

Understanding what “It” is and How to Support “It”

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Presentation Overview

- Overview of outcomes-based assessment
- Importance of outcomes-based assessment and its relationship to external indicators
- Considerations for making it effective, efficient, and enduring





Ask Yourself These Questions

- What decision did you make about a program/curriculum last year?
- What evidence did you use to inform that decision?
- What was it that you were trying to influence about that program/curriculum when making that decision with the stated evidence?



That is Outcomes-Based Assessment (Bresciani, 2006)

- Most people do capitalize on their innate intellectually curiosity to find out what works
- Most people just don't articulate their intended end results (e.g., outcomes) ahead of time
- Most people don't document the decisions made based on their results
- Most people don't follow up later to see if their decisions made the intended improvement



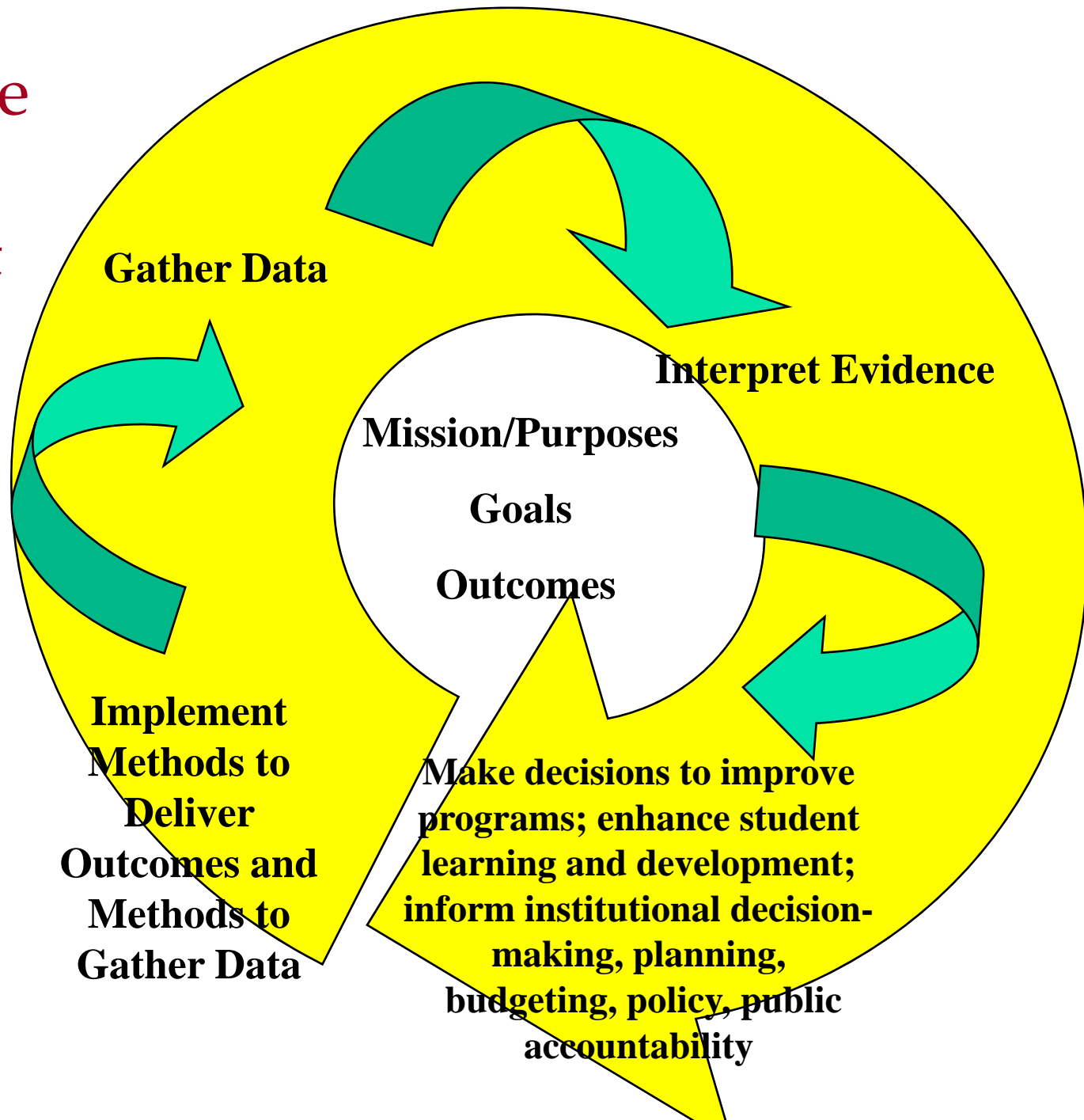


The Assessment Cycle (Bresciani, 2006)

- The key questions...
 - What are we trying to do and why? *or*
 - What is my program supposed to accomplish? *or*
 - What do I want students to be able to do and/or know as a result of my course/workshop/orientation/program?
 - How well are we doing it?
 - How do we know?
 - How do we use the information to improve or celebrate successes?
 - Do the improvements we make contribute to our intended end results?

The Iterative Systematic Assessment Cycle

Adapted from
Peggy Maki, Ph.D. by
Marilee J. Bresciani, Ph.D.



Assessment (Bresciani, 2006)

- Most importantly, assessment should be
 - Understood = by professionals (e.g., faculty and staff) and students
 - Inclusive = involve as many professionals as possible
 - Meaningful = professionals drive the process and intended end results
 - Manageable = takes into account varying resources
 - Flexible = takes into account assessment learning curves





Assessment, cont. (Bresciani, 2006)

- Truth-seeking/ objective/ ethical
- Iterative and systematic
- Inform decisions for continuous improvement or provides evidence of proof
- Promote a culture of accountability, of learning, and of improvement



What are you already doing that could be considered outcomes-based assessment?



Why is outcomes-based assessment important?





The Purpose

- Outcomes-Based assessment does not exist for assessment's sake
- It is taking what most of us already do, and making it systematic
- It is NOT personnel evaluation
- Planning is incorporated into it





The Purpose, Cont.

- Its purpose is to reflect on the end result of doing - - are we accomplishing that which we say we are?
- All types of assessment have value (e.g., needs, utilization, satisfaction, learning and development) but we have to pay attention to evaluating student learning



Drivers of Outcomes-Based Assessment (Ewell, 2003)

- To improve the underperforming student
- Competency Movement in Business and Industry
- International Trade Agreements
 - Affecting higher Education - Competition for new providers in Postsecondary or Tertiary Education
 - Transnational Education or Globalism
 - Massification of Education





Drivers, Cont.

- Bologna Declaration of 1999
- Government Conversation, 1985
 - The Higher Education Re-authorization Act Testimonies in USA, 2002 and 2006
 - Response to NCLB Legislation
 - Regional Accreditation – flexibility
 - CRAC – 2003, 2004
 - Both documents focus on student learning



Drivers, Cont.

National Commission on the Future of Higher Education (2006)

- Demand for Public Information about Performance
 - Transparency of outcomes and results
 - Comparable measures of quality
 - Demonstration of value-added of the entire educational experience





Drivers, Cont.

- Accountability requirements handed back to states
 - Performance indicators
- Discipline Standards could be designed by disciplines
- Federal control over financial aid remains
- Increased focus on private education



So, what do we need to document?

Well...

(insert technical disclaimer)



Typical Components of An Outcomes-Based Assessment Plan (Bresciani, 2006)

- Program or Course Name
- Program Mission or Course Purpose
- Goals
 - Align with your strategic plan, college goals, division goals, or department goals
- Outcomes
 - Student Learning and program
- Planning for Delivery of Outcomes
 - Concept Mapping
 - Syllabus Design
- Evaluation Methods
 - With criteria for each outcomes
 - Add Limitations, if necessary
 - Link to Division Indicators



Typical Components of An Outcomes-Based Assessment Plan, Cont.

- Implementation of Assessment Process
 - Identify who is responsible for doing each step in the evaluation process (list all of the people involved in the assessment process at each step of the process)
 - Outline the timeline for implementation
 - Identify who will be evaluated
 - Identify other programs who are assisting with the evaluation
 - Identify who will be participating in interpreting the data and making recommendations and decisions



Typical Components of An Outcomes-Based Assessment Report

- Program Name
- Outcomes
- Results
 - Summarize the results for each outcome
 - Summarize the process to verify/validate the results
- Decisions and Recommendations
 - Summarize the decisions/recommendations made for each outcome

Typical Components of An Outcomes-Based Assessment Report, Cont.

- Decisions and Recommendations, Cont.
 - Identify the groups who participated in the discussion of the evidence that led to the recommendations and decisions
 - Summarize the suggestions for improving the assessment process
 - Identify when each outcome will be evaluated again (if the outcome is to be retained)
 - Identify those responsible for implementing the recommended changes



As leadership, how can you
make it effective, efficient, and
enduring?



Suggestions

from Bresciani, 2006

- Leadership must be leading
 - Explain why assessment is not a fad
 - Explain that doing it well does require resources
- Fine balance between “top-down” expectations and “bottom-up” engagement
- Fine balance between structure and flexibility





Suggestions, Cont.

- Define assessment
- Articulate a shared conceptual framework and common language for assessment
- Implement this framework respecting your college's/university's culture
- Articulate and implement expectations
- Identify short and long range goals for the process
- Disseminate information on the process – keep the process transparent



Suggestions, Cont.

- Genuinely interact with faculty/ staff and utilize feedback to improve the process
- Design and implement a faculty development plan
 - Tie to pedagogy, learning and development theories, evaluation methods, identifying data, interpreting data, use of data, report writing, etc.)
- Provide incentives for initial engagement
- Consider engagement in process – not generation of results – as a performance criteria and position description expectation
- Identify assessment successes
- Celebrate good practices in quality assessment





Suggestions, Cont.

- Start small and grow
- Start with early adopters and then ask them to be the spokespersons
- Remind people why they are engaging in assessment – not a process for process' sake
- Embrace the ambiguity
- Remain flexible, but systematic



Suggestions, Cont.

- Remember that Faculty must have ownership of the process
- Respect varying disciplines' academic freedom
- Recruit influential faculty / administrators to lead the process
 - Stagger or turn over appointments to avoid burnout
- Offer one-to-one or group consultations/sessions as needed and requested
- Take time to get to know and cater to specific needs



Suggestions, Cont.

- Share examples with each other
- “Advertise” your assessment learnings and decisions made
- Nudge and Retreat (Maki, 2001)
- Incorporate students in all facets of assessment planning and implementation, if your program is ready
- Answer the question, “What happens if I don’t engage in assessment?”



Suggestions, Cont.

- Support documentation efficiencies
- Make an agreement on how assessment results will be used
- Explain how OBA fits into program review and YARs, if at all
- Explain how OBA results inform required performance indicators
- Explain why OBA is not personnel evaluation and be consistent with that practice



How will you know when you are there?

- Visit the Commission on Higher Education's website for Levels of Implementation matrix found at <http://www.ncahigherlearningcommission.org/resources/assessment/index.html>
- Use or adapt self-evaluation tools found at http://www.ncsu.edu/undergrad_affairs/assessment/files/evaluation/evaluation.htm
- Look at what your assessment plans and results are telling you
- Ask your faculty, co-curricular specialists, and students
- Disseminate as appropriate



Take-Home Messages

- You do not have to assess everything you do every year.
- You don't have to do everything at once-start with 2 or 3 learning outcomes
- Think baby steps
- Be flexible
- Acknowledge and use what you have already done.
- Assessment expertise is available to help - -not to evaluate your program
- Borrow examples from other institutions to modify as appropriate
- Time for this must be re-allocated
- We allocate time according to our priorities

Resources

- Each Other
- University Planning and Analysis (UPA) Assessment website
 - <http://www2.acs.ncsu.edu/UPA/assmt/>
- Higher Learning Commission Website
<http://www.ncahigherlearningcommission.org/>





Questions?



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One Minute Evaluation

- What is the most valuable lesson that you learned from this workshop?
- What is one question that you still have?
- What do you think is the next step that your division/program needs to take in order to implement systematic program assessment?



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