



DEVELOPING A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM ASSESSMENT PLAN

Office of Institutional Assessment

WORKSHOP AGENDA

1. The Assessment Model
2. Program Learning Goals
 - a. What is a program learning goal?
 - b. Defining a program learning goal.
 - c. Exercise #1 -Creating and defining program learning goals
3. Program Learning Outcomes
 - a. What is a program learning outcome?
 - b. Defining a program learning outcome.
 - c. Exercise #2 – Creating program learning outcomes
4. Program Learning Assessment
 - a. Curriculum mapping
 - b. Exercise #3 curriculum mapping
 - c. Exercise #4 WASC rubrics
 - d. Exercise #5 outcomes rubrics
 - e. Choosing the assessment tool
5. Program Assessment Time Frame
 - a. Identifying a three year time frame.
6. Program Assessment Implementation
 - a. Who conducts the assessment?
 - b. Who coordinates the assessment process?
7. Program Assessment Feedback
 - a. What to report in the plan?
 - b. What now?

WORKSHOP OUTCOMES

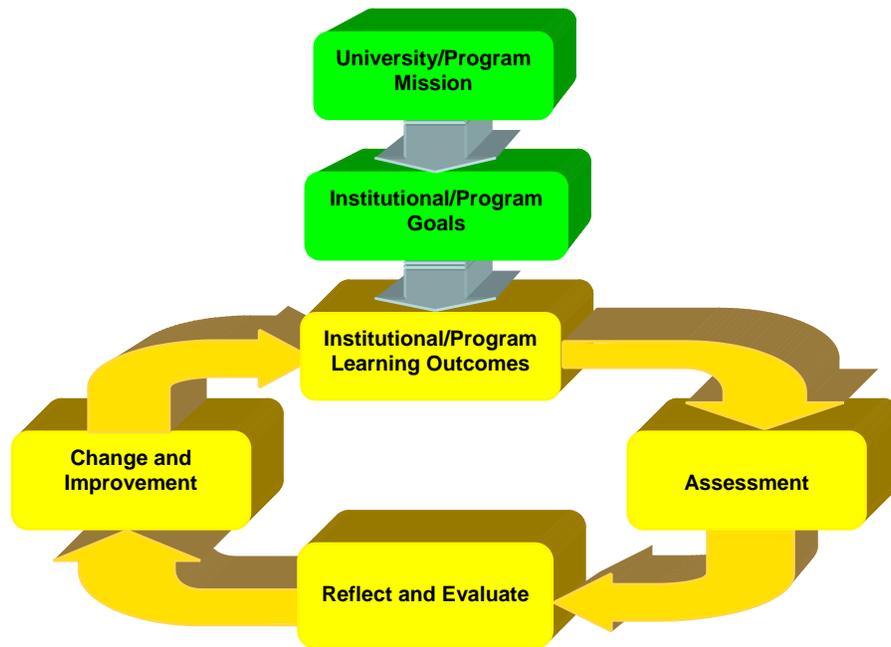
At the end of this workshop attendees can expect to learn:

- What the difference is between a learning goal and a learning outcome
- How to operationally define a learning goal
- How to write a learning goal
- How to define a learning outcome
- How to write a learning outcome
- How to prepare a curriculum map
- What is a rubric
- How to write a rubric
- How to align assessment tools with program assessment needs
- Define a 3 year assessment plan
- Decide what is important to report
- Decide what is important to improve upon

DEVELOPING A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

The assessment of student learning outcomes (SLOs) involves developing a system of continuous loops (see illustration below) informed by the mission and goals of the University and of the individual academic program. Once the learning outcomes have been established, assessment procedures can be identified and applied so that faculty can evaluate and reflect on whether the department/program is meeting its learning goals. Changes can then be developed and implemented, thus beginning another round in the assessment cycle.

The Assessment Model



Components of an Assessment Plan

An assessment plan should be a short document that identifies a program's characteristics and puts in place a plan or timeline for assessing student learning (*see Handout 1 for an example*). Generally, an assessment plan should include the following components:

1. Program Goals

Program goals are broad general statements concerning the department/program's role in shaping the educational characteristics of students who graduate from the program. Program goals influence specific student learning outcomes (SLOs) but are too general to directly assess them. To identify your program's goal(s) answer one of the following questions:

- a. "Given the Mission of the University, what do we want our department/program graduates to have learned?"
- b. "What do we want students to be when they graduate?"

Examples:

- Students will be able to critically analyze sociological theories and apply them to explain contemporary societal problems.
- Students will be able to develop analytical tools that give attention to the various historic and social forces that intersect to create the built environment.

2. Learning Outcomes

Student learning outcomes (SLOs) are precise statements that describe the specific knowledge (the acquisition of an organized body of information, usually factual or procedural in nature), skills/abilities (the proficient manual, verbal, or mental manipulation of data or things), and values (the ideas and beliefs we hold as special) that the student will acquire as a result of finishing your program. Learning outcomes transform learning goals into specific indicators of student performance and abilities that demonstrate learning or personal development. Learning outcomes make explicit what you want students to know or be able to do. A manageable assessment plan needs only to have a few “essential” measurable student learning outcomes.

When writing learning outcomes:

- Focus on the student and what they learn or what skills they acquire.
- Describe observable behaviors.
- Identify the depth of learning that faculty expect.
- Clarify faculty expectations for absolute or value-added learning attainment.

Types of outcomes:

1. Knowledge: What you want students to “know”
2. Skills/Abilities: What you want students to “be able to do”
3. Values: What you want students to “think or feel”

To draft learning outcomes, answer a question such as “What do we want our students to know or be able to do when they leave our program?” You can answer this question by deciding on the level of complexity of the knowledge or skills you want your students to acquire as a result of studying in your program at USF. Bloom’s taxonomy can be helpful in shaping your SLOs.

Bloom suggests five levels of complexity in student learning (from lowest to highest):

(See Handout 2 for a list of verbs and examples aligned with Bloom’s taxonomy that are helpful in drafting learning outcomes.)

- a. *Knowledge* (to know specific facts, terms, concepts or theories)
- b. *Comprehension* (to understand or explain concepts or theories)
- c. *Application* (to apply knowledge or solve problems)
- d. *Analysis* (to be able to establish relationships or organizing principles)
- e. *Synthesis* (to create or plan)
- f. *Evaluation* (to measure adequacy or value)

3. Assessment Methods

This section of an assessment plan identifies the methods that can be used to assess how well students have achieved the desired learning outcomes. In general, the emphasis here should be on using strategies that faculty already have in place (e.g., exams, class projects, capstone experiences, senior papers, portfolios, presentations and performances, etc.). Once the assessment of a particular learning outcome has been completed, faculty may decide, as part of their reflection on the assessment evidence, that other methods of assessment should be used. In general, final grades in a course do not provide enough information about students’ achievement of SLOs, since final grades often are given for things other than direct student learning, e.g. attendance, participation, etc.

Step One: The assessment process should start with a curriculum mapping exercise (see Handout 3). Curriculum mapping makes it possible to identify where within the current curriculum your

departmental learning outcomes are addressed. In Handout 3 you can see the framework for a matrix that is helpful in identifying the linkages between learning outcomes and specific courses and requirements. Along the top of the matrix is the list of all the courses and other requirements/options (internships, service learning, theses, etc.) for the major. Along the side of the matrix are listed your departmental/program learning outcomes. Faculty indicate which of the outcomes are addressed in each of the courses by specifying the degree to which the coverage in a particular course addresses the learning outcome (“Introduced,” “Moderate” or “Comprehensive” coverage).

Step Two: In this step, you analyze the quality of your program learning outcomes by using a rubric such as the one found in Handout 4 which has been developed by WASC. This would then be followed by developing a set of rubrics for each of your learning outcomes.

Step Three This step involves choosing an appropriate assessment tool (see Handout 5) to measure the actual level of learning that has occurred among students. In considering your specific assessment methods keep in mind the following questions:

- a. By what measure(s) will you know that students are meeting departmental learning outcomes? (*see Handout #6 for examples of assessment approaches and a glossary of methods used in assessment of student learning*)
- b. From whom, and at what points, will you gather data?
- c. How will the information be collected?

4. Time Frame

June 30, 2008	All Department/Program representatives will have completed initial 4 hour workshop.
August 22, 2008	All Department/Program representatives will have edited/developed program goals and learning outcomes, completed a curriculum map, appropriate rubrics, and written a complete assessment plan.
September 15, 2008	All Department/Program representatives will have completed second workshop.
September 30, 2008	All faculty in each Department/Program will have discussed the assessment plan, determine assessment methods and implement the first year of the plan.
May 15, 2009	All Departments/Programs will have assessed 1/3 of their program outcomes, made a determination as to whether the learning outcomes have been attained, met as a department to discuss the assessment results, and will have developed a plan for improvement in order to meet benchmark standards if necessary.
May 15, 2010	All Departments/Programs will have assessed the second 1/3 of their program outcomes, made a determination as to the attainment of the outcomes and developed a plan for improvement for meeting the desired levels.
May 15, 2011	All Departments/Programs will have assessed the final 1/3 of their program outcomes, made a determination as to the attainment of the outcomes and develop a plan for improvement for meeting the desired level. Report on progress

5. Who will do the assessment?

- a. When will you conduct the assessment?
- b. Who will be responsible for each component?

6. How data will be used to improve or revise curricula

This last step is commonly referred to as “closing the loop of assessment” and the object is to decide, based on your findings, what should be done to improve the learning environment

Please consult the website of the Office of Institutional Assessment (www.usfca.edu/assessment) for additional examples and resources on student learning assessment.