Year One

Session One: Assessment Basics

The “A” Word
Something to Ponder

• What would it take to make assessment for you / your area…
  • useful?
  • manageable?
  • feasible?
  • worth doing?

What Matters Most?

The assessment of student learning begins with educational values. Assessment is not an end in itself but a vehicle for educational improvement. Its effective practice, then, begins with and enacts a vision of the kinds of learning we most value for students and strive to help them achieve. Educational values should drive not only what we choose to assess but also how we do so. Where questions about educational mission and values are skipped over, assessment threatens to be an exercise in measuring what’s easy, rather than a process of improving what we really care about.

~ American Association for Higher Education (1992)
Assessment Definitions

Assessment is the ongoing process of:

- Establishing clear, measurable expected outcomes of student learning.
- Ensuring that students have sufficient opportunities to achieve those outcomes.
- Systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well student learning matches our expectations.
- Using the resulting information to understand and improve student learning.


Assessment Definitions

Assessment is any effort to gather, analyze, and interpret evidence which describes institutional, division, or agency effectiveness.

~ John Schuh & Lee Upcraft (2001)
Assessment Definitions

Assessment...

- ...is a kind of ‘action research,’ intended...to inform local action.
- ...means basing decisions about curriculum, pedagogy, staffing, advising, and student support upon the best possible data about student learning and the factors that affect it.
- ...is already occurring...

~ Barbara Walvoord (2004) 

Assessment Definitions

- Institutional effectiveness refers to how well an institution is achieving its mission and major educational goals.
- Student learning comprises a major component of institutional effectiveness.
- Additional components of institutional effectiveness include: research/scholarship, community service, financial stability, financial support, facilities and infrastructure, service, collaborative partnerships, etc.

Another Point to Ponder

In order to gain the most benefit from assessment, faculty and administrators at each institution must develop their own understanding of assessment.

~ Palomba & Banta (1999)

Assessment

Assessment, to me, means....
A Definition for Cornell?

• “How well do we accomplish our educational intentions?”

• “How do we know?”

(Adapted from Maki, 2004)

Therein lies the wellspring of an institutional commitment to assessment – intellectual curiosity about what and how well our students learn. Assessment is the means of answering those questions of curiosity about our work as educators.

~ Peggy Maki (2004)
Questions & Concerns

Assessment Cycle

- Year One: Identify Priorities, Goals / Outcomes
- Year Two: Gather Evidence
- Year Three: Interpret Evidence / Action Plan
- Year Four: Implement Change

Mission / Educational Objectives

Maki, 2004
Next Step Considerations

How do we think about assessment?
What is our educational mission?
What are our educational objectives?
What are we curious about with regard to:
  σ student learning?
  σ program effectiveness?
  σ institutional effectiveness?

Next Session

Articulating Program Goals
Thursday, October 8th
3:30-4:45 p.m.
Hedges