West Chester University

Streamlining Assessment and Eliminating Data Fatigue

"We've moved beyond just entering data. Now we can concentrate on what that data means and how we can use it for improvement."

—Scott Heinerichs, Ed.D., ATC, Professor and Program Director M.S. Athletic Training and Special Assistant to the Vice Provost

When the university successfully completed its Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) reaffirmation in 2011, the experience revealed significant opportunities to improve the institution's assessment process.

Putting Data to Work

"We had assessment fatigue," says West Chester's Scott Heinerichs. "Data was going into a black hole. Only a handful of assessment people knew where it was or what it told us. We needed an infrastructure that enabled us to understand and manage it more effectively."

As West Chester planned for its 2016 five-year interim report, the school turned to Nuventive Improve, made available through a contract with the university's parent organization, the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education. Thanks to training that encourages buy-in, users quickly understood Nuventive Improve's capabilities and benefits—from articulating outcomes and selecting metrics to defining criteria for success and curriculum mapping. "We emphasized building a foundation that allowed users to gather the data they needed and then use it to create action plans," Heinerichs reports.

Implementation of Nuventive Improve went smoothly, due in large part to flexible features, such as the ability to adjust field names to use familiar internal nomenclature. "Preferred assessment terms for each program could be confusing—such as 'goals' instead of 'outcomes,'" Heinerichs explains. "Each accreditor wants specific information and Improve lets you build those accommodations into your system, enter data once and run reports. We met with each specialized program and adjusted labeling accordingly within Improve, avoiding double work to satisfy both their accrediting body and MSCHE."

University-Wide Impact

All academic departments now use Nuventive Improve. West Chester's Assessment Committee runs and review reports each year for all programs, gathering valuable information to guide strategy for the next annual cycle. "We create heat maps for each program that shows performance in the areas that Nuventive Improve follows," says Heinerichs. "Administrators can quickly see where every program is in its assessment process and identify programs in need of assistance and those that are doing well."

Customer Profile

West Chester University is the largest institution in the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education network, with 16,000 students. West Chester offers 118 undergraduate and 92 graduate programs.

Opportunity

West Chester recognized that the university could benefit from a more consistent and sustainable approach to assessment, and from extending assessment into new areas—including the tracking of strategic plans.

Improvement

Nuventive Improve streamlined and centralized West Chester's data collection and storage of outcomes assessment, program review, and planning information. Thanks to Nuventive Improve's powerful, flexible reporting capabilities, users are now able to leverage data more effectively to meet multiple reporting requirements, support decision-making, and promote accountability.

Nuventive™

Assessment and Planning with Purpose

Another benefit offered by Nuventive Improve is the ability to "roll up" results from the department level to the college, division and university levels. "Each department and college used to have their own structure for measuring and reporting progress on student learning assessment," explains Dr. Lorraine Bernotsky, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. "Using Nuventive Improve allows me to understand progress in achieving student learning outcomes from multiple levels of analysis and understand comparisons between departments and colleges that were not possible before. It also provides, for the first time, the ability to report on overall progress within the Division of Academic Affairs, a critical piece of the work we need for our regional accreditation."

West Chester also uses Nuventive Improve to track its institutional strategic plan. "Academic and institutional assessment aren't that different," Heinerichs says. "We customized applicable fields to accommodate the plan's information requirements, and mapped the plan to each of the MSCHE standards. We now enter the information once and there's a feedback loop for the plan that everyone can see and use."

Providing Nuventive Improve access within SharePoint® also simplifies the response process. "Once they're in SharePoint, users just click the Nuventive Improve assignment link to enter their data and hit the submit button," he says. [Note: Nuventive Improve, was formerly PlanningPoint® in Microsoft Office 365™ and in SharePoint 2013.]

No Reinventing the Wheel

"An ongoing challenge is the number of times people are asked to submit reports," Heinerichs says. Users can easily access information stored in Nuventive Improve, and use its standard and ad hoc reporting capabilities to create reports for accrediting bodies, as well as internal committees. "We clarify the structure and data expectations upfront, and users only have to enter information once. Reporting is more focused and meaningful."

Key Benefits

+ Helps with student learning outcomes and outcomes assessment

+ Simplifies and strengthens compliance and accreditation efforts

+ Adapts to institutional nomenclature and structures

+ Tailors information to internal and external requirements

+ Provides a framework for ongoing, sustainable assessment processes

+ Minimizes costs thanks to a streamlined implementation

+ Increases buy-in through user-friendly training and familiar interface

"We've moved from 'output' reporting to 'outcome' reporting— from 120-page reports to 50-page reports that zero in on the right information."

—Scott Heinerichs, Ed.D., ATC, Professor and Program Director M.S. Athletic Training and Special Assistant to the Vice Provost

Nuventive™

www.nuventive.com | learnmore@nuventive.com | 1.877.366.8700 or 1.412.847.0280