

## **Assessment and innovation: One darn thing leads to another**

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Using recent experience at Carleton College in Minnesota as a case history, the authors offer a model for assessment that provides more flexibility than the well-known assessment feedback loop, which assumes a linear progression within a hierarchical administrative structure. The proposed model is based on a double helix, with values and feedback serving as the backbone chains, and assessment, curriculum, faculty development, learning outcomes, student performance, and teaching as interactive building blocks. Unlike the base pairs in the DNA double helix, these building blocks can combine in any order, depending on the institutional context. Faculty development, as one of the building blocks, is shown to be most successful as an iterative undertaking in which a threshold level of participation provides statistically significant effects in the curriculum and student learning. Specifically, a faculty member's increased participation in faculty development activities related to writing instruction yields significantly more of that faculty member's assignments in sophomore portfolios compiled by students as a graduation requirement.