Program Assessment: Choosing Assessments

1. Identify program goals
2. Specify intended outcomes
3. Measure whether students are meeting those outcomes
4. Improve your program based on results

Cathy Barrette, Director of Assessment
Wayne State University
Assessments

* Data sources (information, evidence, metrics, performance indicators, proof) that demonstrate whether students are learning what your program intends at the desired level
  * Draw on information you already have to make data collection more practical and less time-consuming
  * One source might serve as data for multiple learning outcomes, but shouldn’t overlap completely

* Direct assessments are usually better than indirect assessments at demonstrating student performance
Common Direct Assessment Methods

Scores from:
* Exams (or exam items/section)
* Essays
* Performances
* Presentations
* Projects
* Papers
* Portfolios
Common **Indirect Assessment Methods**

* Responses from:
  * Surveys
  * Interviews
  * Focus groups
  * Student activity log
* Institutional data (e.g., repeat class rates, retention rates, time to graduation)
Assessment Usefulness

* Assessments provide:
  * Information about students’ knowledge, skills, beliefs, or values at the program level, which shows whether students’ competencies grow across courses
  * Concrete information to base programmatic decisions on
  * Talking points for communicating among stakeholders
  * A counterbalance to anecdotal evidence
To help you select appropriate sources of evidence or data, consider the following questions:

* What information does the assessment provide that helps identify how well students are meeting expectations for a particular learning outcome?
  * Does it include extraneous information that will bias the data?
* What criterion level of performance will you set?
* Is it practical to gather this information (not too time-consuming or costly)?
Using an overall exam or project score that is affected by performance beyond what’s included in the learning outcome
  * You can use a score from an appropriate section or just from some items, however

Focusing on information from a single course
  * Learning outcomes should stretch across a program and multiple courses, therefore so should the assessment data

Collecting data, but not using it to improve the program!
Local Resources for Program Assessment

* Cathy Barrette, WSU Director of Assessment
  c.barrette@wayne.edu
  (313)577-1615
  4129 F/AB

* WSU Assessment website (temporary url)
  http://undergrad.wayne.edu/assessment.php

* OTL staff, workshops and website:
  http://otl.wayne.edu/
Want More Information?

* Additional presentations explain how to:
  * Write mission statements
  * Write learning outcomes and curriculum maps
  * Understand and use results from the assessments
  * Use Compliance Assist to record your work

* Each part has examples and pitfalls to avoid as well!