

Assessing Student Learning Outcomes

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What we will do in this breakout group

- Discuss how to structure assessments to monitor curricula and enhance student learning.
- Share strategies for developing a learning-centered curriculum and for connecting curricular experiences to assessment initiatives.
- Look briefly at standardized tools
- Explore in more depth how to integrate coursework into broader assessments of general education and the majors.
- Consider and demonstrate how intentional and transparent assessments of student learning can inform decisions at all levels.

1

Why the focus on student learning

- Student learning is central to university mission
- Student assessment efforts often focus on curricula, faculty productivity, and student "satisfaction" measures. Needed to re-focus on learning.

2

The primary SACS connection

SACS' Principles of Accreditation (2008 Edition):

CS 3.3.1: The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results in each of the following areas (**Institutional effectiveness**):

3.3.1.1 educational programs, to include student learning outcomes

...

3

Key considerations when assessing student learning outcomes

- The culture of your institution
- The structure of your institution
- Who to involve (the willing and the skeptics)
- Intentional outcomes of assessment for students, faculty, administrators
- External reporting requirements

4

Assessments to monitor a curriculum and enhance student learning

Step 1: Establish a learning-centered curriculum

Step 2: Align curricular experiences with assessment initiatives

5

1: Establish a learning-centered curriculum

- Are curricular goals stated explicitly?
- Do the goals define what the faculty expects students to learn?

Learning expectations for a curriculum should be:

- Mission driven
- Faculty endorsed
- Oriented to actions and/or behaviors
- Quantifiable and measurable

6

Examples of defined curricula (see Appendix A)

General education

- Harvard University
- Longwood University
- Winthrop University

Degree programs

- Texas A&M – Economics
- Emory University – Middle Eastern & South Asian Studies
- Claflin University – Business Administration / Finance
- UNC - Charlotte – Public Policy Ph.D.

7

Effective strategies for developing a learning-centered curriculum

- Approaches to curricular development
 - Inductive
 - Deductive
 - Hybrid
- General education
 - Often deductive, involves wide and disparate interests
- Disciplinary-based
 - Often inductive, based on current course offerings and faculty interests

8

Curricular map ~ Program level

Level: I=Introduced, R=Reinforced; Emphasis: High, medium, low

Courses	Goals: What the faculty expect students to learn				
	Major #1	Major #2	Major #3	GE #2	GE #...
ZZZ101	I, Low			I, High	I, Low
ZZZ102	R, Medium	I, High			R, High
ZZZ ...	R, Medium		R, Low	R, Medium	R, High
ZZZ400	R, High			R, Low	
Other ...					

9

Curricular map ~ General Education

General Education Requirements				
GER 1	GER 2a	GER 2b	GER 3	GER ...
ECON345 KIN365 MATH104 MATH108 MATH111 MATH131 PSYC400 SOC362	BIOL101	CHEM101 PHYS101	ANTH101 ANTH201 ANTH345 ECON345 PSYC201 PSYC202 PSYC206 SOC201 SOC362	...

10

Outcomes of a Learning-centered curriculum: Course level

- Intentional alignment with program learning goals
- Transparent to faculty, students, deans, others

11

2: Align curricular experiences with assessment initiatives

- How do you know the curriculum is working?
- What “evidence” do you need?
- How will assessment results be used to:
 - enhance student learning?
 - inform resource allocation decisions?
 - address accountability requirements?

12

Sources of “Evidence”

Direct measures

- Written exams
- Oral exams
- Performance assessments
- Standardized tests
- Licensure exams
- Oral presentations
- Projects
- Case studies
- Simulations
- Portfolios

Indirect measures

- Questionnaires
 - Web
 - Mailed
 - In-class
- Interviews
- Focus groups
- Employer satisfaction studies
- Advisory board
- Job/grad school placement data

13

Testing measures: Is the Evidence “Good”

- Will the “evidence” address your questions?
- Will the “evidence” be valid? reliable?
- Will you/others have confidence in the “evidence”?
- Will you/others understand the “evidence”?
- Will the “evidence” be useful?
 - Inform decisions?
 - Lead to enhanced student learning?
 - Provide information for accountability?
- Is the “evidence” worth the costs (\$, time, opportunity ...)
- ...

14

Brief look at externally developed standardized tools

Examples: Voluntary System of Accountability

- **Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP)** – two modules: critical thinking and writing essay
- **Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA)** – complete test including performance tasks, analytic writing tasks
- **Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress (MAPP)** – two sub scores of the test: critical thinking and written communication

15

Pros & cons of different indicators/ measures of student learning

Pros & Cons of different indicators:

- National standardized tests
- National licensure exams
- Locally developed standardized tests
- Capstone projects/papers
- Course specific assignments/tests
- Self-report survey instruments
- ...

16

Coursework as a source of “evidence”

- Curricular mapping: program level
 - how do requirements (including electives) articulate learning expectations
- Curricular mapping: course level
 - how courses introduce or reinforce learning expectations
- Curricular mapping: assessment initiatives
 - how learning experiences inform curricular assessments

17

Curricular map ~ Course level: Math 108

(Instructor guide): x=addressed, √=assessed

↓ Experience Learning Goal→	GER: Math & quantitative reasoning			Major	
	Goal #1	Goal #2	Goal #3	Goal #1	Goal #3
Lecture	X	X	X	X	X
Readings	X		X	X	X
Refl. paper				X	
Grp project	√	√	√		
Midterm	√				
Final	√	√	√		√
Assessed:	3	2	2	0	1

18

Curricular map ~ Course level: SOWK3233:

An Intentionally Designed Course

SOWK 3233 (List course experiences)	The Social Work faculty expects graduates to be able to:		
	Apply critical thinking skills	Engage in ethical decision-making	Analyze, formulate, & influence social policies
	Map the different experiences in which expectation is addressed.		
Lecture	X	X	X
Group project		X	
Reading		X	X
Evidence that can be used in program assessment of learning expectations			
	Field log, Final	Term project	Term project

19

Integrating coursework into broader assessments of student learning

- Course embedded approach
 - Faculty members include common assignments/tests

- Course portfolio approach
 - Faculty members collect assignments/tests for broader assessment

20

Course portfolios: Example of process used to evaluate general education

GER 1: Mathematics & Quantitative Reasoning

- Academic year: Instructors construct portfolios
- May Seminar: Working group of faculty rate portfolios using a common scoring guide
 - Working group appointed by Dean
 - Scoring guide based on learning goals/expectations articulated in the curriculum
 - Scores aggregated in tables and graphs
 - Working group responds to set of questions about the portfolios, the curriculum, and the assessment process
- Report distributed to chairs, deans, committees

21

Structure of a course portfolio: GER 1 Mathematics & Quantitative Reasoning

- **Narrative describing how course experiences align with learning expectations**
 - ✓ Numerical computations ✓ Math. theory ✓ Practical applications
- **Course syllabus, course material**
- **Examples of student work (full range)**
 - ✓ Excellent ✓ Marginal
- **Survey Responses**

22

Use of assessment results

How can assessment results inform decision-making at all levels and enhance student learning?

- Course level
- Program level
- School level
- University level

23
