



# Novel Approach to an Assessment Committee

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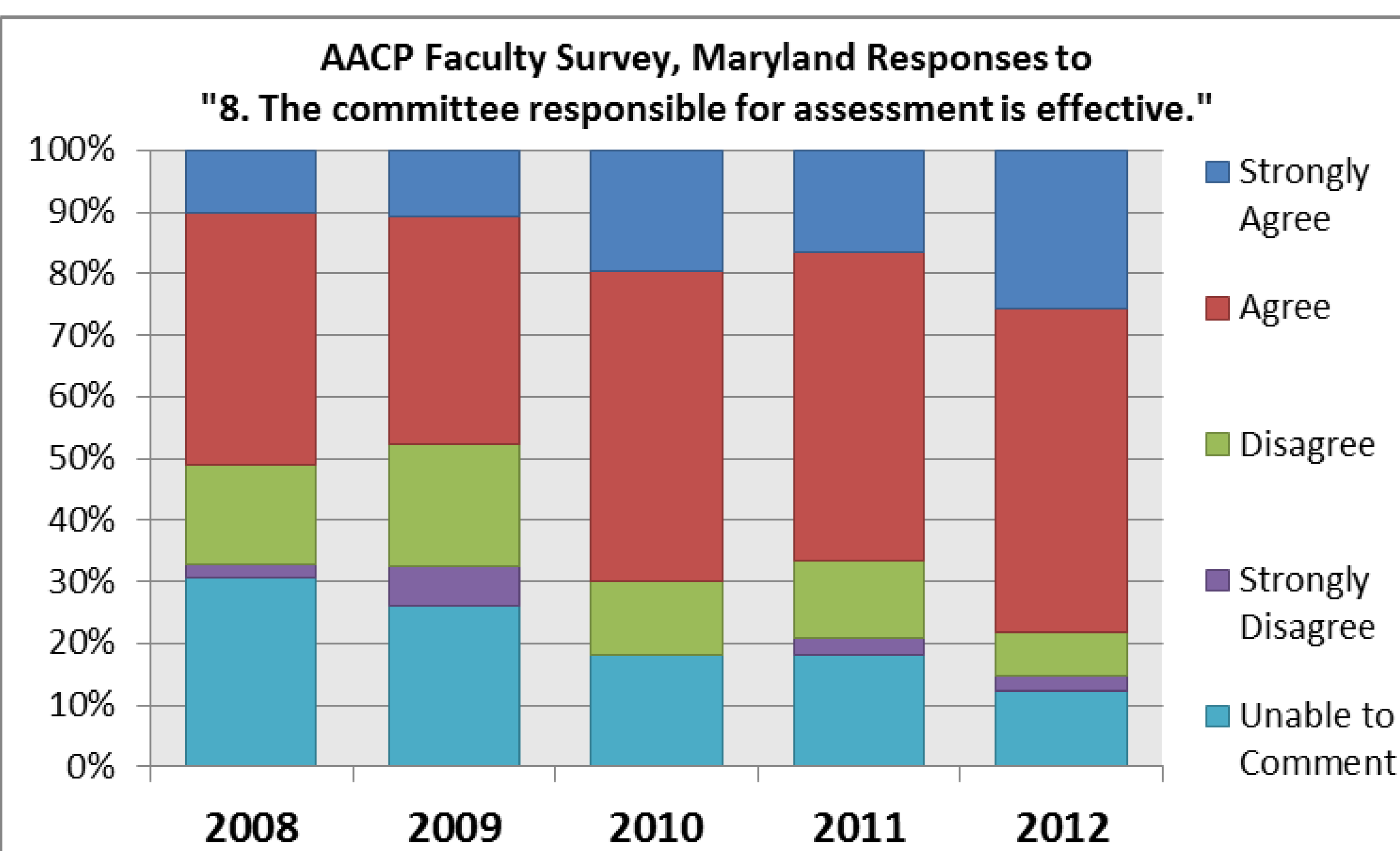
## Background

Evaluation of student achievement and curricular effectiveness traditionally fall under the auspices of a Curriculum Committee, while assessment of progress toward broad goals in the School's strategic plan may or may not be well coordinated among the faculty and leadership. In 2006 the University of Maryland School of Pharmacy Office of Academic Affairs hired a professional staff person to direct assessment activities; a faculty committee was formed and its members were expected to report on assessment data at their respective department meetings. After a few years it was clear that this structure was not effective; communication back to the departments was inconsistent at best, and the committee did not control resources nor was it able to generate the faculty support needed to effect change.

## Objective

The objective was to form an Assessment Committee that could effect meaningful evidence-based changes with faculty buy-in and resource commitments.

## Figures



## Methods

In 2010 the dean reformed the Assessment Committee (AC), chaired by a faculty member and composed of faculty from each academic department, a student representative, and members of the dean's leadership team. Members of the leadership team are also charged as 'champions' of the strategic plan to ensure active oversight and implementation. Admittedly, a significant percentage of the AC members hold administrative positions within the School. This was done purposely as **any response or recommended change must be adequately resourced and implemented** by the School's administrative team. The associate deans have access to campus data that might otherwise not be available to faculty, which has enabled the AC to delve further into questions raised during the assessment process.

### Assessment Committee Membership

Chair, faculty	PHSR faculty	PPS faculty	PSC faculty	P2 student	P3 student
Assoc Dean, Academic Affairs	Assoc Dean, Student Affairs	Assoc Dean, Admin & Finance	Assoc Dean, Grad Studies & Research	Asst Dean, Assessment & Accreditation	Asst Dean, Instructional Technology

The AC is charged with a specific list of tasks, but its overarching function is to implement a cycle of continuous quality improvement. This includes examining data and making recommendations that enable the School to achieve its strategic goals and ensuring that the School remains in compliance with accreditation standards.

Thus, the **AC serves as a facilitator and catalyst** of the School's assessment activities, both specific (as outlined in Assessment Plan) and general (e.g. engendering a culture of assessment, addressing issues that arise de novo during the course of the year). As such, a high level of interaction is necessary between the AC and other committees and stakeholders within the School.

## Results

The Assessment Committee focused on streamlining the collection, dissemination and analysis of programmatic and curricular assessment data over the past two years. **Focused data** is now directed to individual instructors, course managers, vice chairs, chairs, faculty committees and the dean's office administration in an effort to drive ongoing self-assessment and continuous quality improvement activities.

**Increased transparency** has enabled the School to maintain focus on the strategic plan goals and program strengths and weaknesses. Faculty on other standing committees are aware of the breadth of institutional data available for evidence-based decision making. AACP faculty survey data indicates that the assessment committee is perceived as increasingly effective (24% increase in the level of agreement between 2009 and 2012).

In 2012-2013 the AC **improved communication** and achieved transparency by flipping its feedback mechanism from sending a representative to department or committee meetings, to holding monthly open meetings where relevant committees and groups of faculty, staff and students are invited to join the AC to review the data and give feedback.

The findings, recommendations, and actions taken in response to these assessment processes are also disseminated to the numerous stakeholders. The chairs of each department welcome the dean and School administrators at their faculty meetings to discuss assessment data as needed, and the dean also presents assessment-related findings, recommendations, and actions in her weekly e-mail newsletter to the internal School of Pharmacy community including faculty, staff, and students.

The complementary and vital role of the Assessment Committee continues to gain traction among the other standing faculty committees.

## Implications

Institutional goals and program outcomes often extend beyond the scope of any one faculty committee, as does control of the resources and policies that may be necessary to implement changes. A leadership committee with faculty representation, and open communication, is important for **real continuous quality improvement and building a culture of assessment**.