Learning Outcomes for Workshop

Participants will:

• Explain and be able to use assessment vocabulary to describe their assessment efforts

• Describe the purpose of assessment at Oxy and beyond

• Write clear and concise learning outcomes for their units

• Identify Assessment Plan Components

• Recognize WASC/WSCUC guidelines for accreditation
What is Assessment?

• What does the term “assessment” mean to you?

• What is the purpose of assessment?

• How do you feel about assessment?

• What are the costs and/or benefits to assessment?
What is Assessment?

Definitions: **Assessment is an on-going process designed to monitor and improve student learning and/or program effectiveness.**

Components:
- Making expectations explicit and clear
- Setting criteria and benchmarks
- Includes identifying, gathering, analyzing, and interpreting EVIDENCE
- Guides Good Practice

What is NOT Assessment?

- Grading
- Individual Performance Reviews
- Feedback & Opinions
- Educational Research (some overlap)
Assessment at Oxy

We ALL are assessing and improving…

• Assessment just provides the documentation, context, and framework for understanding our work and impact

• Explicitly links our ideas to action

• Provides legitimate justifications for changes, enhancement, decision-making

• Encourages innovation and thoughtful experimentation

• Develops better appreciation for data-driven decision making

• Creates a space for safe and collaborative dialogue
Assessing Program Effectiveness

1. Preparation
2. Design
3. Alignment
4. Collect Evidence
5. Review and Analyze
6. Close the Loop

Flow: Preparation → Design → Alignment → Collect Evidence → Review and Analyze → Close the Loop
Assessment Terminology

- **Assessment**: Gathering data or information about student learning or program effectiveness

- **Evaluation**: *Using* assessment evidence to *improve* effectiveness; making judgment/decisions using the assessment data (Upcraft & Schuh, 1996)

- **Learning Outcomes**: Descriptions of what we expect students/participants to know, do, and/or be when they *LEAVE* our course, program, or institution (KSA)

- **Indirect Evidence**: Students’ Perception of their learning (surveys, interviews, focus groups, evaluations)

- **Direct Evidence**: Student Products that demonstrate learning (papers, projects, presentations, tests, posters, etc.)
Assessment Terminology (cont’d)

• “Closing the Loop”: Process of USING assessment analysis to IMPROVE services, processes, offices, etc.

• **Triangulation**: Use of data from different sources to determine a pattern or problem for decision-making

• **Benchmark**: Standard of excellence, achievement, or quality against which data can be measured or judged

• **Reliability**: Consistency of Assessment
  Can you expect the same results?

• **Validity**: Accuracy of Assessment
  Is it doing what it’s supposed to be doing?
A Comprehensive Model of Assessment
Includes...

- Tracking Who Uses Services, Programs, Facilities
- Assessing Student (Client) Needs
- Assessing Satisfaction with Services, Programs, Etc
- Assessing Campus Climate, Student Culture...
- Assessing Program and Service Outcomes
- Benchmarking: Comparisons w/ Other Institutions
- Assessing Effectiveness Against Standards
- Assessing Cost Effectiveness
Student Learning Outcomes

Transitioned from
LEARNING OBJECTIVES
  What *WE* intend to do
to
LEARNING OUTCOMES
  What *STUDENTS* do

PURPOSE:
• Provides meaning and intentionality for programming
• Creates transparency between student and program
• Focuses assessment efforts
Writing Learning Outcomes

• Start with the Mission and Goals: broad descriptions of our intentions for students

• Provide **specific** expectations for learning \( \rightarrow \) HOW would you know the goal was achieved? What would the students do to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and/or attitudes?

• Only **one** action verb: Is the verb specific, observable, measurable?

• Identify **single** accomplishments for each learning outcome
  Don’t have too many! Make sure the students can understand the outcomes.

• Focus on **students/participants**, not necessarily the faculty or curriculum or program
ACTIVITY

Write a learning outcome for your unit.

Who and what will be assessed?
Active Verb
Will you be able to “measure” the LO?
What would be an appropriate timeline?
How does the LO relate to your unit’s missions, goals, programming?
Learning Outcomes

Value Added vs Absolute

- Value-Added: Outcomes indicate a change or improvement in learning → Growth Indicator
- Absolute: Set an expectation of demonstrating the learning outcome → Skill Attainment Indicator

Formative vs Summative

- Formative: Occurs during the learning process
- Summative: Occurs at the end of the learning process
Components of an Assessment Plan

I. Heading

II. Mission
Provide a condensed 1-3 sentence statement describing the overall purpose and basic function of the program. In a second paragraph (or bulleted list) provide the educational philosophy, values, and/or guiding principles of the program. Each program’s mission should be closely aligned with the College mission and its cornerstones.

III. Learning Goals and Outcomes
Provide 3-5 primary goals, and as many supporting learning outcomes as needed under each goal. Goals should reflect the general knowledge, skills, and attitudes that students will develop during the time they are taking the program’s courses. Outcomes should clearly state what students will do or produce to demonstrate their learning within a specific time frame, such as a semester, an academic year, etc.

IV. Alignment with College Wide Learning Goals
The goals of the academic department need to be aligned to the approved set of college-wide student learning goals. (see: https://www.oxy.edu/academics/college-wide-learning-goals).

V. Curriculum/Activities/Events/Program Map

V. Implementation
  - Assessment Tools, Focus, and Methods
  - Assessment Schedule
  - Collaboration
  - Data Management
  - Roles and Responsibilities
## Mapping/Alignment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program/Service</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Population Served</th>
<th>Short-Term Outcomes</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group Leadership Workshop Series</td>
<td>• Full-day workshops</td>
<td>Undergraduate students involved in campus organizations or groups</td>
<td>• Students will identify and describe leadership models</td>
<td>Every Semester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Three-hour workshops</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Students will facilitate 2-3 meetings with peers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Resources</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Students will critique each other in a constructive manner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Too Little Time, Too Few Options
Staff Struggle to Diversify Assessment Tools

Assessment Tools Used in Student Affairs, Southern University
(n=32 learning outcomes)

Frustration with Limited Assessment Methods

“Respondents indicated that the selection and implementation of assessment methods was a unit-level decision and that most units were relying primarily on locally developed surveys to assess student learning. The Vice President at Southern University commented, ‘It has been a challenge for folks to understand that there are other ways [than surveys] to measure outcomes that are often more appropriate.’”

“An Exploration of High-Quality Student Affairs Learning Outcomes Assessment Practices”
“Don’t Reinvent the Wheel”
Use Common Themes as a Starting Point

**Learning Reconsidered 2: Core Values**
- Cognitive Complexity
- Humanitarianism
- Civic Engagement
- Practical Competence
- Persistence and Academic Achievement
- Interpersonal and Intrapersonal Competence
- Knowledge Acquisition, Integration, and Application

**AAC&U’s Essential Learning Outcomes**
- Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World
- Intellectual and Practical Skills, including inquiry, information literacy, and teamwork
- Personal and Social Responsibility, including civic knowledge and engagement, and ethical reasoning and action
- Integrative and Applied Learning

**CAS Standards (Excerpt)**
- Intellectual Growth
- Enhanced Self Esteem
- Career Choices
- Leadership Development
- Healthy Behavior
- Collaboration
- Appreciating Diversity
- Spiritual Awareness
- Effective Communication
- Realistic Self Appraisal
- Independence
- Social Responsibility

BREAK

Questions?
WASC/WSCUC
What is WSCUC?

WSCUC is the WASC Senior College and University Commission, one of six regional organizations that the federal government has authorized to accredit institutions of higher learning.
Oxy’s WASC Timeline

1949: First Accreditation

Most recent visit: 2012
Interim Report: Fall 2014
Mid-Cycle Report: 2017
Next Visit: 2021

http://www.oxy.edu/irap/wasc-accreditation
What is the self-study process?

Every few years, we must demonstrate our ongoing commitment to the continuous improvement of our programs, both curricular and co-curricular. The self-study defines an inquiry we can use to measurably improve student learning.
Why do we have to do this?

Simple answers:
• To be eligible for federal funds that support a variety of programs, including student financial aid.
• For the academic credit we award to be recognized by other institutions.
Why do we have to do this?

A better answer:
WASC describes the self-study as “the university doing a dissertation on itself.” This suggests that it can be an intellectual opportunity – an exercise in collaborating and in “thinking critically and creatively,” to cite our own University Learning Objectives.
Good Assessment: What WSCUC wants to see

- Links to Mission, Goals, Objectives
- Involvement of All Segments of Campus
- Multiple Measures; Assessment of Cognitive, Behavioral, Affective Domains of Learning
- Evidence of Use in Improving Programs
- Ongoing Assessment & Re-Evaluation of Assessment Program
- Linkages Between Assessment and Planning/Budgeting Process
Typical Program Review Cycle

1. **Self Study**
2. **External Review**
3. **Annual Assessment Report 1**
4. **Annual Assessment Report 2**
5. **Annual Assessment Report 3**
6. **Annual Assessment Report 4**
7. **Annual Assessment Report 5**
8. **Action Plan**
9. **Assessment Plan**
10. **Program Review Cycle**
Program Review

Questions to answer:

• Is there a robust system of cyclical program review (including the co-curricular)?
• Does it include findings from assessment of student learning?
• Is program review tied to planning and budgeting?
• Will program review promote the sustainability of assessment?
• Has program review resulted in attention to and enhancement of student learning?
Guidelines for Good Practice
Some Final Words of Wisdom

• Tie assessment to a few key objectives
  • intended learning outcomes, key problems, OR primary strengths
• Choose assessment methods wisely
• Pilot test if possible
• Assess what you intend to use
• Assess at key decision points
• Make appropriate use of existing resources
• Keep it simple
Concluding Questions:
A One-Minute paper

• What is the most important thing you learned today about assessment?
• What remains most unclear or confusing to you about assessment at this point?
RESOURCES

• http://www.oxy.edu/irap/assessment/assessment-resources
2013 Core Commitments and Standards of Accreditation

• Three Core Commitments

Student Learning and Success: “Institutions have clear educational goals and student learning outcomes….Institutions support the success of all students and seek to understand and improve student success.”

Quality and Improvement: “Institutions are committed to high standards of quality in all of their educational activities…. Institutions demonstrate the capacity to fulfill their current commitments and future needs and opportunities.”

Institutional Integrity, Sustainability, and Accountability: “…Institutions engage in sound business practices, demonstrate institutional integrity, operate in a transparent manner, and adapt to changing conditions.”
Standard 1:
Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives

- Institutional Purpose
- Integrity and Transparency

Standard 2:
Achieving Educational Objectives Through Core Functions

- Teaching and Learning
- Scholarship and Creative Activity
- Student Learning and Success
Standard 3:
Developing and Applying Resources and Organizational Structures to Ensure Quality and Sustainability

- Faculty and Staff
- Fiscal, Physical, and Information Resources
- Organizational Structures and Decision-making Processes

Standard 4:
Creating an Organization Committed to Quality Assurance, Institutional Learning, and Improvement

- Quality Assurance Processes
- Institutional Learning and Improvement
Degree Programs: Meaning, Quality, and Integrity of Degrees

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**Meaning**

- What does a degree from the institution mean?
- What does it say students are capable of doing?
- What are the distinctive experiences and learning outcomes of an education at the institution?
- What does the degree all add up to?
- Is it more than the sum of its parts?
- What *are* the parts?
- What’s the overarching goal?
Quality

• How rich are the experiences that the institution offers?

• How challenging? How rigorous?

• What quality assurance processes exist at the institution to guide improvement?
Institutional Report
Component 3: Degree Programs: Meaning, Quality, and Integrity of Degrees (continued)

Integrity

- To what extent are all the parts of the educational experiences coherent, aligned, and intentional?
- To what extent does the institution deliver what it promises to deliver?
- How well does the institution achieve what it sets out to do?
- How does it know?
- How does it communicate about its degrees to internal and external audiences?
Institutional Report
Component 4: Educational Quality: Student Learning, Core Competencies, and Standards of Performance at Graduation

Student Learning

• What do students learn in General Education? The major? Elsewhere?

• How well do students learn?

• How does the institution know?

• What’s “good enough?”
Component 4: Educational Quality: Student Learning, Core Competencies, and Standards of Performance at Graduation (continued)

Core Competencies

- Writing
- Oral Communication
- Quantitative Reasoning
- Critical Thinking
- Information Literacy

Questions to pose

- How well do students perform at or near graduation?
- How does the institution know?
- What’s “good enough”? 