

# “Assessment for Administrative Units”

Presented by  
Committee for the Assessment  
Of Institutional Effectiveness (CAIE)  
and the  
Center for Teaching and Learning

Presenter:

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# Workshop Objectives

- Provide review of materials learned in Assessment 101 in administrative assessment context
- Describe reasons for doing assessment for nonacademic units
- Describe some of the general approaches to assessment that administrative units use

# Workshop Objectives

- Describe guidelines for creating administrative unit goals and objectives
- Describe types of outcomes that administrative units use
- Describe some resources that administrative units can use in the assessment process

# What I Won't Do Today

- Provide a one-size-fits-all formula for assessment plans/reports

# Outline of Material

- I. Review of definition of assessment
- II. Why do administrative assessment?
- III. Approaches to administrative assessment
- IV. Components of the assessment plan with examples

# Review: What is Assessment?

- Establishing measureable departmental goals, objectives, and outcomes
- Devising a plan to systematically measure specific outcomes
- Collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the measurements you have taken

# Review: What is Assessment?

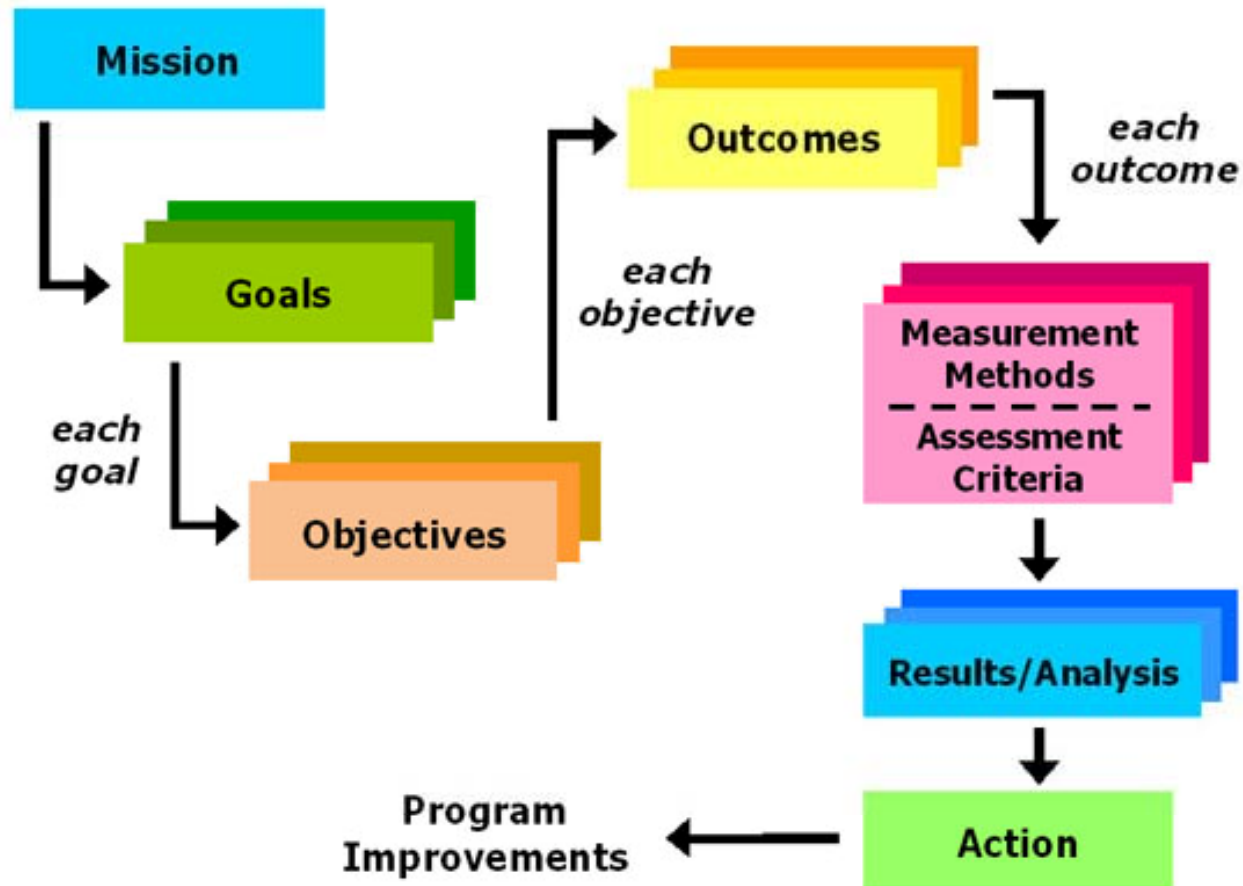
- Using data to inform departmental improvements (programmatic, procedural, etc.) → the effects of which you will then assess in the next round!

Assessment is a process!



# Outcomes assessment plan

(from Assessing Academic Programs in Higher Education, Allen.)



## II. REPORT ON 2009-2010 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Unit Mission Statement: \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE LIST FIRST THE GOAL AND/OR OBJECTIVE THAT YOU HAVE ASSESSED.

A. Goal 1:

\_\_\_\_\_

Objective 1

\_\_\_\_\_

**Intended Outcome/Criteria for Success**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Means of Assessment**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Evaluation of Success/Summary of Assessment Data Collected**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Use of Results to Improve Program**

\_\_\_\_\_

# Review: What is Assessment \*Not\*?

- A list of things done by the department
- Evaluation of individual employees
- Anecdotal evidence
- Based on a single measure productivity or effectiveness
- **A comparison of administrative units**

# Why should administrative units do assessment?

- Inherent need to improve processes, quality and efficiency = “quality control”
- Growth of administration costs in colleges in recent years puts increased pressure on nonacademic units to demonstrate productivity and efficiency internally (and external pressure is not far behind)

# Why should administrative units do assessment? (cont.)

- Improvement is generally a better focus than accountability in most cases, because it provides better “bang for your buck”
- For some offices (like business units) accountability issues may be a bigger part of assessment than for others

# Costs of Not Doing Assessment

- Reduced quality of services or processes
- Inefficiency
- Not identifying areas where improvement might be made
- Unit's activities or philosophy not aligned with the college mission

# Some Approaches to Administrative Assessment (*Reichard, 1995*)

- Total Quality Management (TQM)/Continuous Quality Management (CQM)
- Performance Indicators
- Benchmarking
- External Audits

# Total Quality Management

- Comes out of the business management world
- Views organizations as web of interdependent processes
- Continuous data collection and analysis is used to improve processes
- Commonly used model is Plan→Do→Check→Act



# Total Quality Management (cont.)

- Plan – develop processes and how processes will be evaluated
- Do – complete processes
- Check – the assessment phase; evaluate success
- Act – act on what you learned about the process in the “check” phase

# Performance Indicators

- A set of measures that you will report regularly to see “how you are doing”
- A dashboard is a collection of performance indicators – we have an institutional dashboard, but you may consider one for your department
- The application summary that admission sends out is a collection of performance indicators
- Are better at telling you how you are doing than at providing data about how to improve your processes

# Benchmarking

- Comparing your processes or outcomes against normative standards (internal/external)
- Most useful when you are looking at peers and trying to determine best practices
- A problem is that of finding institutions that are truly comparable to yours

# External Audits

- Most common is business units, but others do them as well (ITS, for example)
- Usually, an external entity reviews your processes and outcomes for compliance with industry standards

# Process-based vs. Client-based outcomes (*Schechter, 2005*)

- For some units, client-based outcomes are easy to see (HR, Student Services, Advising)
- For others, they may be less apparent, because the focus is on the administrative process, but looking at client-based outcomes may be helpful

# Process-based vs. Client-based outcomes (cont.)

Questions to ask when your office is more process-based:

- Could a focus on client-based outcomes help our “bottom line?”
- Could a client-based focus help us achieve our strategic goals?

# Examples of process-based vs. client-based approaches

## Advancement:

- Process-based: All donors get a thank-you card within 2 weeks of donation receipt
- Client-based: Donors express a 90% satisfaction rate with their donor experience on a donor survey

# Counts vs. Client Feedback

## Career Planning:

- Counts: “27 people attended a resume workshop.”
- Client feedback: “85% of the people who attended a resume workshop said that they would recommend it to a friend who was job-hunting.”



# Review: “OK, so where do I start?”

## With your mission statement!

- What is your *raison d'être*?
- How do you fit in with the mission of the college?
- How well does your mission statement mesh with the strategic plan?
- How well does it summarize what you think is important about your department?

# Mission statements for administrative units

Should:

- Support the institution's mission statement and strategic plan
- State your purpose and name your client base
- Describe your most important functions
- Differentiate your department from others on campus with related functions

# Mission statements

- “The Agnes Scott sports medicine staff is responsible for the health and welfare of its student athletes. The staff is responsible for patient education in regard to injury prevention and injury care, along with nutrition and other matters pertaining to wellness and general health. While working in conjunction with the team physician and other allied professionals, the staff's goal is to return the athlete to participation.”
- DOC: “To provide for the efficient functioning and supportive services for the academic area of the college in a professional and personable manner. “

# Review: Goals

- Derived from the mission statement
- Ways in which you hope to fulfill your mission
- Somewhat broad and general, but less so than the mission statement

# Where to start writing goals

- Review existing documentation (catalogs, other colleges, SACS, previous annual and assessment reports)
- Review other units' goals
- Focus on key functions from your mission statement
- Try taking a service perspective

# Goals: Examples

## Educational Technology Center:

Educate faculty and students about how to use technology that enhances teaching and learning and prepares graduates to live in a digital world.

Registrar: Process transcript information correctly and efficiently.

Career Services: Assist students in the transition to work or graduate school.

# Review: Objectives

- What you are going to do in order to accomplish the goal
- More detailed than the goal
- May be seen as sub goals---all relate back to the goal

# Review: Objectives

- Describe how processes must function
- Describes client satisfaction levels
- Describes optimal process outputs
- A good objective should also provide a target (often quantitative)



# Objectives

## Examples:

- “The college will complete a successful and timely audit, with an unqualified opinion.”
- “The campus will be a safe and secure environment for students and employees.”
- “ITS will support the integration of instructional technology into classrooms.”

# Further Classification of Types of Objective Statements

- Outcomes-based
  - “Students will learn how to use library resources.”
- Process-based
  - “Accounting Office will promptly process invoices.”
- Client satisfaction-based
  - “Students will express satisfaction with the registration experience.”

# Review: Objectives

Needs to be something  
measurable/provable---  
something you can demonstrate  
with some sort of evidence!

Which brings us to...

# Review: Outcomes

Some measure that tells you if you have achieved an objective

A good assessment outcome has three parts:

- A measurable action
- The conditions you plan to measure it under
- What you will measure the action against

## “SMART” Outcomes (*Drucker, 1954*)

- **S**pecific – to your unit
- **M**easureable – feasible to collect and analyze data
- **A**ggressive but **A**ttainable – ambitious but do-able
- **R**esults-Oriented – focus is on change to improve results
- **T**imebound – done when?

# Review: Classification of Types of Outcomes

- Quantitative vs. Qualitative
- Direct vs. Indirect
- Objective vs. Subjective

Which should you use?

---All of them!!!

# Means of Assessment

How you know the evaluate  
whether the desired outcome  
is achieved

You may also put target  
statements here (or in the  
outcomes section)

# Considerations: Effectiveness

- Does participation always imply effectiveness?
- Does user satisfaction always imply effectiveness?
- Does user estimation of the value of your services always imply effectiveness?



## Examples of Outcomes and Means of Assessment (Adapted from Nichols and Nichols, 2000)

Outcome	Means of Assessment
Students will be able to write an acceptable resume.	Survey of recruiters.
Faculty and staff will understand gender/sexual orientation diversity issues.	Pre-test/post-test comparison of knowledge following Safe Zone training.
Students will be able to use bibliographic resources.	HEDS Research Practices Survey results.
Graduates will gain an appreciation of fine arts.	Attendance counts at fine arts series.

# Review: Don't forget to close the loop!

- Present and analyze your results
- Discuss and reflect on your results---what happened? What does it mean?
- Next steps---could be changes to program, could be you realize the need for more focused assessment

# Closing the loop: describe your actions

- Beware just giving a laundry list of what you will do next year; what did you do ***this year***, based on your assessment results?
- Make sure what you do next--- or plan to do next---is related to your assessment results

# Having trouble closing the loop?

If you don't know how to close the loop, chances are you aren't building an **actionable** assessment plan. When you write outcomes or means of assessment, ask yourself:

*“How will knowing this help me improve my department?”*

# Review: Tips for Getting Started

- What is important to your department?
- What can you actually improve?
- What data are you already collecting (on campus, not just in your department) that might be useful?

# Tips for Getting Started

- Look at resources from your professional association – what are their industry standards?
- Does your professional association offer guidance or training on unit assessment?
- Does your professional association collect benchmarking data or have assessment instruments you can use?
- What external audits or reviews are you already participating in?

# Resources

- Professional Associations
  - NACUBO (Business Units), CUPA (HR Units), ALA (Libraries), CAI (Advancement), NASFAA (Financial Aid)
- Benchmarking Groups
  - Council for the Advancement of Standards
  - Consortium for Higher Education Benchmarking

# Sources

- The Administrative Unit Assessment Handbook, James O. Nichols, University of Central Florida, [http://oeas.ucf.edu/doc/adm\\_assess\\_handbook.pdf](http://oeas.ucf.edu/doc/adm_assess_handbook.pdf)
- “Setting and evaluating objectives and outcomes in nonacademic units,” Donald .J. Reichard, in *A Practitioner’s Handbook for Institutional Effectiveness and Student Outcomes Assessment Implementation*, Agathon Press, New York, 1995.
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# Sources

- *The Department Head's Guide to Assessment Implementation in Administrative and Educational Support Units*, Karen W. and James O. Nichols, Agathon Press, New York, 2000.
- University of Connecticut, *UConn Assessment Primer*, <http://assessment.uconn.edu/primer.htm>

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