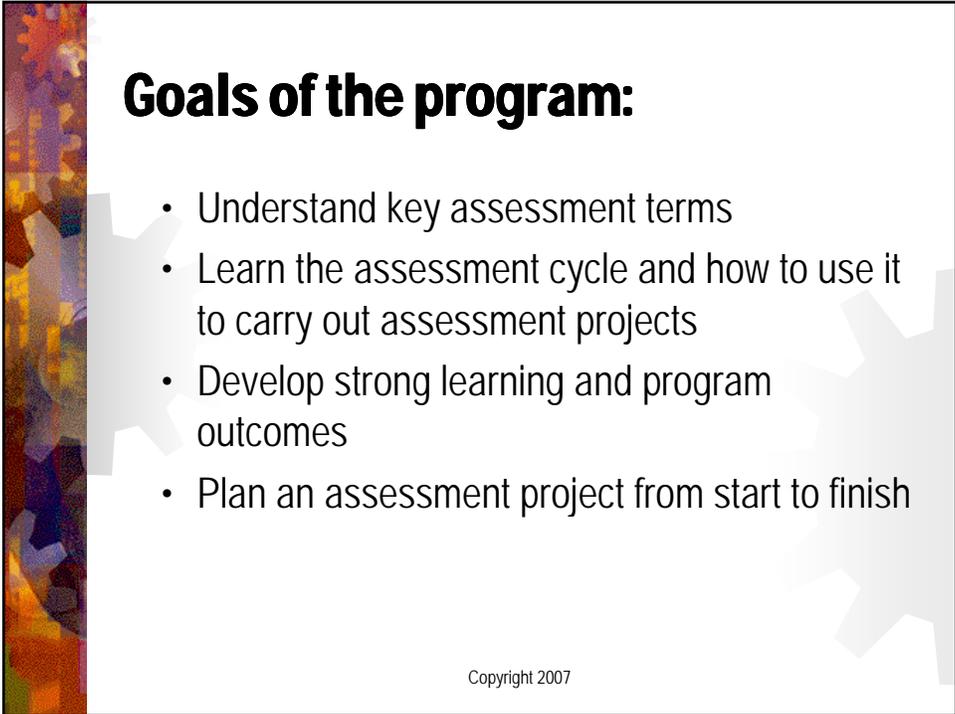


Assessment 101: A Guide for Higher Education

*Adapted from work by:
Becki Elkins Nesheim
Dianne Timm
Kim Yousey
Pete Swerdzewski*

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Goals of the program:

- Understand key assessment terms
- Learn the assessment cycle and how to use it to carry out assessment projects
- Develop strong learning and program outcomes
- Plan an assessment project from start to finish

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Assessment

- "Any effort to gather, analyze, and interpret evidence which describes institutional, divisional, or agency effectiveness." (*Upcraft & Schuh, 1996, p. 18*)
- A systematic process which includes research, data gathering, data analysis, and evaluation in an effort to guide good practice and improve student learning and development. (*Erwin, 2002; Palomba & Banta, 1999*)

Copyright 2007



Evaluation

- The process of analyzing results in a manner that makes the results usable. (*Upcraft, 2003; Upcraft & Schuh, 1996*)
- It is part of the assessment process. (*Upcraft & Schuh, 1996*).

Copyright 2007



Evaluation

- FORMATIVE EVALUATION
 - Provide feedback
 - Modify and/or shape a program or service
 - Improve a program or service
- SUMMATIVE EVALUATION
 - Judge a current program or service for quality and/or worth
 - Based on previously established standards

(Palomba & Banta, 1999)

Copyright 2007



Research

- The method of gathering information to support and/or guide the assessment process.
- Qualitative
- Quantitative
- Mixed Methods

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Assessment Cycles

- How you organize your assessments
- Assessment systems vs. ad hoc systems
- Adaptable to different institutions and goals

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Example #1: Comprehensive Assessment Model

- Usage Numbers
- Student needs
- Student satisfaction
- Environments
- Learning Outcomes
- Comparable (Benchmarking)
- Using National Standards (i.e. CAS)

(Upcraft & Schuh, p. 27)

Copyright 2007



Example #2: Guiding Questions

- What's the problem?
- What's the purpose?
- Who will be studied?
- What's the best assessment method?
- How do we decide who to study?
- How should the data be collected?
- What instrument(s) should we use?
- Who should collect the data?
- How should we record the data?
- How do we analyze the data?
- How do we report the results?
- How do we use the results?

(Upcraft & Schuh, p. 316)

Copyright 2007



Example #3: Assessment Cycle

- Identify Outcomes
- Gather Evidence
- Interpret Evidence
- Implement Change

(all centered around Mission/Purpose, Educational Objectives)

(Peggy Maki)

Copyright 2007



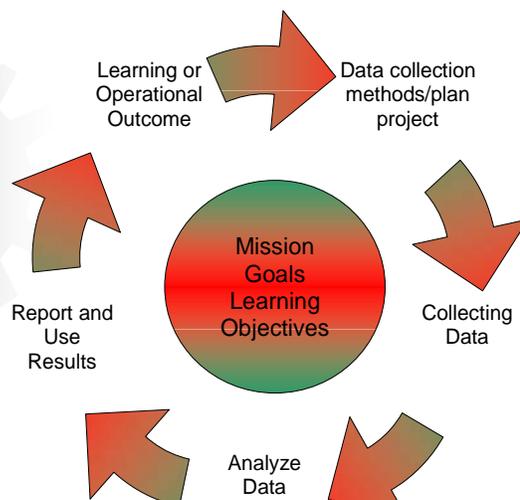
Example #4: Practical Inquiry

- What topic are you interested in?
- What would you like to know about your topic? (Question)
- How can you answer your questions? (Method, data collection)
- What did your data tell you? (analysis)
- How does that inform practice? (implications/report)
- What is the next question? (feedback loop)

(Yousey)

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A Comprehensive Model:



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Putting the Cycle Into Action:

Creating an Assessment Plan begins by going step-by-step through the cycle

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Step #1: Learning Outcomes

- Objectives which help define in clear and simple terms how student affairs programs and services contribute to student learning and fit institution mission. *(Bloland, Stamatokos, & Rogers, 1996)*
- Objectives or goals that can be measured to show student learning through student affairs programs and services. *(Bresciani, Zelna, & Anderson, 2004)*

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Learning Outcomes

- Cognitive Learning Outcome
 - General skills, intelligence, higher order cognitive development
 - Affective Learning Outcome
 - Attitudes, values, and self-concept
- (Alexander & Stark, 2003)*

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Developing Outcomes

Outcome: An outcome is the desired effect of a service or intervention, but is much more specific than a goal. It is participant or output centered.

Example: As a result of participating in the Pathways to Success Program students will increase their first year grade point average. (Compared with the objective: enhance student academic achievement.)

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Good Outcome Statements

- Student learning outcomes translate intentions into actions
- Describe what students should demonstrate or produce
- Use action verbs
- Align with other intentions (institutional, departmental)

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Good Outcome Statements

- Map to practices
- Are collaboratively authored
- Reflect/complement existing national criteria
- Are measureable

Maki, P. L. (2004). *Assessing for learning: Building a sustainable commitment across the institution.*

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Individual Exercise

- Pick one program/service where you know that learning is occurring
- Make a list in your own words of what students are learning
- Write a “quick and easy” learning outcome:
By the end of this program students will....
(think, feel, do differently)

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Group Exercise

- Gather by area of interest
- Share your outcomes/give feedback

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Step #2: Planning Methods

Begins with: How best to measure your outcome?
(Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods)

Ends with: Creating a plan of the
who/what/where/when/how of your assessment

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Qualitative

- Researcher(s) gathers information from the world around them. (*Bogdan & Biklen, 2003*)
- Researcher(s) make multiple constructions and interpretations of the world they are studying. (*Merriam & Associates, 2002*)

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Quantitative

- Research designed to gather information and test a particular hypothesis or theory.
- Uses simple to complex statistics.

(Erwin, 1991)

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Things to consider:

- How best to answer your question? (Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods)
- What's in your tool belt?
- Timeline
- Resources (\$\$, time, human)
- Sampling
- KISS

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Measuring Outcomes

When measuring learning outcomes make sure that the measure...

- **Matches:** Measure directly matches to the outcome it is trying to measure
- **Appropriate methods:** Uses appropriate direct and indirect methods
- **Targets:** Indicates desired level of performance

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Measuring Outcomes

- **Useful:** Measures help identify what to improve
- **Reliable:** Based on tested, known methods
- **Effective and Efficient:** Characterize the outcome concisely

Adapted from Paula Krist, Director of Operational Effectiveness and Assessment Support, University of Central Florida, May 2006.

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Group Exercise

- Look at your outcomes and discuss some ways (or methods) you can answer the question
 - Bounce off different ideas, why would one method be better than others?
- 

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Step #3: Collecting Methods

Easy if you plan ahead

- Who – is being asked, who is conducting
 - What – method
 - Where – logistical space or web space
 - When – timing is everything
 - How – are you carrying it out, analysis?
- 

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Individual Exercise (if time)

- After discussing a method, how would you plan the:
 - Who? (who is doing work, who is participating)
 - What? (method, what do you need to design?)
 - Where?
 - When?
 - How?
- Remember KISS!!

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Step #4: Report and Use

- Know your audience
- Short is better
- Focus on results AND implications (So now and So what)
- Use non-technical language
- Check for content, grammar, etc. before distributing
- Follow-up with those implementing results

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