UWM
Assessment Survey Results
2019

Executive Summary

In September of 2019 Academic Affairs distributed a survey gathering information from faculty and teaching academic staff about their views and experiences with assessment, meant to help understand faculty needs for professional development and support regarding assessment. The survey reveals that **most respondents are engaged with assessment and understand its value** to their programs beyond mere compliance with accreditation standards. **172 out of 326 respondents (52.8%) indicated that assessment had resulted in concrete improvements** to their programs.

Respondents are less certain how well their programs are doing with assessment overall, and text comments reveal **concerns that assessment is not being used to its full potential.** While survey respondents tended to value assessment, they saw issues with **faculty culture, lack of understanding** about assessment or its uses, and a **lack of time, resources, and support staff** contributing to difficulties using assessment effectively for program improvement. Some respondents suggested that they do assessment work for their programs in isolation or without the support of colleagues, which reduces assessment's effectiveness and can in turn reinforce the perception that assessment isn't useful or valued except to satisfy accreditation requirements. Other respondents appeared to be part of programs where faculty widely value assessment and, by gathering and analyzing richer data, use it actively as a part of continuous improvement.

Overall, while most respondents have embraced learning outcomes assessment's value as a tool for program improvement, their responses suggest that they need to be better supported in their efforts in a variety of ways.

Survey results suggest that UWM needs to:

- **cultivate greater faculty knowledge and understanding** of assessment's value beyond accreditation through professional development and messaging
- **shift the focus** of UWM's assessment practices and discussion away from accreditation toward assessment's intended uses (program and course improvement)
- **increase capacity for assessment consultations and direct support** for programs and individual faculty
- **provide more material support** for the work of gathering, analyzing, and reporting on assessment data.

Overview

In September of 2019 Academic Affairs distributed a survey gathering information from faculty and teaching academic staff about their views and experiences with assessment, meant to help understand faculty needs for professional development and support regarding assessment.

Who completed the survey?

639 responses begun, 313 Finished

N varies by how many respondents answered each question.

Campus:		Classification:		Leadership role in dept or program?	
UWM	398	T/TT Faculty	222		
UWM-Waukesha	17	Adjunct	90	Yes	158
UWM-Washington Co.	14	Teaching Academic Staff	104	No	264

	Very aware	Somewhat aware	Not aware
Reporting awareness of Assessment efforts	150	107	70
	Yes	Unsure	No
Reporting Participation in Assessment efforts	223	17	88

The strong response rate from those with leadership roles or who reported participating in assessment suggests that **the respondent population self-selected, to a degree, based on their exposure to and opinions about assessment.** As such, this data is best interpreted as disproportionately representing the views of those most engaged with assessment at UWM.
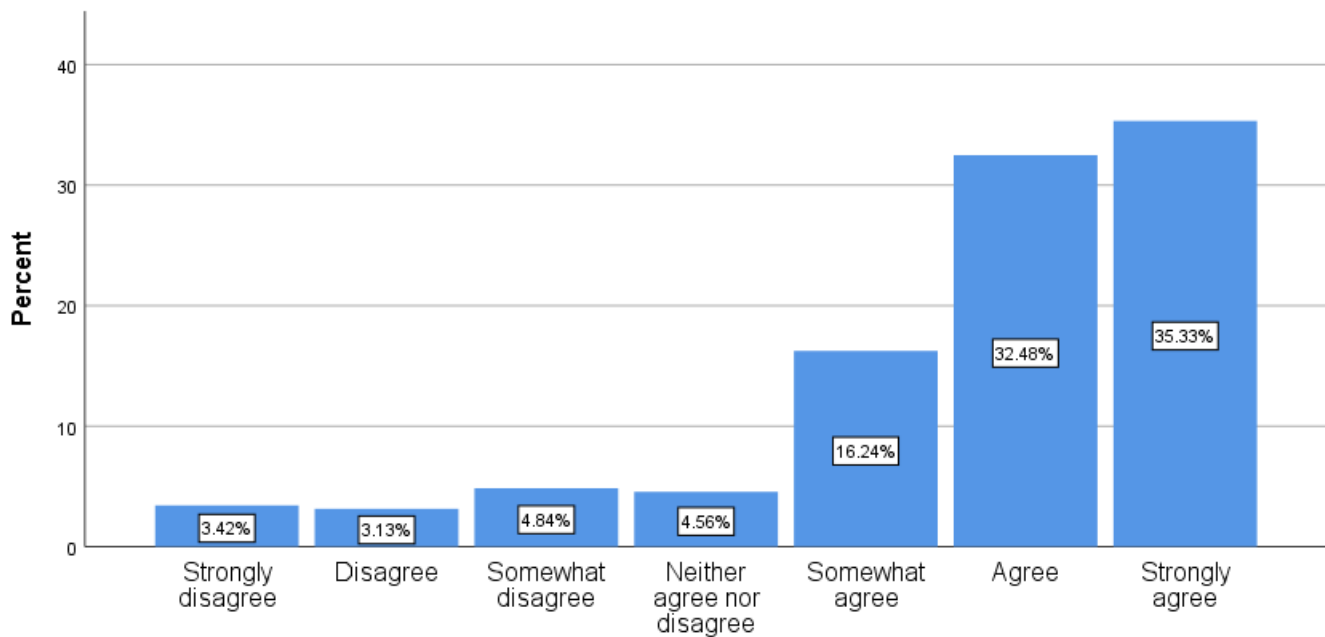
Data

Faculty were asked to rate their agreement with a series of questions.

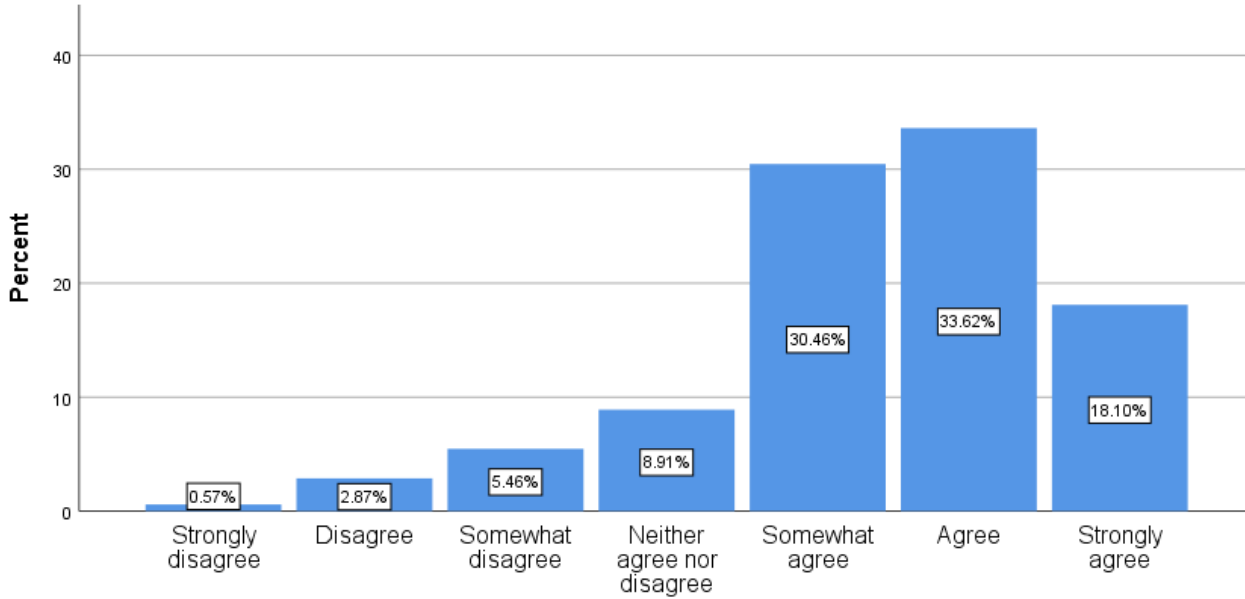| Scale: 1-7, Strongly Disagree-Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Dev.	Variance	Count
Program Assessment is useful and worthwhile.	5.66	1.54	2.37	351
I am knowledgeable about assessment best practices	5.39	1.25	1.57	348
Assessment works best when overseen by a program's own faculty.	5.79	1.19	1.41	349
Assessment in my program is primarily about accreditation	4.32	1.74	3.04	350
Assessment in my program is primarily about improving student learning	5.15	1.47	2.17	349
My program has robust and ongoing program assessment processes in place	4.93	1.51	2.27	348

Q10_1

Program assessment is useful and worthwhile.

Strongly disagree: 3.42%
Disagree: 3.13%
Somewhat disagree: 4.84%
Neither agree nor disagree: 4.56%
Somewhat agree: 16.24%
Agree: 32.48%
Strongly agree: 35.33%

Rate your level of agreement with the following statements: - Program assessment is useful and worthwhile.

Q10_2

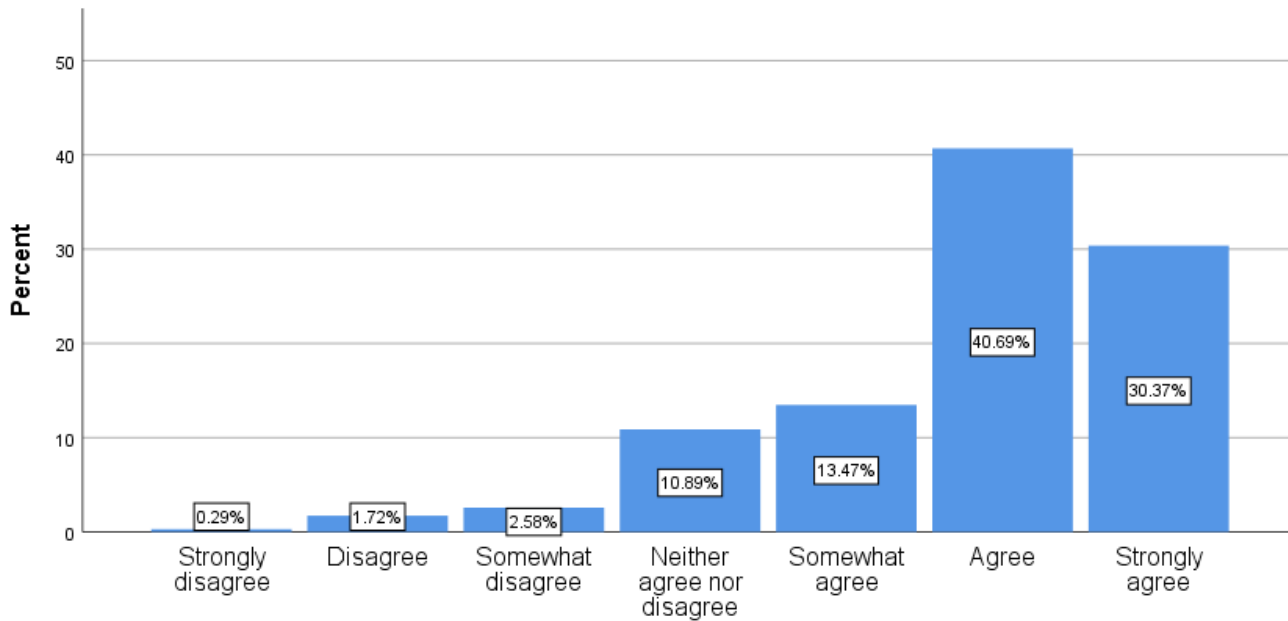**I am knowledgeable about assessment best practices.**

Strongly disagree: 0.57%
Disagree: 2.87%
Somewhat disagree: 5.46%
Neither agree nor disagree: 8.91%
Somewhat agree: 30.46%
Agree: 33.62%
Strongly agree: 18.10%

Rate your level of agreement with the following statements: - I am knowledgeable about assessment best practices.

Q10_3

**Assessment works best when overseen by a program's own faculty.**

Strongly disagree: 0.29%
Disagree: 1.72%
Somewhat disagree: 2.58%
Neither agree nor disagree: 10.89%
Somewhat agree: 13.47%
Agree: 40.69%
Strongly agree: 30.37%

Rate your level of agreement with the following statements: - Assessment works best when overseen by a program's own faculty.
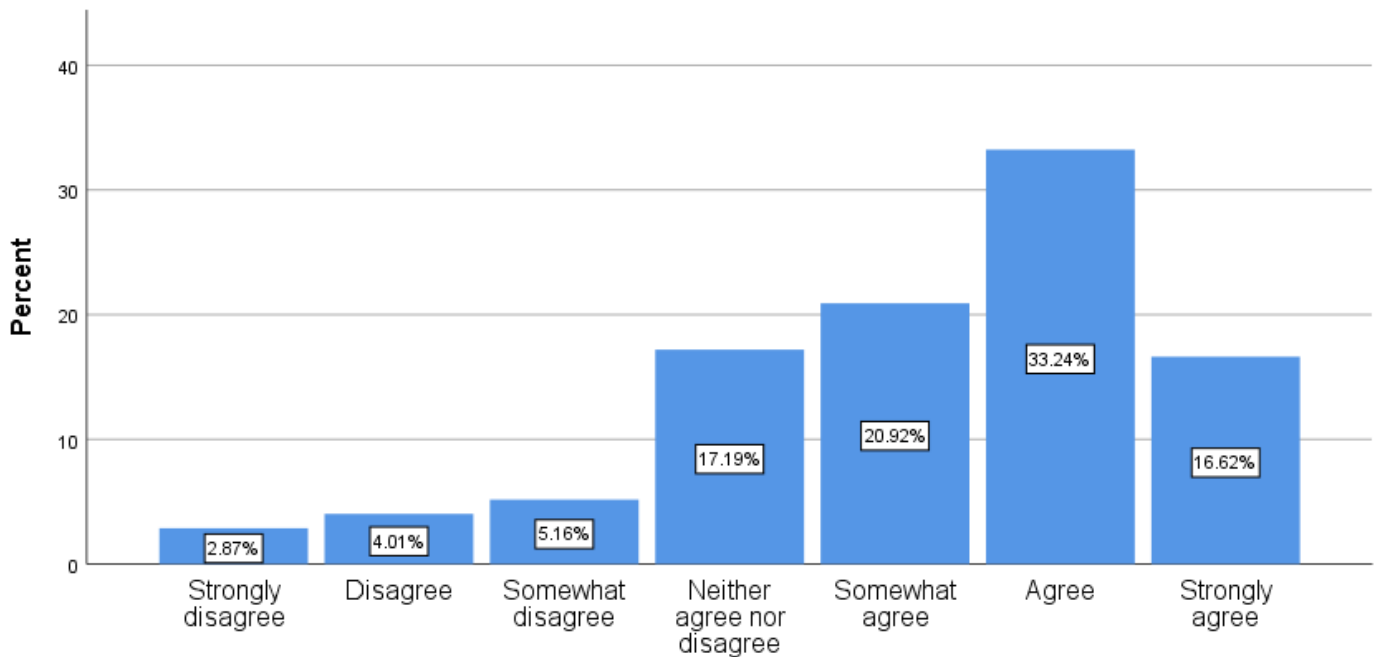
Assessment in my program is primarily about accreditation.
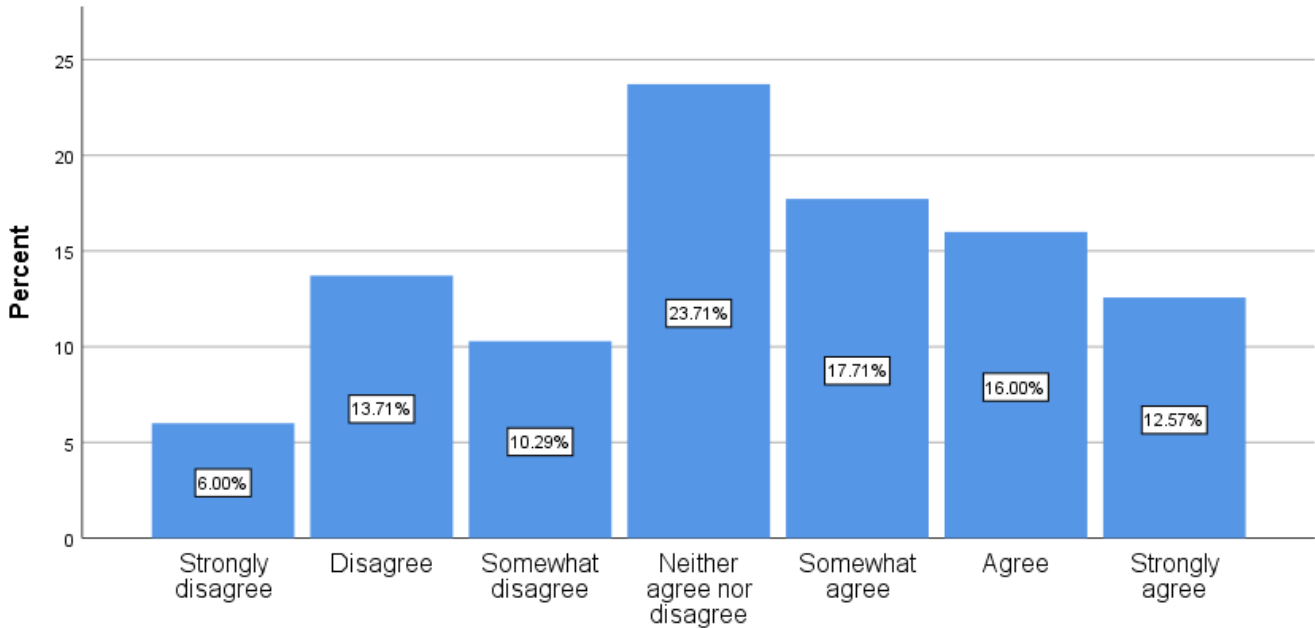
Rate your level of agreement with the following statements: - Assessment in my program is primarily about accreditation.
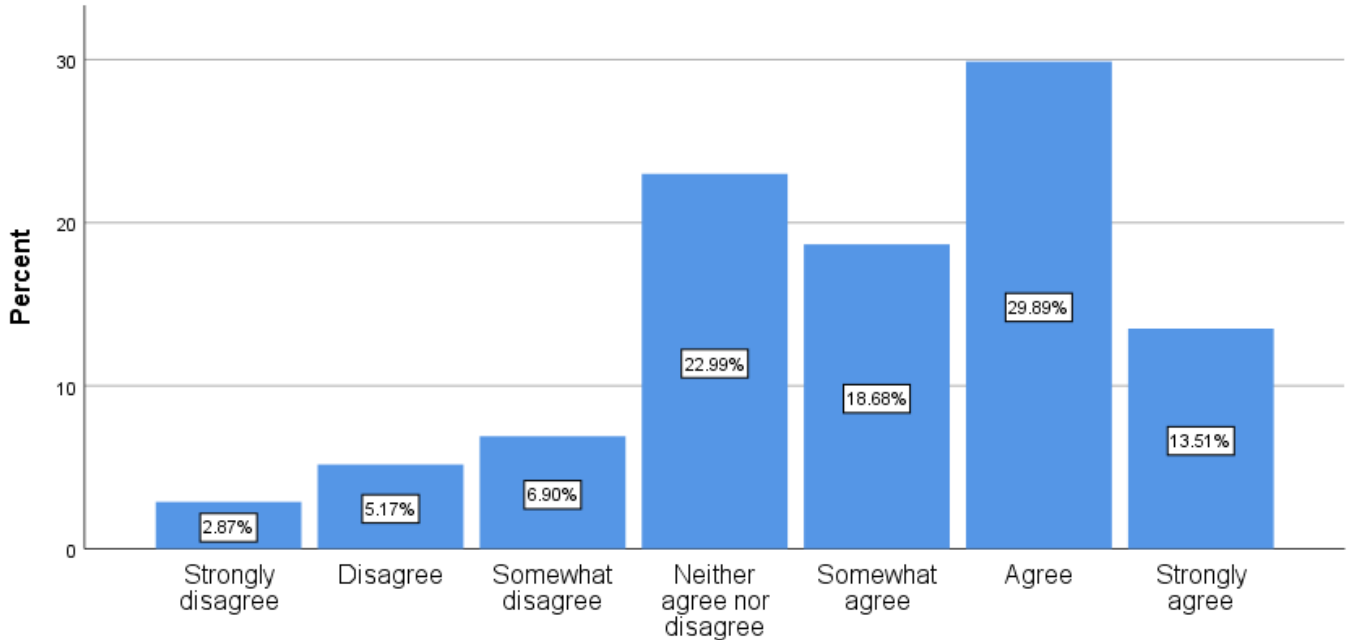
Assessment in my program is primarily about improving student learning.

Rate your level of agreement with the following statements: - Assessment in my program is primarily about improving student learning.

My program has robust and ongoing program assessment processes in place.
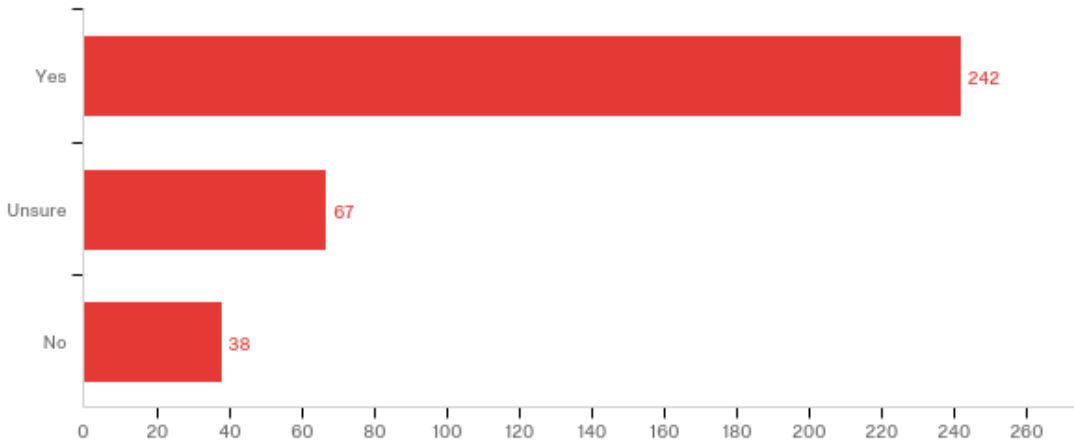

Rate your level of agreement with the following statements: - My program has robust and ongoing program assessment processes in place.

Q10_1, "Assessment is useful and worthwhile" broken down by the students that faculty most interact with:

Most of my students are:	Mean score on scale of 1-7 (Strongly Disagree-Strongly Agree)
Freshman	5.56
Sophomores	5.66
Juniors	5.52
Seniors	5.50
Graduate students	5.73

Q11

To the best of your knowledge, has your department or program clearly articulated expectations for what knowledge or skills a student graduating from your program should have? Put another way, does your program have explicit *program*-level learning goals or outcomes?

Program outcomes by program type:

|			An undergraduate program	A graduate program	Both undergraduate and graduate programs in my department	Other (explain)	Total
To the best of your knowledge, has your department or program clearly articulated expectations for what knowledge or skills a student graduating from your program should have? Put another way, does your program have explicit program-level learning goals or outcomes?	Yes	Count	86	42	111	3	242
			35.5%	17.4%	45.9%	1.2%	100.0%
	Unsure	Count	36	8	21	2	67
			53.7%	11.9%	31.3%	3.0%	100.0%
	No	Count	24	3	11	0	38
			63.2%	7.9%	28.9%	0.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	146	53	143	5	347
			42.1%	15.3%	41.2%	1.4%	100.0%

Q12 To the best of your knowledge, are those program-level goals or outcomes available publicly (e.g., on your department website) to students, faculty, or other potential stakeholders?
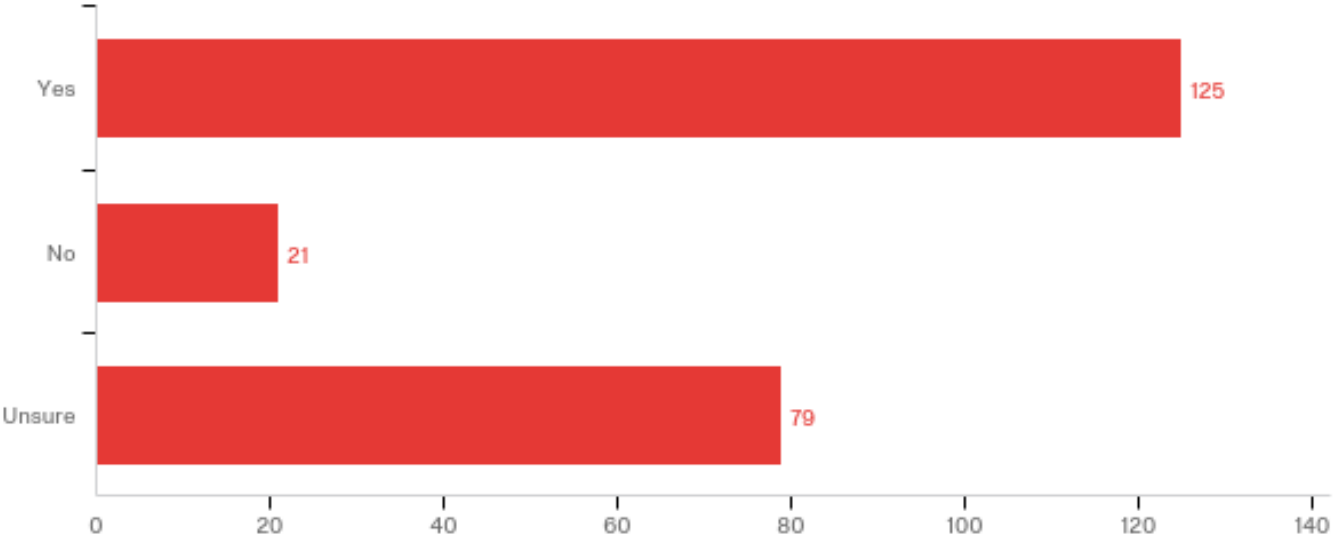
Q13 To the best of your knowledge, has your department or program established a curriculum map? (i.e., determined in which courses throughout a required course of study particular knowledge or skills are introduced, developed, and then subsequently mastered)?
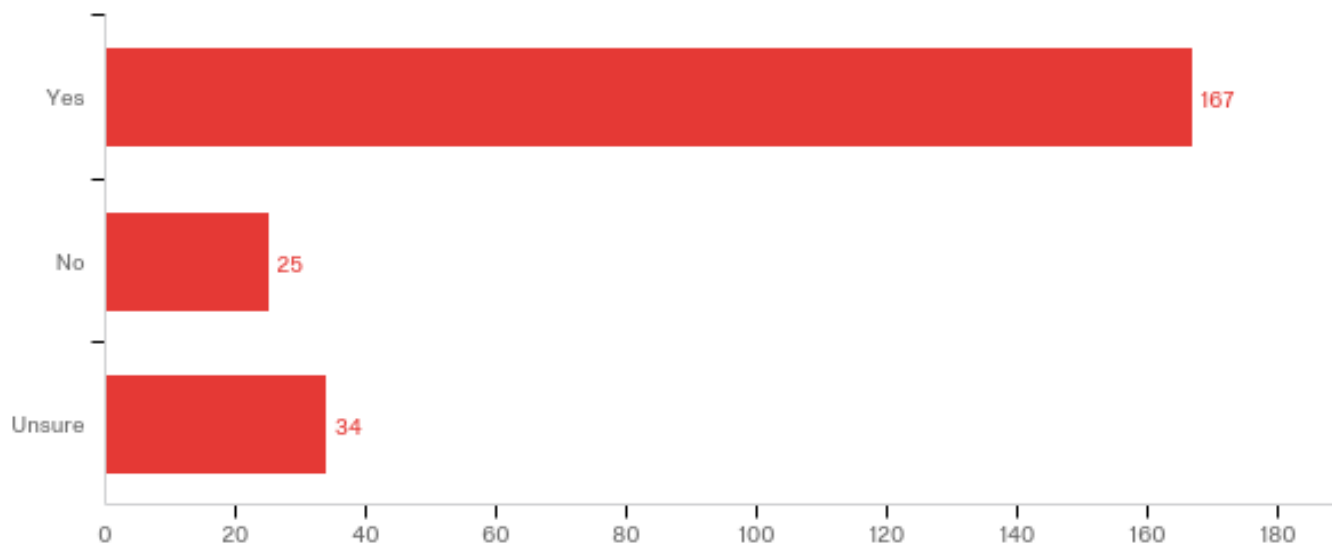

Q16 What kinds of assessment evidence does your program gather?   (Select all that apply)

Evidence Type: (Listed most reported to least reported)	% of Respondents Reporting
Rubric scores of student performance or work (direct)	55.6%
Survey responses from exit surveys, alumni surveys, etc. (indirect)	44.8%
Graduation rates (supporting)	39.8%
Local exam scores (direct)	34.3%
Course pass rates (supporting)	33.3%
Committee evaluation of student work such as defenses, juried performances, etc. (direct)	29.9%
Job placement data (supporting)	28.1%
The results of national, certification, or licensure exams (direct)	27.2%
GPA data (supporting)	25.6%
Interviews, exit interviews, or focus groups (indirect)	21.6%
Unsure	23.8%
Other	7.7%
None	1.2%

Q17 To the best of your knowledge, does your department or program have consistent, ongoing processes in place to assess student learning in courses which carry **general education** credit?
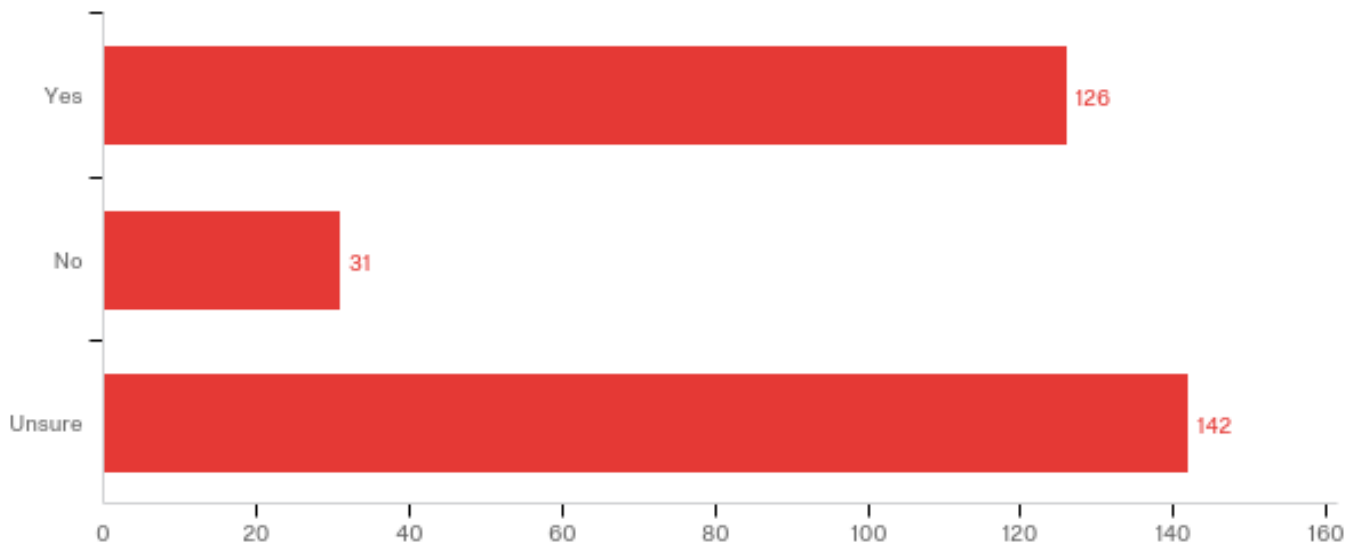
Q18 Does your department or program discuss the results of assessment at faculty or staff meetings?
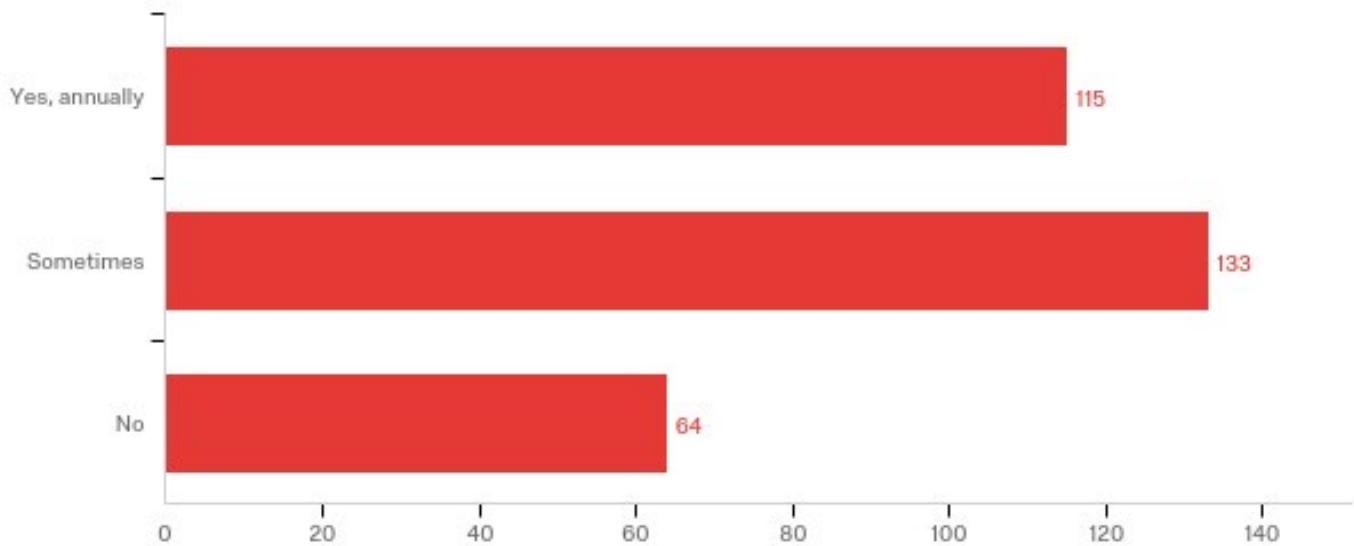
Q19 Are you aware of any instances in the last ten years in which faculty in your program have used assessment data to inform programmatic improvements or changes?

Answer	Count
Yes	172
No	43
Unsure	111
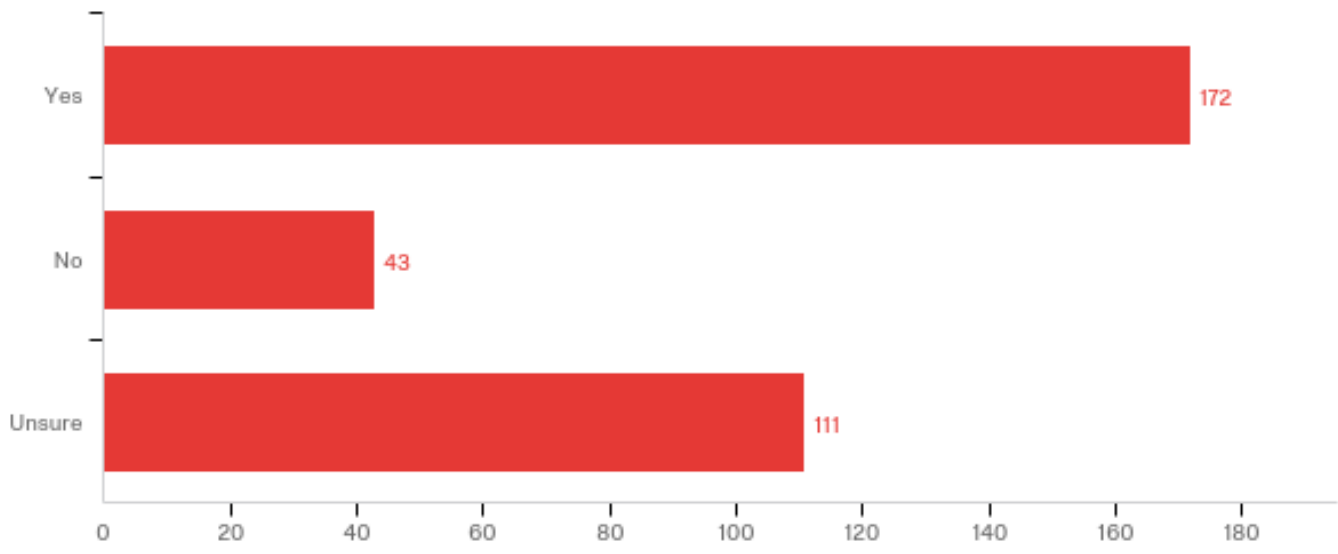
Q20 Please provide some brief details about the program improvements or changes that resulted from considering assessment data:

Of the 172 reporting the use of assessment data to make program improvements or changes, 121 offered an explanation of what kinds of changes were made. The results were coded using nVivo software, and are summarized below:

Reported Program Improvements Resulting from Assessment Data:		
General Curriculum Changes	93 instances	Changes to course content (28)
		Changes to requirements (11)
		Created a new course (9)
		Changes to course sequence (5)
		Changes to how students are assessed/graded (5)
		Changes to learning outcomes (4)
		Changes to assignments or work required in a course (3)
		Other (3)
		Unspecified (25)
Unspecified Improvement	9 instances	
Other	9 instances	
Changes to course delivery (i.e., online/hybrid)	4 instances	
Improved training/support for faculty, GTAs, or teaching academic staff teaching a course	4 instances	
Policy changes	2 instances	

Q21 In general, how does your department or program use its assessment data? (select all that apply)

How programs use assessment data: (Listed most reported to least reported)	% of Respondents Reporting
To satisfy accreditation requirements	57.0%
To inform curricular or pedagogical changes to particular courses	51.5%
To identify and address unmet student needs	48.9%
To inform structural or policy changes for the program	37.5%
To improve student advising in the program	35.0%
To inform changes to the assessment process itself	33.3%
To inform professional development for staff, faculty, or GTAs	23.3%
Unsure	23.0%
Other	3.9%

Q22 Do you believe that your program's assessment plan allows for patterns of strengths or weaknesses to be detected? In other words, does it help facilitate program improvement?
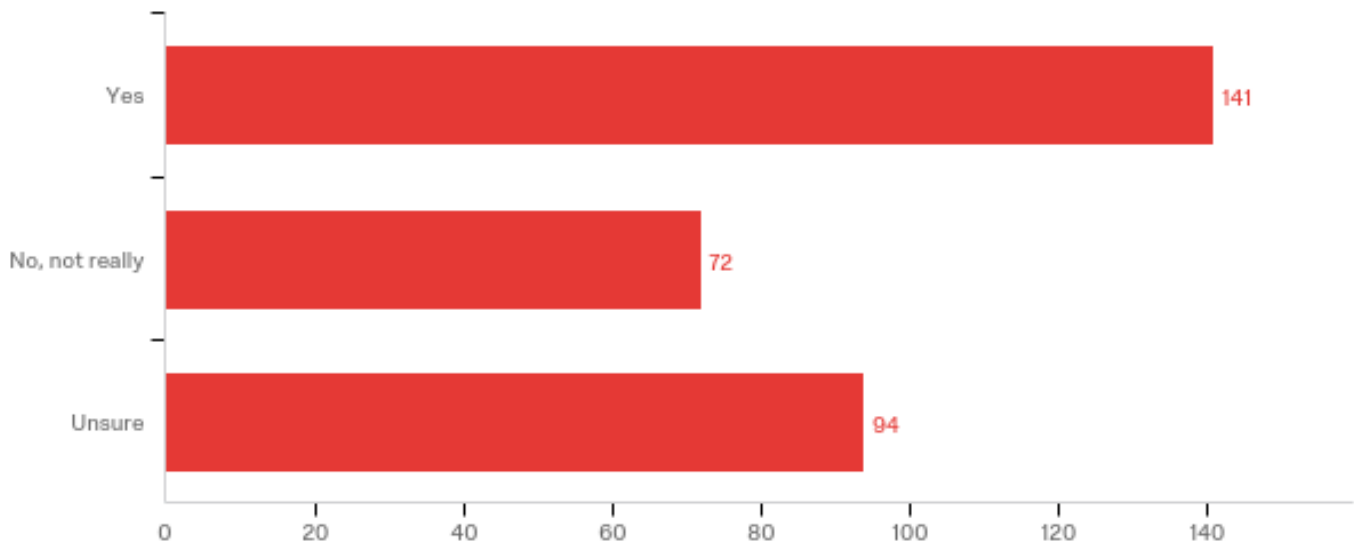
Q23 What do you think may be the greatest obstacles or challenges in your program to effectively using assessment for program improvement? (select all that apply)

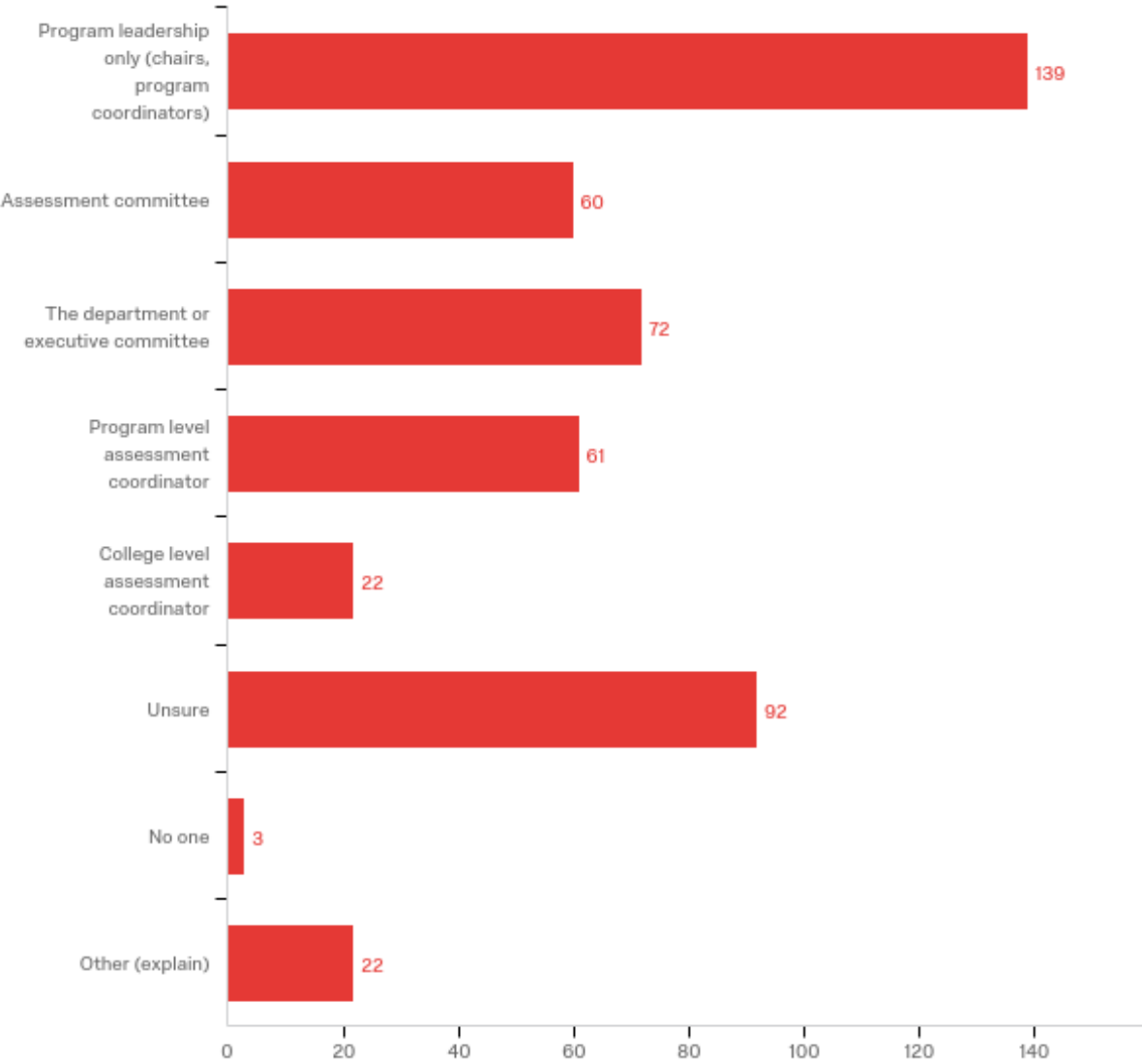| Reported Obstacles or Challenges: (Listed most reported to least reported)	% of Respondents Reporting
Faculty Culture	33.2%
Lack of knowledge or discussion around program-level outcomes	32.9
Lack of awareness and information about the process	31.0%
Lack of understanding about the value or uses of assessment	28.2%
Need for more support or resources (explain)	26.4%
Other (explain)	23.8%
Lack of alignment between course curricula and program outcomes	17.7%
Lack of defined program-level outcomes	14.8%

Note: These figures do not represent how critical faculty considered each obstacle, only how many faculty selected each. We did not ask faculty to rank the obstacles, which would have provided further clarity.

Some faculty who identified "Need for more support or resources" also supplied text responses to explain their response.

Need for more support or resources:	# of Instances
Faculty overburdened	33
Need for funding (course releases, incentives, budget to cover assessment activities or program changes)	9
Need for more support staff	7
Unspecified support needs	5
Need for new admin positions (e.g., program assessment coordinator)	2
Support for data analysis	1
Need for more prof development	1
Total references coded:	58

Note: that most of these overlap; for example, the need for more support staff is directly related to gathering and analyzing assessment data, and writing reports. Faculty reporting feeling overburdened by assessment are those doing that work themselves.

Q25 Do you know who, in your department or program, has responsibility for overseeing and implementing program assessment activities?　(select all that apply)

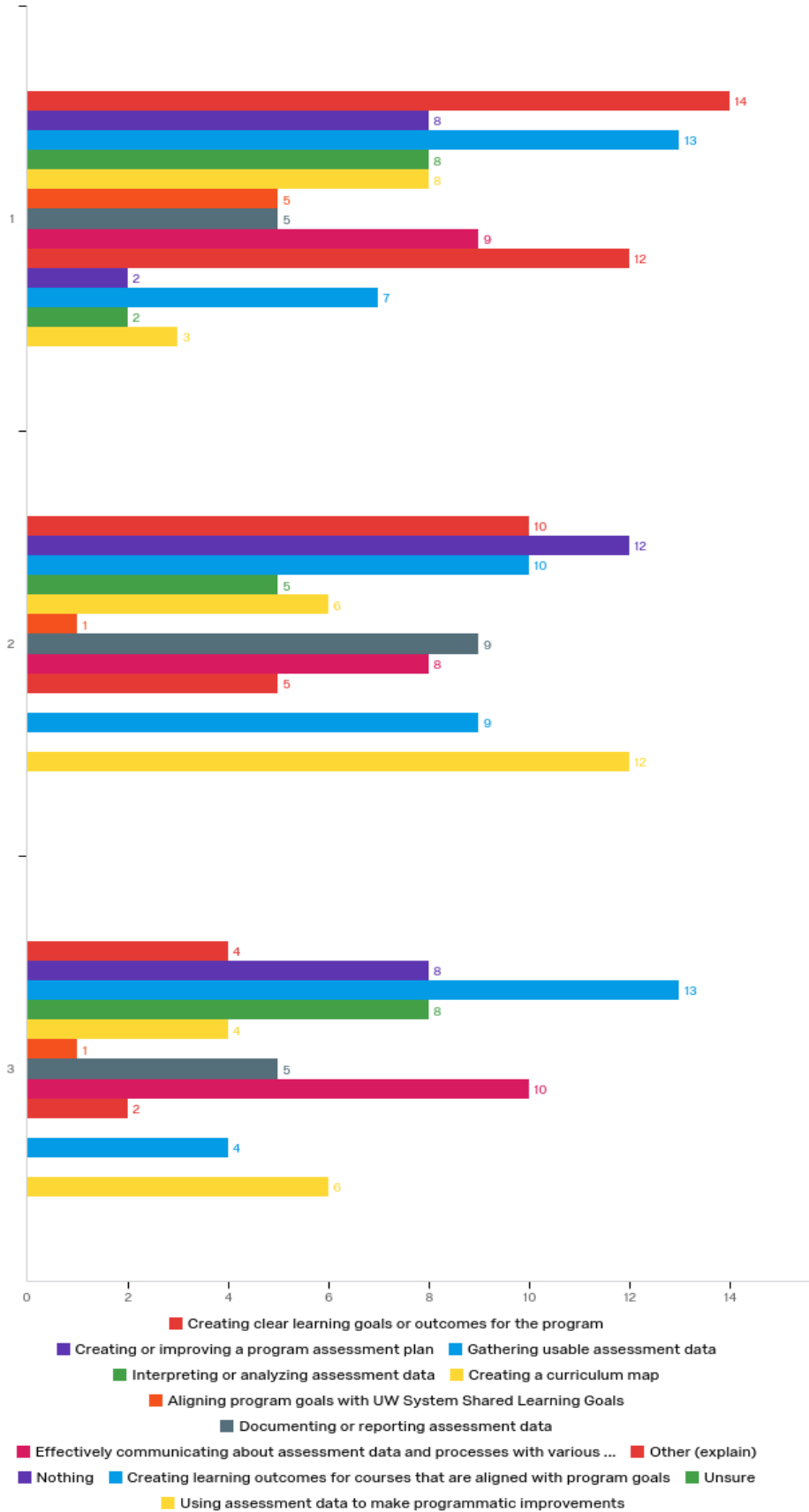| Category	Value
Program leadership only (chairs, program coordinators)	139
Assessment committee	60
The department or executive committee	72
Program level assessment coordinator	61
College level assessment coordinator	22
Unsure	92
No one	3
Other (explain)	22

Q26 What do you think faculty in your program need the most help with at this time?   (select all that apply)

Assessment issues faculty need the most help with: (Listed most reported to least reported)	% of Respondents Reporting
Gathering usable assessment data	28.9%
Effectively communicating about assessment data and processes with various stakeholders (accreditors, faculty, the public, students)	22.9%
Using assessment data to make programmatic improvements	22.6%
Unsure	21.9%
Creating or improving a program assessment plan	20.6%
Interpreting or analyzing assessment data	18.3%
Creating clear learning goals or outcomes for the program	17.9%
Other	17.9%
Documenting or reporting assessment data	16.3%
Creating a curriculum map	15.6%
Creating learning outcomes for courses that are aligned with program goals	14.0%
Aligning program goals with UW System Shared Learning Goals	8.3%
Nothing	7.3%

Responses for "Other" were further broken down:

Responses for "Other":	# of Instances
Need support, time, resources	21
Other/misc	14
Changing faculty culture	7
Alignment issues	4
Better integration/utilization of institutional and program data	2
Facilitate better inclusion of teaching academic staff in assessment processes	2
Implementing the assessment plan	1
Total references coded:	51

Respondents were asked to then **rank** their responses in order of importance. The chart below shows those items commonly ranked #1, 2, 3, and 4 in order of importance below.

■ Creating clear learning goals or outcomes for the program
■ Creating or improving a program assessment plan ■ Gathering usable assessment data
■ Interpreting or analyzing assessment data ■ Creating a curriculum map
■ Aligning program goals with UW System Shared Learning Goals
■ Documenting or reporting assessment data
■ Effectively communicating about assessment data and processes with various ... ■ Other (explain)
■ Nothing ■ Creating learning outcomes for courses that are aligned with program goals ■ Unsure
■ Using assessment data to make programmatic improvements

The items most often ranked #1 were:

1. Creating clear learning goals or outcomes for the program
2. Gathering usable assessment data
3. Other

Note: The most common "Other" response referred to here was the need for more support/funding.

Q28 What kinds of professional development or support for assessment would you like to see at UWM? (Check all that apply)
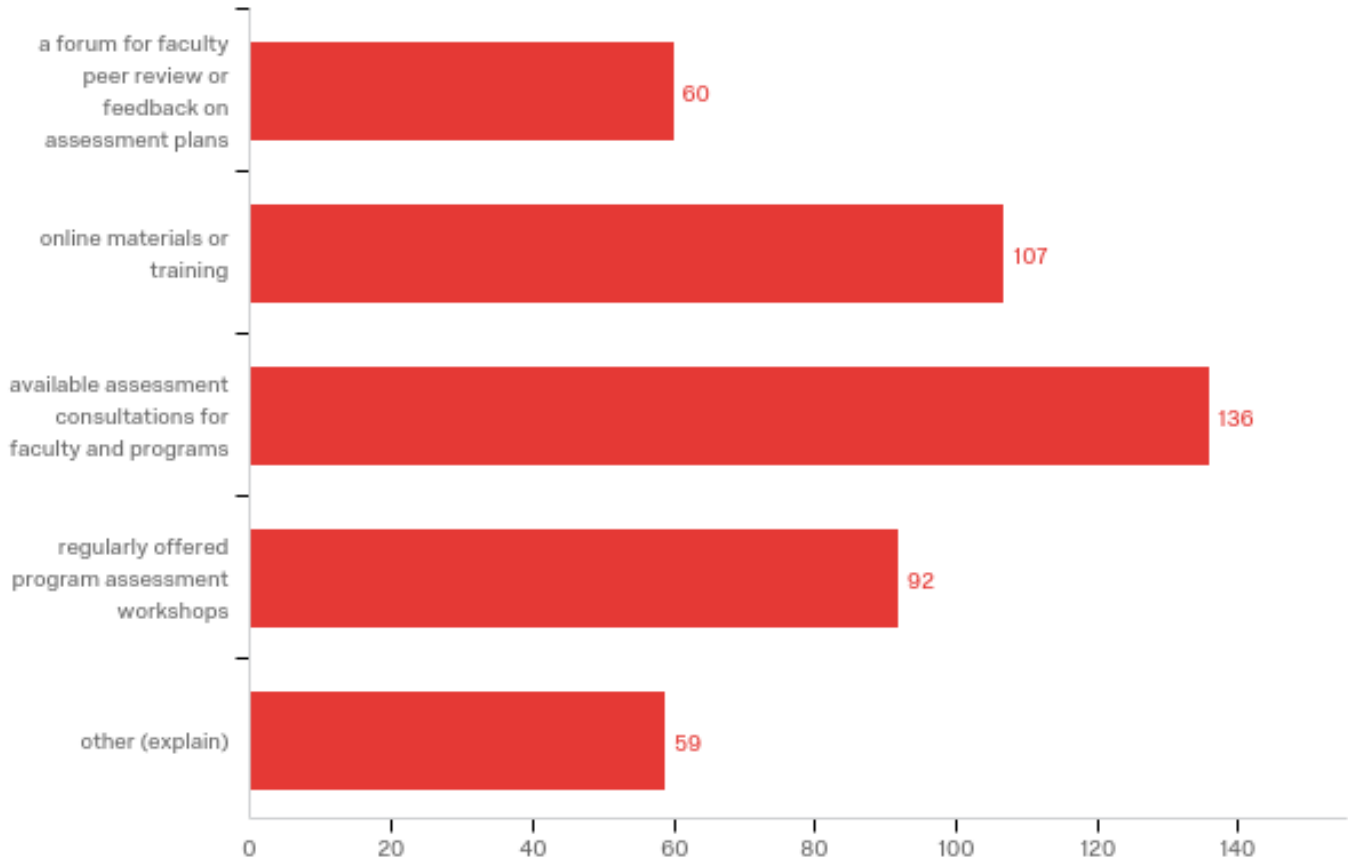
Note: The 59 "Other" responses to this question reiterated the same issues. The largest share of those comments (18 references) were for the **need for more support** (funding, support staff, incentives).