The Art and Science of Assessment

“Assessment as Art” vs. “Assessment in the Arts”

- What is “Art” - The expression or application of human creative skill and imagination, typically in a visual form such as painting or sculpture; however, in modern times, it could be a pictograph or a video. All of these works of art are appreciated for their beauty or emotional power or for their informational or entertainment value.
  - Assessment as “art” involves the use of assessment results to figuratively create a picture or tell a story about people, places or things.

The Science of Assessment

- What is “Science” - The intellectual and practical activity encompassing the systematic study of the structure and behavior of the physical and natural world through observation and experiment.
  - The science of Assessment focuses on the standards of practice that are employed to produce information about people, places or things that is reliable and valid.
ASSESSMENT AND THE MOVIES

Lessons Learned about Assessment from “Slumdog Millionaire” and “Akeelah and the Bee”
Assessment and the Movies: Lessons Learned

- There is a relationship between background and performance.
- A lot of experiential learning takes place outside of the classroom.
- To maximize performance, you must be able to apply what you have learned and recognize what information you need to recall in order to respond correctly.
- Do not be distracted by information or circumstances that might negatively influence your performance.
- Believe in yourself.
Questions to Ponder

- How is each lesson learned related to:
  - “Slumdog Millionaire”
  - “Akeelah and the Bee”

- How is each lesson learned related to your Howard University students?
- How is each lesson learned related to YOU?
“Slumdog Millionaire”
“Akeelah and the Bee”
Lesson #1: There is a relationship between background and performance.

- There are many variables that influence performance. Most research conducted on populations in the United States reveals that there is a positive relationship between socioeconomic status and academic achievement. The size of the correlation coefficient depends on many factors such as the subgroup being studied and how “achievement” is defined.

- What do you discern about the relationship between Jamal’s or Akeelah’s socioeconomic background and their “achievement”? 

Positive Slope: As one variable increases, so does the other variable.
Lesson #2: A lot of experiential learning takes place outside of the classroom.

- Value-added out-of-school experiences give some students an advantage when they are asked questions on a test or assessment which contain content that was not explicitly or thoroughly taught in school.

- Where did most of Jamal’s experiences occur, and how did those experiences help his performance?

- What out-of-class experiences do your students bring to the classroom that may enhance their learning? Do you provide those kinds of experiences for your students?
Lesson #3: To maximize performance, be clear about what information you want students to learn and how they should apply what they have learned.

- There is a universe of knowledge and skills that we want students to know or be able to do. However, it is neither possible nor desirable to assess students on every thing. Formal tests or assessments usually consist of items or tasks that are aligned with a subset of the student learning outcomes (SLOs). Well-developed syllabi which include clearly written SLOs and rubrics help students maximize their performance.

- Do you use rubrics to assess/evaluate student performance? Do you share the rubric(s) before the test (e.g., are they included in your syllabus)?
Lesson #4: Do not be distracted by information or circumstances (noise) that might negatively affect your performance.

- There are both internal and external factors that can have a negative effect on an individual’s performance: anxiety, low self-confidence, or a belief that the assessment process is biased or unfair.

- Who were Akeelah’s distractors? Who were Akeelah’s supporters?

- What or who could have distracted Jamal?

- What are some distractions that Howard University students face in earning their degrees?

- What are some distractions that you face on the road to tenure and promotion?
Lesson #5: Believe in yourself.

- Belief in one’s self is one of the first steps to success.

- “The man who moves a mountain begins by carrying away small stones” – Confucius

- “If you can’t fly then run, if you can’t run then walk, if you can’t walk then crawl, but whatever you do, keep moving forward” – Martin Luther King, Jr.

- “Many of life’s failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up” – Thomas A. Edison

- “When one door of happiness closes, another opens” – Helen Keller
The Science of Assessment
Assessment and YOU: Lessons Learned

- There is a relationship between background and performance. Conduct a “fit analysis.”

- A lot of experiential learning takes place outside of your department, school/college, and Howard University. Widen out!

- To maximize performance, be clear about your goals and how you plan to reach them. Further, be clear about what information you need to know and how you will apply what you have learned.

- Do not be distracted by information or circumstances that might negatively influence your performance. Manage the noise.

- Believe in yourself.
QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION

The End