

*Using the Results of Assessment to Improve Student Learning*

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools  
Commission on Colleges  
Institute on Quality Enhancement  
And Accreditation  
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Inventory of Assessment Purposes:

- Accreditation
- Accountability
- Employers' Concerns
- Return on Investment for Tuition
- Others?



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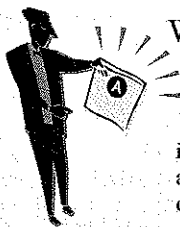
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What is our purpose for conducting assessment?

Many would respond that we are involved in assessment to achieve accreditation or to meet external demands.

*This is the wrong answer!!*



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***Why is this the wrong answer?***

- We want to engage in assessment because we care about student learning and development.
- If we do a quality job with assessment, accreditation and accountability will take care of themselves
- Faculty and student affairs professionals are not well disposed to being told what to do. They're attracted to higher education, because *they are autonomous*.
- However, they DO CARE about student growth and development!
- Engage them in the entire process, and they will respond. This is a major point of the session.



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**Purpose: Improving Student Growth and Development**

This purpose resides at the heart of the mission of all colleges and universities

This is obviously easier said than done. Let me share some of the strategies we have employed that have bolstered faculty enthusiasm and engagement:

- Sustained administrative support
- Solid data collection plans
- Sound assessment instruments
- Direct linkage of instruments to program objectives
- Continuous attention to development of an assessment culture [e.g., Committees that WORK!]



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**Before you start....**



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### Assessment Dos and Don'ts

- **DON'T BE COMMITTED**
  - To assessment
  - To research
  - To evaluation
  - To measurement (especially this!!)
- **DO BE COMMITTED**
  - To student learning and development
  - To being creative about your work
  - To your students and your program
  - To continued professional development



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### Make Assessment Meaningful!

- Think about why you go to work everyday—your purpose
  - How do you want your students to be transformed as a result of your program?
    - Are you interested in outcomes in the Cognitive, Affective and Psychomotor domains?
  - Do you see your students as your partners in learning?
  - What feedback from your students and other stakeholders will be beneficial for program improvement?
- Recall why the assessment of student learning is important
  - Do you want to know if your students are benefiting from the learning experiences you design and deliver?
  - How will your program benefit?



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### Make Assessment Meaningful!

- Expand your conceptualization of your program's goals and objectives beyond the cognitive domain
- Include complex constructs, competencies, values, and attitudes
- Communicate the unique nature of your program to faculty, students, and employers
- Gather compelling data on the effectiveness of your program in achieving these goals



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**Objectives to Consider for your Program**

- *Cognitive Domain*
  - Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, Evaluation
- *Technology and Information Literacy*
  - Efficient use of the internet
  - Evaluation of materials
  - Facility with computers and multimedia
- *Development of Professional Self*
  - Ethical understanding
  - Leadership qualities
  - Readiness to assume professional role
- *Personal Characteristics*
  - Promptness, Neatness, Courtesy, Attitudes, Constructive Intentions



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**Make Assessment Meaningful!**

- Focus on the decisions that will be made using the assessment results
- The validity of the decisions made depend upon the purpose for which the assessment was designed in the first place
- Your goals and objectives are therefore critical to establishing validity



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**What is Learning Assessment?**

Assessment is the systematic basis for making inferences about the learning and development of students.



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**Stages of the Assessment Process**

- 1. Establishing Objectives
- 2. Selecting or Designing Methods
- 3. Collecting Credible Information
- 4. Analyzing and Maintaining Information
- 5. Using Information for Teaching and Learning Improvement

\*Regardless of the level of assessment required, whether it be a single learning objective, a course, a curriculum, or an entire program, the process is the same.



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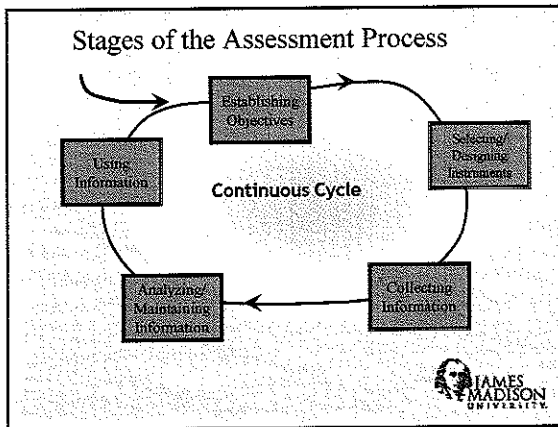
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**The Assessment Culture at JMU**

JMU requires students to take a series of student outcomes assessments prior to their graduation. These assessments are held at four stages of students' academic careers:

- as entering first-year students
- at the mid-undergraduate point when they have earned 45 to 70 credit hours, typically the sophomore year
- as graduating seniors in their academic major(s)
- Students will also complete an alumni survey after graduation

JMU Undergraduate Catalog



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**The Assessment Culture at JMU**

- Long-standing and pervasive expectation at JMU that assessment findings will guide decision-making.
  - Annual reports, Assessment Progress Templates, program change proposals, and all academic program review self-study documents all require substantial descriptions of how Assessment guides decision-making
- The Center for Assessment and Research Studies (CARS) is the largest higher education assessment center in the US
  - with 10 Faculty, 3 Support Staff, and about 15 Graduate Assistants at the Masters and PhD level



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**The Assessment Culture at JMU**

- CARS supports all general education assessment
- CARS facilitates all JMU alumni surveys
- CARS supports assessment for every academic program
  - Undergraduate and Graduate
- CARS supports assessment for the Division of Student Affairs
- All programs must collect and report on assessment data annually
- Academic Program Reviews are scheduled every 6 years for every major degree program
  - Undergraduate and Graduate



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**Not Just Any Data Will Do...**

- If we want faculty to pay attention to the results, we need credible evidence
- To obtain credible evidence:
  - We need a representative sample or a census
  - We need good instrumentation
    - The tasks demanded must represent the content domain
    - Reliability and validity
  - We need students who are motivated to perform



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### Prerequisites for Quality Assessment

- We must have three important components
  - **Excellence in sampling of students**
    - Either large, representative student samples or a census
  - **Sound assessment instrumentation**
    - Reliable, valid assessment methods
    - Instruments that faculty find meaningful
  - **Motivated students to participate in assessment activities**
    - Can we tell if students are motivated?
    - Can we influence examinee motivation?




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### Data Collection Strategies

- Two institution-wide Assessment Days
  - Fall (August): Incoming freshmen tested at orientation
  - Spring (February): Students with 45-70 credits ; typically the sophomore year
- **Classes are cancelled on this day**
- All students are required to participate, else course registration is blocked
- Students are randomly assigned using the last two digits of their JMU ID number to testing rooms where a particular series of instruments are administered
  - This results in large, representative samples of students
  - Student ID numbers do not change; therefore, we can assure that students complete the same instruments at time 2 as they did at time 1
- *JMU just completed its 23<sup>rd</sup> Spring Assessment Day*
- The Spring Assessment Day is also used by many majors to collect data on their graduating seniors




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### Data Collection Scheme: Repeated Measures

Fall 2004	} COHORT 1	Students in each cohort are tested twice on the same instrument – once as incoming freshmen and again in the second semester of the sophomore year.
Spring 2005		
Fall 2005	} COHORT 3	
Spring 2006		
Fall 2006		
Spring 2007		
Fall 2007		
Spring 2008		




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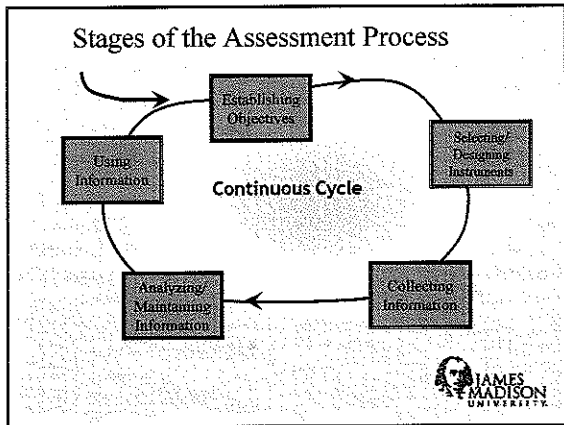
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### Developing a Strategy

- Think about what the objective means to you and your program
- What process or activities can make the objective more observable?
- You routinely collect many samples of behaviors, performances, and products
- What do you value most in your graduates?

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

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### *Stage 5: Using Information for Program Improvement*

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### Ways to Use Results

- 1. Continuous Improvement**
  - Quality movement
- 2. Program Review**
  - Self-studies and peer review
- 3. Planning and Budgeting**
  - Resource allocation and reallocation, needs assessments
- 4. Teaching and Learning**
  - Changing teaching methods, faculty distribution, curriculum, etc.
- 5. Improving Assessment**
  - Revise process for the future



Source: Palomba & Banta, 1999



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### Stage 5: Using Information for Program Improvement

- This is the stage where “closing the loop” begins
- Involves feedback from faculty members and careful consideration of the assessment results
- Examples of trying to “close the loop”: curricular change, resource allocation or reallocation, changes in instructional delivery, course resequencing
- Successful “closing the loop” is confirmed with new data collection showing improvement in diagnosed problem areas



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### Examples from Your Institutions:



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**Linking Results to Improvement**

Assessment Technique or Process	Findings/Results	Actions Taken	Evidence of Improvement
<i>UG Psychology</i> 1. Psychology writing samples scored	•Students not identifying study design strengths and weaknesses •Syllabus and course sequence review	•Information shared with faculty •More student writing and study critique opportunities developed •Methods and statistics courses taught in combination, rather than separate	•Student scores associated with critique increase over three years




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**Linking Results to Improvement**

Assessment Technique or Process	Findings/Results	Actions Taken	Evidence of Improvement
<i>Nursing BSN</i> 1. Nursing Assess Test Exit Exam 2. HESI Critical Thinking Pre/Post Test 3. NCLEX Subject Specific Assessment Tests	•Scores on tests show need for improvement	•Information shared with faculty and students •Continue to integrate HESI testing •Introduce remediation earlier in the curriculum	•Student scores show continued increase from 2005, 2006 and 2007 •Student exit ratings also improve over time with exception of community based interventions, which will be strengthened with new curriculum




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**Linking Results to Improvement**

Assessment Technique or Process	Findings/Results	Actions Taken	Evidence of Improvement
<i>Economics Major</i> 1. Economics Major Field Assessment Test 2. Faculty observations 3. Student interviews on Assessment Day	•Results of MFT indicate an increase in senior performances in 2006-07 results over 2005-06, but scores still below earlier years	•"Fall Assessment Meeting" addressed this topic •Has student quality deteriorated over the years? •Course sequencing modified to assure senior completion of key courses •Experimental sections of capstone course to be reviewed	•In process: Student MFT scores will be monitored




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### Linking Results to Improvement

Assessment Technique or Process	Findings/Results	Actions Taken	Evidence of Improvement
<i>ISAT UG Major</i>			
1. Chemistry Concepts Inventory 2. Statistics Concepts Inventory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chemistry Concept results similar to those in literature, but 3 problem topics identified</li> <li>Statistics Concept results show students making significant progress during ISAT 251; hope for more improvement after design and analysis class and Senior Project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Faculty teaching ISAT 112/113 need to evaluate course material, enhance coverage of Chemistry concepts</li> <li>The ISAT 251 course was created to address identified Statistics Concepts weaknesses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In process: Chemistry Concept Scores will be monitored</li> <li>The ISAT 251 Statistics course is a success story in using assessment results to improve curriculum content and student learning</li> </ul>




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### Linking Results to Improvement

Assessment Technique or Process	Findings/Results	Actions Taken	Evidence of Improvement
<i>Psychological Sciences</i>			
1. Psychology Apprenticeship Report and associated scoring rubric	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discovered that the breadth of student experiences was not being captured; students were engaging in a variety of activities, not a single project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developed a new instrument to evaluate the Apprenticeship Experience with versions for both students and mentors</li> <li>Students complete an Apprenticeship Evaluation, which includes checklist of skills and Student Activity Summary</li> <li>These are reviewed with the advisor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review process now has greater alignment with program goals and activities</li> <li>Assessment results will portray breadth and depth of student experiences, rather than a single project and its report</li> </ul>




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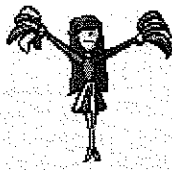

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**Remember to Keep it Stimulating!**

*If you are not having fun, you are doing it wrong!*


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