

FACULTY INVOLVEMENT IN SUCCESSFUL  
INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION:  
PERSPECTIVES THROUGH THE  
LENS OF ETZIONI'S  
COMPLIANCE THEORY

By

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*“To climb steep hills, requires a slow pace at first.”*  
William Shakespeare, Henry VIII

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Design of the Study.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	3
Purpose of the Study.....	4
Research Questions.....	4
Theoretical Framework.....	5
Procedures / Methodology.....	8
Researcher.....	8
Methodological Implications.....	9
Data Needs and Sources.....	9
Data Collection.....	10
Data Analyses.....	11
Significance of the Study.....	12
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	15
Historical Synopsis of Assessment in Higher Education.....	15
Relationship of Accreditation and Assessment.....	20
Faculty Involvement in Assessment.....	21
Strategies Used to Engage Faculty in Assessment.....	23
Orienting Conceptual Framework Underpinning the Study.....	25
II. METHODOLOGY.....	29
Study Design.....	29
Population and Sample.....	30
Data Collection.....	31
Interviews.....	32
Study Sites and Participants.....	34
Data Analysis.....	39

Chapter	Page
IV. DATA PRESENTATION .....	40
Portrayal of Participants and their Connection with Assessment .....	40
Reasons for Participating in Assessment .....	46
Who is Responsible for Establishing Assessment Policy .....	50
How Students have Benefitted from Assessment Activities.....	51
Why College / University Assessment Programs have been Successful.....	56
The Roles of Administrators in Assessment.....	66
Concerns and Challenges Related to Assessment.....	72
Recommendations for Enhancing Assessment .....	80
Priorities Needed to Assist Faculty in Assessing Student Learning.....	86
Reasons for Participating in Assessment Activities in Reference to Etzioni.....	88
Other Comments .....	90
V. ANALYSIS .....	94
Compliance Theory Operationalized .....	95
University Power Surrounding Faculty Engagement Strategies.....	98
Faculty Responses to Power .....	102
Institutional Types of Power in Relation to Faculty Responses .....	106
Study Summary.....	107
Who is Responsible for Establishing Assessment Policy .....	108
How Students have Benefitted from Assessment Activities.....	108
Why Colleges / Universities Assessment Programs have been Successful.....	109
The Roles of Administrators in Assessment.....	113
Concerns and Challenges Related to Assessment.....	113
Recommendations for Enhancing Assessment .....	116
Reasons for Participating in Assessment Activities in Reference to Etzioni.....	117
VI. CONCLUSION.....	119
Limitations of the Study.....	120
Significance of the Study .....	121
Dissertation Summary.....	123
REFERENCES .....	125

APPENDICES .....	135
A IRB Application .....	136
B IRB Approval .....	137
C Informed Consent.....	138
D Verbal Informed Consent Request.....	139
E Interview Protocol .....	140

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1 Description of Study Participants .....	38
2 Institutional Types of Power .....	102
3 Faculty Responses to Power .....	106
4 Institutional Types of Power by Faculty Responses .....	107

## CHAPTER I

### DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Society's recognition that higher education is a necessity for economic viability in the United States workforce has been an emphasis since the late 1980's (Ewell, 1999; Suskie, 2006). This emphasis gained increased momentum with the release of the Spellings Report (U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2006) which described a yearlong exploration of the higher education system in the United States. A Commission, consisting of representatives from both the public and private arena and including current and past college presidents, leaders from business, finance and nonprofit corporations, and government officials was appointed in 2005 by the then Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings. The Commission was charged with the task of learning how the U.S. system of higher education was functioning, what was and was not working, and what improvements were needed to have graduates that were well equipped to handle future workforce needs and were able to fully contribute to the changing economy (Callan, 2002; USDOE, 2006).

The Commissioners submitted a summary of their findings and recommendations to the Secretary of Education who in turn released the findings to the public. The results were that our country's system of higher education was complacent, has rested on its laurels of previous recognition and success for too long and as a result was no longer



performing optimally (USDOE, 2006) This observation was disheartening as the Commission found that higher education was crucially linked to economic liveliness and it appeared that this system was no longer capable of consistently providing graduates who could be economically competitive on a global basis (Le & Kazes, 2009; Robinson, 2009; USDOE, 2006). To counteract the complacency, Spellings stated that the “colleges and universities must become more transparent, faster to respond to rapidly changing circumstances and increasingly productive in order to deal effectively with the powerful forces of change they now face” (USDOE, 2006, p. 27). Moreover, she also noted that, the goal of post secondary education is “...to have a world-class higher-education system that creates new knowledge, contributes to economic prosperity and global competitiveness, and empowers citizens” (USDOE, 2006, p. viii). The report suggested tactics that if followed, would allow higher education to be more attainable, answerable and the cost of attending would become more reasonable. The precursor to achieving this goal is to change higher education from a system “...primarily based on reputation to one based on performance” (USDOE, 2006, p. 30).

The Spellings Report highlighted the fact that legislators, employers, parents and even students have been questioning: what are today’s graduates learning in colleges and universities. Stakeholders representing a variety of disciplines, organizations and legislative bodies have seen data that describes many traditional educational institutional practices as wasteful and inefficient. Answers are wanted for why many expensive programs have exceptionally high attrition rates; why students are accumulating excessive debt from college loans and yet are not earning degrees; why universities and colleges continue to raise tuition and fees and yet nothing seems to be done to meet

student needs; and why are there a large number of duplicate programs located throughout state systems (Gill, 2006; Kingsbury, 2007; Lingenfelter, 2003; USDOE, 2006)? Where is the “sound” education students were promised? The stakeholders have demanded that not only should colleges and universities have their spending practices available for legislative and consumer review but they must also demonstrate that the tax dollars that are spent result in value (Lyons, McIntosh, & Kysilka, 2003; Schmidlein & Berdahl, 2005). In essence, the providers of higher education are to be held accountable (Berdahl & McConnell, 1994; Honan & Teferra, 2001; Welsh, Alexander & Dey, 2001).

As noted above, the Spellings Commission echoed the demand for higher educational institutions being accountable. Findings of the Spellings report concluded that in order for the United States to have citizens who can compete in today’s global society, higher education practices must change and agencies that accredit colleges and universities must reprioritize their goals for higher education accreditation (Miller, 2006; USDOE, 2006). Accreditation agencies have attempted to answer the demand for accountability by adopting standards that require higher education to demonstrate institutional effectiveness (Allen & Bresciani, 2003; Gill, 2006; Lingenfelter, 2003; Lyons, McIntosh & Kysilka, 2003).

Despite the fact that colleges and universities have endeavored to respond to the cry for accountability, there have been many obstacles that have sabotaged their efforts. Support for assessment activities has been halfhearted and inconsistent (Litterst & Tompkins, 2000; Welsh & Metcalf, 2003) and many view assessment as an extremely sensitive issue (Theall, 2002; Driscoll, 2006). Faculty are said to oppose accountability requests as it is perceived they will lessen or entirely dissipate institutional autonomy,

result in a loss of personal academic freedom (Dugan, 2006), and splay open a faculty member for review and critique (Weinstein, 2006). Reasons for why faculty may believe that assessment activities are only for the purpose of teacher evaluation may be related to the inconsistent, haphazard way in which many higher education institutions approach the assessment process. Palomba and Banta (1999), Nichols (1995) and Birnbaum (1988) each concluded that faculty opposition and/or reluctance to become involved with assessment activities has been the principal factor identified for why initiatives for institutional effectiveness fail.

Faculty acceptance of assessment has been found to be a facilitating factor if not one of the major contributing factors for successful assessment initiatives (Cross, 1997; Palomba & Banta, 1999; Priddy, 2007; Rouseff-Baker & Holm, 2004). McEady (2006) noted, “Faculty play the most important role in curricular and programmatic assessment” (p. 151). According to George Kuh, Director of the Center for Postsecondary Research at Indiana University at Bloomington, “assessment can be a wasted effort, in terms of a lever for improvement, unless you can get the faculty to buy into it” (as cited in Bollag, 2006, p. 3). Because of the importance of faculty involvement, it is desirable to ascertain the strategies higher education institutions have used to secure faculty engagement with assessment activities.

### *Statement of the Problem*

Colleges and universities with successful assessment programs have had their programs developed by the faculty (Driscoll, 2006; Kramer, 2006; Palomba & Banta, 1999; Suskie, 2006; Wergin, 2002). It is very challenging, however, to get faculty

involvement, let alone engagement (Theall, 2002; Welsh & Metcalf, 2003; Wergin, 2002). This leads one to wonder, why is it so difficult to get faculty involved in assessment? What have the colleges and universities who are deemed to have successful assessment programs done to garner faculty engagement? Are there motivational factors that facilitate faculty involvement in assessment activities?

Etzioni's (1964) compliance theory would answer these questions from the perspective of uses of and responses to power. Theoretically, to obtain faculty engagement with assessment, colleges and universities must use some form of power, coercive, remunerative or normative. At the same time, it is expected, theoretically, that faculty respond to the power and engage with assessment in three possible ways: alienation, calculative involvement or moral commitment.

### *Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of this study was to identify the uses of power and responses to that power found in colleges and universities identified by their accrediting agencies as having successful assessment programs, which have obtained faculty engagement to support their assessment activities.

### *Research Questions*

Using the lens of Etzioni's compliance theory (1964), answers to the following questions were sought:

1. In the institutions deemed to have successful assessment programs according to Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), a national organization

whose primary focus is quality and accreditation in higher educational institutions, *how has faculty engagement been obtained?*

\* In what ways do the strategies for faculty engagement in assessment reflect *coercive, remunerative, and/or normative power?*

\* In what ways have the faculty responses to assessment reflected *alienation, calculation, and moral involvement?*

2. What other strategies for faculty engagement are revealed?
3. How useful are the power and involvement components of Compliance Theory in explaining the phenomenon under review?

### *Theoretical Framework*

The theoretical framework for this study is based upon Etzioni's (1964) Compliance Theory. The premise of the theory is that organizations are performance directed, goal oriented, and ensure compliance through their power structure. In situations when compliance does not occur, it is due to weaknesses in the commitment of their members. Etzioni further alleges that organizations cannot depend on employees to complete most assignments voluntarily. Because of this, organizations, through their power base, must employ a system of rewards and penalties in order for employees to accomplish their work (Etzioni, 1967; 1968). Work performance that is desired should be rewarded and performance that is not desirable should be punished.

Etzioni developed three categories of power and stable involvement responses used in organizations: coercive/alienation, calculative/remunerative and normative/moral (Etzioni, 1964). The first, *coercive*, describes an organization's use of physical

constraints, pain or other types of containment strategies in order to achieve compliance. An organization's use of coercive influence is likely to result in an organization in which employees do indeed comply but the compliance often produces anger, mistrust, and alienation. Responses to the coercive power typically result in alienant involvement.

*Calculative*, the second category identified by Etzioni, occurs when an institution offers employees either tangible or intangible rewards in exchange for compliance. Employees ask themselves, how will they benefit from these types of remuneration if they comply? Responses to remunerative power typically result in the calculation of involvement on the part of the worker.

The final category, *normative*, is dependent on the employees and the institution having similar beliefs and values. The institution then emphasizes the fact that employee commitment is essential in order for the organization to achieve its goals. Goal achievement will result in increased self-esteem, acceptance and prestige for the employees. The employees perform because it is morally right (Etzioni, 1968; Birnbaum, 1988). The typical response to normative power is moral involvement on the part of workers or faculty.

The type of power an organization uses according to Etzioni (1964) is contingent on the organization's type and/or purpose. While it is not unusual for organizations to use two or perhaps even all three categories of influence, most employ one predominant type (Etzioni, 1975; 1964). Prisons and correctional facilities, for example, are more apt to use coercion whereas industries and businesses rely on calculative influence. Religious, political and educational organizations generally fall under normative influence.

It is the latter, normative, in which Etzioni observed colleges and universities. Based on this supposition, faculty are generally highly committed to their colleges and universities, share their institutions' missions and values and as a result will fulfill their job responsibilities without much supervising influence from administration. The belief that achieving the organizations' goals will result in prestige and acceptance in the professional realm and enhanced self-esteem in the personal realm is generally all the guiding influence that is needed for faculty to complete their work.

It is therefore this facet of Etzioni's theory that this study explored. Is normative power sufficient for faculty to fulfill their assessment responsibility? Alternatively, does completing the assessment tasks require calculative influence or coercion? Studies have indicated that many faculty do not participate in assessment (Theall, 2002; Welsh & Metcalf, 2003; Wergin, 2002). In the colleges and universities that are viewed as having successful assessment programs, are they indeed faculty-driven? And if yes, what were the motivating factors? Did prestige and professional acceptance (i.e., normative influence) motivate faculty? Were they enticed by promises of salary increases, promotion in rank, tenure, or overload pay (i.e., calculative influence)? Or were they threatened with loss of job, departmental transfer, and relinquishment of benefits (i.e., coercive influence)? Additionally, this study will illustrate whether the types of influence that motivated faculty also brought with it feelings of alienation, remuneration or moral duty.

### *Procedures/Methodology*

This is a qualitative study, which uses a descriptive case study approach. “Qualitative research occurs in a natural setting, where human behavior and events occur” (Creswell, 1994, p. 162). This comprehensive process of inquiry through case studies justify the reason for the design of the study, the methods used for data collection, and the tactics used in data analysis (Yin, 2009).

*Researcher.* I have been involved with higher education and assessment for over two decades. As a nurse educator who has taught and continues to teach in the classroom, I have participated in administering assessment activities and evaluating the assessments on a regular basis. Furthermore, as the administrator of nursing education programs, I have written numerous self-study reports for accreditation and regulatory site visits. These reports consistently ask for demonstration of assessment activities. The accreditation and regulatory site visitors and review panels have consistently remarked that the assessment and evaluation activities I have described are indicative of measuring student learning.

Additionally, as an administrator, I have asked my faculty to participate in assessment activities and have observed first hand that some faculty are interested and willing to take part while others have no interest and their participation is frequently minimal. Moreover, during the past 20 years, I have served on various colleges and universities assessment committees both as a member and as a chair. These endeavors have provided me the opportunity to observe first hand that faculty engagement in assessment is varied. It has also given me the motive to question how some colleges and



universities are able to report overwhelming participation of faculty involvement with assessment.

*Methodological Implications.* This study employed a qualitative investigative approach using descriptive case study methodology. The qualitative approach was selected due to the nature of the research focus, my desire to discover and recognize underlying factors that contribute to an occurrence and for the purpose of describing elements of behavior that cannot be quantified. These reasons substantiate the qualitative research approach (Creswell, 1994, 2003; Roberts, 2004).

In a descriptive case study, the researcher explores a specific phenomenon, gathers in-depth knowledge through selected data collection techniques and describes what was observed and reported (Merriam, 1998). Yin (2009) has described case studies as being the favored approach when "...how' or 'why' questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context" (p.1). Such is the situation in this study. *How* have some colleges and universities been able to obtain faculty engagement with assessment? The focus is a *how* question. I had no jurisdiction over the colleges or universities that were included in my sample. And, assessment is an essential component of determining the success and value of educational programs.

*Data Needs and Sources.* Given the fact that it is quite challenging to get faculty buy-in with assessment, and the fact that some colleges and universities have achieved it, this research study was conducted to identify the ways in which colleges and universities who have successful assessment programs have or have not used one or more types of

power as described by Etzioni (1964). The data needed in this study was explanations of how faculty engagement with assessment occurred.

To gather this data, colleges and universities that have successful assessment programs were identified, and permission was received to conduct interviews with representatives from administration, assessment committee members and selected faculty members. Visits were made to each campus and interviews were conducted with individuals who were solicited via e-mail from a list of names provided by the colleges' and university's directors/ coordinators of assessment. Creswell (2003) noted that a facet of qualitative research is to select informants who can provide a knowledgeable response. The educational institutions that were visited included a four-year public/state university, a public/state community colleges and a public/ state community college with a career technical emphasis. The latter college was selected to explore how educational programs with a career technical emphasis (i.e., watch making, automotive, electricians, plumbing, heavy machinery) have had success in their assessment programs and how faculty engagement has occurred.

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained from my home institution as well as from one of the college's IRB. The other college and university visited did not require formal IRB approval. Approval was received from the college administration at all three institutions.

*Data Collection.* A precept of qualitative research is to purposively select study participants that can best respond to the study question(s) and to use a methodology that is appropriate for the study (Creswell, 2003; Meloy, 2002). The methodology selected was face-to-face interviews and the study participants were purposely selected to

participate. The interviews were semi-structured in order to capitalize on the quality of data that can be obtained. Thus part of the interview consisted of a list of prepared questions derived from Compliance Theory as explained by Etzioni (1975); and selected questions from an instrument designed by the Assessment Committee from Concordia College, Moorhead, MN which surveyed faculty about their attitudes from assessment (Schneider & Wohlfeil, 2008). The other portion of the interview was shaped by the responses of the interviewees and the discussion that ensued. Rubin and Rubin (1995) described the semi-structured interview as an interview where structured questions can be followed up with unstructured, probing questions. To preserve participants' rights, I adhered to ethical standards that have been recommended by professional organizations including the American Anthropologic Association (1998), the American Educational Research Association (Strike, et al., 2002), and the American Nurses' Association (2001).

To aid with reliability of this case study investigation, the interview protocol was formalized prior to data collection. Rubin and Rubin (1995) and Yin (2009) both have noted that the protocol steers the data collection and fosters dependability. Additionally, I being the only interviewer followed the guidelines recommended by Yin: ask appropriate, open-ended questions, listen attentively, be flexible have a solid understanding of the subject matter being explored and be perceptive to interviewees' responses and comments. The preceding guidelines were not unfamiliar to me as they are qualities that professional nurses, including myself, typically possess.

*Data Analyses.* The responses to the interview questions and other information obtained has been compared and categorized. Patterns that emerged were reviewed. Using Etzioni's (1964) Compliance Theory as a guide, attention focused on the ways in

which the three institutions, their administration and faculty reflected the realities of power and responses to power. The comparison of data paralleled elements found in Etzioni's theory. It is believed that the findings from this study can be transferred to similar settings. To facilitate trustworthiness of the results, I vigilantly described the results, incorporating triangulation and peer debriefing (Creswell, 2003; Wolcott, 2001). By carefully depicting the responses obtained during the interviews, I objectively reported the participants' replies to the questions asked. Furthermore, this approach revealed data that is inconsistent with identified themes. Triangulation gave me the opportunity to study the data collected from interviewees who represent different perspectives by virtue of their role in the assessment process. This process illustrated if there were agreement with the approaches used to obtain faculty engagement with assessment. Finally, the use of a peer debriefer allowed me to see the data through another's viewpoint.

### *Significance of the Study*

In light of the problems in higher education highlighted in the Spellings Report and in consideration of the recommendations made in the Spellings Report, the findings from this study have significance in the areas of theory, research and practice. The results supplement the literature regarding assessment. The knowledge base on faculty and assessment are strengthened. Administrators and assessment committee members can use the results of this study when designing the faculty involvement component of their assessment programs.

This study has focused on the relevance of compliance theory for understanding administrator power and faculty involvement in assessment activities. Findings of the type of power structure needed in order to motivate faculty to participate in assessment activities will strengthen the existing body of literature not only in assessment but also in leadership and management. Etzioni has stated that, “The best we can do is to add some links to what precedes us and tie the work of colleagues to make longer, more encompassing chains” (1986, p. 16). Therefore, it is believed that the results of this study can be used by educational researchers to design larger studies that examine motivational factors for faculty engagement with assessment activities. Additional questions to be asked could include: Does the type of educational institution account for the type of motivating factors needed? Are faculty who teach in research universities more apt to participate in assessment activities when they are rewarded normatively than faculty that teach in community colleges? Or technical-focused colleges? Are faculty that teach in technical-focused colleges more motivated to participate in assessment if they receive remuneration than community college faculty or research university faculty?

Further study by educational researchers on factors related to assessment will assist colleges and universities in designing assessment programs that measure student outcomes which in turn will answer the higher education stakeholders’ calls for accountability and answers to the question, what are students learning.

Identifying factors that motivate faculty to have buy-in with assessment will be beneficial to higher education administrators and assessment committee chairpersons. The administrators can use this knowledge to determine the type of management strategies (i.e., power structure) that should be employed which will reduce faculty

resistance and encourage faculty compliance. Assessment committee chairpersons can use the knowledge to lobby administration for appropriate incentives, which will serve as motivators for participating with assessment activities.

### *Chapter Summary*

Assessment of student learning is a requirement of colleges and universities. Faculty participation in the assessment process has been linked to successful assessment programs. However, obtaining faculty participation in assessment is challenging. The purpose of this study is to understand the ways in which colleges and universities, with successful assessment programs, have engaged faculty in assessment activities. Interviews were conducted with academic administrators, assessment committee members and faculty from three different higher educational institutions. Etzioni's (1964) compliance theory has been used as a tool to analyze the interview responses for responses to and uses of power used to facilitate engagement.

### *Reporting*

In Chapter 2, an extensive review of the literature related to assessment, faculty engagement and compliance theory is provided. Chapter 3 consists of a detailed discussion of the qualitative research methodology used to conduct this study. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study, Chapter 5 the data analysis is expounded. In the last chapter, Chapter 6, the findings of the study are discussed along with the strengths, limitations, conclusions and implications for theory, research and practice.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter contains a review of the literature related to assessment, relationship between accreditation and assessment, faculty engagement and strategies use to facilitate faculty engagement with assessment. A discussion of Etzioni's Compliance Theory completes the review of literature.

#### *Historical Synopsis of Assessment in Higher Education*

Higher education for the masses was not an expectation in the early development of the United States. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, only men, and those from elite families who were thought to possess intellectual capacity for leadership, were encouraged to further their education at a college or university (Domonkos, 1989; Shore, 1991). The curriculum offered at these colleges and universities was initially quite similar and typically originated from ancient doctrine grounded in religion and focused on classical study (Alstete, 2007; Harcleroad, 1994; Thelin, 1996). Courses maintained European values and purpose; original thinking was not promoted (Rudolph, 1977; Shore, 1991). The degrees granted by these early institutions of higher learning were all quite similar. Questioning the value or effectiveness of these degrees did not occur (Alstete, 2007).

This uniformity waned during the late 1800s as the United States continued to grow and establish an identity separate from its European ancestors. The number of people (women as well as men) seeking formal higher education multiplied. This resulted in the creation of additional colleges and universities with each offering unique and varied degrees. This newfound identity resulted in a curriculum shift in higher education in which the spirit of inquiry was promoted. The purpose of instruction was to prepare students to explore and venture into the unknown (Domonkos, 1989; Rudolph, 1977).

The effectiveness of college and university instruction was demonstrated during annual commencement activities. During these activities, which frequently lasted a week, students displayed the work they had done and professors basked in the praise and attention given to them for their success in preparing a student who was ready to "take on the world." The parents, relatives, church and community leaders that came to the commencement activities evaluated for themselves whether or not the college or university was educating students to meet the needs of society (Rudolph, 1977). This was the origin of assessment -- external assessment.

As educational institutions became increasingly dissimilar, concern arose about the abilities of graduates from the many universities and colleges. Questions were asked regarding consistency of educational offerings, learning expectations and professorial preparedness. A movement encouraging higher educational institutions to meet minimal standards became a common expectation in 1890 and by 1901 was viewed as the norm (Rudolph, 1977; Lagemann, 1999; Alstete, 2007).

The initial system of checks and balance, which determined whether a university was meeting minimal standards, was internally governed through professorial committees



and administration (Rudolph, 1977). Society at that time maintained the perception that higher education, its faculty, and administration lived in an ivory tower and were exempt from external review (Lyons, McIntosh & Kysilka, 2003). This belief began to change as growing discontent concerning students' college preparedness, admission decisions and institutional rivalry for students became routine "drawing room" discussion by many in society.

In 1906, during a meeting of the National Association of State Universities, institutional accreditation conducted by regional external associations became a primary goal. The regional associations cooperatively agreed to expect colleges and universities to standardize their admission and recruitment policies. These expectations were further enhanced by philanthropic foundations. The foundations' directors began to question whether the colleges and universities, who were requesting monies from them, were indeed bonafide institutions of higher learning. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, The Rockefeller Foundation and the General Education Board pronounced that in order to receive bequests, conformity needed to occur among higher education institutions with respect to instructor admission and degree requisites (Rudolph, 1977; Shaw, 1993; Thelin, 1994).

Their declaration was supported by the Flexner Report. This report, prepared by Abraham Flexner in 1910, identified significant inconsistencies in the standards and curricula offered by the 147 medical colleges in the United States (Flexner, 1910; Hofstadter & Smith, 1961). Dr. Flexner visited each of the medical colleges and observed that many were graduating ill-prepared physicians. He summarized his findings and presented them in a report to The Carnegie Foundation. The findings were published and

the reforms that occurred in medical education in the United States were credited to the Flexner Report. As a result of the report, the number of medical schools in the United States decreased from 147 to 95. The schools that remained open developed admission and graduation standards along with a curriculum that was comparable among all of the medical schools (Bonner, 2002; Flexner, 1910). Additionally, upon reading the Flexner Report and seeing the uproar it created in educational circles during this time period, 1910-1915, administrators of other professional schools, i.e., law, engineering, education, theology, followed the medical schools' actions and also began to formalize their curriculum, admission and graduation standards (Bonner, 2002; Hofstadter & Smith, 1961).

The Carnegie Foundation's further involvement in the underpinning of assessment was to define what a college was, differentiate a college's curriculum from that of a secondary school and establish guidelines for professor qualifications, length of study needed for a college diploma and a baseline financial endowment (Lagemann, 1999). By 1919, the National Conference Committee and the American Council on Education buoyed by the past 13 years of efforts by colleges and universities to conform to general standards firmly agreed upon a definition of an institution of higher learning. The definition included criteria for: college admission, a set number of credit hours needed to graduate, educational requirements for faculty, minimum number of faculty needed to teach, expected faculty instructional workload, minimum number of volumes in a library, minimum amount of operating income, guidelines for ownership, and the numbers of students who were successfully prepared for graduate school (Harclerod, 1994; Rudolph, 1977). The charge for oversight of these criteria was given to the regional

accreditation agencies who throughout much of the twentieth century, gained recognition for being the major authority for recognizing quality in colleges and universities. Additionally, the accreditation agencies operated relatively free of federal government influence.

As the twentieth century progressed however, the federal government's involvement with higher education accreditation became more noticeable and state governments joined in this endeavor as well. In the 1950's the responsibility of accrediting higher educational institutions was given to the regional accreditation agencies by federal and state officials (Council for Higher Education Accreditation [CHEA], 2006). They, on behalf of the educational institutions' stakeholders, charged the regional accreditation agencies with the responsibility of determining an institution's effectiveness and of evaluating colleges' and universities' eligibility for federal and state funds (CHEA; Lyons, et al., 2003) This eligibility screening by accreditation agencies continues today and has intensified the significance of colleges and universities achieving and maintaining accreditation.

While achieving and maintaining accreditation status is a voluntary activity, the full-time retention and graduation rates of accredited universities and colleges have been found to be higher in comparison to non-accredited universities and colleges (Espiritu, 2007). Furthermore, institutions that are not accredited are generally ineligible to provide their enrolled students any financial assistance from federal or state monies and the quality of their educational programs are suspect (Alstete, 2007). Some professional organizations restrict licensure to only those who graduate from an accredited institution [i.e., registered nurse licensure] (Harclerod, 1994). Additionally, donors and

philanthropic foundations believe the accreditation status of a college or university is important and often use this status as a criterion when making financial contributions (CHEA, 2006). Moreover, employers also consider colleges' and universities' accreditation standing when reviewing applications, resumes and transcripts of potential job applicants. Not only is there a prevalence to hire individuals who have earned degrees from accredited institutions, but the earning ability and possibility of promotion is at times improved for graduates from accredited institutions (Espiritu, 2007). Indeed, accreditation is considered a crucial sign of an institution's quality (Alstete, 2007; Eaton, 2009).

#### *Relationship of accreditation and assessment*

As previously noted, the process of accreditation has evolved since its inception in the early 1900's. In the beginning, the major deciding factor for accreditation was based upon an assessment of the consistent application of an institution's policies, procedures and usage of resources as well as a review of its infrastructure. Demonstration of an institution's consistency equated with academic quality (Baker, 2002). Baker (2002) has noted that "in earlier times, this assessment tended to focus upon processes, structures and resources such as the academic degrees held by faculty members, the number of books in a library, and the size of institutional budgets" (Role of Assessment section, para. 3). In recent years, and as an effect from the Spellings report, the focus of determining the quality and effectiveness of an institution and demonstration of accountability has changed from solely focusing on inputs to emphasizing the significance of the outputs (Rouseff-Baker & Holm, 2002; Eaton, 2009; USDOE, 2006).

Chief among the outputs is student learning and measuring whether or not student learning has occurred (Carey, Perrault & Gregory, 2001; Gill, 2006; Lyons, et al., 2003).

Due to the growing variety of higher educational institutions and the fact that they have diverse missions, goals, and populations, the regional accrediting agencies no longer have evaluation criteria that command that a particular method of assessment be used to determine quality (Lingenfelter, 2003). Rather, the assessment methods are to be individualized in accordance with the institution's mission, goals and population base (Priddy, 2008; Wellman, 2000). Additionally, the results of the assessment activities are to be published in documents or posted on websites, to enable current and potential students, their parents, employers, federal and state legislators and other stakeholders to see the results. The accrediting agencies are to determine if the assessment results are indeed transparent (Callan, 2002; Gill, 2006).

#### *Faculty involvement in assessment*

A significant element that accreditation agencies look for is whether or not institutional assessment is faculty-driven. To achieve an assessment program that is faculty-driven, many colleges and universities have had to modify their institutional culture to stress the importance of student learning, highlight the responsibility faculty have for student learning and inform faculty that they are responsible for institutional assessment (Diaz-Lefebvre, 2003; Palomba & Banta, 1999; Rouseff-Baker & Holm, 2004). Faculty have responded to their institution's culture shift by questioning where they are to find the time for the assessment role responsibility in addition to their research, teaching and service roles (Sorenson & Bothell, 2004). Others, according to

Dyer (2006), share the opinion “that assessment and practices that explore curriculum, pedagogy and educational goals fall far beneath the lofty and esoteric aims of higher education” (p. 166).

Weinstein, (cited in “Outcomes Assessment is Here to Stay”, 2006) alluded to the fact that college administrators may not be clarifying with faculty, the intent and rationale for participating in assessment and as a result there is minimal faculty participation. He also recommended that colleges and universities have a point person with expertise in assessment available to assist the faculty in planning and evaluating assessment activities.

Gill (2006), noted in her review of research on assessment facilitators and obstacles, that lack of faculty support was a significant obstacle to the success of any assessment program. Rouseff-Baker and Holm (2004) agreed with this and stated: “The importance of fully engaging faculty ...in the assessment process cannot be overemphasized” (p. 41). Further, Rouseff-Baker and Holm found that faculty buy-in of assessment is exponentially related to institutional assessment sustainability “As faculty ownership becomes apparent in the assessment process, faculty are motivated to remain engaged and their interest is more likely to be sustained over the years that follow, even after the accreditation self-study has come and gone” (2004, p. 33). Thus, the challenge for higher education institutions is for faculty to recognize that student learning, instruction and assessment must be integrated (Gijbels, van de Watering, & Dochy, 2005).

### *Strategies used to engage faculty in assessment*

Faculty engagement in assessment is often dependent on their perception of support from their university / college administration. Bloomberg (as cited in Herson & Dugan, 2006, p. 379) has noted that solid leadership and considerable financial assistance is essential for assessment programs to thrive.

Motivating faculty to participate in assessment has been studied by Palomba and Banta (1999) who identified three essential facets of motivation: responsibility, resources and rewards. They proclaim that when faculty a) understand they are accountable for assessment, b) have an understanding of assessment and are cognizant of where to go for assistance if needed when conducting assessment activities and c) receive recognition or compensation for involvement with assessment that opposition to assessment participation is eradicated. They further recommend that to gain faculty acquiescence with assessment that all faculty be involved whether they be assigned minute or wide-ranging tasks.

The promise of anonymity was the solution for one state's system of higher education in attracting faculty participation in the shaping and execution of a statewide assessment of general education. Kramer (2006) interviewed 14 individuals representing various types of higher educational institutions located in a western Rocky Mountain state, and asked how the promise of anonymity that was granted by the state's board of regents and legislature was instrumental in getting faculty and others' involvement in a statewide assessment program. Kramer's findings included the acknowledgement that increased backing and participation by faculty throughout the state was a result of not

fearing that they or their schools would be punished if the assessment results indicated minimal to no learning occurred.

Schneider and Wohlfeil (2008), reported that time, money and autonomy were the solutions for their college, situated in an upper Midwestern state, in acquiring faculty involvement with assessment. Their conclusions were the result of survey data collected in 1999 and 2005 which sought suggestions from faculty on what would peak their interest and facilitate participation in assessment. The college administration then provided funding to offer release time, summer projects, stipends and departmental grant monies for the assessment activities. Autonomy was accomplished by allowing the academic departments to identify their priority assessment foci and providing consultation by the college's assessment department rather than supervision. Schneider and Wohlfeil (2008) conveyed the message that these approaches were deemed to be very successful in gaining faculty engagement with assessment.

Identification of specific factors that foretell faculty commitment with assessment was the goal of the investigative study by Grunwald and Peterson (2003). They sent surveys to 200 tenure-track faculty at each of seven U.S. universities. Despite a low response rate of 30%, the investigators labeled their sample population as being illustrative of the faculty at the seven universities. The results of their study echoed assessment facilitating factors previously reported in the literature including administrative commitment to assessment, administrative-supported professional development activities focusing on assessment, and demonstration of the benefits of assessment. They concluded however that the predicting factors that lead to faculty satisfaction with the assessment process were different from the predicting factors that



led to faculty involvement with assessment and as such warranted further study. Additional areas recommended for examination included the “impacts of external influences, faculty and institutional characteristics...” (Grunwald & Peterson, 2003, p. 203).

### *Orienting Conceptual Framework Underpinning the Study*

The foundation for this study was derived from organizational theory. It was based on several premises, the first being that organizations are classified by their overall purpose for societal existence (Etzioni, 1968). The second premise is that organizations each have an influential variable that gives the organization order (Etzioni, 1968). The third premise, compliance, is viewed, as an influential variable (Etzioni, 1968). And, lastly, that organizations are performance directed, goal oriented, and ensure compliance through their power structure. These premises serve as the basis for Etzioni’s (1964) Compliance Theory.

While organizations have been viewed as having various characteristics, Etzioni (1968) professed that they should be classified according to one attribute, that being the overall organizational goal. What it takes to achieve the goal was studied by Etzioni in relation to the type of control that is used by organizational administrators and supervisors. Control was interpreted as power (Etzioni, 1968). Etzioni defined three types of power according to the method(s) used to obtain compliance. The three types of power and their definitions according to Etzioni (1975) are as follows:

Coercive power: “rests on the application or the threat of application of physical sanctions such as infliction of pain, deformity or death” (p. 4).

Remunerative power: “based on control of material resources and rewards through allocation of salaries and wages, commissions and contributions, ‘fringe benefits’, services and commodities” (p. 4).

Normative power: “rests on the allocation and manipulation of symbolic reward and deprivations through employment of leaders, manipulation of mass media, allocation of esteem and prestige symbols, administration of ritual, and influence over the distribution of ‘acceptance’ and ‘positive response’” (p. 4).

Etzioni (1975) explained that organizations typically use all three types of power at one time or another. There is however, one type of power that has greater utility in an organization than another and it is that one that is more heavily emphasized.

In addition to power as a major concept in Etzioni’s compliance theory, another concept is involvement. The type of involvement one has in an organization varies. Etzioni (1975) viewed power as being on a continuum with polar extremes. On one end is positive involvement, which is labeled commitment. The other end, illustrating negative involvement is labeled alienation. There are three “zones of involvement” on the continuum. Their names and definitions as conceived by Etzioni (1975) are:

Alienative Involvement: “designates an intense negative orientation” (p. 10).

Calculative Involvement: “designates either a negative or positive orientation of low intensity” (p. 10).

Moral Involvement: “designates a positive orientation of high intensity” (p. 10).

Etzioni (1968; 1964) studied various organizations using the above definitions of power and involvement and assigned the organizations into various compliance

categories. Most correctional facilities and custodial mental hospitals were classified as being “predominantly coercive”. “Blue-collar” and “white-collar” industries were viewed as being ‘predominantly remunerative’ while religious organizations, hospitals, colleges and universities were identified as being “predominantly normative” (p. 101).

Etzioni’s theory was applied by Julian (1966) who examined the character and extent of compliance patterns in hospitals. Julian interviewed 183 patients in five different hospitals. Overall, the patients were comparable in age, sex, marital status, occupation and medical diagnoses. His findings supported those of Etzioni in that he observed that “general hospitals tend to be normative, while custodial hospitals tend to be relatively more coercive” (p. 389, 1966). He also concluded that in hospitals where there was normative power being used, the patients were satisfied with the level of communication that occurred (i.e., patients being encouraged to ask questions and doctors and nurses telling them what they could expect in terms of treatment or progress with healing). Whereas individuals who were patients in hospitals that were considered to exhibit coercive power reported that their treatment or care was not discussed with them, that there was little communication and that they found that if they did not comply with the expectations of the facility sanctions were applied until they did comply. (Julian described a custodial hospital as being a facility that used coercive influence and that the sanctions that were applied included restriction of activity or administration of sedatives to keep the patient quiet [p. 385, 2006].) Again, the findings from Julian’s study supported Etzioni’s compliance theory in that the type of organizational influence affected the type of involvement that would occur.

For the purposes of this study, I used this theory to examine the types of power employed by the three schools I visited and the participants' responses to that power with respect to engagement with assessment. A recommendation from Grunwald and Peterson's (2003) study, which identified predictors that could forecast faculty "buy-in" with assessment, was exploration of the "impacts of external influences, faculty and institutional characteristics..." (p. 203). This study did that through exploration of the external influences in relation to types of power employed by a university and two community colleges and the responses given in return by the faculty with respect to their involvement with assessment.

#### *Chapter Summary*

The literature review included a synopsis of the history of assessment in higher education. Among the written works examined was the 1910 Flexner Report, considered a groundbreaking study for college admission and graduation standards. Other writings related to accreditation and assessment, faculty engagement, and strategies for encouraging faculty engagement were also studied. This chapter concluded with a summary of Etzioni's compliance theory, which provided the theoretical framework for this study.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify the uses of power and responses to that power found in colleges and universities who have been identified by their accrediting agencies as having faculty who are successfully engaged in the institutions' assessment programs, Two colleges and one university recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) as having successful assessment programs served as research sites.

#### *Study Design*

Yin (2009) has observed that “a research design is the logic that links the data to be collected [and the conclusions to be drawn] to the initial questions of the study” (p. 24). Merriam (1998) described the qualitative method as one in which the investigator becomes fully immersed in data collection. Singh (2008) noted that a qualitative approach is used in research when the investigator desires to fully delve into the data that is to be collected. Creswell (2005) identified case studies as the method of choice when a researcher desires to conduct a thorough investigation of a specific subject matter. Drawing upon that line of thought, a qualitative case study design was the most appropriate for this investigative study because of the questions this study was asking.

Participants in the study were asked questions about the assessment programs at their educational institutions with the goal of learning what types of power were used to gain faculty participation in assessment activities. Yin (2009) has recognized that a case study is relevant when participants are asked a series of questions that seek an explanation to why something is occurring rather than one question about a specific subject matter.

There are three avenues to data collection in qualitative research: direct observation, in-depth interviews asking open-ended questions and review of written documents. The latter includes personal diaries, journals, logs, and written responses to open-ended questions (Labuschagne, 2003). The second approach, in-depth interviews, was the format used in this study. This methodology is germane when the questions that are asked seek an explanation for why something is or is not occurring and when the responses to the questions require a description (Yin, 2009).

A protocol for the interviews was established. The interviews were semi-structured and incorporated open-ended questions. The participants' responses to the questions determined whether a follow-up question was asked. Schlebusch (2002) and Burns and Grove (2007) have mutually noted that interviews that include structured questions followed by probing questions enrich the data.

### *Population and Sample*

A criterion for selection of the sample was that each of the educational settings to be visited needed to have received national recognition for their assessment programs. Each of the three institutions that were selected for this study met the criterion and had received a CHEA Award for Institutional Progress in Student Learning Outcomes. A second criterion for selection was that three different types of institutions were to comprise

the sample. I wanted representation from a 4-year university, a two-year community college and a two-year community college with a technical focus. This criterion was also met by the sample. Two institutions were located in the southwest region of the United States and one was in the northeast central region.

Following approval by my university's institutional review board (IRB, see Appendices A & B), the director/coordinator of the three educational institutions assessment programs selected for participation were contacted and queried as to whether he/she believed his/her institution would be interested in participating in the study. Each of the director/ coordinators indicated that he/she would need to seek approval from either their president or chief academic officer. Affirmative responses were received from all three institutions, although one of the three did require that I complete their IRB training, and seek IRB approval from their district office. The participants for the study were selected through non-probability purposive sampling with the assistance of each site's assessment program director/ coordinator.

### *Data Collection*

This qualitative research study used a case study approach. The primary method of data collection was through semi-structured interviews. Additionally, because of the generosity of the participants, I was also able to view first hand, samples of assessment materials. This supplemental material added to the data obtained through the interviews. A protocol, which included open-ended questions followed by probing questions, served as a guide for the data collection and provided assistance in staying focused on the subject matter. Ethical considerations for the study were addressed in the consent form

and verbally repeated at the start of the interview. Moreover, the methodology and plans for the collected data were reviewed and approved by my university's IRB.

### *Interviews*

The interview protocol was designed to elicit information about each individual's involvement with assessment at his or her respective schools. Explanations for why they participate in assessment activities and why they believe their school's assessment programs are a success were sought. Participants were also asked to identify the challenges they perceive exist for maintaining the level of success their assessment programs have had and to recommend strategies for augmenting the assessment programs. The interview protocol may be found in Appendix D.

The majority of the interviews were conducted in the faculty, staff or administrators' offices. Three of the faculty that were interviewed, requested we not meet in their offices. Therefore interviews were also conducted in a coffee shop (- in a quiet area, away from others), a student study lounge (- we were the only ones in the lounge) and outside on a park bench (- our backs were turned away from the walking path).

All of the participants were asked before the start of their interview if they had any questions regarding the investigative study, consent form or audiotaping of the interview process. None of the 20 participants asked questions or expressed any concerns regarding the process. Once the participants appeared ready to begin, they were asked to sign the consent form, and given a copy for their records. The tape recorder was turned on, only after the participants and I had signed the consent form. I reiterated at the start of the tape recordings that neither names of interviewees nor the names of their universities



or colleges would be used in any written report or podium presentation. The participants verbally indicated either they understood or nodded their heads in acknowledgement.

In addition to audiotaping the participants' responses, I also wrote their responses to the questions on the protocol forms (questionnaires). I ended the interviews by thanking the participants and telling them that I would contact them if I needed clarification when transcribing their responses. The average length of time for an interview was 40 minutes with 25 minutes being the shortest and 82 minutes the longest.

I felt comfortable meeting with the participants and it appeared they were genuinely interested in this investigative study. They were informative and friendly, with several appearing eager to share the experiences either they or their school has had in furthering their assessment programs. Each educational institution gave me copies of selected assessment materials, i.e., reports, plans, rubrics, executive summary and even a PowerPoint presentation. It was also suggested by many, that I look at the assessment data, reports and summaries that are included on the schools' websites. It was apparent that the individuals who were the point of contact at each of the three schools had paved the way for me prior to my visiting their campuses. All three contacts had responsibility for the assessment programs at their respective schools.

I encountered no tactical difficulties during the interviews. I was able to find the interviewees' offices and meeting sites with the assistance of campus maps and kind-hearted individuals who escorted me to the location of a next interview. I allowed three days for Educational Institution F and two days each for the other campuses. This timetable was established in case someone had to reschedule. On two occasions this did indeed occur. The interviews were deferred to another day and I was still able to conduct

a person-to-person interview. As I was unable to make contact with the Assessment Coordinator from Educational Institution C after I was at home, I did not conduct any interviews via telephone. That was the back-up plan if I was not able to interview them when I was at his/her campus.

There was no difficulty with the equipment malfunctioning. The audio recorder worked fine. As it is a digital recorder, I downloaded the recorded interviews to data files on a CD. The CD is locked in a secure filing cabinet in my home office and I am the only one with a key. The plan is to destroy the audiotape files within two months following my dissertation defense. The transcribed data has been de-identified, it will be retained in my home office in a locked secure filing cabinet for a period of five years, and then it will be destroyed.

### *Study Sites and Participants*

Interviews were conducted over a nine-day period in mid-spring 2009. I first visited the four-year university (Educational Institution F); followed by the two-year community college (Educational Institution C) and lastly the two-year community college with a technical focus (Educational Institution T). Information about each institution and their participants is detailed below.

*Educational Institution C.* Educational Institution C offers two-year degrees and certificates in over 150 programs. The public community college is spread out over several campuses and reports a student enrollment of over 27,000. The number of fulltime faculty is near 350 with 750 plus adjunct faculty. Sixty-five percent of the students attend part-time. This institution has been in existence since 1965. The campus

I visited was the first site of this college. The city the community college is located in has a population of 460,000. Aerospace, healthcare and technology industries are the major employers for this locality.

Educational Institution C's assessment component is a part of the college's Office of Research and Planning. The function of this office is to collect and analyze data for the college. The results are used in the community college's decision-making. Additionally, the office coordinates the college's assessment of student learning efforts, evaluation of the college's institutional effectiveness as well as accreditation endeavors. This office is administered by the Dean of Research and Planning Analysis. A coordinator of institutional effectiveness and a research assistant are also members of the Office of Research and Planning.

Faculty involvement with assessment at Educational Institution C is assisted through the Faculty Senate Student Outcomes Committee (SOC), which is a standing committee of the college's Faculty Senate. The mission of the SOC is to guide the implementation of the community college's assessment program. The SOC's primary functions include: a) conducting the annual Assessment Week activities; b) disseminating the results of the Assessment Week Efforts; and c) promoting the incorporation of assessment results in teaching and learning throughout the college.

*Educational Institution F.* Educational Institution F, a public research university, has a student population of almost 23,000 and 800 faculty. Nearly 100 undergraduate degree programs and 50 graduate degree programs are offered by this century-old university. The city the university is located in has an estimated population of 60,000. Tourism is responsible for a significant workforce sector of this city.

When I visited, the assessment office consisted of a director who also had a faculty role and taught part-time, a research specialist and a part-time graduate student research assistant. The office previously had additional staff but due to budgetary constraints, the positions of people who transferred to other departments, graduated or resigned were not replaced. My contact person at the university was the assessment office's director.

The university's assessment committee was established in 2002 by the university's faculty senate and consists of elected faculty and professional staff. Prior to 2002, the university had another structure in place for assessment. The current assessment committee's responsibility is to determine how the assessment of student learning outcomes affords the opportunity to strengthen the university and augment its accountability. According to the mission of the committee, it functions as the overseer of assessment, is responsible for developing the university's policies related to student learning, reviews assessment results, recommends changes in strategies used in assessment and ensures that the university uses the assessment results in its decision making.

*Educational Institution T.* Educational Institution T, a public two-year college with a technical focus, has been granting associate degrees for 41 years. The college also awards diplomas and certificates for completion of various technical and occupational programs. Educational Institution T currently has over 40 associate degree programs that are offered between two campuses. The main campus covers 2300 acres and has 20 buildings. Approximately 4500 students attend Educational Institution T. This amount is slightly less than the total population of the town in which the college is located. That

population is 5300. The town's main industry for decades was coal mining followed by manufacturing of rugged and occupational footwear. In recent years, the major workforce employers have been from education and healthcare.

Educational Institution T's assessment program is lead by an Assessment Coordinator. This role is listed as being one-half to two thirds of a fulltime position and the Assessment Coordinator indicated she was also responsible for related student success programs in the college thus allowing her to be considered a fulltime employee. This position is in charge of the college's assessment program in that she educates faculty on assessment, assists with the development and implementation of assessment opportunities, collects and analyzes assessment data, and then disseminates the results of the data to college administration, faculty, regulatory and accreditation agencies.

Faculty involvement in Educational Institution T's assessment process is through the Assessment Council. This council is comprised of 17 members that represent faculty, students, administration & the Assessment Coordinator. I was told that the role of the Council has changed over the years as the college's assessment program has matured. Initially the role of the Council was to create an assessment plan and develop procedures for the implementation of the assessment program. Now the Council's focus is to oversee and mentor their faculty colleagues' execution of the assessment program.

A qualitative approach allows the researcher to vividly depict each participant in the study while research morals preclude vivid depictions. A brief description of each participant is provided in Table 1. Pseudonyms were given to each study participant (as well as the educational institution) for ease in tracking them throughout the data presentation and analysis phases and to protect their anonymity.

Table 1

*Description of Study Participants*

	<b>Educational Institution C</b>	<b>Educational Institution F</b>	<b>Educational Institution T</b>
<b>Type of Educational Institution</b>	<b>Community College</b>	<b>4-year university</b>	<b>Community College with Technical Focus</b>
<b># of interviews</b>	<b>N=4</b>	<b>N=9</b>	<b>N=7</b>
<b>Position at Institution; Gender/</b>	Dr. Carl: Assessment Committee Member / Faculty; Male	Dr. Frank: Assessment Coordinator / Faculty; Male	Dr. Tamera: Assessment Coordinator; Female
	Dr. Christopher: Assessment Committee Member / Faculty; Male	Dr. Floyd: Assessment Committee Member & Current Committee Chairperson / Faculty; Male	Dr. Thomas: Faculty/ Dean & Assessment Committee Member; Male
	Dr. Corey: Assessment Committee Member / Faculty; Male	Dr. Francine: Former Assessment Committee Member & Committee Chairperson/ Faculty; Female	Mr. Trevor: Assessment Committee Member/ Faculty/ Associate Dean; Male
	Dr. Colton: Academic Vice President; Male	Ms. Florence: Assessment Committee Member/ Staff/ Female	Ms. Tara: Assessment Committee Member/ Faculty; Female
		Dr. Fred: Former Assessment Committee Member / Faculty; Male	Mr. Tim: Assessment Committee Member/ Faculty; Male
		Dr. Felicia: Assessment Committee Member / Faculty; Female	Mr. Tyler; Faculty; Male
		Dr. Faith: Ex Officio Assessment Committee Member/ Assistant Dean; Female	Dr. Trudy: Provost & Sr. Vice President Academic Affairs; Female
		Ms. Farrah: Assessment Committee Member/ Staff; Female	
		Dr. Fiona: Vice Provost; Female	

### *Data Analysis*

All interview transcripts were transcribed verbatim. Transcribed data was read several times so that I was familiar with the responses from each participant. Additionally, as I was the individual who transcribed the data, I noted on the questionnaire audible nonverbal responses, including chuckling, raised voices, whispered conversations, and the ease or quickness to which the participants responded to the questions. Following a thorough review, the responses were sorted and categorized into sections each representing an area of inquiry that was listed on the questionnaire.

Initially the faculty responses from each school were kept together to determine patterns of responses to questions from participants within the same institution. These were noted. The responses were then inputted into a category with comparable responses from other schools and the results of those categories were also noted. The transcripts were reviewed a final time to make certain that the patterns reported were consistent with the presented data. No specific qualitative software was used for the analysis

### *Chapter Summary*

Chapter 3 provided details on the specific methodology used in this study. The study design was explained along with a discussion of the criteria used for selecting the population and sample. The chapter also includes an overview of each of the three educational institutions visited and a brief synopsis of the study participants. Data collection was described as well as the interview process including steps that were taken to protect the collected data. The chapter concluded with an account of how the data was analyzed.

## CHAPTER IV

### DATA PRESENTATION

In this chapter, I present the stories of the participants. The data has been organized by the use of a case study approach. Presentation of the collected data is by category and by educational institution. The categories are derived from topical content addressed by the interview questions and reported by the participants.

#### *Portrayal of Participants and their Connection with Assessment*

Assessment coordinators, current assessment committee members, and former assessment committee members comprised this study's subjects in addition to each institution's chief academic officer. Most of the participants had worked with assessment for several years. Additionally, several of them were members of their educational institution's assessment committee when it was awarded the CHEA award for Institutional Progress in Student Learning Outcomes.

Assessment committee members at Educational Institution C have similar backgrounds of involvement. Mr. Carl stated he has been at this community college for six years and is a residential, fulltime, tenured faculty. He has been a member of the Student Outcomes Committee (SOC) since 2003 or 2004. He currently is in his first year as chairperson of the SOC. Like Carl, Dr. Christopher has been a faculty member at Educational Institution C for eight years and the past three or four years has been a SOC



member. Dr. Corey has the most tenure of those interviewed from this college, as he is completing his 18th year. He noted that he has been involved with assessment activities at Educational Institution C for 15 years; and is an original member of the current SOC.

The newest member of the committee, Dr. Colton, Vice President, Academic Affairs, has only been at Educational Institution C for nine months. The Office of Research and Planning including the Dean of Research and Planning Analysis report directly to him. As the individual responsible for academic programs at this, Colton said assessment of student learning has a significant role at the college while he still admits to being new in his job, he has been very impressed with the college's assessment initiatives so far.

The four-year university, Educational Institution F, has an assessment committee aptly called the University Assessment Committee or UAC, which is comprised of both faculty and staff. Length of association with this university for the individuals I visited ranged from two years to 24 years with the average tenure being 12 years. This does not include the 19 years that Dr. Fiona, the Vice Provost has been at Educational Institution F. While she has only been in the Vice Provost position for five years, she was credited by the eight others I interviewed from F as being a significant ally of assessment and as a result, assessment is treated with much respect by a majority of the campus. Dr. Fiona indicated that she sees the UAC as a critical group for the university and believes that as leadership on the committee is usually stable for two-three year periods, that this has helped the committee carry out several significant assessment initiatives. She sees her role as stewarding the UAC work and as such attends UAC sponsored events whenever she can and if asked speaks during the events as well as working with the deans and

chairs to ensure that they understand that this university's administration values assessment.

The UAC member providing continuity along with stability is Dr. Floyd who has been a member of UAC for 4 years and has served as chair of the committee for the past two years. He described his understanding of assessment as being directly related to improvement of student learning. As a faculty member at Educational Institution F for 18 years, he has seen positive changes occur as a result of assessment projects. This observation is shared by Dr. Francine, who is in her 16th year at F. Dr. Francine chaired the UAC for the four-year period prior to Dr. Floyd.

Other current members of the UAC who were interviewed include Ms. Florence, Ms. Farrah, and Dr. Felicia. Ms. Florence represents the library on the UAC and has been at Educational Institution F since 2001. She said that although she is not a faculty member she has "equal footing" with the faculty UAC members and that, her presence on the committee has brought a different perspective to the committee. She believes her involvement with the committee has also led to the library becoming increasingly aware of the types of resources the university can use to enhance student learning. Another staff representative is Ms. Farrah who has just completed her second year at F. Her role at the university is to oversee the assessment of the e-learning programs and courses. She believes her role on the UAC helps to keep her aware of the "hills and valleys" the faculty teaching on-ground courses are faced with when it comes to assessing student learning. Ms. Farrah said she is also able to share the experiences she has had with assisting faculty develop student learning assessment strategies for on-line courses. Dr. Felicia is a relative newcomer to F as she has only been a faculty member for three years.

Her membership on the UAC is also three years. She had prior experience with assessment at her previous university.

Dr. Faith is an ex officio on the UAC. Prior to her being in an Assistant Dean position, Dr. Faith was a member of the UAC. Her current position as an Assistant Dean prevents her from being an active member on a Faculty senate committee. Because she represents the university's department for teaching and learning, she is able to lend her voice during discussions related to planning for assessment activities. Dr. Faith's tenure with F is 13 years.

The last person interviewed aside from Dr. Frank the director of the Office of Academic Assessment, is Dr. Fred. He has the most seniority at this university among the study participants with 24 years in residence. While Dr. Fred is no longer on the UAC, he co-authored the self-study for the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) over a decade ago in which the need for a stronger assessment program was identified by him as well as the HLC site visitors. He was a charter member of the university's first formal assessment committee and as such was able to offer the historical viewpoint of assessment at Educational Institution F.

The final participant from F to introduce is the first person I interviewed, Dr. Frank. As noted above, Dr. Frank is the Academic Assessment office's director and my contact from this institution. While Dr. Fiona was given credit for the assessment program's existence, Dr. Frank was lauded as the reason the assessment program at this university is so successful. The adjectives the participants used to describe Dr. Frank included "being passionate about assessment," having a personality that is non-threatening nor condescending so that when he knocks on doors to promote assessment

people trust him and that makes them willing to partake in the assessment activities. Dr. Frank has been a faculty member at F for 12 years and added the current responsibilities in 2005. He admits to being very green when it came to assessment when he accepted this role but says he has learned much by immersing himself in the role. The other study participants agree that he has definitely become involved with assessment and has perhaps even mastered it.

Educational Institution T refers to its assessment committee as the Success Skills Community Committee. The name was derived from the core concepts the community college identified as being indicative of preparedness for the real world. I was unable to get an exact number of people who serve on the committee but did discover that deans, associate deans and department heads are welcome to attend the Success Skills Community Committee meetings. Dr. Thomas, a 29-year faculty member from Educational Institution T and also a dean, revealed that some deans and department heads attend the meetings and some do not. He is one person who attends as often as his schedule permits. Mr. Trevor, an associate dean in the same school as Dr. Thomas and a 13-year veteran of T indicated that he also goes to the committee meetings. A third member of the committee who I interviewed was Ms. Tara. She is a faculty member who has been at T for eight years as a fulltime faculty and two years prior to that as an adjunct.

Rounding out the faculty who were interviewed were Mr. Tyler, who has 21 years of faculty service to this college and Mr. Tim who has 4 ½ years as a fulltime faculty member. Mr. Tyler is a fulltime faculty member who teaches capstone courses at T. He indicated that as a member of the Success Skills Community Committee, he has been

privileged to help with the design of many of the assessment tools and has used them in his courses. Mr. Tim participated in a pilot of an Institutional assessment committee, which met in the summer and was comprised of faculty and academic administrative people from across campus and external people as well. The purpose of that committee was to assess student learning from an institutional perspective rather than a program or departmental. These committee members reviewed students' e-portfolios, which were created during a capstone course. One of the purposes of the e-portfolios was to include examples of how students had met the college's identified core concepts while they were students at T.

The final two participants were Dr. Trudy and Dr. Tamara. Dr. Trudy has been employed at Educational Institution T for all but three of the years the college has been in existence. She will be completing her 38<sup>th</sup> year at the end of the current school year. She stated that she has basically grown up with the college. Dr. Trudy is the Provost and Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs. A former student of Dr. Trudy's is Dr. Tamara. She has been at this technical related community college for 21 years and is presently in her fourth year as Coordinator of Assessment. Dr. Tamara was my contact person for Education Institution T. Dr. Tamara said she has been interested in assessment for much of the 21 years she has been a faculty at T. She believes this interest in assessment contributed to her being hired for her current position. She also remarked on the importance of assessment to the faculty role of nurturing students' learning success.

*Summary.* The people who made up the sample for this research study have a combined 260 years experience in higher education. Most of them have been involved with assessment from the time they began their affiliation with their respective colleges

or and university. The interviewees from the technical focused community college, T, averaged 18 years employment. Educational Institution F, the four-year university, had an average of 12 years of employment for the people interviewed and the other community college visited, C, averaged 4 years when their recently hired Academic Vice President was included in the count. Without him, 11 years is the average.

### *Reasons for participating in assessment*

Some faculty participate in assessment because of their experiential or educational backgrounds. Dr. Felicia came to Educational Institution F from another university where she was involved with assessment. She also indicated that she is certain that her background with assessment is one of the reasons she was hired at F. She said that her departmental chairperson wants all faculty involved with assessment and that this has been an uphill battle in her department. Dr. Felicia further acknowledged that when she came to F three years ago, “there was open rebellion among the faculty in my department.” She said that she has worked very hard the past two years helping to get her department ready for an initial accreditation visit. She believes her efforts have been worthwhile as she thinks about half of her colleagues now understand assessment and have implemented assessment strategies in their courses and there is definitely less outward rebellion when the subject comes up. She gives credit to the praise that was given by the accrediting team’s site visitors, faculty discussions on assessment that are occurring more and more regularly and the fact that their department received a Seal of Excellence for their assessment efforts. The latter being recognition from the university’s office of Academic Assessment. (In order to receive the recognition, departments or

programs need to complete an application and submit evidence that shows the department or program has not only implemented their assessment plan but has also “closed the loop” by reviewing the assessment results and then sharing them with faculty, students, stakeholders, etc. Departments and programs who are determined to have met the criteria for the acknowledgement are awarded the Seal of Excellence, which is actually an emblem that can be placed on their department or program website, added to stationery, e-mail signature lines, etc.

Dr. Francine concurs with the reasoning stated by Dr. Felicia and added, Some of why we did this was because of NCA (North Central Association of Schools and Colleges). But, all of the volunteers on this committee had seen graduates come out of our program who shouldn't have graduated. They hadn't learned anything. We saw this [assessment] as a method of stopping this from occurring. And then once our committee began working on policies, reviewing assessment reports, the benefits started leaping out at us. We were making changes in our programs based on data. Assessment makes it so easy to go up to the Board of Regents and say we have to make changes and this data supports it. Then with help from the committee members who were from the School of Business and were market savvy, it was proposed that we put the results of data on our marketing brochures. There were many good suggestions for the data and that was one of the benefits of having such a broad ranging group of people on the committee. We had people from the library who are on the committee and they were thinking that data results could support the resources we needed to purchase for student learning. The benefits of the assessment activities were remarkable.

This finding has stimulated interest among committee members and certainly contributes to why they participate.

Dr. Corey and Dr. Christopher both stated that faculty from their department always seem to be on the assessment committee. In fact, Dr. Corey believes that his department has been involved with assessment almost since the beginning of the concept arriving at C. He admitted his personal reason for participating with assessment activities was that he finds it to be a process that indeed validates student learning. Dr. Christopher's response was very similar to Dr. Corey's.

Ms. Tara explained that she was assigned to the committee. She followed that up by admitting that involvement with assessment at T had been very beneficial for her in her faculty role. She also noted that she was the coordinator for assessment in her academic department. She said "that doesn't mean that I conduct the assessment for each of the programs but rather my role is to try and encourage consistency with assessment among the courses in my department." Mr. Tyler summarized his reason for participating in assessment by stating that it interests him. He said that prior to his college's current assessment rage, he had done a lot of personal, informal classroom assessment primarily with courses within his educational program.

Dr. Trudy, the individual with the most longevity in higher education replied that she has always been interested in student learning and intrigued by strategies that facilitated learning so it was only natural that she would become a strong supporter of assessment. She also admitted that her college, T, is in a committed relationship with a nationally known leader of assessment and development of student learning outcomes. As such, the model and theory used by the college for its assessment program is the one



conceived by the well-known leader in the assessment movement. This leader's assessment program was specifically designed for community colleges and technical schools and has a heavy emphasis on application, which is quite appropriate for technical schools like T.

Dr. Carl stated the following when asked why he was on his college's assessment committee:

I got on this committee partly because my doctoral program was largely in research assessment, educational assessment, and psychological assessment. Therefore, it seemed a really good fit and I was looking for a committee experience that let you do something and a committee experience where you had a little bit of power. Not all committees do. The first few years, I was on this committee, I was really out of my element. Now I understand the terminology, the acronyms and I find myself being really interested in what the SOC can do for the college.

When indicating why he was involved with assessment, Dr. Christopher said simply that "assessment is about teaching and learning and I enjoy that." This sentiment is shared by Dr. Fred who remarked that he participates on the UAC and in campus-wide assessment activities because faculty should be involved with assessment. Dr. Faith agrees with Dr. Fred and added that when she first arrived at F 13 years ago, she wondered about the consistency of instruction and the accountability. She said she did not think that faculty realized they had a responsibility to be accountable for what students learned. Once she started learning about program assessment, it seemed to make

sense and since then she tries to take advantage of any opportunity to promote assessment.

*Who is responsible for establishing assessment policy*

The responsibility for establishing assessment policy varies by campus. The consensus of the interviewees for the four year university was that the University Assessment Committee (UAC) establishes specific assessment policy while the provost and vice provost identify the overall intent of the assessment policy. The faculty and staff UAC members were also unanimous in saying that Dr. Frank, F's assessment coordinator, was the "main person responsible if one really wanted to go to a *gut feeling* level". The UAC puts the specific policies together and plans how they are to be implemented but concedes they would have never gotten to the point if it were not for Dr. Frank. Dr. Francine went so far as to say that "F is so very fortunate to have a person like Dr. Frank who is dedicated, knowledgeable and has so much energy you almost want to strangle him."

According to Mr. Carl, the Student Outcomes Committee (SOC) is responsible for establishing assessment policy at Educational Institution C in conjunction with the Office of Research and Planning. The purpose is not to create specific assessment tests. Rather they meet with faculty and ask them "what do you want students to know when they leave this college?" The faculty get together in their departments and discuss this question. As a faculty, we have come up with 'clusters or themes' that the assessment measurements are then based upon. "So yes, in essence, faculty are significantly involved with driving assessment here. The SOC leads the initiative." Dr. Corey also

agreed with this perspective and noted that the “faculty through the SOC is responsible for establishing assessment policy” at C.

Dr. Thomas, a dean from Educational Institution T, the two-year technical community college, noted that the assessment program is administratively driven although the faculty are the actual drivers. He explained that the college’s board decides on the overall assessment policy and then the provost and Office of Academic Affairs charge the faculty through the Success Skills Learning Community committee with carrying out the policy. Once the results of the assessment activities are summarized, the AAC makes recommendations to the provost who in turn sends them to the President, who forwards them to the college’s board. He also mentioned that the policy is implemented according to the recommended strategies presented in the standardized assessment package. Using these guidelines, the faculty have the opportunity to determine the assessment strategies. Dr. Trudy, the provost, agrees with Dr. Thomas’s observation and added “We try things and see if they work. If not we try something else. We’ve done several pilot programs with assessment activities.” The faculty interviewees who have no administrative role at T see the responsibility for establishing assessment policy a bit differently than the dean and provost. They indicated that Dr. Trudy sets the policy and Dr. Tamara ensures the academic departments put it into action.

#### *How students have benefitted from assessment activities*

Perhaps not surprisingly, all of the interviewees were able to provide examples of how they have observed students benefitting from various assessment activities.

Academic departments at Educational Institution F have developed rubrics which faculty

use in determining whether or not students are learning and therefore meeting the established learning outcomes. Faculty I spoke with believe that because students see the rubrics when they are given the assignments and when the assignments have been graded and because students see the feedback that accompanies the rubric they are able to see what they have learned and why it is important to learn. Ms. Farrah, a UAC member supports this belief as evidenced by her response to the question how have students benefitted from assessment, “Rubrics can and do demonstrate that faculty are sharing results with students. A consequence of this is that students have a better idea of what the expectations are for them in their course or program.”

Dr. Floyd is also impressed with rubrics and how by using them students are able to know exactly what is expected of them in his classes. He perceives that rubrics provide clear detail as to the material students are being assessed on including outlining the specific levels of achievement. The effect of this is evident by students who are better prepared for assessment activities than previously observed.

Ms. Florence admonished faculty who do not have “buy-in” with assessment because it does negatively affect students.

If faculty can't say what the outcomes of the program should be and what the graduates of the programs should be able to do, I think we have a problem. The faculty are doing prospective and current students a disservice if they can't speak about their program. Assessment brings us down to a different level - a direct level. The more students understand about assessment and the purpose of it, they more they will appreciate the program and the university. It's not fair to leave students in the dark.

Dr. Felicia concurs with Ms. Florence, and believes that faculty have a huge responsibility to “buy in” to assessment. She said:

Students have a better sense of why they are being taught what they are being taught. We as faculty can give them a meta cognitive perspective. This is a broader view of what they’ve been learning, what they need to learn and how it fits into their development as citizens in our society.

Dr. Fiona summarized why she believes the students have benefitted from assessment as follows:

Our students have benefitted. First and foremost, they’re learning more and gaining more as a result of assessment. Our beginning database of evidence has shown changes that needed to be made and at the same time provided us with answers that illustrate there have been positive results with student learning.

Faculty have become more reflective and there is shared discussion with students on what the expectations are upon course or program completion. Faculty, not just the administration, are now more aware of bottlenecks; are we offering courses that are needed? Do all of our courses contribute to students’ learning?

Students are beginning to realize that assessment is done because we’re trying to promote their success in obtaining their degree- bachelor’s degree or graduate degree, whatever their level is. Another way students have benefitted is by being involved with assessment; rubrics encourage student involvement with assessment. Students’ voices have helped us see what we’re doing right or not doing right. Students benefit in a diffuse number of ways. We have a culture of

evidence, which enables us to have discussion that focuses on learning outcomes and students' achievement of them.

Mr. Carl explained that Educational Institution C, the community college, has selected nine areas in general education, referred to as clusters that are assessed. The clusters are: communication, numeracy, problem solving/critical thinking, scientific inquiry, arts and humanities, information literacy, cultural diversity and global awareness. He stated "We have seen statistically significant numbers with some of our assessment measures that indicate student improvement in various clusters. They're still in the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile but this is drastically improved from what they were a few years ago."

Dr. Corey maintained that students do indeed benefit from assessment. He discerns that students seem to get value from assessment beginning with the administration of the assessment instrument:

I talk to them about the process – what it means institutionally- letting them know that this is a data collection process. We're not assessing students per se or evaluating faculty rather we're observing the value that has been added from student learning.

The idea of value added to learning is also noted by Dr. Christopher:

Sophomore students at this community college seem to value assessment.

It's not us assessing them (the students) and they're not assessing the faculty. Rather the entire college experience is being assessed- that growth, the entire value added. Whether the learning was from my classroom or somewhere else, I don't know. It may not even have come from

us. Perhaps they grew up with it, but we talk about value added learning with the students and what it means to them.

Every course syllabus at Educational Institution T has an outline of the assessment activities for that semester, including the specific concept being highlighted, and an explanation of the benefits that should be derived from the assessment activities. Students develop electronic portfolios and each quarter submit evidence (i.e., papers, outlines of podium presentations, posters) of how they have met the course objectives. This evidence is frequently an example of how students have achieved a student learning outcome for a specific course. By the end of the six quarter educational programs, Dr. Thomas noted that students are able to review their portfolios and in doing so, they realize what they have learned in the process. Ms. Tara noted that many courses at T have assignments that reflect assessment activities and that this is specifically seen in the capstone courses, one of which she teaches:

We're up to our eyeballs with looking at assessment related assignments as they are being required in all capstone courses that the college schedules. We explain why students have the assignments as well as what we will do with the information that we gather from the assignments when we grade them. Overall, I believe the assessment process has been a positive one. It has made us better teachers and I think it has improved the quality of our students who go out the door and into the workforce. Because of the assessment process, we as teachers have had to learn to give better feedback to our students- feedback that is very specific and also explains why something should or should not have been done a

certain way. This ultimately leads to better learning opportunities for the students.

Mr. Tim and Mr. Tyler were of the same thought and are also in accord that students benefit from assessment plus through the process, faculty become better instructors. Mr. Tyler says he has reviewed direct student comments on assessment and in general, students have said that they're not so overwhelmed when they see courses that have assignments that are increasingly multifaceted. He notes that students indicate that because of assessment and through the use of rubrics, they understand the learning process of teaching from simple to complex and it should be expected that their assignments and expected levels of achievement will increase in difficulty. These comments were not seen prior to the implementation of rubrics detailing what is needed for achievement of the student learning outcomes.

*Why college/ university assessment programs have been successful*

Interviewees, whether faculty, assessment coordinators or administrators were eager to explain the ways in which their college's or university's assessment program had been successful. They once again credit specific people at their institution for providing the support or exerting the effort to make their assessment program not only successful but also award worthy.

Dr. Frank, F's assessment coordinator, remarked that their program is a success because it is a huge priority at his university. He believes that the site visit by NCA in 1997 was the impetus.



They came and told us we needed to assess student learning and create a viable assessment center. So task forces were created and the administration provided support for assessment activities. By 2007, we'd come full circle. It took 10 years to get to that point and get the whole system in place. That's what we tell people when we go to conferences. At the beginning, there was a lot of resistance from the faculty, a lot of misinformation primarily due to lack of knowledge.

Departments submitted documents, but they didn't really mean anything because faculty didn't understand assessment. Assessment needs to be meaningful to the faculty. I believe we've reached that point overall.

Another reason why the program has been so successful, according to Dr. Frank, is the administration. He says they have a president and provost who believe in the value of assessment and support related activities. The past several years, his office has been funded very sufficiently. The current administration with the Vice Provost as the leader of academic and student affairs has done wonders in finding funds to dedicate to assessment. He discussed that even with the current budget crisis that was present in his state and is impacting his public university, he did not think his office would take a huge hit.

A few years ago, Dr. Frank met with the Vice Provost, Dr. Fiona, and together they agreed that a significant portion of his office budget would be allocated for assessment activities not salaries. Some of the monies are used for start-up mini-grants or to fund travel expenses for faculty attending or presenting at assessment related conferences. Dr. Frank said faculty may apply for the mini-grants either on a departmental or individual basis. The grant monies, which range from \$1,000-\$2,000 can

be used for summer stipends, faculty development workshops or even hiring assistants to help with data collection. He believes the mini-grants have significantly helped not only to encourage faculty to participate in assessment but also to understand its importance.

Ms. Florence also discussed the mini-grants and said she believes they have indeed helped with faculty engaging with assessment. She brought up the fact that work with assessment is generally not a criterion for tenure and promotion but writing grants, being awarded grants, conducting research and then presenting the results is. So, if faculty can get a mini-grant to help them with their assessment program and then prepare a manuscript or presentation from it, they can include these activities in their quest for tenure or promotion. Because of this, the mini-grants have been a great motivator for faculty involvement with assessment. Ms. Florence also mentioned another incentive that the UAC has initiated which she sees is also instrumental in making their assessment program a success. The committee awards Seals of Assessment Excellence & Achievement to departments or degree programs whose assessment plans meet established criteria and merit distinction. Ms. Florence said that the seal can be placed on their web site, departmental letterhead, accreditation self-study reports and marketing materials. Plus, each department or program awarded a Seal of Assessment Excellence or Seal of Assessment Achievement is also given a certificate suitable for framing. She said their committee has seen an increase in assessment activities being implemented in departments that previously were not active participants. Dr. Fiona, the school's vice provost chuckled when I asked her about the seals. She said that she understands both seals are quite coveted and that departments or programs will contact the assessment

coordinator's office to find out how they can get a seal when they see one printed on another department's newsletter or interdepartmental memorandum.

Ms. Florence explained that success in assessment was also based on more than incentives.

Assessment at this university doesn't have many restrictions. It's not punitive and if you don't participate, there isn't any punishment. Committee members strive to be very diplomatic and encouraging when reviewing plans and reports that departments or programs have submitted. We won't say something is terrible to the department. We try to be mentors and give suggestions how they could approach something differently. It's not grading a paper. We're trying to make their plan better. We might see things, or know things about assessment that they don't even know about. Our approach is starting to have much success. Departments are beginning to say assessment is really worth doing.

I also think the success the UAC has had needs to be shared. Organizationally, the university with the Vice Provost (Dr. Fiona) has provided backing aside from the financial support. She is telling department chairs and deans that assessment matters. She publicly praises departments that are doing well with assessments and have received seals. She comes to our annual assessment dinner. She is present at the annual assessment fair. It is quite evident that there is clear support from upper level administration. Assessment is all over our university.

Finally, I think the success of the assessment program at F should also be attributed to Dr. Frank. He has the perfect personality for the challenges his role brings. When he interacts with faculty from other departments, he is not threatening or patronizing. Each department at F is supposed to turn in a *tiny* assessment report and most departments saw this as a burden. Dr. Frank has met with the departments and reminded them that this report is for them. He asks what they want to learn about their students. People trust Dr. Frank. He leads departments to experience success. He is the key.

Dr. Floyd and Ms. Farrah said that the resources available for conducting assessment, the tremendous amount of support from upper administration and the UAC are all responsible for the successful assessment program at F. They also both agreed that the UAC has the most committed, dedicated group of people who are 100% involved and excited with assessment. The feeling of excitement shared by UAC members has also been observed by Dr. Faith. She said that representatives from the UAC were able to take their understanding of and excitement for assessment back to their departments. This has helped with faculty “buying into” assessment. Dr. Faith also noted that while the president and vice provost had said assessment will be done, they have left it up to the faculty to determine the specific hows and whys of assessment. She remarked on the level of participation by the deans and department heads by commenting that they have been supportive and have joined in on assessment-related goings-on and this has motivated people getting involved. The Seals certificates have also made a difference she believes. She said the UAC has definitely seen an increase in the number of departments submitting their assessment plans and applying for a Seals certificate.

Dr. Francine's observations as to why this university has a successful assessment program focused on the processes used by the UAC in formulating assessment policy. She said the UAC gathered input from as many departments and faculty as they could. Plus, the committee had:

Dr. Frank, knocking on doors of the faculty and promoting assessment. People on the committee who were students of sociology. They understood the principles of doing good research and made sure that what we were doing, collecting and reporting was good research. Additionally, members of the committee were asked to get themselves reelected or reappointed to the committee in order to have some continuity. Many UAC members made tremendous sacrifices, not only meeting 1 ½ hours per month but also attending the numerous subcommittee meetings that were scheduled between the monthly meetings. How dedicated the UAC members have been is almost unbelievable.

Dr. Francine also gave tribute to Dr. Fiona, the vice provost:

The Vice Provost has supported everything. She has come to our meetings, she has consistently supported us and fought for incorporation of assessment activities when needed. She got money for the office. She got paid staff to work in the office. She got money for the mini-grants.

Dr. Francine ended by saying "Indeed the assessment program is a success. For the past several years, our aim was to build a culture of assessment throughout the campus. We wanted assessment to be almost invisible. It is just something we all do."

Dr. Fiona, a senior administrator at F, commented that F is an institution that has a real commitment to undergraduate and graduate education and is therefore very cognizant

of the need to know whether or not students are learning. She thinks F's mission, strategic plan, and leadership all line up with assessment. Further, she and Dr. Frank share the philosophy that assessment needs to matter to the individual. She said this university has shifted from compliance-oriented assessment to a university that has an embedded culture of assessment and this is a result of the assessment program that is in operation at F. She too gave praise to Dr. Frank and credits him as being very instrumental with the university making this shift. From her comments and the comments of the UAC members it is clear that Dr. Fiona and Dr. Frank have worked together to cultivate a culture of meaningful assessment activities at Educational Institution F.

At Educational Institution C, Mr. Carl explained the success of the community college's assessment program in terms of its ability to close the loop. Accrediting agencies say that assessment is not complete unless the 'loop is closed'. This means that the results of the assessment data have to be communicated with those that are responsible for implementing the assessment activities. The results also have to be shared with students, parents, employers, stakeholders, etc. And the results have to be used to make changes at the institution or program changes as well as to justify maintaining institutional or program activities. To assist with this process, and similar to the assessment program at the four-year university, Institution C also offers grants that groups can apply for. Carl indicated that the grants can provide monies for faculty stipends, purchase of materials, bringing in a consultant, etc. "We prefer if the grant application represents cross-disciplinary groups." Further he explained that the grant proposals need to address one of the outcomes from C's general education clusters." The

grants are referred to as ROC grants with ROC standing for Results Outreach Committee. “Historically, we haven’t had a lot of groups applying for the grants but that seems to be changing this year as already there are three proposals which involve 10-12 faculty.”

Carl continued to elaborate on reasons their assessment program has been successful: “The success of our assessment program has also come about from promotion. From shaking hands with faculty and giving them a handout or flyer. Then going back later on in the school year and giving them another handout about assessment or another poster to hang on the wall.” Dr. Corey seemed to agree with Mr. Carl. He also added that:

Assessment is institutionalized here. Everyone knows what we do during our ‘big’ assessment days. It isn’t hard to get volunteers. We’re not doing it because of accreditation, we do it because it’s a part of our culture. This is who we are, we want to know what our students are learning.

Mr. Trevor stated that it took almost 10 years for Educational Institution T to have a truly successful assessment program. Now he says that it is “ingrained in our culture. It’s not new anymore, it’s not a fad, it’s just something we do.” Dr. Thomas agrees and also remarked that during an annual assessment day, faculty participate in round table discussions which are frequently initiated by one or more faculty showcasing what she/he or they have done with assessment during the past year and that in his opinion this contributes to the success of the school’s assessment program. He also definitively reported that the assessment program has been successful at T because it has the support of the Provost and it is continually kept in front of the faculty and the students. It is not something that is just done prior to an accreditation or state regulatory visit. Mr. Trevor

said that the college specifically strives to be on the forefront in their state and “stay on the cutting edge” with their assessment program. He commented:

We do not use a cookie cutter approach even though we have an overall institutional assessment program. Each department or program can design the activities that will allow their students to meet the overall institutional assessment goals. All new faculty also go through a four day quality improvement orientation prior to them beginning their first semester. During this time, they are introduced to the assessment program. Then during the semester, their course leader mentors them as they work with the assessment activities.

When asked if Mr. Trevor believed anyone specific has been instrumental in making this college’s assessment program a success, he stated:

Definitely our Provost. She’s been the stalwart behind assessment at this college. Dr. Tamara is the worker bee. She gathers the data and puts it together so we can understand it and use it. Dr. Thomas is also a significant factor in our department’s success with assessment. He understands it and has high expectations for our department. He pushes us to excel in assessment.

Mr. Tim agrees with Mr. Trevor that the provost, Dr. Trudy, has had much to do with the assessment program at Educational Institution T being labeled successful. He had many positive words to describe Dr. Trudy’s impact with the assessment program:

Dr. Trudy is very engaged with assessment and communicates very clearly that it is important to her. She’s been part of an outcomes based national education panel at times. Faculty see that she is participating on a national



level and sharing the success of T's assessment program with other community colleges in the country. This is quite an impressive feat for the small rural technical college we are.

Consistent leadership and the ability to have an assessment coordinator's position were the reasons Dr. Tamara gave as being factors in the success of the school's assessment program. According to Dr. Tamara, the Provost Dr. Trudy started the assessment process at T in the early 90's when the word assessment was just beginning to be included in accreditation language. Dr. Tamara noted that because Dr. Trudy has been continuously employed at T for 38 years, her vision of assessment and the role it should play at T has been constant since she initiated it almost twenty years ago. The assessment coordinator's position, which Dr. Tamara referred to, is her own position. Dr. Tamara is not the first person to have this position so she said the fact that there is such a position when many schools do not is definitely a contributing factor in the success of T's assessment program. Again, credit was given to Dr. Trudy who because she values assessment so much was able to have the position created and approved. Dr. Tamara said that to have someone who can facilitate all of the reporting that needs to happen has been good for Educational Institution T.

Prior to concluding the reporting of selected responses to the question of whether the program is successful, I believe it is essential to note what Dr. Trudy had to say about her school's assessment program:

Our program strengths are many. In particular, I believe it is because we really have the outcomes tied to what the employers want. This is essential particularly with the technical programs and degrees we offer. Furthermore, assessment is

faculty driven. It has to be. We strive to make it workable for faculty. At the same time, assessment is in the faculty job description and has been since 1996. We also recently began to include it as a component to be looked at during the faculty evaluation period.

Other reasons for the success are probably because we have an annual Assessment Day, which focuses on the students. We also have had Success Skills Fairs in which faculty share what they're doing in their program as far as assessment activities and who knows it may have transferability to another department or at least that is what we're hoping will happen. Finally, we have Dr. Tamara's position as assessment coordinator. She does individual coaching, teaching, mentoring, and provides feedback to faculty. She takes or tries to take the programs to the next level.

#### *The roles of administrators in assessment*

The majority of interviewees thought that department heads, deans and the administration should have a role with assessment. A few others showed some skepticism at first but upon further thought stated that administrators should be involved but their roles needed to be explicitly spelled out and limited. This feeling is demonstrated in Mr. Carl's response:

I don't think they need to necessarily be involved with student outcomes, because in general assessment is doing well at our schools. Our program is running well. But, I think they should be involved by encouraging departments to use the data that is generated. In effect, they need to help faculty close the loop.

Dr. Christopher sees their role slightly different. He sees administrators as messengers; people who help spread the news about assessment. Dr. Christopher discussed how at Educational Institution C, the Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) attends events sponsored by the Student Outcomes Committee (SOC) and on occasion has even been a speaker. He believes the chair of his department values assessment as he routinely sends e-mails asking for faculty involvement with assessment activities and to meet with Dr. Christopher if they have questions. He said he appreciates the fact that the Chair includes assessment as an agenda item during department meetings. He said it is not only his department's chairperson that is active in promoting assessment; there are others. He cited a department where SOC members and recipients of grants from the Results Outcomes Committee (ROC) have been invited to the department chairperson meetings to give presentations. Also mentioned was that in preparation for Assessment week, department chairpersons routinely assisted in recruiting classrooms for participation in Assessment Week and supported and praised faculty who have given up some of their precious class time so that selected assessment tools could be administered. In his experience, the Chairs have been very helpful and he thinks this is an appropriate role for departmental chairpersons.

Dr. Corey's responses paralleled most of what Dr. Christopher said. He thinks administrators should be involved and that because of their administrative role they have the potential to facilitate the recruitment of faculty to immerse themselves in assessment. An obstacle Dr. Corey is fearful of occurring is that faculty may soon view assessment as one of the repetitive things they need to do and many of his colleagues may perceive it as one more thing that is being "piled" on faculty. It is his position that when department

chairpersons include information about assessment happenings on the department meeting agendas, they demonstrate to faculty the importance of assessment. Dr. Christopher also would like to see more department chairpersons sharing assessment results with faculty and helping them understand the results and how they might use them to improve student learning at Educational Institution C.

Dr. Frank, assessment coordinator for F, began by noting that the amount of involvement by department chairs is varied and frequently personality traits and managerial style determine the level of involvement. He also noted that:

We have some department chairs that are very interested in assessment and vigorous in their support and they facilitate the activities in their department.

Others turn it over to a faculty committee and there is usually an energetic faculty member willing to take the lead. Either way it seems to work.

Dr. Frank pointed out that, at F, the position of departmental chairperson rotates among the faculty. Generally, a person holds the position for two-three years and then they are done until it cycles through again. He revealed that some department chairs see the position as a leadership role whereas others see it as a glorified secretary. These beliefs impact how seriously or how involved the chair will be about assessment.

When the departments are small, they almost need to be directly involved according to Dr. Fred. He said in these situations, it is not necessarily that the department chairperson is taking the lead role, but rather she or he is viewed as one more body to help with the workload. If the department is sufficiently staffed, department chairs should be in Dr. Fred's perception:

Involved as a way of demonstrating the importance of assessment but except in limited situations, i.e., small departments, the actual work should be from the faculty. It should be organic and not imposed. Another words, deans and chairs articulate the role of assessment for their level as a whole but not be in charge of the actual assessment.

Other interviewees also affirmed the participation of deans and department chairs with most again recommending periodic oversight. Dr. Francine replied, “It should be faculty driven. Department chairs oversee the process and review the plans and reports but they shouldn’t be developing the plans or reports.” “Yes, they must be involved” said Dr. Faith and then she described her view of the depth to which they should participate:

They need to show support; and they also need to be more intimately facilitating plans. They need to question when weaknesses are found. They shouldn’t dictate. It’s important for the chair to set aside time for faculty to review data results and make decisions. Chairs should reward those who reply and have consequences for those who don’t comply. Deans need to support the chairs. They should expect reports from faculty and chairs and when they do not receive them, they should ask questions and find out their status.

Ms. Florence also suggested that department chairs take a proactive role:

If the department heads and chairs do not have buy-in that makes it really hard for us (UAC members). If they do have buy in and say good things and give people release time or even acknowledge the workload because assessment does take time, that is important. Compliments are great motivators. Depending on the level of quality of the assessment/ plan/ report the department head or chair most

definitely should be involved. They should be assisting if it is not of good quality. They should be mentoring.

Both Dr. Felicia and Ms. Farrah also included several shoulds when they answered this interview question. Excerpts of their conversations as to whether or not deans and department chairs should be involved with assessment activities are provided as follows:

Yes, they should be involved. If they're not involved then to the faculty member it feels more like a burden, an icky thing we have to do. When they're actually involved and perhaps are designing rubrics, writing outcomes, etc. then I think everyone else takes it more seriously. (Dr. Felicia)

I think they should definitely be involved but not ordering faculty around or telling them what to do. I think they should be involved with encouraging assessment and getting their faculty on board with assessment. Definitely, they should be a part of the major conversations that take place but they shouldn't be running it. The faculty need to own assessment. (Ms. Farrah)

At Educational Institution T, department heads, associate deans and deans are able to be on the assessment committee. They do not take an active leadership role but they do attend meetings, read policies and assessment newsletters. Dr. Thomas stated that if "they don't participate at least on this level, they will soon be out of the loop." He also stated that "the deans need to be in on the 'ground floor and pour the foundation' along with the faculty. After that, the faculty should be able to work on their own with only occasional visits from the supervisor". This response is similar to that which was received from Mr. Tyler who replied, "Absolutely, your dean and chair should be

involved in each department's assessment plans. They need to at least take a few cursory views. It's important they keep an eye on various indicators.”

Mr. Trevor said they should be coaches and cheerleaders and encourage faculty to participate. At some point, they may need to be a boss and say you have to do this. Then they need to quickly change hats and become the helpful coach. In this manner, Mr. Trevor believes that the department heads and associate deans do help the faculty to understand assessment. He said that without their involvement he does not know how a college could achieve the level of success he perceived T as having.

The coaching and cheerleading approach was also mentioned by Dr. Trudy and Dr. Fiona. Dr. Trudy explained that faculty are to submit their program or departmental assessment reports to their respective deans who are to review them and ensure the reports are complete. She wants each dean to “know the student learning outcomes inside and out. They need to know the assessment practices inside and out.”

Additionally, she believes “they need to also coach, reinforce and take the opportunities when they're with faculty to reinforce the importance of assessment. They also need to cheerlead and to be able to sell it.” Dr. Tamara wants the deans and department chairpersons to fully understand how T's college mission interfaces with student assessment. When they do, they are able to mentor and coach the people within their area and provide general support during times when assessment activities are occurring.

While some deans and department chairpersons at T do understand, there are others that need to have a better understanding. She reiterated that “assessment is important because it is a faculty role to nurture students' learning and success.”

The response from Mr. Tim was also in the affirmative with some qualifications. He wants to see Educational Institution T's administration involved but not overly. He wants to be able to see that the administration values assessment and that they appreciate that the faculty are involved with it as well. He would like to see evidence of what the administration is doing in the area of assessment. He recommended that the administration "communicate the importance of what we're doing but not to necessarily become so engaged in the process that it becomes an administrative dictate."

### *Concerns and challenges related to assessment*

Almost without fail, this topic was usually met with hesitation. This was noticeable to me as this reaction seemed so contrary to the zeal I saw with other topics. Three of the four interviewees from Educational Institution C had responses that were nearly identical. Dr. Colton, having only arrived on campus nine months ago, readily admitted he has not had much time to really familiarize himself with C's assessment program. He has heard about all of the strengths of the program but has not had the time to sit down with the Dean of Research and Planning Analysis and have a frank discussion about the challenges, obstacles or areas of concern.

Dr. Corey who has been at C for 18 years and has been involved with assessment activities for 15 years did not seem to need to think twice about his response:

Trying to disseminate data. The data needs to get back to the faculty in a meaningful way. We also need to rethink who the audience should be for the data and report it in a way people will understand it so they can use it to make informed decisions.



Dr. Christopher, with eight years tenure and three plus years on the Student Outcomes Committee (SOC), answered:

Closing the loop, that is the challenge. This is difficult for faculty – faculty who are not on the SOC. We need to keep trying to ‘grow faculty’ so they’ll value assessment. We don’t want to force faculty to participate in assessment.

Closing the loop was what Dr. Carl said as well. He also had something to say about how the results are disseminated: “Changing the manner in which assessment results are presented to the faculty. It’s just not user friendly. How do we get faculty to look at the results? Use the results?” He also expressed concern about the SOC membership being comprised of the same faculty representing the same departments. He indicated he understood the need for continuity among members but also pointed out that there are almost 350 fulltime faculty and as such, their committee should have more membership as it was “sorely in need of new blood.”

I conducted the most interviews at Educational Institution F, the four year university. Nine out of nine interviewees each listed more than one concern or challenge. Additionally, their responses can be categorized into five areas. The first category reflects the economic picture that was present at the time the interviews were conducted. The state this public university is located in was experiencing a monumental budgetary crisis. State employees, including faculty and staff employed at this university had just been told one day prior to my visit to the campus that they would be required to take one to three furlough days during the 2010 fiscal year and that there would be additional budgetary cuts campus wide. It is believed the fiscal status of the university contributed

to the comments that were made about resources and workload. Dr. Fiona, the vice provost mentioned the budget as her primary concern related to assessment.

Capacity of the unit may decrease because of the budget constraints and a diminished capacity will slow down the good work of the assessment program. There is no plan to weaken the infrastructure of the assessment center. We want to achieve our goal but not overburden faculty. Work smart instead of hard.

Dr. Francine discussed how decreases in monies allocated to the Assessment Center could affect the entire university:

I don't think this university would cut the services the assessment program can provide, as they see the value of it. But, if the budget cuts get so severe, they may have no choice but to make personnel cuts and this is difficult.

Assessment is so embedded in this university, that any cut to the program will impact the whole university.

Dr. Floyd also seemed to be concerned about the bearing the budget cuts have on the assessment center. Dr. Frank is unable to replace a very effective and efficient (according to Dr. Floyd) staff member who was hired into another department and as a result he is worried that the customer service the assessment center had been able to provide will not be as responsive as it has been. He is worried that the gap that will be created by this person not being there will add to Dr. Frank's already heavy workload and that because of this, there may be reports and analyses that will not get finished.

Dr. Francine commented on her fears and said that:

Because of the budget crunch and faculty having to teach more and fewer adjuncts being hired, there may be the dilemma that departments might say we don't have the time to conduct assessment or post the results. I hope given the time and amount of investment that has been put into assessment that that doesn't happen.

This fear was also shared by Dr. Faith who listed dwindling resources for the assessment program as her number one challenge. She too mentioned the vacant position and expressed trepidation as to who would assist Dr. Frank with data compilation and management.

Worry about sustainability of the assessment movement was identified by Dr. Felicia, Ms. Farrah and Dr. Fiona. This is the second category. The first concern in the area of sustainability expressed by Ms. Farrah was "I fear that the Assessment momentum will fade now that HLC has been here. How do we keep the momentum going? Who is laying out a plan for the next phase?" Dr. Felicia expressed uncertainty re the ability to maintain the degree of involvement by faculty:

I'm worried about the sustainability of departments implementing their assessment plans. What is a sustainable level? How do you keep it interesting to faculty? How can you prevent them from getting burned out? They've had some success. What's next?

Her worry may be transient as her last comment to this question indicated she had hope. "Overall I think assessment is pretty embedded campus-wide. If that is the case, the program should be able to maintain." The last concern in this area to be reported was by Dr. Fiona who referenced the CHEA award given to Educational Institution F for its

progress in focusing on student learning outcomes. “The risk of getting an award could let us sit back and not continue with the progress we have made. We need to avoid becoming bureaucratic ritualists.”

Faculty engagement with assessment and faculty workload were the third and fourth areas mentioned by the interviewees. Dr. Francine talked about faculty who will not participate in assessment. She explained that many of these faculty were hired 35-40 years ago and that they were hired to teach not conduct research. She said colleagues have tried to explain that assessment does not need to be considered research but rather how much assessment can improve their courses. She feels as if members of the UAC are preaching to the ‘deaf and stubborn’:

They fight assessment. Although truth be told they seem to fight any extra work not just assessment. They don’t see the benefit of assessment, they just see it as a burden for their time. They don’t see any rewards for it, it’s just too far out of the box for them. Most of those folks are nearing retirement. So I see this as a problem for now – one that is disappearing. People like these are a small minority and getting fewer all the time. Our new young faculty understand the nature of data, they value what it can do for you. They also participate in assessment activities. So this is a diminishing concern.

Ms. Florence has observed that there are still some faculty who do not understand assessment. Rather, she has seen that they shut down when they hear the word assessment. They think they are the ones being evaluated. She suggested a possible remedy however when she said:

But if you could turn it around when they say that and tell them no, we just want to talk about the students and what you think they should be learning, then sometimes they might be more open.

Dr. Floyd shared how he has been selling assessment for almost two decades and he believes in it. He is worried that with the current resource constraints, that both the process and the culture of assessment at F may weaken. He expressed his concern that if his department is no longer able to hire adjunct faculty because of budget tightening then the workload would need to be picked up by the fulltime faculty who many say are already overworked. He said that if our colleagues get too busy, it is easy for them to fall back and think “Oh, I don’t have time for assessment.” He also suggested that assessment be a tenure and promotion criteria. He believes that if that were the case, more faculty would pay attention to it.

The fifth category deals with closing the loop. Dr. Frank identified a challenge in getting faculty to use the data results. He says he is not seeing departments use the data that is being collected to help them make decisions about their teaching. He acknowledged that he and the UAC have been successful in getting faculty to include assessment activities in their courses. He is ready to see more progress. “We’ve gotten them to a certain level but I want them to get higher.”

Ms. Farrah apparently agrees with the challenge Dr. Frank had identified as she stated the very same thing, “how can we help faculty to use the data results?” She indicated that some of the units that are doing very well are not sharing their success with the students. There is a type of disconnect she believes. The success is being shared with the general faculty in the department but it stays there and not only does it not appear to

be being used to inform decision-making, but the students may never receive any feedback.

Mr. Trevor indicated that he felt the biggest challenge for assessment at Educational Institution T was getting “full faculty buy-in”. He said that it has taken the past 10 years to shape the assessment program to meet the needs of the T’s students and comfort level for the faculty. While he does not think that T has 100% faculty-buy in, he believes it is quite close. Some faculty understand the reason for assessment and that yes it can improve student learning. Other faculty need a different approach. So rather, than emphasize the correlation of assessment and student learning, the faculty were told that involvement in assessment would assist with meeting accreditation and state mandates. He further noted that while some faculty were not happy having to participate they all did as they did not want to be responsible for having their school be sanctioned or lose accreditation. Finally, he stated “We will be getting a new senior administration this summer and we hope they will continue to support assessment. They’d be crazy not to. Assessment is our lifestyle.”

Making assessment meaningful and getting faculty buy-in were two challenging areas mentioned by Ms. Tara:

It’s tough to make assessment meaningful. It’s up to the instructor or department to do that and unless you use a standardized assessment tool, it’s very difficult.

It’s very hard to do institutional assessment across the variety of programs that we have at this school; especially with measuring intangible skills, community culture and global awareness. If faculty do it because they have to do it, you

don't get the same quality of product. I know for me, an assessment activity has to be meaningful.

Faculty buy-in is also challenging. There are some faculty who are going through the motion, I don't think they're doing it because they believe it's the right thing to do. They're doing it because they were told they have to do it.

Additionally, Ms. Tara brought up the concerns she will have if Dr. Trudy, the provost, leaves. She expressed anxiousness wondering if her replacement will have the same feelings about assessment because it had certainly been a priority for Dr. Trudy.

Mr. Tim said the biggest challenge he perceives is also faculty engagement: I have a hard time saying whether there's faculty buy-in or not. I think that it's not something most faculty are excited about but it's something they're accepting of. I don't know where that acceptance comes from necessarily, I just know that this is something that's a part of their job and they do it. I don't think they would do it if it was not part of their job.

I also think some faculty think that they will come off looking poorly as a result of their assessment activities or that it will be used against them. It's not someone else stepping in and grading the faculty on what they do. It's self-improvement. The administration needs to understand that some faculty still believe that assessment is used as an avenue to punish them. They question the role of evidence based decisions fearing that they are only used to punish someone or to create restrictions for them because it's felt that they're not doing a good job when it comes to using the data from assessment.

Dr. Tamara agreed that faculty buy-in is a challenge at this moment in time as well as the fact that new administration was coming and faculty do not know whether assessment is leaving or staying. Educational Institution T is advertising for a new president as their president of 42 years is retiring and Dr. Trudy has indicated she may also be retiring this year as well. “I try to tell them I’m staying, and assessment is not going to go away, but some just don’t know what to think.”

The last interviewee from T to discuss challenges to assessment was Dr. Trudy. She noted that the biggest challenge she believes exists at this time is turnover of faculty.

You have new faculty trying to learn about teaching or perhaps how to start a new program and they’re going to be very busy. There is a lot on their plate, assessment being just one of the components. Sadly, assessment can often be one of the last areas they think about during their first year at T.

Additionally, we still have some faculty who think assessment is going away- with my retirement. I say “dream on.” It’s an expectation of accreditation. The demands today are higher and greater. Assessment has to happen and the results must be transparent and shared with respective students and parents.

### *Recommendations for enhancing assessment*

Suggestions for improving assessment were varied, although each faculty or staff from all three schools that participated in the interviews appeared to have previously thought about the changes they think would help their assessment programs.



Dr. Carl from the community college did not hesitate when he was asked for suggestions. He replied that the SOC committee has discussed starting a cyclic approach with student assessment. He said this year that two or three outcomes would be assessed. The next year rather than assessing any outcomes the committee would look at selected instruments they had been using to gather information and reassess their utility and validity. The following year Dr. Carl said the SOC would either assess different outcomes, convert some assessments so they could be used with online or implement new instruments. The next year a new cycle would begin and that perhaps other clusters or outcomes would be assessed. He discussed the fact that the SOC believes they no longer need to do the same thing year after year “because basically we get the same responses year after year.” Dr. Carl also mentioned that unless something significantly changed with their student population base, perhaps a cultural, economic, or college preparedness shift occurred there was no need to continue repeating the same assessment measures as they have looked at the trended data and overall are obtaining the same results. He said that by changing how C approaches assessment that this will allow some flexibility for the Office of Research and Planning to hopefully look at what it is they are doing and really build an assessment program that is responsive to the needs of the college and population it serves.

The second suggestion Dr. Carl reported was the SOC’s desire to offer a workshop for faculty who will hopefully operationalize the assessment program. The purpose would be to show faculty how they can take results of the assessments and apply them to their classes to better facilitate learning. This thought was also mentioned by Dr. Corey. He added that “we also need to help faculty identify the significance of

assessment. I believe the ROC grants have helped with this and they can continue helping faculty.” Dr. Corey noted that the offer of a summer stipend appealed to faculty as they frequently are seeking a supplement to their salary.

Dr. Carl ended with these two additional ideas:

We’d also like to develop an executive summary that can be given to the faculty. Something that is colorful and more interesting to read rather than the entire packet of results that are currently distributed. And, we’d like to start bringing faculty in to serve as analysts of the data. Not for statistical purposes but rather help interpret the findings and make recommendations for how one can apply the data and sift it into their classes.

At the four-year university, F, Dr. Felicia suggested that it was time for the UAC to move to a different level. She said she would like to compare their university’s assessment results with other like universities. Not only to validate their findings but also to see if other universities were assessing student learning in a different manner. She also wondered if the UAC needed to revisit its mission. She said that the UAC members were no longer the experts. Many faculty have become so interested and engaged with assessment that they have become the experts. She said the committee need to review what it is the departments are needing at this time and who can best provide it?

Ms. Florence’s wish was for more funding for the assessment office. She said if monies were obtained, they could be used for professional development for UAC members and university faculty and staff so that all could learn the latest on assessment.

Dr. Frank, F’s assessment coordinator, stated that the UAC believes that overall their assessment program is in a very stable place and that perhaps it is time to go to a

multi-year cyclic pattern of collecting data. He wonders if the process itself is at a stage where it can be “ramped” back and if doing so would it result in an ultimate “closing the loop” effect? He encourages the use of assessment data but not necessarily expecting an assessment cycle every year. He would like for the university to go to a three year cycle for assessment and every few years making some adjustments, particularly if the data that is being reviewed is similar to previous years’ data.

The individual who had the most to say was Dr. Floyd who began by discussing changing the frequency of when the assessments were conducted at F:

I don’t know what this cyclic approach will do with the assessment approach.

It’s still a concept. The seals and certificates have brought assessment to the

individual level. Our motivation is to make it more manageable, more

extensive in terms of the effect it has on the curriculum, to make it more

visible to know what goes on in each individual unit. If we weren’t having the

departments assess every year, perhaps we would have time to work with them

more.

Dr. Floyd described the assessment activities that some of the individual departments had developed. He remarked:

I think we’re still in the stage where we have a cadre of assessment experts

either by accident or design. We’ve seen enough units close enough so that we

can say when this thing really works, that’s pretty special. When we’re

actually going back and saying our students don’t write as well and we’ve got

the data so that we can build a departmental writing center. That’s really closing

the loop. My department has done just that. Based on the assessment data we were

able to get approval for a writing center to be located in our department for the students seeking our degrees. We've also seen the "beefing up" on the ethical content in our courses and this was done as a result of assessment data. Really, much of what we've been able to achieve in our department the last few years is a result of the activities and motivation of the faculty becoming involved with assessment.

Due to the successes Dr. Floyd has seen in his department that he believes were related to assessment, his wish to enhance assessment at F was for the UAC to continue with its efforts, perhaps working with departments or programs who have not "jumped on the assessment bandwagon."

Dr. Francine had similar comments to Dr. Floyd's:

This is the faculty's program. They just sometime need a shove to get them going and working. Most of the faculty are somewhere in the middle as far as buying into assessment. Some are at one end and others at the other end. Faculty workload is continually increasing and many view this as additional workload. If you can get them to see the benefits, it shouldn't be so difficult. In some departments it's an automatic process- you have to have your syllabus in by such and such a day. You have to conduct your assessment activities on such and such a day. It should just become embedded in the faculty role.

Six of seven participants from T, the two year technical college, had recommendations to enhance the assessment program at their college. "Establishing degree program outcomes that are truly reflective of the purpose of the each program."

That is what Mr. Tyler had to say as his recommendation. The provost, Dr. Trudy said almost immediately, “Cloning Dr. Tamara.” She discussed how impressed she has been with Dr. Tamara’s efforts in getting the faculty to understand assessment. At the same time, she said she wishes she could add 1-2 people to work with Dr. Tamara. She believes more people are needed to assist with coaching and mentoring the faculty who struggle with assessment. ” Additionally she stressed her desire for all faculty to recognize that the institutional outcomes are important for all programs.

Moreover, Dr. Trudy avowed that T had decided “that the closing the loop piece has to be at the program level.” She said she wants to see action taken by the degree programs as a result of the assessment data. She indicated that the faculty need to understand that the assessment data depicts how students in their programs are doing.

Dr. Tamara’s indicated her fervent wish that she could give monetary rewards to those who participate in assessment. She said that even if it she could not pay individual faculty she would love to be able to give it to their departments. Dr. Tamara explained, “I can’t pay them, I don’t have a budget. I need something to reward them for their efforts. You can compliment them for what they’re doing and I do a lot of that, but it gets old.”

Perhaps Dr. Tamara was anticipating what Ms. Tara had to say when she was asked this question as this is what Ms. Tara said was what she thinks will enhance T’s assessment program:

We are so busy during the school year and there is no time for faculty development activities per se. It would be nice to have a stipend or grant monies to develop new course materials during a five week period in the summer, even if it was a \$1000. We could develop or revise our courses in response to the

assessment results that were collected. The fact that we were getting paid to do that, even if it is a little stipend, would help and also further show the faculty that the college was recognizing the fact that you were making the changes and developing the materials that you need to do to meet your assessment requirements. I think if we did that, then our assessment program would improve as we'd have increased faculty buy-in.

*Priorities needed to assist faculty in assessing student learning*

“Grow faculty involvement” was the response from Dr. Christopher and echoed by Dr. Corey at Educational Institution C. When asked how this could occur, Dr. Christopher mentioned the New Faculty Experience program during which new faculty are oriented to C each fall or spring semester. Dr. Corey said that members of the SOC have been asked to present during this event and that he too thinks this is a prime opportunity to indoctrinate new faculty about assessment.

Ms. Farrah, from the four-year university, said she believes a priority is to provide more support for faculty who want to work on specific aspects of their assessment plan. She says they need help with the details, whether it be graduate assistants, clerical work, etc. She thinks that some folks have plans that need fine tuning whereas others need help with the basics. Perhaps it is the basics that Dr. Faith views as a priority as she said the priority is to help faculty write and develop measurable and meaningful objectives. Like Ms. Farrah, Dr. Faith acknowledges that there are faculty who can indeed write measureable objectives. Unfortunately, she has seen many faculty who cannot and this should not be the case at this four-year university.

Dr. Floyd said he believes that continuing the ability for the UAC committee to provide mini-grants in the summer is a priority. They have been great motivators. Each mini-grant is \$3500 and it provides for two individuals from the same department to work on assessment during the summer. This summer support according to Dr. Floyd, allows faculty to work on assessment and do things that are unable to be done during the academic year because of all of the other required duties. He also noted that without the financial support in the summer, he did not believe faculty would work on assessment. As a result, departments would be unable to close the loop as there is generally no time during the school year for this type of work.

The priority for Dr. Francine is simply getting the departments to use the data. She said:

Yes, they collect the data, yes they write the reports and plans. But do they use the results or does it get put on a shelf? Or is it used only periodically-like when the seven year program review rolls around. Completing the loop, that is the priority.

Mr. Trevor from Educational Institutional T says that a fulltime Institutional Research person is needed. Currently, the person that does Institutional research has other college responsibilities. He sees this as a priority. He believes a fulltime institutional researcher needs to be available to receive the data from the faculty, crunch the data, interpret the data and get the results to the faculty. He said he knows Dr. Tamara tries very hard, it is just that she has other responsibilities in addition to working with assessment.

*Reasons for participating in assessment activities in reference to Etzioni*

Participants were also asked to note which of four descriptions were most accurate as to why they participate in assessment. The results are noted below. The statement is listed first, followed by the participant(s) who identified with the specific statement.

- ❖ *I participate in assessment activities because \_\_\_\_\_ (educational institution) has offered me (faculty/ assessment committee members/ administration representative) tangible rewards in exchange for involvement with assessment.*

No participants chose this statement. Although Dr. Francine commented, “The most tangible reward I ever got was this clock and it has not worked since I got it. It was a lovely gesture however.”

- ❖ *I participate in assessment activities because \_\_\_\_\_ (educational institution) has offered me (faculty/ assessment committee members/ administration representative) intangible rewards in exchange for involvement with assessment.*

Only three of the 20 participants selected the above statement as aligning most closely with their belief systems. The three were from the four-year university: Dr. Floyd, Ms. Florence and Ms. Farrah.

Dr. Floyd said “the reason I keep doing it, is the intrinsic value I get from it. I am very interested in assessment.” Ms. Florence stated she does it because she believes the knowledge and experience she is gaining from learning about assessment is priceless. She also noted that it provides opportunities for professional development, particularly



networking and this adds to the value she receives from it. Ms. Farrah responded, “This is definitely my first choice. I do it because I love it.” This statement was Dr. Felicia’s and Mr. Tyler’s second choice

- ❖ *I participate in assessment activities because \_\_\_\_\_ (educational institution) has warned or threatened me with penalties, or punishment if I do not participate in assessment activities.*

There were no interviewees who selected the above choice. Several people smirked or shook their head “no.” Only Dr. Francine said, “Absolutely not!”

- ❖ *I participate in assessment activities because \_\_\_\_\_ (educational institution) stresses that faculty/ administration commitment is essential in order for the organization to achieve its goals and I agree with this philosophy because it is morally right.*

The last statement was selected by 17 interviewees. All four from the two-year community college said yes to this statement: Dr. Carl, Dr. Colton, Dr. Corey, and Dr. Christopher. From F, the four-year university, six of nine indicated they agreed with the statement: Dr. Frank, Dr. Francine, Dr. Faith, Dr. Fred, Dr. Felicia and Dr. Fiona. And seven of seven interviewees from the two year technical college chose it: Dr. Thomas, Mr. Trevor, Ms. Tara, Mr. Tim, Mr. Tyler, Dr. Tamara, Dr. Trudy.

The following annotations were also stated: Dr. Fred: “I agree with everything but the last part. I don’t believe assessment is morally right; I don’t think that assessment is related to morals.” Dr. Felicia:

Our department is driven more by an external accreditation body so we have to conduct assessments. However, the main reason I participate in assessment

during my classes is more from my personal curiosity about student learning and my inner drive to educate students well.

Mr. Tim: “I feel that assessment is pervasive around here. We own it. The institution expects it but it’s still ours.” Mr. Taylor: “I do it because it is the right thing to do. We have to be accountable.”

### *Other comments*

Participants were also asked if they had anything else they wanted to say about the assessment program at their institution. The following are excerpts from the responses to that question.

Dr. Corey: “We have good buy-in from faculty with assessment. There is one week in the spring before spring break. Over 200 classrooms participate. Assessment is definitely institutionalized at our college.”

Dr. Floyd: “Our university now allows assessment related activities to account for a maximum of 10% of a student’s grade. This policy applies to major liberal arts courses (frequently referred to as general education courses at other colleges and universities) and program core courses. As the policy is still relatively new, it seems that only the capstone courses are taking advantage of course grade inclusion of assessment activities. We think this will change once faculty start seeing other faculty having results from it.”

Ms. Florence: “It can be hard to get some faculty to share information about the department. I believe students want to see this.” “For as much work as it has been, the positive results have helped to build the program.”

Dr. Francine:

I'm really proud of the university. It has come so far. Dedication, hard work, collegiality this is what has helped to make our assessment program a success.

Without it, we wouldn't be where we are now. Everything just fell in line. People say we create our own good luck. I really think that's what happened here.

Ms. Farrah: "Across the board, assessment is doing well at this university."

Dr. Fred:

I don't think we could have been able to do what we've done if it weren't for the UAC. That's been the magic. Plus our customer service must be good for us to getting the response we've had. We've got people who are interested. We've got people who are smart. We've got people who are dedicated and committed and they like working on this stuff. We're getting these people involved with assessment. They think they're doing it for us when in actuality they're doing it for themselves. They just need to see it that way. Need to be really good with customer service.

Dr. Fiona:

We have a growing intellectual capacity related to assessment. Our ability to have assessment flow from the values of faculty to follow the path that their values & commitments take them on by believing in that, faculty are scholars. We've come to have a scholarly approach to our teaching and much of that is because of the assessment we do in our classes. But the effort takes time.

Ms. Tara:

They've tried rewards and encouragements. There were cash awards, success skill fairs where we do a celebration for faculty. But I think what really gets people to participate is they either do it because they want to, or they do it because they know if they don't, there'll be penalties.

Mr. Tim:

I'm under the opinion that if you use assessment properly, it makes your job as a faculty much easier. Because if assessment has identified a problem and you fix what you're doing wrong, suddenly students are learning more and you're doing less work because they understand what you're telling them to do. I do think assessment has become an innate part of our culture. I'm not sure if the administration changes however, if the push for assessment will stay the same.

Dr. Thomas: "Our faculty are critical. The assessment coordinator Dr. Tamara is critical. She and the Provost are the driving force behind the current assessment push right now."

Dr. Tamara: "I really think that the strength of our assessment program is the faculty. It is faculty driven, faculty owned. The institution identified core concepts to be assessed, but the faculty have determined the specifics."

### *Chapter Summary*

The case study data has been presented in narrative form from participants' responses to open ended questions posed during interviews. The questions were derived as a result of knowledge gained following the literature review of accreditation, assessment, faculty engagement and compliance theory. Faculty perspectives about

assessment highlighted multiple categories including reasons for participating in assessment, who was responsible for policy and other roles for administrators in the assessment process, how students benefitted, and reasons for success and challenges.

In all, the participants in this study believed that faculty were essential to the work of assessment and administrators were needed to help facilitate that work. They recognized assessment was not an easy task but believed that students benefitted as well as their institution.

## CHAPTER V

### ANALYSIS

The purpose of this study was to identify the uses of power and responses to that power found in colleges and universities identified by their accrediting agencies as having successful assessment programs, which have obtained faculty engagement to support their assessment activities. This chapter presents an analysis of the data and findings based on the data presented in Chapter IV. These findings relate to the strategies used by colleges and universities to facilitate engagement. Moreover, this exploration was through the lens of Etzioni's (1964) Compliance Theory.

Specifically, in this chapter, I consider whether the strategies used by colleges and universities to engage faculty in assessment activities reflect coercive, remunerative and or normative power. Correspondingly, I look at whether the faculty responses to involvement with assessment manifested feelings of alienation, calculation and moral involvement. Additionally, this chapter delves into why the participants participate in assessment; who they believe is responsible for establishing assessment policy; how they perceive students have benefitted from assessment activities; why they believe their assessment programs are successful; what concerns or challenges do they have related to assessment; and what role do they believe administrators should have in assessment.

### *Compliance Theory Operationalized*

Compliance theory as posited by Etzioni (1964) hypothesizes that organizations make certain their organizational goals are met by using various types of power; another words, the organization uses power to control behavior whether for the purpose of acquiring something or increasing productivity level or for the purpose of ceasing the behavior or terminating a relationship. People who work in organizations respond to that power with behavior that according to Etzioni can be compartmentalized into three different categories. Furthermore, Etzioni's early research in the 1960s led him to theorize that the type of organization sets the stage for the general type of power that will be employed. Similarly, the type of organization also sets the stage for the type of response one can normally expect to see. Etzioni does acknowledge that organizations can employ more than one type of power and people can respond in more than one way. Through his research, he has observed however, that organizations and people generally use or exhibit one type of power and one type of response more than the others.

There are three types of power defined in Compliance theory: normative, remunerative and coercive. Following are definitions according to Etzioni (1975) plus an example of how that specific power could be used in a college or university setting:

- ❖ Coercive power: “the application, or the threat of application of physical sanctions such as infliction of pain, deformity or death” (p. 5). One does not generally see an academic administrator using corporal punishment or confinement if a faculty member fails to comply. However, the administrator could cancel a faculty member's move to a new or renovated office space or even threaten loss of one's job. The latter could indeed progress to a faculty

member being unable to pay personal bills and result in injury to one's physical self (i.e., loss of one's basic needs for shelter, food, warmth).

- ❖ Remunerative power: “control of material resources and rewards through allocation of salaries and wages, commissions and contributions, ‘fringe benefits’, services and commodities” (p. 5). As noted in the definition with the mention of salaries, wages, fringe benefits, etc., organizations can agree to provide a salary or award a stipend or grant in return for an employee following one's job description or agreeing to work on a project during the summer. Fringe benefits, including vacation, personal leave, and tuition reimbursement for professional development are also examples of objects that can be granted or denied by one's administrator
- ❖ Normative power: “the allocation and manipulation of symbolic reward and deprivations through employment of leaders, manipulation of mass media, allocation of esteem and prestige symbols, administration of ritual, and influence over the distribution of ‘acceptance’ and ‘positive response’ (p. 5). Recognizing a faculty member for outstanding teaching or a staff member for exceptional service to an organization. The act of recognizing in this manner is an example of normative power. With normative power, an administrator may award a certificate for someone's accomplishments or publicly praise a faculty or staff member for his/ her achievements. As with the other two types of power, people will display specific behavior in response to the use of normative power.



The behavior response Etzioni refers to is the degree of involvement that occurs because of the type of power the organization used. There are three stages of involvement in Compliance theory: alienative, calculative and moral. Etzioni (1975) viewed them on a continuum with polar extremes, a positive end and a negative end. Etzioni also believed that the stage of involvement changes as a result of many factors, one of which is the power used by an organization. Following are definitions according to Etzioni plus an example of what a specific degree of involvement may mean:

- ❖ Alienative Involvement: “designates an intense negative orientation” (p. 10). As the name applies, a faculty or staff member alienates him or herself from others in a group or does not attend meetings. The alienation exhibited by a faculty or staff member may be quite intense.
- ❖ Calculative Involvement: “designates either a negative or positive orientation of low intensity” (p. 10). The degree of involvement whether it be negatively oriented or positively oriented is less intense than alienative involvement or less committed than moral involvement. In higher education, this is frequently seen with workload, if one believes that her salary is less than what she would like it to be, she may not work an entire day or may not volunteer for certain committees. In essence, the power that is employed determines the stage of involvement that is witnessed.
- ❖ Moral Involvement: “designates a positive orientation of high intensity” (p. 10). An example of how this last stage can be observed in higher education is with membership on committees or sponsoring a student organization. There

is a huge display of commitment and people participating in activities or projects because 'it is the right thing to do'.

The discussion that follows in the succeeding section illustrates the level of involvement the participants are or have been in response to the type of power presented by the college or university administration.

#### *University power surrounding faculty engagement strategies*

The three types of power Etzioni references in his work were found across the three institutions participating in this study. This was not surprising as Etzioni (1975) observed that most organizations frequently do use all three types at one time or another.

*Normative power.* The individuals charged with oversight of academics for the three institutions were among those interviewed for this study. Two of the three, Dr. Fiona and Dr. Trudy, provided several responses that illustrated the use of normative power. Their responses were corroborated by their respective faculty. Both academic leaders discussed how they value assessment because of its ability to demonstrate whether or not student learning has occurred and because of what assessment does, it is tied closely to their educational institutions' mission and strategic plans. They also mentioned that they tried to attend campus events that featured assessment activities to demonstrate their support for both their institutions' assessment committees and the faculty who participate in assessment. Additionally they described how they include assessment on their agendas when they meet with deans and department heads. These are examples of normative power – giving praise and recognition to faculty for their contributions to the assessment process.

Many of the respondents from F described an incentive the UAC initiated in order to recognize assessment activity participation. The incentive is the Seals program from which departments or degree programs can receive a Seal of Excellence or Seal of Achievement for their assessment plans. This program has become a significant motivator according to Ms. Florence and Dr. Frank. While the seals are awarded through a process developed by the UAC, it is Dr. Fiona who signs the certificates and who mentions who has received them during her meetings with academic leaders and the faculty. The Seals program, viewed as a prestigious symbol by many faculty at F, is another example of normative power being employed at this university.

The use of normative power at C was epitomized by Dr. Colton through his selection of the following statement presented during the interview: *“I participate in assessment activities because Educational Institution C stresses that administrator commitment is essential for the organization to achieve its goals and I agree with this philosophy because it is morally right.”* The other interviewees from C, Dr. Carl, Dr. Corey and Dr. Christopher also selected this statement. They provided other comments that reflected the use of normative power by their administration as well as the significance of obtaining faculty buy-in with assessment so that the assessment process is faculty-owned. Dr. Christopher discussed the efforts by members of the SOC during the new faculty orientation each fall. The new faculty are introduced to C’s assessment program at the beginning of their employment with the community college. He talked about the need to “grow faculty” so that they would value assessment. The use of the term value is indicative of normative beliefs. Dr. Christopher specifically rejected any idea that C uses any type of coercive power to gain involvement with assessment when

he explained that participation in assessment was not a criterion in their performance evaluation process. He also noted that if it was ever a factor, he believed it would hinder faculty buy-in.

*Remunerative power.* Several of the participants from F, including Dr. Fiona, noted the success of the mini-grants for which departments or individual faculty apply. The grant monies are used for assessment related activities and according to Dr. Frank, Ms. Florence and Dr. Fiona, have been instrumental in motivating faculty to participate in assessment and also understand its importance. The mini-grants, which are allocated from Dr. Fiona's budget, are an example of remunerative power being used by Educational Institution F.

The use of remunerative power is evidenced by Dr. Colton's mentioning that his office had allocated \$10,000 for the ROC grants, which are awarded to faculty and departments for specific work on assessment activities. Other interviewees from C also mentioned the ROC grants and noted that the grants were appealing to faculty and that each year more faculty and departments as a whole were applying for the grants. The interviewees said that with the grant monies, faculty were increasing their involvement with assessment.

Participants cited varying reasons for why they participate or have participated on their college or university's assessment committee. Ms. Tara and Ms. Florence revealed that they had been assigned to their institutions' assessment committees and Dr. Carl said that he had a formal educational background in assessment and he believed his background was a factor in his assignment to the assessment committee. These examples support the notion of the institutions engaging in remunerative power. Committee work

is an expectation of one's job description, which is written by the administration. Additionally there are some college and university committees that require more work and time than others. In return for this committee participation, Ms. Tara will have met one of the criterion listed in her job description as will Ms. Florence and Dr. Carl will not be assigned to another committee because of the heavy workload the assessment committee has.

*Coercive power.* One of the statements made by Dr. Trudy left me with the impression that a form of coercive power is used at Educational Institution T. This form was not physically harmful. Rather the persuasion used to obtain faculty involvement with assessment was a threat; assessment is a required expectation and if a faculty member does not participate, her/his performance evaluation will reflect the fact. The addition of participation in assessment as a criterion for evaluation had only recently been approved at T. Some of the interviewees' responses from T apparently also interpret this new mandate as an example of coercive power. Both Ms. Tara and Mr. Tim indicated that they did not think faculty would participate in assessment if it were not a part of their job.

*Combinations.* Based on the academic administrators' comments, as well as their respective faculty remarks during the interviews, it is apparent that all three institutions were described as implementing both normative and remunerative power when it was viewed in relation to assessment. The fact that both types of power have been experienced is not uncommon when one refers to Compliance theory. Etzioni (1968) affirmed that "organizations often mix their means of control and draw on two or all three kinds" (p. 99). Even so, Etzioni observed that, "most of them rely more heavily on one of the three kinds" (p.99). Normative appears to be the power that is most often employed.

This finding supports Etzioni's (1968) compliance classification of colleges and universities as demonstrating a predominantly normative power structure. This analysis also found that one of the three institutions may be using a form of coercive power with the new requirement of assessment as a criterion when evaluating faculty performance.

A full array of types of power reported by participants from each institution is summarized in Table 2 below.

Table 2

*Institutional Types of Power*

	Coercive Power	Remunerative Power	Normative Power
Institution C	X	X	XX
Institution F		X	XX
Institution T			XX

*XX = Primary type of power interpreted as being employed.*

*Faculty Responses to Power*

Organizations, which allow faculty to be involved with activities of their own choosing because of their own interests and because it makes them feel worthwhile operate through a structure of normative power. The behavior corresponding to this type of power according to Etzioni (1975) is that of moral involvement. Strong positive commitment is also viewed as behavior showing moral involvement. The following demonstrated moral involvement through statements they gave during the interviews. Dr.

Floyd, Dr. Fred and Ms. Farrah each stated that they believe they receive a tremendous amount of support from upper administration and this support fosters faculty buy-in with assessment. Mr. Tyler noted that he participates in assessment because it is the right thing to do and he believes Dr. Trudy and Dr. Tamara have done a great job of letting faculty know that T values assessment. Mr. Tim admitted that while the institution may expect assessment, it is the faculty who own it and who are committed to it. Three of the four participants from Educational Institution C, Dr. Corey, Dr. Carl and Dr. Christopher, have acknowledged that the strong commitment to assessment demonstrated by their administration has aided with engaging faculty with assessment.

Dr. Faith mentioned the Seals of Excellence, which departments and programs apply for, and which if awarded recognizes the department or program's assessment plan has met specific criteria. Dr. Felicia referred to it as well and noted that she had orchestrated her department applying for one and they were awarded one. She said between the Seal and the praise her department received from their accrediting site team visitors, that everyone was motivated to stay involved with assessment activities. As noted previously, the Seals awards are viewed as a symbolic gesture and faculty respond by increasing their involvement with assessment, a sign of increased commitment and an example of moral involvement as defined by Etzioni (1975).

Judging by the statements made by some of the other participants, it would appear that they respond in a manner because it is what is expected of them and/ or they know that if they do respond a certain way, they will be able to get something back in response. This is viewed as calculative involvement according to Etzioni (1975). An example is Ms. Florence. She stated: "...the mini-grants have been a great motivator for faculty

involvement with assessment”. As was observed with the participants from F, those who are motivated to participate in assessment because of tangible items, i.e. mini-grants, monies for travel to conferences, etc., are responding in a calculative manner.

Several of the participants also indicated that their colleagues developed an interest in assessment when they had seen the outcome of its results. A case in point was Dr. Francine’s discussion of how her university began their efforts in assessment in earnest. She noted that initially the movement was born out of NCA recommendations. Once the committee members began to reflect on the purpose of assessment, they realized that they could use assessment to stop students from graduating that were not academically prepared to earn a degree. This potential effect of assessment gained faculty interest in participating in assessment activities. To me it is an example of calculative involvement. It shows commitment, but the commitment was based on an external body, it did not come from within.

Interestingly, there are some participants who provided responses that would fit in two categories of involvement. Dr Frank, the assessment coordinator is one individual who I would label as belonging in both the moral stage and the calculative. He believes that there are people who can be motivated to comply (i.e. participate in assessment) if they are given symbolic representations or recognition. At Educational Institution F, this would be the Seals of Excellence certificates. On the other hand, he is also aware that some people are more motivated to do something if they receive something tangible in return. The mini grants that range between \$1,000-\$2,000 are indeed viewed as motivators. He is also supportive of this type of response in return for involvement with assessment activities.



Two individuals from Educational Institution T, Ms. Tara and Mr. Tim, revealed that some of their colleagues believe assessment and particularly assessment results are used as an “avenue to punish them.” They intimated that these faculty do not want to participate in assessment because they believe they may be exposed as bad instructors. Moreover, they left me with the impression that because involvement with assessment is now a criterion for evaluation, they believe these faculty will only participate with assessment because they are being forced into it. Ms. Tara even said that she thinks if faculty only conduct assessment activities because they have to, the results will be of less quality than someone who performs them because she/he is interested in the assessment process. The comments by Ms. Tara and Mr. Tim seem to illustrate that there may be faculty exhibiting signs of alienative involvement in response to what is perceived by some as a sign of coercive power being employed by C’s administration.

Commentary from the participants gave me insight into how they have reacted to perceived power strategies from their administrations. The participants’ overall responses to the power they perceived being delivered by their administrators was aligned with Etzioni’s stages of involvement: alienation, calculation, and moral (1968, 1975). Table 3 depicts the categories in which they were placed. In some cases, participants’ response to power met the definition of one stage and then there were examples of behavior that would place the participant in another stage- almost. Etzioni viewed these stages as being on a continuum, therefore the participants who displayed more than one type of involvement are placed between two stages.

Table 3

*Faculty Responses to Power*

	Alienation	Calculation	Moral
Faculty C (N=4*) (n=3)			3
Faculty F (N=9)		2	5
			2
Faculty T (N=7)		2	3
	2		

\*No examples or quoted remarks with respect to response to power were given by one individual so this participant is not included in this table.

*Institutional Types of Power in relation to Faculty Responses*

The administration of each educational institution was reported as employing normative power to engage faculty with assessment. The response to this power was described by participants from all three institutions as behavior that was representative of moral involvement. Etzioni (1975) viewed this as a stable response, i.e., normative power should result in a moral involvement response. He also theorized that remunerative power would see a calculative response and the stable behavioral response to coercive power is alienative. When stability exists, Etzioni postulated that there would be organizational effectiveness. When there is incongruency between the power and the behavioral response there is less effectiveness. The perceptions and interpretations of power and behavioral responses are diagramed in Table 4.

The participants' responses that have been interpreted as observing normative power strategies used by the administration in order to engage faculty in assessment and seeing faculty respond with moral involvement when participating in assessment is

supportive of Etzioni’s compliance theory and is an approach that should be used by college and university administrations in order to obtain faculty engagement with assessment. The effectiveness of academic administrators who were perceived as using remunerative or coercive methods to facilitate faculty buy-in with assessment was not apparent as the perceived faculty responses to these approaches was mixed.

Table 4

*Institutional Types of Power by Faculty Responses*

Normative Power C F T			XZ XZ XZ
Remunerative Power C F T		X XZ Z	
Coercive Power C F T	Z		
	Alienation	Calculation	Moral

X designates the type of power observed . Z designates the type of response observed.

*Study Summary*

Utilizing a case study approach, responses to the questions asked during the interviews were also provided in the previous chapter. While responses to all of the questions were received from each of the 20 respondents, for the sake of interest and manageability, some of the responses were summarized while others were presented

verbatim from the transcribed audio recordings. A summary analysis of the participants' responses follows:

*Who is responsible for establishing assessment policy?* The ultimate assessment program is the result of collaboration between administration and faculty (Commission on Higher Education, 1996). Dr. Thomas described the assessment program at his college as administratively driven with the faculty being in the driver's seat. That seems to be the consensus of these participants as they indicated that it was definitely a collaboration between the administration and faculty. While most selected one individual or group (i.e., an administrator, assessment coordinator, assessment committee members, college trustees) as the primary assessment driver, another individual or group was mentioned as the reason that assessment was occurring on the campus.

*How students have benefitted from assessment activities?* All participants agreed that students have gained as a result of assessment activities and each had examples to share. A theme that was observed after listening to their responses was that the process of assessment positively promotes the interchange that occurs between the student and the instructor. Many faculty referred to the use of rubrics as a mainstay in assessment. Dr. Fiona in explaining how she believed students have benefitted stated "...rubrics encourage student involvement with assessment. Students' voices have helped us see what we're doing right or not doing right." This statement is similar to others that were made professing assessment as being instrumental in helping improve the teaching-learning process. Ms. Tara observed an increased acceptance of assessment by students after they have realized that assessment results can tell them not only about what they have learned but also how their learning can prepare them for the workforce.

Moreover, faculty who have become involved with assessment recognized that it brings the value added component to education that accreditors and stakeholders including students and their parents are asking to see. Dr. Corey noticed that students get value early on in a course when they are introduced to an assessment tool. He said that once he explains to them the purpose of administering the tool including what it means for the college, students seemed to not only understand the reasoning for the assessment but also appreciate their inclusion in the process.

*Why college/university assessment programs have been successful?* Participants sang the praises of their colleagues and administrators when asked for reasons their programs have been deemed successful and award worthy by external organizations. Many credited their administrations as being supportive and committed to the assessment process. Several noted that it was obvious to many that assessment was considered a priority at their educational institutions. Ms. Florence described how the Vice Provost (Dr. Fiona) attends an annual dinner that the assessment committee has as well as attending some of their meetings and has a presence at an annual assessment fair. Others noted that their academic leaders publicly praised program and departmental faculty for involvement in assessment activities during department head and deans meetings. Dr. Frank also illustrated how much assessment is a priority at Educational Institution F when he said that despite a current budget crisis, which the university is experiencing, he did not anticipate the assessment office being dismantled or monies allocated for faculty grants being withdrawn.

The personalities of the assessment coordinators were also recognized as being influential in making the assessment programs a success. All were listed as having good

working relationships with the academic officers. Dr. Frank was referred to as having a personality that was non-threatening or condescending and as such was able to develop congenial relationships with department chairpersons and faculty throughout the university. These relationships facilitated department heads and faculty understanding of assessment and participation in assessment activities. Dr. Tamara was called the worker bee for her data gathering and interpreting the data so the faculty can make use of it. Mr. Carl described the promotional efforts that have gone on in his school to elicit faculty support and participation in assessment including assessment leaders knocking on office doors, once, twice or more during an academic year or working the crowd during assessment fairs to share information about assessment.

Consistency in leadership both from the top and on the assessment committees was another factor identified as helpful in making their assessment programs successful. As was the schools' decision to fund an assessment coordinator's position. Each of the schools had either a fulltime or three-fourths time individual in the assessment coordinator role who was either a former faculty or still a current faculty.

In addition, financial resources available for assessment activities were discussed by several of the participants. Aside from funding the coordinator's positions, faculty were pleased to report that monies had been allocated for travel to professional conferences, which focused on assessment and learning outcomes. Consultants and guest speakers had also been brought to the campuses through allocated assessment funds. Perhaps the discussions in which the participants showed the most enthusiasm were when the mini-grants and ROC grants were described. The grants awarded to individual faculty or groups of faculty provided monies for summer stipends during which faculty

could develop new assessment instruments and activities or review assessment results and prepare documents that reported and interpreted the results. Grant monies could also be used to bring in consultants for individual degree programs and even purchasing materials for use in assessment activities.

Faculty from Educational Institution F told how the assessment committee initiated an award that is actually a seal emblem and certificate, which is bestowed on academic programs and departments that have submitted assessment plans, which by all appearances truly measure student learning outcomes. Specific departments or programs were cited as believing they had “bragging rights” because of the caliber of their assessment programs when they received a Seal of Excellence or Seal of Achievement and award certificate from the assessment committee via the assessment coordinator’s office. All three schools reported they had days reserved annually for faculty to meet in round table discussions or have poster displays in which they could share the process and showcase the results of their assessment programs.

It was Ms. Florence who specifically mentioned that one of the reasons the assessment program at F was of merit was because it was not perceived as being punitive. She also added that if people did not participate they would not be punished. Punishment was not mentioned by Dr. Trudy when she reported that assessment had been part of the job description at T since 1996. She did note however that assessment is now a criteria used for evaluation of faculty. Mr. Trevor when speaking about concerns and challenges related to assessment said some faculty participated in assessment not because they wanted to but because they did not want to be responsible for their school being sanctioned or losing accreditation. I imagine one can ask if punishment is disguised in the

requirement of faculty to participate in assessment in order to meet accreditation and state mandates.

Dr. Fiona mentioned that a factor in Educational Institution F's note worthy assessment program was that the university's mission, strategic plan and leadership were aligned with assessment. She also explained that the university had changed from a compliance-oriented assessment program to one that had become embedded in the university. More than one person told me that a goal of the assessment program at F was that it become invisible. This is not meaning that they do not want it to be there, but rather desire it to become so automatic that it is not viewed as an additional function of someone's role.

Finally, the last but arguably the most plausible reasons for the success of their assessment programs has been that they are faculty driven. Administrators at all three of the schools have a role in the assessment programs but the fact that they are faculty driven through the assessment committees was quite obvious. Faculty, including assessment committee members involved with assessment were described as being dedicated, role models, mentors, adventurers, out-of-the-box thinkers and campus leaders.

*The roles of administrators in assessment.* Yes, the participants said administrators are to be involved in assessment. Limited involvement is what appeared to be the common modifier. Roles administrators should have according to the participants included messenger, encourager, mentor, salesperson, cheerleader and coach. Dr. Christopher noted how important it is for department heads and deans to include assessment issues on the agendas of meetings that are convened for their faculty or



intradepartmental meetings with upper administration. Dr. Corey and Dr. Felicia agree with this tactic. Dr. Corey also expressed his worry that if the administrators do not demonstrate they have an interest in assessment or if they do not see it as a priority then faculty may sense that assessment efforts by faculty are not valued and as such they may see it as a waste of their time.

There were some participants who said that there were times when the administrators needed to be a boss and give direction as to how assessment activities were to be put in operation but according to Mr. Trevor, once this is done, the boss needs to change hats and be the cheerleader and coach and promote assessment. Both senior academic administrators from Educational Institution F as well as from T agree with Mr. Trevor. Dr. Trudy described how she believes each dean and department head should thoroughly understand the assessment practices of their department or institution so they can coach and reinforce the importance of assessment. Mr. Tim does not disagree, although he also would like the administrators to share with faculty what they are doing about assessment. It is his premise that by doing this, administrators will convey to faculty the importance of assessment.

*Concerns and challenges related to assessment.* Contradicting the fervor and enthusiasm I saw when the previous questions were asked, inquiring about any concerns or challenges with respect to the assessment programs at their schools that they may have brought a pause and vacillation. I reminded each of them that they did not need to answer this question or any other question if they were uncomfortable in answering. With the exception of Dr. Colton who was new to his college and knew very little about his college's assessment program, all of the others did relate one or more concerns or

challenges. Many of their worries centered around closing the loop. The school representatives say that for the most part, they have the data collection and data analyses components of assessment down pat. The area that is not universally implemented by the three schools is for departments and faculty to review the results and determine what they mean and then either make changes to their curriculum, instructional approach, etc. or keep with the status quo. The decisions are to be driven by the data that was obtained. Following this, the results need to be shared with students, parents, stakeholders, accrediting agencies and the school's administration. Members of the assessment committees are not seeing this done by their fellow faculty who are not assessment committee members and this is viewed as both a concern and a challenge. Some participants who believed that the reason this is happening is that there are faculty who have no interest in assessment. The challenge according to Dr. Christopher is to "grow faculty" so that they will appreciate and value assessment. A related concern is an observation by some of the participants including Dr. Carl that methods used to disseminate assessment results are difficult for many to follow and comprehend. He sees a need to create a document that presents the results in a manner that is meaningful for the faculty .

Sustainability was an identified area of concern by Dr. Felicia, Ms. Farrah and Dr. Fiona. Worries were related to the threat of complacency that may develop among the faculty due to schools receiving praise from an accrediting body, receiving recognition for their assessment programs from CHEA, or even completing a departmental or programmatic assessment plan and thinking that there was no more that needed to be done. Change in leadership was also viewed as a danger to sustainability

particularly at Educational Institution T where it was rumored that Dr. Trudy would be retiring after 48 years of continuous service to the institution. Several from T expressed concern as to whether assessment would continue to be viewed as a priority once she retired. Dr. Trudy indicated she was aware of the rumors and has tried to assuage their concerns justifying the continuing presence of assessment with accreditation requirements and expectations.

Impending budget crises and resulting workload changes were two additional areas of concern or challenge that were named. The fragile economic climate that is currently present in the United States has given birth to budget crises in many state assisted educational institutions. Faculty from each of the three schools I visited each inferred that their school was either in the midst of a mandated reduction in their budget or predicted to be presented with one in the near future. While the three academic administrators from each of the schools gave me assurances that their assessment programs including coordinator positions would not be cut, there were faculty that expressed apprehension.

Moreover, there was concern expressed that reduced budgets would limit the number of adjunct faculty hired and this action would result in the fulltime faculty being required to teach courses that adjuncts would have normally taught—if the courses are not cancelled. If and when that occurs, assessment committee members including Dr. Floyd and Dr. Francine expressed grave concern. They are both worried that if the fulltime faculty become too busy, they will say they do not have time for assessment.

One would think that if faculty were truly engaged with assessment that they would incorporate it into their teaching even if they were overly busy. It is the degree of

faculty engagement that has many participants anxious. As noted previously, it is believed that some faculty participate in assessment not because they believe as Ms. Tara said, "...it's the right thing to do" but rather they take part in it because it is mandated, or it is a criterion in their evaluation or promotion process. Ms. Tara also inferred that when this is the reason, the caliber of the results is generally less.

Some participants see faculty engagement as their number one challenge. Dr. Francine blatantly said that there were some faculty who adamantly refuse to participate in assessment activities. She indicated that despite efforts to change their minds and obtain their involvement there has been no movement on their part. Recognizing that they comprise a minority of the faculty at F and the fact that most are nearing retirement age, she is seeing this as a concern that will soon resolve itself. Ms. Florence, Mr. Trevor, Mr. Tim and Dr. Tamara all agreed with Dr. Francine that faculty engagement is a huge concern.

*Recommendations for enhancing assessment.* Each of the respondents listed at least one recommendation that they believed if implemented would enhance their school's assessment program. The suggestion of changing from an annual assessment report to a three or four year cycle was listed by faculty from two different schools. Both of the schools had assessment programs that had been in operation for several years and from what I was told, it appears that their assessment activities include at least annual assessments of most of their courses. The data that is obtained has been apparently quite similar from year to year. The feeling is that if they move to a multiple year cycle, faculty, particularly those on the assessment committees can use the 'off years' to pilot new instruments or conduct professional development activities. When asked what they

thought HLC would say about the change, there was no indication that this had been discussed with their HLC liaisons up to that point. The concept does sound interesting as it would allow time for greater review and interpretation of collected data.

Another recommendation that was mentioned more than once was finding monies to either bring in national speakers or send assessment committee members and faculty to professional development opportunities that would focus on closing the loop in assessment. Getting faculty to use the assessment results to make informed decisions with respect to teaching and learning appears to be a challenge being faced by each of the institutions visited. The next area mentioned more than once, was for monies to be dedicated to pay faculty summer stipends for assessment work, hire adjuncts to cover courses so faculty could focus on assessment for a semester, or use monies to develop new course assessments, etc. The impression I was given is that those serving on assessment committees along with several of their colleagues do indeed believe in assessment of student learning outcomes and would like to be able to devote dedicated time to a project.

*Reasons for participating in assessment activities in reference to Etzioni.*

Participants were asked to select one statement, which most accurately represented their beliefs about assessment. The statements were adapted from Etzioni's compliance theory. A majority of the participants, 85% (17/20) selected the statement that implied their reason for participating in assessment activities was because it is the right thing to do. The statement selected reflects Etzioni's normative power structure and moral behavior stage. Both of these are consistent with the Etzioni's classification category that indicates faculty in colleges and universities are apt to select that statement. This observation also

corresponds to the findings that were discussed at length in Chapter 4 related to institutional use of power in order to obtain compliance and faculty response to the employment of the power structure. Etzioni's compliance theory was first presented in the mid 1960's. It is interesting to note that despite the myriad of societal changes that have occurred in the past 45 years that this moral compass has not changed for college and university faculty.

### *Chapter Summary*

Chapter 5 has included an analysis of the data and findings presented in the previous chapter. The strategies used by colleges and universities to engage faculty in assessment activities were examined using Etzioni's compliance theory as a framework for the analysis. Each of the three schools were perceived to be using normative power strategies in order to facilitate faculty involvement with assessment. The resulting behavior that was perceived by the participants was moral involvement. These perceived observations supported Etzioni's theory.

The chapter also included an exploration of the participants responses to a number of questions posed during the interview including why the participants participate in assessment; who they believe is responsible for establishing assessment policy; how they perceive students have benefitted from assessment activities; why they believe their assessment programs are successful; what concerns or challenges do they have related to assessment; and what role do they believe administrators should have in assessment.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, STUDY SIGNIFICANCE AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, conclusions are drawn from the analysis of the data and findings. Identified limitations of the study are included along with a discussion of the significance of the study in relation to theory, research and practice.

All three educational institutions were perceived as using normative power when viewed in relation to assessment. Two of the institutions used both normative and remunerative power. The use of two or even all three types of influence (normative, remunerative and coercive) are not an unexpected finding (Etzioni, 1968). When normative power was used, participants from all three institutions were able to provide examples of moral involvement with assessment. Faculty engagement had occurred because it was the right thing to do and their involvement was recognized and praised by the administration. In the matter of assessment, all three organizations used their normative power in an effective manner.

When remunerative power was used some participants responded with calculative behavior while others did not. This incongruency generally does not lead to an effective organization (Etzioni, 1975). As such, it is believed that institutions should research the type of remunerative power they would employ if a calculative response is expected. Only one institution was perceived as using some form of coercive power. The expected alienative response may have been observed but overall the institution was not described as using primarily coercive power in order to motivate faculty to become involved with assessment.

Additional analyses of the participants' responses to the questions corroborated the importance of a faculty driven assessment program with support and collaboration between administration and faculty (Cross, 1997; McEady, 2006; Priddy, 2007). While it was agreed that faculty needed to own assessment, the participants were unanimous in their opinion that the administration needed to regularly and visibly demonstrate its commitment to assessment. In addition, the consensus was that the assessment coordinators for the campus needed to have personalities that were nonthreatening and not condescending. These personality attributes were perceived as positively contributing to the success of an assessment program. Faculty who were engaged with assessment were cognizant of the value of assessment and its relationship to the accrediting agencies and stakeholders call for accountability of student learning.

Concerns surrounding the institutions' assessment programs centered on the current budget crises that they were facing. While none of the assessment programs were seeing significant decreases in their operating budget many of the interviewees expressed concern as to what the future would bring. Topping the list of challenges for their assessment programs was sustainability. Many wondered if the campuses would see less faculty involvement now that they had received national recognition. Another challenge facing the two community colleges, was whether the assessment would continue to be viewed as a priority for the colleges once their new administrations were in place.

#### *Limitations of the study*

Data for this study was only obtained from three schools. While each school was viewed by a national organization – Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA)



– as having a successful assessment program, it would be interesting to obtain data from additional schools that have been recognized by CHEA for their assessment programs. Each of the three schools represented different education platforms. A reason for selecting the three types of schools was to see if there were differences in the approaches used to gain engagement. Although there were some differences observed anecdotally, the focus of the study was power and compliance and the type of education platform was not a variable that was specifically explored. Additionally, with the exception of the three academic officers and one former assessment committee member, all of the participants were current assessment committee members. It is unlikely that their perspectives on assessment necessarily represent the views of all of their colleagues from their home institutions – particularly colleagues who do not serve on assessment committees.

### *Significance of the Study*

As stated at the beginning of this document, this study has focused on the relevance of compliance theory for understanding administrator power and faculty involvement in assessment activities. Etzioni's Compliance theory, which was introduced in the 1960's, almost 50 years ago, was the framework for the study. I did have doubts as to whether this theory would still be applicable 50 years after it was introduced. After all, it is a new century. Much has changed in the world, in society, and in education in the past 50 years. People have changed. Or have they? Have their values changed? Are they motivated by other influencers? Do people respond differently?

What I found in this study was that Etzioni's compliance theory continues to have application. The types of power used, at the schools I visited, to gain faculty involvement with assessment could indeed be placed in the three categories Etzioni labeled: coercive,

remunerative and normative. The responses also fell in line and could be grouped into alienative, calculative and moral involvement. Further, the schools seemed to use more than one type of influence. Again, this was an observation made by Etzioni in the 1960's.

I would be remiss however if I did not acknowledge that the type of power used by an administrator or even an assessment committee chairperson could be interpreted differently by an individual and he/she would use a different behavioral response. So while the theory was useful to me in this study, it is not a guarantee that others will recognize its utility and thus I do hesitate to make any grandiose generalizations.

The results of this study lead to other research questions. How would schools who have assessment programs that were not successful respond to the questions posed in the interview protocol? Did they use normative influence to obtain faculty involvement with assessment and not achieve a moral response? Does the type of educational institution account for the type of motivating factors needed to engage faculty in assessment? Are faculty who teach in research universities more apt to participate in assessment activities when they are rewarded normatively than faculty that teach in community colleges? Or technical-focused colleges? Are faculty that teach in technical-focused colleges more motivated to participate in assessment if they receive remuneration than community college faculty or research university faculty? Answers to some of these questions were viewed in the responses from some of the participants. However, these questions were not the focus of the study, so additional scrutiny through another research study is suggested.

From this study, it is believed that the findings support much of the literature that stresses the importance of faculty involvement in assessment and specifically faculty

buy-in (Gill, 2006; Lopez, 2002; Outcomes Assessment, 2006; Palomba & Banta, 1999; Rouseff-Baker & Holm, 2004). Colleges' and universities' administrations and their assessment coordinators and assessment committee chairpersons should use types of normative power to obtain faculty involvement in assessment. At the same time, if colleges and universities plan assessment programs where remuneration is included, they should be aware that it is highly likely the faculty will respond with calculative behavior.

### *Commentary*

I believe I did identify the uses of power and responses to that power observed in the three educational institutions I visited along with learning about several effective strategies the colleges and university have used to obtain faculty engagement in assessment activities. Thus, the purpose for conducting the study was met. I also learned that the three schools had assessment programs that were highly developed and that they were "light years" ahead of many schools' assessment programs including my university's assessment program. Each of the institutions had one or more participants that graciously shared copies of assessment tools, rubrics and even PowerPoint presentations as well as pointing out where I could access additional assessment materials on their respective websites. The success of the schools' assessment programs, including the high level of involvement by the faculty in measuring whether student learning has occurred significantly contributed to the success they have had in receiving continuing accreditation by their regional accrediting agencies.

My study ended with more questions than I began with. This fact was not necessarily unexpected nor is it disappointing. I believe the area of faculty engagement

with assessment and identifying factors, which lead to a successful assessment program, have many facets. I hope to continue exploring assessment as I too recognize its significance to student learning and give it high priority in my role as department head and nursing education program director. I have also enjoyed using Etzioni's Compliance theory and have found it fascinating that it continues to have application in a society that is unlike the society of the 1960's. I would like to use this theory in a future study.

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## APPENDICES

Appendix A

REC'D URG  
FEB 24 2009

HANDWRITTEN FORMS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED

<p align="center"><b>APPLICATION FOR REVIEW OF HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH</b>                  SUBMITTED TO THE                  OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD                  Pursuant to 45 CFR 46</p>	<p align="center"><u>ED-09-27</u>                  IRB Number</p> <p align="center">FOR OFFICE USE ONLY</p>
<p>Title of Project: Faculty Involvement in Successful Institutional Accreditation: Perspectives through the Lens of Etzioni's Compliance Theory</p>	
<p>Is the Project externally funded? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No If yes, complete the following: <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> Federal</p> <p>Agency: _____ Grant No: _____ OSU Routing No: _____</p>	
<p>Type of Review Requested: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Exempt <input type="checkbox"/> Expedited <input type="checkbox"/> Expedited Special Population <input type="checkbox"/> Full Board</p>	
<p><b>Principal Investigator(s):</b> <i>I acknowledge that this represents an accurate and complete description of my research. If there are additional PIs, provide information on a separate sheet.</i></p>	
<p>Nancy Diede ✓  <b>Name of Primary PI (typed)</b></p>	<p><u>Nancy Diede</u>                  Signature of PI</p>
<p>Higher Education _____                  Department _____</p>	<p>February 12, 2009                  Date</p>
<p>7305 W 36th St, Tulsa, OK 74107                  PI's Address (Street, City, State, Zip)</p>	<p>918-446-0160                  Phone</p>
<p>Required IRB Training Complete: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No                  (Training must be completed before application can be reviewed)</p>	<p>ndiede@rsu.edu                  E-Mail</p>
<p>Required IRB Training Complete: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No                  (Training must be completed before application can be reviewed)</p>	
<p><b>Adviser (complete if PI is a student):</b> <i>I agree to provide the proper surveillance of this project to ensure that the rights and welfare of the human subjects are properly protected.</i></p>	
<p>Dr. Ed Harris  <b>Adviser's Name (typed)</b></p>	<p><u>Ed Harris</u>                  Signature of Adviser</p>
<p>School Administration _____                  Department _____</p>	<p>Feb 18, 2009                  Date</p>
<p>308 Willard Hall, OSU, Stillwater, OK 74078                  Adviser's Address</p>	<p>405-744-7932                  Phone</p>
<p>Required IRB Training Complete: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No                  (Training must be completed before application can be reviewed)</p>	
<p>ed.harris@okstate.edu                  E-Mail</p>	

Updated: October, 2008



Appendix B

**Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board**

Date: Thursday, March 12, 2009  
IRB Application No ED0927  
Proposal Title: Faculty Involvement in Successful Institutional Accreditation:  
Perspectives Through the Lens of Etzioni's Compliance Theory

Reviewed and  
Processed as: Exempt

**Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 3/11/2010**

Principal  
Investigator(s):  
Nancy Diede Edward Harris  
7305 W. 36th St. 308 Willard  
Tulsa, OK 74107 Stillwater, OK 74078

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

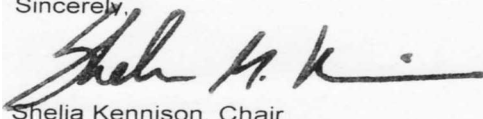
**X** The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Beth McTernan in 219 Cordell North (phone: 405-744-5700, beth.mcternan@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,



Shelia Kennison, Chair  
Shelia Kennison, Chair  
Institutional Review Board

Appendix C

Okla. State Univ.  
IRB  
Approved 2/12/09  
Expires 2/11/10  
IRB# ED0927

INFORMED CONSENT

Project Title: Faculty Involvement in Successful Institutional Accreditation: Perspectives through the Lens of Etzioni's Compliance Theory.

Investigator: Nancy Diede, Doctoral Candidate in Higher Education Administration, Oklahoma State University

You are invited to participate in a study about assessment and faculty involvement in assessment. Through this study, I hope to learn what components in your college's/university's assessment program were instrumental in gaining faculty participation. Your college/university was selected to participate as it has been deemed as having a successful program as identified by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). You were selected as a possible individual to interview as you are either a faculty member who is actively involved with assessment, a member of your institution's assessment committee or an administrator of your institution's department that is responsible for developing and implementing the assessment program.

If you decide to participate, I will ask you a series of questions related to your involvement with assessment at your institution and your observations of your institution's assessment program in general. The interview is expected to take no more than 30 minutes. I will take notes during the interview as well as audiotape your responses. The purpose of the audiotape is to ensure that I capture the essence of your responses.

The information gained from this study will assist other institutions in learning how to engage faculty in assessment. There are no known risks and/or discomforts associated with this study.

The records of this study will be kept private. Any written results will discuss group findings and will not include information that will identify you or the university. Research records will be stored securely and only I and individuals responsible for oversight of this research will have access to the records. It is possible that the consent process and data collection will be observed by research oversight staff responsible for safeguarding the rights and wellbeing of people who participate in research.

If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without prejudice. There is no compensation for participation in this study.

Questions about this research study may be directed to: Nancy Diede, 7305 W 36<sup>th</sup> St., Tulsa, OK 74107, 918-446-0160; or my dissertation committee chairperson: Dr. Ed Harris, 308 Willard Hall, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-7932; ed.harris@okstate.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact Dr. Shelia Kennison, IRB Chair, 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-1676 or irb@okstate.edu.

I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy of this form has been given to me.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I certify that I have personally explained this document before requesting that the participant sign it.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Appendix D

Okla. State Univ.  
IRB  
Approved 2/12/09  
Expires 2/11/10  
IRB # E00927

VERBAL INFORMED CONSENT REQUEST

Project Title: Faculty Involvement in Successful Institutional Accreditation:  
Perspectives through the Lens of Etzioni's Compliance Theory.

Investigator: Nancy Diede, Doctoral Candidate in Higher Education Administration,  
Oklahoma State University

I am a graduate student in the College of Education at Oklahoma State University. I am conducting a study about assessment and faculty involvement in assessment and will use the information I collect as the basis for my doctoral dissertation.

Before we begin, I would like to take a minute to explain why I am inviting you to participate and what I will be doing with the information you provide to me. Please stop me at any time if you have any questions. After I've told you a bit more about my project, you can decide whether or not you would like to participate.

Through this study, I hope to learn what components in your college's/university's assessment program have been or were instrumental in gaining faculty participation. Your college/university was selected to participate as it has been deemed as having a successful program as identified by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). You were selected as a possible individual to interview as you are either a faculty member who is actively involved with assessment, a member of your institution's assessment committee or an administrator of your institution's department that is responsible for developing and implementing the assessment program. The information gained from this study will assist other institutions in learning how to engage faculty in assessment. There are no known risks and/or discomforts associated with this study.

If you decide to participate, I will ask you a series of questions related to your involvement with assessment at your institution and your observations of your institution's assessment program in general. The interview is expected to take no more than 30 minutes.

I would like to tape record this interview so as to make sure that I remember accurately all the information you provide. I will store the audio tapes securely in my home office and only I and individuals responsible for oversight of this research will have access to the tapes. Any written results will discuss group findings and will not include information that will identify you or your university.

If at any time and for any reason, you would prefer not to answer any questions, please feel free not to. If at any time you would like to stop participating, please tell me. We can take a break, stop and continue at a later date, or stop altogether. You will not be penalized in any way for deciding to stop participation at any time. There is no compensation for participation in this study.

If you have questions, you are free to ask them now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at Nancy Diede, 7305 W 36<sup>th</sup> St., Tulsa, OK 74107, 918-446-0160; or my dissertation committee chairperson: Dr. Ed Harris, 308 Willard Hall, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-7932; ed.harris@okstate.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact Dr. Shelia Kennison, IRB Chair, 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-1676 or [irb@okstate.edu](mailto:irb@okstate.edu).

Are you interested in participating in this study? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

*Interview Protocol*

**Project Title: Faculty Involvement in Successful Institutional Accreditation:  
Perspectives through the Lens of Etzioni's Compliance Theory.**

**Time of Interview:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Place:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Interviewer:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Interviewee:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Position of Interviewee:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Interviewee's role with university's assessment program:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Length of Interviewee's tenure with university:** \_\_\_\_\_

*I am seeking information from faculty, assessment committee members and administrators on assessment practices at \_\_\_\_\_ (educational institution). Your institution has been acknowledged as having an outstanding assessment program. I would like to learn what components are in place that have led your school to being acknowledged in this manner. This information will assist other institutions in learning how to engage faculty in assessment. Prior to beginning the interview, I would like you to read the Consent form and sign it if you agree to participate. (Give Interviewee consent form to read and sign.)*

**Questions:**

**1. Tell me about your involvement with student assessment at**

\_\_\_\_\_ **(name of institution).**

Appendix E

*Probing questions to use if needed:*

- a. Describe your involvement with assessment in the classroom.
  
- b. What type of course revisions or changes in instructional methods have you incorporated based on student assessment results?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- c. Discuss your use of active assessment techniques (i.e., student portfolios, performances, observations).
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- d. Please evaluate the success of your classroom assessment activities.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- e. What type of involvement have you had on departmental- or institution-wide assessment committees or task forces?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- f. Who is responsible for establishing assessment policy at \_\_\_\_\_(educational institution)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- g. Tell me how the results of student assessment at \_\_\_\_\_(educational institution) are interpreted.

**2. In what ways have students benefitted from assessment at \_\_\_\_\_ (educational institution)?**

**3. Why do you believe the assessment program at \_\_\_\_\_ (educational institution) has been successful?**

*Probing question to use if needed:*

a. If you don't believe the assessment program is successful, why isn't it successful?

**4. Why do you participate in assessment activities?**

*Probing question to use if needed:*

a. Describe what, if anything, the \_\_\_\_\_ (educational institution) / the administration/ department chairperson/ assessment committee has done to gain your involvement in assessment activities.

**5. I will read you four descriptions, please indicate which one is most accurate:**

\_\_\_\_\_ I participate in assessment activities because \_\_\_\_\_ (educational institution) has offered me (faculty/ assessment committee members/ administration representative) tangible rewards in exchange for involvement with assessment.

\_\_\_\_\_ I participate in assessment activities because \_\_\_\_\_ (educational institution) has offered me (faculty/ assessment committee members/ administration representative) intangible rewards in exchange for involvement with assessment.

\_\_\_\_\_ I participate in assessment activities because \_\_\_\_\_ (educational institution) has warned or threatened me with penalties, or punishment if I do not participate in assessment activities.

\_\_\_\_\_ I participate in assessment activities because \_\_\_\_\_ (educational institution) stresses that faculty/ administration commitment is essential in order for the organization to achieve its goals and you agree with this philosophy because it is morally right.

**6. Describe any concerns that you have about assessment at \_\_\_\_\_  
(educational institution)?**

**7. What challenges related to assessment should the \_\_\_\_\_  
(assessment committee, administration) be concerned about?**

*Probing question to use if needed:*

a. What do faculty need in the area of assessing student learning?

**8. What should be done first (receive highest priority) to assist faculty in the assessment of student learning?**

**9. What recommendations do you have for enhancing assessment at  
\_\_\_\_\_ (educational institution)?**

**10. How should department chairs, deans and the administration be involved with improving the assessment of student learning?**

**11. Do you have anything else to add?**

**12. Who should I speak with to find out more about assessment at  
\_\_\_\_\_ (educational institution)?**

*Thank you for participating. I appreciate the time you have given me today.*



VITA

Nancy Rae Diede

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Dissertation: FACULTY INVOLVEMENT IN SUCCESSFUL INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION: PERSPECTIVES THROUGH THE LENS OF ETZIONI'S COMPLIANCE THEORY

Major Field: Higher Education Administration

Biographical:

Education:

Bachelor of Science in Nursing 1977  
Master of Science, Major in Nursing, Minor in Administration 1984  
*University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, ND*

Faculty and Administrative Experience in Oklahoma:

Department Head, Health Sciences, 2008-present  
Director, Nursing Education 2008-present  
BSN Curriculum Coordinator 2007-present  
*Rogers State University, Claremore, OK*

Instructor 2005-2007  
Health Science and Technologies Division  
*Oklahoma State University-Okmulgee, Okmulgee OK*

Dean, School of Health Sciences 2001-2005  
Health Science Division Chairperson 2000-2001  
Director, Nursing Education 1994-2005  
*Bacone College, Muskogee, OK*

Assistant Professor 1991-1993  
School of Nursing and Health Professions  
*Langston University-UCT, Tulsa, OK*

Professional Memberships: Golden Key International Honour Society, Sigma Theta Tau International Nursing Society, Zeta Delta Chapter of Sigma Theta Tau, American Nurses' Association, National League for Nursing Association, Oklahoma Nurses Association

Name: Nancy Rae Diede

Date of Degree: December, 2009

Institution: Oklahoma State University

Location: Tulsa, Oklahoma

Title of Study: FACULTY INVOLVEMENT IN SUCCESSFUL INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION: PERSPECTIVES THROUGH THE LENS OF ETZIONI'S COMPLIANCE THEORY

Pages in Study: 144

Candidate for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Major Field: Higher Education Administration

Scope and Method of Study: This is a qualitative study about faculty engagement with their college's and university's assessment programs viewed through Etzioni's Compliance theory.

Findings and Conclusions: All three educational institutions visited were perceived as using normative power when viewed in relation to assessment. Two of the institutions used both normative and remunerative power. The use of two or even all three types of influence (normative, remunerative and coercive) are not an unexpected finding (Etzioni, 1968). When normative power was used, participants from all three institutions were able to provide examples of moral involvement with assessment. Faculty engagement had occurred because it was the right thing to do and their involvement was recognized and praised by the administration. In the matter of assessment, all three organizations used their normative power in an effective manner.

When remunerative power was used some participants responded with calculative behavior while others did not. This incongruency generally does not lead to an effective organization (Etzioni, 1975). Only one institution was perceived as using some form of coercive power. The expected alienative response may have been observed but overall the institution was not described as using primarily coercive power in order to motivate faculty to become involved with assessment.

Additional analyses of the participants' responses to the questions corroborated the importance of a faculty driven assessment program with support and collaboration between administration and faculty (Cross 1997; McEady, 2006; Priddy, 2007). Faculty who were engaged with assessment were cognizant of the value of assessment and its relationship to the accrediting agencies and stakeholders call for accountability of student learning.

ADVISER'S APPROVAL: Dr. Adrienne Hyle

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