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**Assessing General Education**  
and Acquiring Faculty Buy-In

SACS-COC Summer Institute  
on Quality Enhancement & Accreditation

July 28, 2008

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### **This session will help you . . .**

1. Appreciate how assessment can enhance student learning and faculty satisfaction.
2. Distinguish between assessing programs and goals.
3. Respect people's fears about assessment and encourage them to express their hopes for students.
4. Choose the best options for assessing general education learning outcomes.
5. Mobilize campus action on assessment findings.

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### **Assessing General Education: Issues**



#### **What do we believe about . . .**

- The relationship between assessment and teaching?
- Teaching general education courses?
- The risks and opportunities of assessment?
- Who should respond to assessment findings?

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### **Are we assessing . . .**

- ▶ The general education program?
- ▶ General education goals?

### **Are we doing this . . .**

- ▶ To be accountable?
- ▶ To improve teaching and learning?

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**What do we believe about . . .**

**the relationship between assessment  
and teaching?**

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- ▶ Do our objectives describe learning?
- ▶ Are they for the long haul?
- ▶ Do they apply to all students (not just future majors)?
- ▶ Do they tell the whole story?
- ▶ Do they represent teaching commitments?
- ▶ Are they **REAL???**

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**What do we believe about . . .**

**teaching general education courses?**

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**Honoring faculty objections and fears**

- ▶ “If we have to measure everything, we’ll choose goals that are easy to measure.”
- ▶ “If we must succeed, we’ll choose sure things.”
- ▶ “Will we be able to teach what we care about?”
- ▶ “Do we really want to know what’s happening?”

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**Which learning should we measure formally?**

- ▶ Testing—locally developed exams or supplied by vendors
- ▶ Examining samples of student work—papers, speeches, projects, portfolios
- ▶ Surveying students about their learning

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**Which learning should we assess informally?**

- ▶ Conducting meetings at which faculty discuss perceptions of student learning
- ▶ Interviewing employers about your graduates’ knowledge and skills

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**Do our indicators measure the learning we want to study?**

- ▶ Do they evaluate the learning we're interested in or merely what's easy to measure?
- ▶ Do they require students to demonstrate learning or merely invite them to do so?

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**Can we trust what indicators seem to say?**

- ▶ Student motivation
- ▶ Sampling

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**Can we act on what indicators tell us?**

- ▶ Are findings sufficiently detailed?
- ▶ Can we break out findings for use by departments and teachers?

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(Circle exercise)

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**Who may be asked to act on findings?**

- ▶ Course instructors & department chairs
- ▶ Academic support staff
- ▶ General education oversight committee
- ▶ Administrators

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**Will we seek agreement on major issues up front?**

- ▶ Purposes, learning objectives, indicators
- ▶ Who will evaluate findings and decide if action is needed?
- ▶ Who will help create improvement plans?
- ▶ Calendar

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**How will we know if improvement plans are being implemented?**

- ▶ Who is expected to do what, when and how?
- ▶ Will action on plans be voluntary?
- ▶ Who will follow up on implementation efforts?  
When? How?

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**What do we believe about . . .**

**who should respond to assessment findings?**

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**Keep in touch . . .**

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