constructs were derived using Maki's work and developed into Likert-type scale for participants' consideration. While additional confirmation and construct validity studies will result in changes to the survey following the initial pilot study, the research foundation of the *Survey of Assessment Culture* is strong and should yield useable, meaningful data. As these constructs are validated and augmented a *Historical Record for the Survey of Assessment Culture* will be maintained.

Survey Administration

The *Survey of Assessment Culture* is administered annually to a representative, stratified sample of assessment practitioners, many of whom serve as the Chief Assessment Officer for their institution. Each September, the survey is sent electronically to eligible participants using a secure surveying system hosted by the Sam Houston State University Information Technology Department. Reminder emails are sent to non-responding participants two weeks, four weeks, and

eight weeks after the survey invitation is initially sent. After nine weeks, paper letters are sent with instructions for taking the survey electronically. Finally, after twelve weeks the survey is closed the weeks following the Thanksgiving Holiday, allowing for last minute participants to complete the survey over the holiday break if desired. This method allows for non-respondent bias studies to be conducted via phone interview or via quantitative explorations of reminded participants.

What Kinds of Studies Will be Conducted Using these Data?

As with any pilot study, future directions for exploration may evolve. However, initial plans for studies include: construct validation studies, group comparisons between Assessment Culture Scales and constructs, and correlative or predictive analyses regarding factors that influence assessment culture development. Structural equation models which explain the covariance between constructs may also prove useful. However, description of specific items and, eventually, trends in longitudinal data could be some of the most useful and meaningful studies resulting from these data.

How will Results be Used and Disseminated?

The primary use of results and interpretations of *Survey of Assessment Culture* data will be as a source of information about the state of assessment culture and the practices in developing it. Scholars and practitioners alike will find this information useful and meaningful in future studies of assessment cultures and in planning for change in their own practice of assessment. The Survey of Assessment Culture collects data on the state of assessment culture on various campuses *and* on factors influencing that state. As such, a series of tips for developing a culture of assessment could be explored and developed and may be beneficial in practical settings.

Research from the *Survey of Assessment Culture* will be published in respected, peer-reviewed journals focusing on assessment in higher education. No participant-identifying information will ever be shared in published materials. Upon conclusion of the survey, participants will be asked if

they want to be added to a mailing file to stay up-to-date on *Survey of Assessment Culture* research and developments. This invitation is voluntary and will in no way influence future participation in surveys or in research collaborations.

Concluding Thoughts

The *Survey of Assessment Culture* is meant to spark dialogue into the state of assessment culture in America and to provide an empirical foundation on the factors influencing this culture. Future administrations may focus on new populations, offering faculty and administrators a means of responding to counterpart surveys for useful comparisons at the institutional level, or in new areas of interest. The *Survey of Assessment Culture* does not purport to be the comprehensive means of collecting information on the status of assessment culture in higher education. Instead, it is a framework for initiating a dialogue into what a culture of assessment looks like, why it exists, and how it changes. Data generated from the *Survey of Assessment Culture* are unique and nuanced. However, the usefulness of survey data rests in its ability to take into account contexts in which surveys are administered; and the contexts of assessment change rapidly. Scholars and practitioners with advice or interests in the *Survey of Assessment Culture* may contact the Principal Investigator, Dr. Matthew Fuller at mfuller@shsu.edu. Additional information about the *Survey of Assessment Culture* can be found online at www.shsu.edu/assessmentculture.

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