Lessons Learned about CCLCM's Portfolio-based Assessment System

Insights about Competency-based Assessment System

Fairness

- Maintain ongoing dialogue with students and faculty about portfolio requirements and timing.

- Recognize that some students need guidance with argumentative writing.

- Monitor referral systems closely, especially when students do clinical training.

Reliability

- Monitor irrelevant variance that may influence performance decisions and fuel "rumor mill".

- Assessors/advisors need to know the curriculum and available assessment evidence in order to make informed decisions about student performance.

Validity

- Review performance milestones annually for appropriateness and fit with curriculum. Faculty may be not engaged if they do not revise milestones.

- The assessment system identifies "at risk" students early during training program. Need to decide when and how to remediate when student performance issues arise.

- Physicians and basic scientists may view student performance differently.

- The advisor plays a pivotal role to ensure student work is representative. Others must trust that advisors are doing their job.

- The quality, quantity, and sources of performance evidence form the foundation of our assessment system.

Educational Effects

- Students will not reflect if they do not purposefully select evidence to include in their formative and summative portfolios.

- It takes faculty and students time to develop skills for new assessment system/model. Provide opportunities for them to learn and practice these skills.

- Students desire more assessment feedback about weaknesses rather than strengths.

- Develop clear guidelines about who sees what in portfolio. Students will not trust system if they do not have sense of ownership.

- Advisors need training on how to develop and use learning plans when interacting with students.

Prepared by S. Beth Bierer, PhD, Director of Assessment and Evaluation
Cleveland Clinic Lerner College of Medicine of CWRU

- Student satisfaction with summative portfolios is enhanced if they (1) have quality evidence, (2) develop learning plans and (3) receive detailed, timely feedback from assessors.

Outcomes

- Pay attention to signs of faculty/student fatigue or stress.

- Recognize the portfolio is only a tool. Develop the assessment system first before designing electronic approaches for organizing/selecting evidence.

- Make sure IT/programmers work closely with assessment committee. Small programming changes can result in undesired outcomes.

- It's challenging to evaluate long-term outcomes and impact of assessment system.

- Diligence is needed to monitor external forces which may undermine culture supportive of assessment model. Position loyal disciples carefully.

Insights about e-Portfolio Design

- Develop principles to guide the design of the assessment system.

- Let the vision, not the technology, dictate the features and functions of the e-Portfolio. We decided to build – instead of buy – to ensure e-Portfolio aligned to our assessment system's principles and related needs (i.e., enable students to write reflective essays, help advisors/promotion committee access portfolios, enable students to select and manipulate evidence, etc.).

- Design the assessment system before selecting electronic approaches for selecting, organizing, and reporting assessment evidence.

- Oversee development process to ensure e-Portfolio supports assessment principles. It helps to have a translator, a person who can communicate effectively with IT/programmers and with educators/curriculum designers.

- Explore ways to leverage technology to improve the flow of and access to assessment evidence.

- Identify solutions to automate processes (e.g., evidence collection) while retaining selection and reviewing flexibility. For instance, if assessment system requires peers to assess each other, then create mechanism where students can access faculty and peer assessments only after the student submits all assigned peer assessments.

- Maintain ongoing, open dialogue about development/updates with stakeholders using multiple approaches.

- Provide training on portfolio functions and maintain ongoing communications with users.

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Cleveland Clinic Lerner College of Medicine of CWRU