Taking Aim at Student Learning

Connecting Learning Outcomes to Your Goals

Office of the Vice President for Student Life
The University of Iowa
Define *assessment, student learning assessment, and learning*

Describe the relationship between student learning assessment and Division of Student Life goals and values

Define *student learning outcomes* (SLOs) and describe their format and desired characteristics

Where to go from here

Questions

Brief Assessment
At the end of this session, you will be able to:

- Define *student learning outcomes* (SLOs) and describe their format and desired characteristics
- Describe how assessment can help you in your work
- Write an effective student learning outcome using the SWiBAT format
Who gets excited when you hear the word “assessment”? 
Are we excited when we talk about the ways students grow as a result of our programs and services?

Assessment is a means to these ends.
“Any effort to gather, analyze, and interpret evidence that describes institutional, departmental, divisional, or agency effectiveness” (Upcraft & Schuh, 1996, p. 18)
What do we mean by learning?

DOMAINS OF LEARNING

- Cognitive (knowledge)
- Affective (attitude)
- Psycho-Motor (skills)
What are student learning outcomes (SLOs)?

- Goals that describe “the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and habits of mind that students take with them from a learning experience” (Suskie, 2009, p. 75)

What should students be able to do as a result of the programs and services we provide?
Prioritizing SLOs

- Determine which SLOs are *nice* and which SLOs are *needed*

- Your program or service works *in concert* with others in the department – it does not need to do it all

- Aim for 3-5 SLOs per program or service
Connecting outcomes to the Big Picture

Align Upward

General to Specific

University Mission

Division Mission

Departmental Goals

Departmental Objectives

Outcomes for programs
Connecting outcomes to the Big Picture: Example

“To educate students for success and fulfillment in a diverse world…”

“To support student success...through educationally purposeful activities”

“OSL provides diverse social, cultural, and educational programs…”

“Students participating in Dance Marathon will list at least 3 types of family support funded by DM.”
It’s all nice, but what’s really essential?

- What really *has* to happen for you to know that program or service did its job?

- What *must* occur for you to know that the time and energy devoted to that program or service was well spent?
SWiBAT: Students will be able to __________.

Examples:

▪ Students will be able to successfully discuss accommodation needs with their instructors (Student Disability Services)

▪ Students who work as intramural officials will be able to demonstrate appropriate conflict resolution skills in an emotional environment (Recreational Services)

▪ Students who participate in The Path will be able to identify at least two academic support resources on campus (Residence Life)
Format of SLOs

First-year students
Graduating seniors
Students {who}
participate in
engage with
complete
activity
program
course
8 counseling sessions {will be able to}
identify
list
describe
summarize
discuss
explain
at least 3 out of 4
70% accuracy
more/fewer than
all
intended elements
{as demonstrated by}
interview
observed behavior
journaling
blog
portfolio
post-survey

Keeling & Associates, 2007
Desired characteristics of SLOs

- Align with department, division, and institution goals
- Describe a behavior that is:
  - meaningful,
  - specific,
  - measurable, and
  - attainable
- Describe a single behavior
- Describe knowledge, skills, attitudes, and habits of mind (i.e., learning)
Common “trip ups”

- Using “action words” that are hard to measure (appreciate, be aware of, understand)
- Multiple outcomes in one
- SLOs that aren’t really about learning
Fixing SLOs

- Students will be able to...
  - ...appreciate the benefits of exercise
  - ...value exercise as a stress reduction tool
  - ...identify at least 3 benefits of exercise

- Students will be able to...
  - ...access resources at The University of Iowa
  - ...develop and apply effective problem solving skills that would enable one to adequately navigate through the proper resources within the university
  - ...identify the university resource most pertinent to their concern
A note about new programs

- Begin with the end in mind: **What is your goal?**
- What should a student know or be able to do to respond to that goal? **(Outcomes)**
- Next, what content will support these outcomes? **(Content)**
- After that, what methods will effectively deliver this content? **(Methods)**
- Finally, how will we know if students have achieved the outcomes? **(Assessment)**
Where to go from here

1. Provide learning experience
2. Compare established/actual learning outcomes
3. Establish learning outcomes
4. Use findings to improve learning