

Assessment:
Keeping It Simple, Making It Matter

James A. Meek
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ASSESSMENT BASICS

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Why Assessment?

“Done correctly, evidence-based policy (or what we academics call 'outcomes assessment') shifts the basis for decision-making from 'expert opinion' to actual observed facts, preferably gathered over a large sample size. In deciding whether a given practice makes sense, data counts. The idea is that some facts are counterintuitive, so simply relying on what longtime practitioners say is right and proper will lead to suboptimal results. Rather than deferring to credentials, authority, or seniority, we are supposed to defer to documented outcomes. Solutions that work are better than solutions that don't, regardless of where they come from or whose position they threaten.”

www.insidehighered.com/blogs/confessions_of_a_community_college_dean/craft_and_evidence (Dean Dad, "Craft and Evidence," August 12, 2009)

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Assessment Asks . . .

- How are we doing?
- How do we know?
- How will we improve?

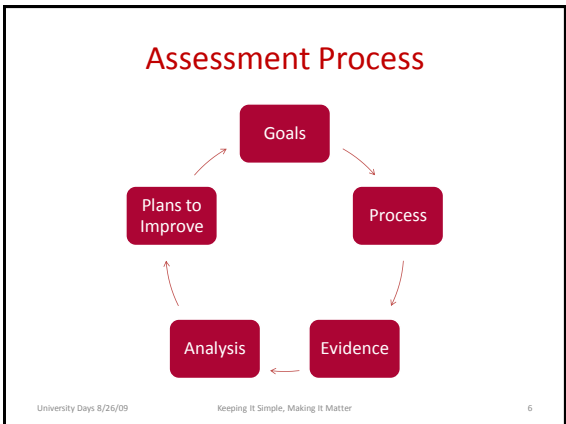
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Assessment Is . . .

Assessment is . . .

- an intentional **process**
- of evaluating **effectiveness**
- in achieving stated **goals**
- by gathering **evidence** about outcomes
- and using findings for **improvement**.

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Effective Assessment

Effective assessment processes are:

- Useful
- Cost-effective
- Reasonably accurate and truthful
- Carefully planned, and organized
- Systematic, and sustained

"Assessing Student Learning and Institutional Effectiveness: Understanding Middle States Expectations," 2005, 4-5

MAKING IT MATTER: LEARNING OUTCOMES

Good Learning Outcomes

- Commonly include . . .
 - **Cognitive** (knowledge) goals
 - **Behavioral** (skill) goals
 - **Affective** (attitude, value) goals
- Describe observable **student behaviors**
 - **Students** as the grammatical subject
 - Strong, specific, observable action **verbs**
- Describe **outcomes** rather than process
- Are **few** (4-8)

Sample Learning Outcomes

- Students will find, evaluate, and effectively use source materials to support their positions. (English)
- Students will satisfactorily apply the scientific method to address a question in biology.
- Students will demonstrate knowledge of the culture of the countries where the target language is spoken, and appropriately contrast their own culture with that culture. (French)
- When presented with . . .

Common Problems

- Confusing ends and means
 - Expose students to . . .
 - Provide opportunities for students to . . .
- Fuzzy outcomes that can't be observed
 - Students will *appreciate* . . .
 - Students will *value* . . .

Outcomes Come From . . .

- Your discipline
- Your curriculum
- What matters to you

Your Issues

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13

KEEPING IT SIMPLE

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14

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15

Evidence of Learning

- Where can you find the best evidence?
 - Capstone or senior course
 - Field experience ("[authentic](#)")
 - Multiple measures
- How can you capture it easily?
 - Design a two-fer
 - Develop a [rubric](#)

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16

Your Issues

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17

Conclusion

- Keep it simple, make it matter
- Resources
www.lhup.edu/planning-and-assessment/assessment/resources.htm
- Questions, comments?

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18