

### The Insight

Assessment indeed is initially painstaking and requires a great deal of critical thought; however, once it is in place, it actually makes one's job as an instructor infinitely easier and more rewarding.

### Implications

The purpose of assessment is not really to evaluate students' performance, but rather to help instructors constructively reflect on their own strengths and weaknesses on a regular basis and continually work toward achieving excellence in the classroom.

*"The term 'assessment' is often considered a dirty word, eliciting eye rolls and yawns among many faculty. However, if done correctly and in the initial stages of course development, it makes teaching and learning much more enjoyable, effective and collaborative."*

### Assessment by Design

As I am a faculty member who is fairly new to teaching and assessment, I attended the Assessment by Design conference, sponsored by the Office of Outcomes Assessment at Johnson County Community College in June 2016, in order to gain some new insights into this area.

To begin with, the format of the conference appealed to me as it was a day-long workshop comprising an interactive presentation by Dr. Sheri Barrett (the director of the Office of Outcomes Assessment) interspersed with small group activities. These active learning opportunities included drafting overarching assessment research questions as well as specific program learning outcomes, choosing appropriate formative and summative assessment tools to help answer these questions, and developing a curriculum map. We also discussed the effective use of rubrics and perused some examples of "gold standard" rubrics used in various disciplines; we then proceeded to design a potential rubric to assess one of our own program learning outcomes. Finally, we discussed some key planning decisions to consider when developing a course or a program, such as how assessments will be conducted, which activities or classes should be assessed, and how assessment data will be collected and scored. Along the lines of data collection, we briefly touched on methods that are often used to summarize and analyze assessment data, including frequencies, percentages, and qualitative summaries.

When reflecting back on my experience at the Assessment by Design conference, I suspect that a lot of the information is likely basic to those who have a great deal of teaching experience. As only a third-year professor and the program coordinator for the undergraduate Public Health program, I consider myself extremely fortunate to have had incredible mentors here at Ferris who have patiently walked me through many of these intricacies of assessment. However, it also dawned on me that I have received much of this mentorship because I am in the unique position of helping to develop a new Public Health program from scratch; therefore, we are in the optimal position to incorporate assessment into program and course development from its earliest stages—essentially, promoting assessment by design. Not all faculty have been given the opportunity to develop their programs from the ground up, and hence, attending and participating in a conference such as Assessment by Design may be especially helpful, at least in reinforcing key assessment concepts. Finally, my take-away message from the conference is that assessment indeed is initially painstaking and requires a great deal of critical thought; however, once it is in place, it actually makes my job as an instructor infinitely easier and more rewarding. The purpose of assessment is not really to evaluate students' performance, but rather to help us instructors constructively reflect on our own strengths and weaknesses on a regular basis and continually work toward achieving excellence in the classroom.