With 226 programs and almost a thousand faculty members, the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) is a sea of diversity. Students major in areas that span nine colleges, including such diverse disciplines as philosophy, biomedical engineering, and furniture design.

**CHALLENGE**
Over several years, academic programs at RIT worked to define intentional student learning outcomes for General Education. But with a traditional distribution-style General Education model, ensuring those outcomes were met wasn’t easy.

“We had approximately 15,000 undergraduate students,” reported Anne Wahl, RIT’s Director of Assessment. “No two of them took exactly the same Gen Ed courses, which made it very challenging to have comprehensive and cohesive assessment processes.”

**SOLUTION**
In January 2009, RIT established an Assessment Office led by Wahl, who hired an Assessment Management System Coordinator, Senior Assessment Associate, and Senior Staff Assistant. These individuals reach out to faculty and have become an important part of the solution.

To facilitate an enterprise understanding of the state of assessment at RIT, Wahl held one-on-one talks with the deans of each college and developed General Education Faculty Teams to plan the assessment. Additional faculty assessed outcomes in their courses, gathered data, and reported their findings. A General Education mini-retreat brought the two faculty groups together to further review the results and talk about how to use the results and next steps.

In 2010, RIT chose Taskstream to help manage assessment. As they moved forward, Wahl found that many of the programs that were least confident about assessment actually had the most potential for authentic performance-based assessment.

**SAILING THE SEVEN CS**
By 2012, the Assessment Office had identified...
Charting a Course Through a Sea of Diversity

seven adjectives to describe their assessment strategy so far: Cohesive, Comprehensive, Committed, Clear, Collaborative, Communicated, and Continuously Focused on Improvement.

Wahl identified several key reasons for RIT’s successful assessment efforts to streamline the assessment process and improve its data analytics.

First, “Be clear about expectations. Communicate early and often!” The Assessment Office found it important to set benchmarks early, so that progress could be monitored along the way and corrections made as needed.

Faculty proved to be engaged and passionate about student learning. Creating opportunities for an ongoing conversation was key to gaining their involvement, and produced helpful ideas. Institutions, Wahl believes, are well advised to provide faculty members with structure and guidance along the way, and appropriate thanks for their time, expertise, and contribution to assessing student learning.

“We’ve had great success working with Taskstream,” Wahl continued. “It provides one place to store, archive, and report our outcomes assessment data. Taskstream has been very responsive to our concerns. We’ve begun a long-term relationship.”

“One of the best things we did was spend time on the analysis and discussion on how the data can be used to guide improvements to teaching and learning.”

Anne Wahl
Director of Assessment
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