Assessment Thank You Breakfast

The Office of Assessment hosts an annual Thank You Breakfast to recognize the dedication and hard work of those collecting, using, and learning about assessment. This breakfast was created in 2016 to say thank you to those who have made program assessment personal. These individuals show they care about student learning through the ways they engage in assessment. The annual breakfast is an opportunity for the Office of Assessment to recognize these individuals and to thank staff, faculty, and others for their commitment to assessment and excellence in the previous school year. At the invite-only breakfast, we recognize award winners: Assessment Innovator and Assessment Champion for the previous academic year. Beginning in 2017, we will have a third award: the Excellence in Assessment Program Award. Please read below to learn more about the awards and about previous award winners.

A group of faculty enjoying the 2016 Assessment Thank You Breakfast.

Assessment Innovator

The Award for Assessment Innovator recognizes individuals in programs that have adopted new processes to improve their assessment. This award goes to individuals and leaders who have sought out best practices in assessment in their field and implemented it in their program with zest and creativity.

2016 Winners: Dr. Bob Stillman & Dr. Shayla Holub

In 2016, we had joint award winners for the Award for Assessment Innovator. Drs. Stillman and Holub had a collaborative process that has resulted in meaningful changes at the School of Behavioral and Brain Sciences.

Dr. Bob Stillman designed a clear, easy-to-understand chart that links student learning outcomes to course changes and improvements. He created this chart after hearing about all that faculty were already doing in “closing the loop” or using collected data to make changes, but the assessment reports were simply not capturing this information. He shared this chart with all the programs in his school to help
them think about assessment. His hope was that this chart would act as a trigger for individuals to think about assessment and improvement.

Dr. Shayla Holub has been intentionally thinking about assessment in her program for some time. In 2014, her program redesigned its curriculum and learning outcomes. 2014 was also the first year our current Office of Assessment gave feedback about learning outcomes. Dr. Holub was eager to learn about assessment processes and best practices from other institutions and programs. We named Dr. Holub our 2016 Assessment Innovator because she took the map Dr. Stillman designed and made it a meaningful tool for her programs. She has tracked and summarized course improvements and changes through this chart. In addition, she was her school’s representative in a meeting about assessment and accreditation where she summarized the processes for the entire school and emphasized the importance of continuous improvement through using assessment. It is clear that due to her leadership, assessment is meaningful and useful for her programs.

Assessment Champion

The Award for Assessment Champion recognizes an individual who is an advocate for meaningful assessment to improve student learning at UT Dallas. The Assessment Champion is someone who both recognizes the importance of assessment to learning and encourages those in his or her sphere of influence to participate in meaningful assessment.

2016 Winner: Dean Bruce Novak

Dean Bruce Novak received the 2016 Assessment Champion award. He has successfully engaged his faculty, program heads, and departments so that they have greater participation in meaningful assessment. Upon realizing the importance of faculty-led participation on assessment, he eagerly attended workshops presented by the Office of Assessment and encouraged conversations about assessment in his school, the School of Natural Sciences and Mathematics. He is enthusiastic about assessment and has corralled those in his communities to learn more about it. In the summer of 2015, he held daily meetings to talk about assessment and held each program in his school accountable for having robust assessment processes in place. He has created a structure for accountability and efficiency for assessment in his school. The dramatic improvement in the School of Natural Sciences and Mathematics and its engagement with assessment are a direct result of Dean Novak’s leadership.

Excellence in Assessment

Starting in 2017, the Excellence in Assessment Program Award will recognize outstanding assessment programs at UT Dallas for their progress in developing and applying evidence of outcomes as part of ongoing evaluation and improvement. For academic programs, the award encourages programs to showcase their achievements in student learning and exhibit their innovations in curriculum, learning design, and assessment. The award also promotes promising practices in curriculum and assessment.
For non-academic, community, and administrative support programs and units, the award promotes collecting meaningful data for assessment and using it to improve their programs, processes, and/or operations. Up to three awards will be presented and each winning program will be given three to five invitations to the annual Assessment Thank You Breakfast.

There are four criteria for the Excellence in Assessment Program Award: 1) articulation and evidence of outcomes, 2) success with regard to outcomes, 3) information to the public about outcomes and 4) use of outcomes for improvement.

We enjoyed celebrating the accomplishments from this past year and look forward to future celebrations. Thank you to all our special invited guests for their commitment to assessment and student learning.