Building a Culture of Assessment by Applying Communities of Practice

Dr. Sarah Wu

Associate Director of Assessment

Dr. Susan R. Perry

Assistant Provost

KENT STATE
UNIVERSITY

Assessment Context

- **Organizational structure**
  - Four-year public, R2
  - 8 Ohio campuses, 6 other U.S., 4 worldwide
  - 10 colleges
  - 282+ undergraduate programs
  - 50+ master's with 100 specializations
  - 23 doctoral with 50 specializations
  - 92 accredited academic programs
  - Decentralized RCM model
  - Varied assessment staffing

KENT STATE
UNIVERSITY
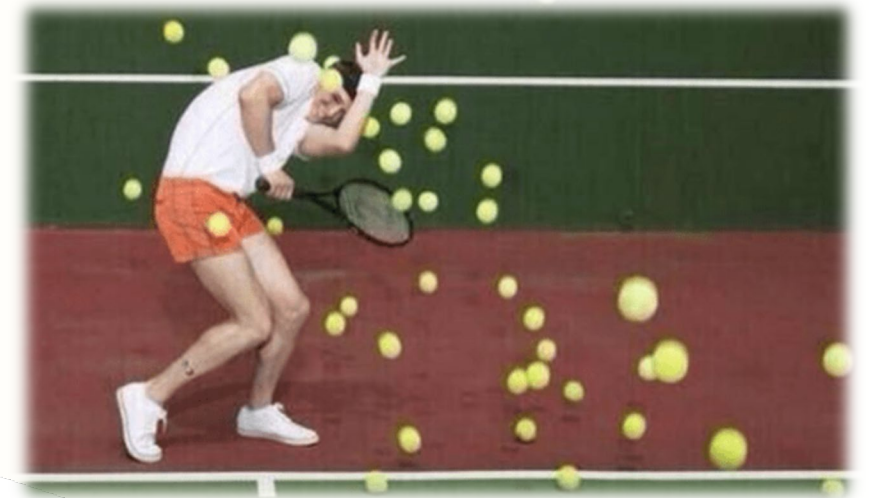
Challenges

- **Information sharing**
- **Professional development**
- **Myths and mindsets**
- **Maturity of assessment work**
- **Recognition and appreciation**
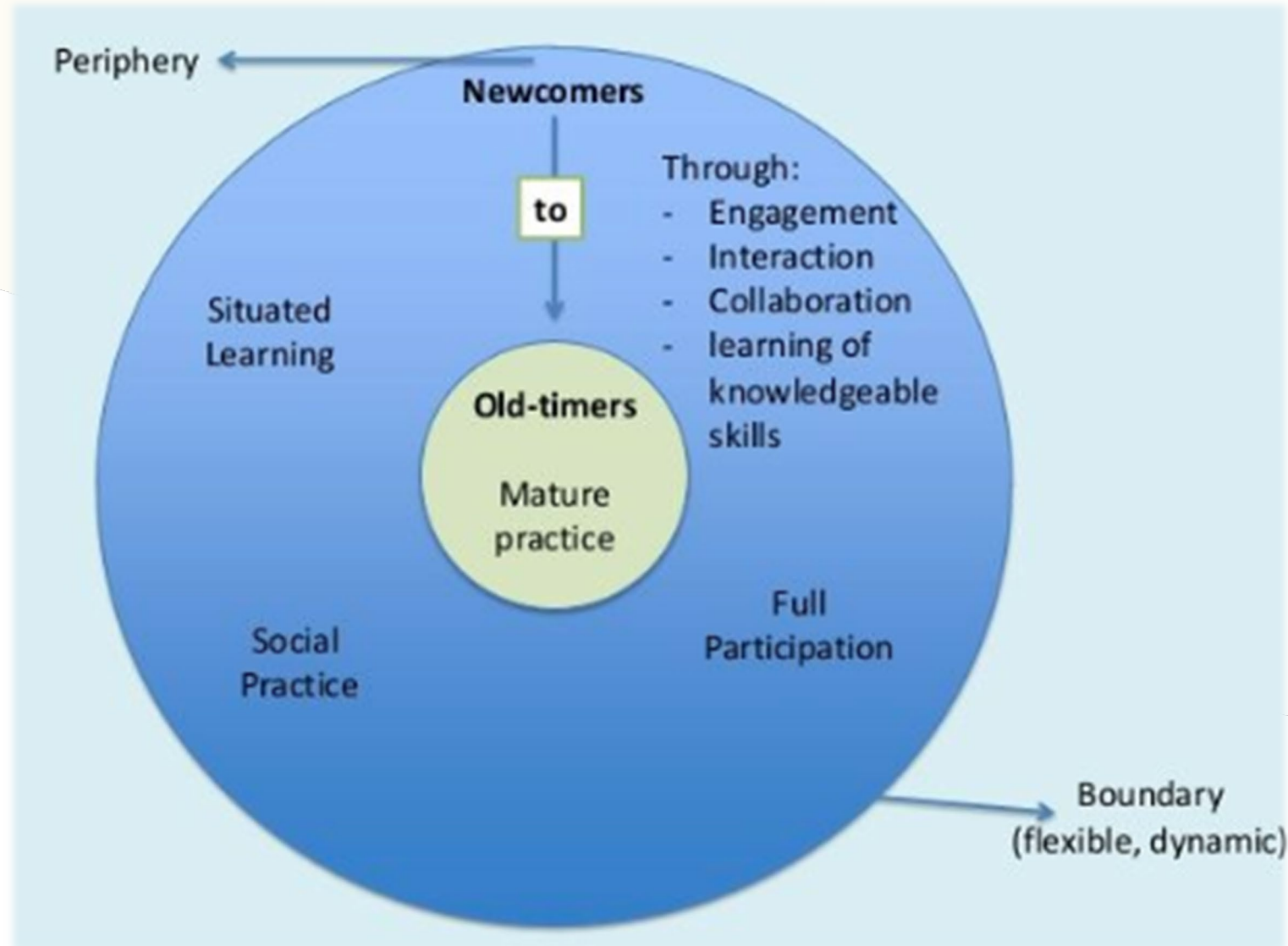
KENT STATE
U N I V E R S I T Y

What is Communities of Practice (CoP)?

- Groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting (with each other) on an ongoing basis.

Jean Lave & Etienne Wenger (1991)
Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation.

KENT STATE
UNIVERSITY

Learning Process - Legitimate Peripheral Participation

Cathay Keough (2016) Information Literacy Workshop https://www.slideshare.net/CathayKeough/information-literacy-workshop-mccloskey-mladla-2016
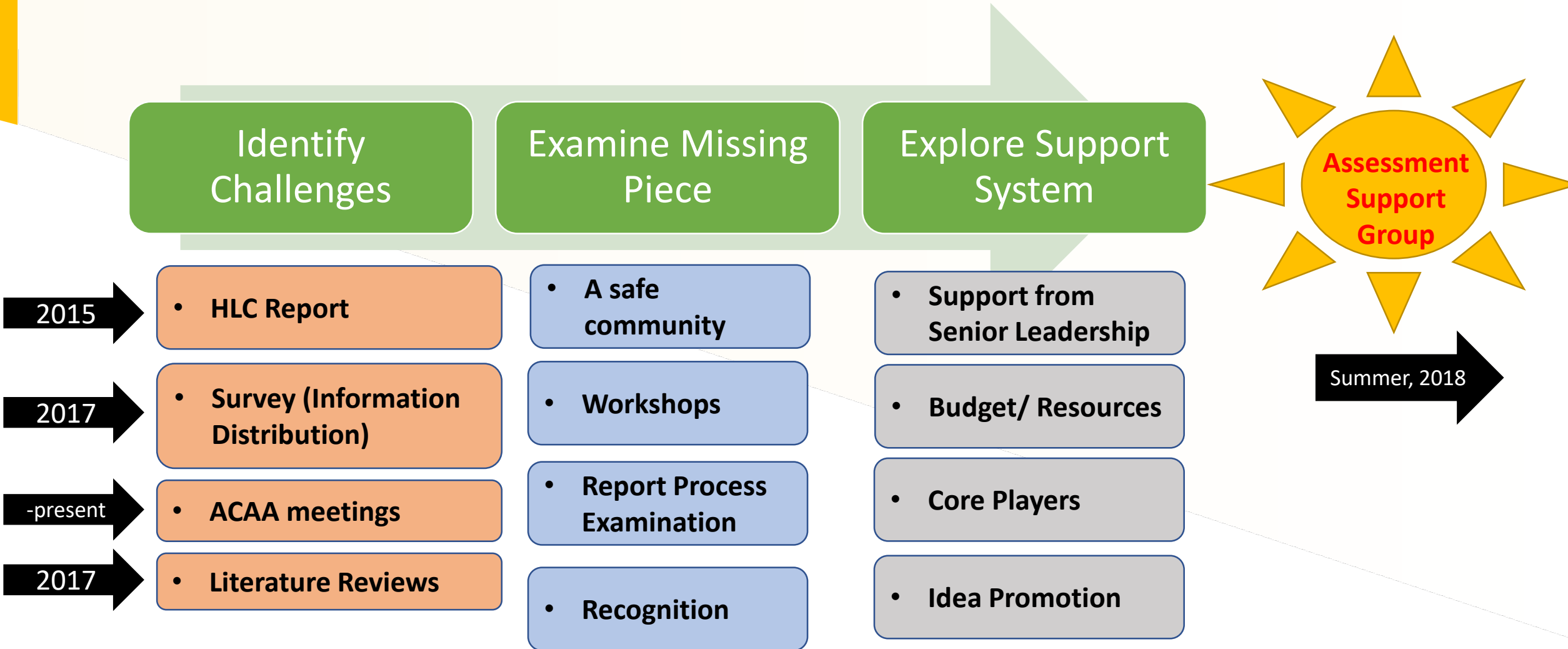
KENT STATE
U N I V E R S I T Y

From Assessment Challenges to Opportunity

Identify Challenges

Examine Missing Piece

Explore Support System

6/16/2019

KENT STATE
UNIVERSITY

From Assessment Challenges to Opportunity

Identify Challenges

- **2015** → **HLC Report**
- **2017** → **Survey (Information Distribution)**
- **-present** → **ACAA meetings**
- **2017** → **Literature Reviews**

Examine Missing Piece

- **A safe community**
- **Workshops**
- **Report Process Examination**
- **Recognition**

Explore Support System

- **Support from Senior Leadership**
- **Budget/ Resources**
- **Core Players**
- **Idea Promotion**

Assessment Support Group

Summer, 2018

KENT STATE
UNIVERSITY

So, we start small

- Three persons
  - All staff
  - 1 male, 2 females
  - 2 Assessment Analysts + 1 Associate Director
  - 2 years - 5 years experience
  - All highly interested and engaged in assessment
  - Business & educational background
  - 1 person has CoP experience

KENT STATE
UNIVERSITY
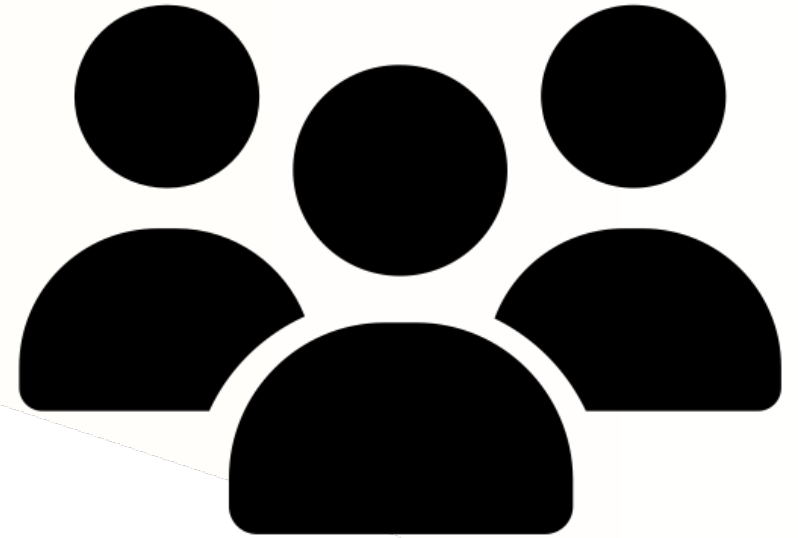
About Kent State Assessment Support Group

- ## Mission Statement
  - The mission of the KSU Assessment Support Group is to encourage and promote a culture of assessment. We will develop assessment skills and strategies through discussions in the monthly meetings in which trust, respect, commitment, and equality enable us to work in partnership in order to synthesize the best practice in different areas.

- ## Goals
  1. Provide a respectful and open environment for members to share problems and exchange ideas about assessment in ways that builds trust and fosters equality
  2. Work toward solutions to issues identified as priorities within the assessment field
  3. Invite people from different levels of assessment engagement
  4. Develop, support, and share assessment best practices
  5. Promote collaboration across disciplines

https://www.dropbox.com/s/2e0r8tj6hqxbh3l/Assessment%20Support%20Group%20goals%20official.pdf?dl=0

KENT STATE
UNIVERSITY

About Kent State Assessment Support Group

- A safe place to share
- All levels of expertise are welcome
- Include all campuses
- Meet once a month
- Resources are shared on the website
- Learning from each others' experiences
- Group members often revisit their goals

KENT STATE
UNIVERSITY

How does senior leadership support this group?

- **Not attending the meetings (no kidding)**
- **Budget support**
- **Presentation**
- **Idea promotion**

CoP Characteristics

- They are peer-to-peer collaborative networks
- They are driven by the willingness of the members
- They are focused on sharing knowledge, developing expertise and/or solving problems and lastly
- They are focused on learning and building capacity

Our Meetings Characteristics

→ • Job title is never mentioned

→ • Members come to a meeting because they are interested

→ • We talk about member highlights and strategies (example provided)

→ • We make sure people get what they want during or after the meeting (example provided)

KENT STATE UNIVERSITY

Meeting Agenda (example)

Assessment Support Group Meeting

July 30, 2018 Meeting
SLIS Conference Room 365

AGENDA

I.   Welcome and Introductions

II. **Community of practice**

Groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.

III. **Assessment Highlight**

IV. **Assessment Challenge**

V.   **Assessment Support Group**
     Who- Open for people who are interested in assessment
     When- Once a month
     Where-TBD
     What- Assessment issues and strategies
     How- meeting

VI. **Current Resources**
     a. **Assessment Google Site:** https://sites.google.com/kent.edu/annual-assessment/home
     b. **EHHS:** https://www.kent.edu/ehhs/about-taskstream
     c. **Business**

VII. **Next meeting**

Meeting adjourned

13   6/16/2019

Personal Goals (example)

What would you like to get from this group??

- How to promote long-term planning / leadership dev / community engagement viz assessment
- Encourage buyin from other Admin units
- Take advantage of tools I'm unfamiliar with
- Assessment Day
- How to use data outside internal use

What would you like to get from this group??

> updates from the university level office
> ideas/examples from other colleges/units
> maybe topics that people in the group need more information on & guest speakers could come & provide that information

Current Status

- **Group Members**
- **Group members' knowledge, skills, & values**
- **Cross-disciplinary collaboration**

KENT STATE
UNIVERSITY

Benefits and Value of a CoP

- Improve performance
- Identify, create, store, share and use knowledge
- Decrease learning curve
- Avoid reinvention of the wheel (and thus improve efficiency)
- Permit faster problem solving time
- Encourage and illuminate good practice
- Be a fertile ground for new and innovative ideas
- Accelerate learning
- Connect learning to action
- Support both personal and professional transformation

KENT STATE
UNIVERSITY

Differences Between a CoP and a Team

Team	CoP
Held together by a task or common goal	Held together by the learning value members find in their interactions
Members may be assigned	Membership is voluntary
Ends when task is accomplished	Continues as long as it is valuable to members
Membership defined by task	Members have similar passions or concerns
Under organizational control	Self organized or under the control of individuals
Common in higher education settings	Not as common in higher education settings

KENT STATE
UNIVERSITY

Group Activity

- **3-4 people per group**
    1. Introduce yourself by name only. **(No JOB TITLE)**
    2. What is the most recent assessment success you have had?
    3. What is the most recent assessment challenge you have encountered?

6/16/2019

KENT STATE
UNIVERSITY

Group Activity

What did you learn?

KENT STATE UNIVERSITY

Design Principles

1. ***CoPs need to be designed for evolution*** – the community must be able to evolve and shift in focus to meet the needs of the participants without steering too far from the domain of interest.

2. ***CoPs need to be open to both the inside and outside perspectives*** - an open dialogue is necessary to introduce and discuss new perspectives even if they are coming from outside the community of practice.

3. ***CoPs need to accept and encourage varying levels of participation*** - it is common to have different levels of participation in the community and acceptance of this can help in figuring out how best to engage the community members.

4. ***CoPs are strengthened when participants operate within public and private community spaces -*** encouraging individual or group activities that are shared publicly or privately (i.e. creating a blog to share activities or having small group meet-ups or video calls) can strengthen the community of practice.

5. ***CoPs focus on value*** - the thematic domain is the glue that binds the participants together and they are heightened by their shared practices.

6. ***CoPs combine familiarity and excitement*** - this is done through shared concerns and introducing challenging perspectives for discussion or action.

7. ***CoPs create the rhythm for the community*** - this is based on the regular activities and shared practices in the community which create the cadence for the community.

Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002)

KENT STATE
UNIVERSITY

Reference

1. James, N. (2013). The learning trajectories of 'old-timers': Academic identities and communities of practice in higher education. In *Communities of Practice* (pp. 141-153). Routledge

2. Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation. Cambridge*, England: Cambridge University.

3. Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

4. Wenger, E., McDermott, R., & Snyder, W. M. (2002). *Cultivating communities of practice: A guide to managing knowledge*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

KENT STATE
UNIVERSITY

Q&A

KENT STATE
UNIVERSITY

CoP Research and Practice Collaboration?
assessment@kent.edu

6/16/2019

KENT STATE
UNIVERSITY

Thank You!

assessment@kent.edu