

**Assessment for
Administrative and
Educational Support
Units**

Mary Harrington (ccmary@olemiss.edu)
Margie Hobbs (margiehobbs@bellsouth.net)

Why Do
Assessment?

Is it for ...



Is it for ...

It's for YOU:

TO IMPROVE
YOUR UNIT



Today's Agenda

- Supportive IE Environment
- Six Steps in Institutional Effectiveness
- Putting Data in TracDat

©Harrington/Hobbs, 2008



Creating a supportive
environment for Institutional
Effectiveness (IE)

©Harrington/Hobbs, 2008



Emphasize Purpose of IE

- Purpose of IE is to make improvements
- Should not be motivated by fear of external review agency
- IE asks "How can improvements be made given current resources?"
- Direct tie to budget provides convenient reason for not making improvements

©Harrington/Hobbs, 2008



Create the Right Mindset

- Requires honest self evaluation
- Assumes trust in administration
- IE cannot be used for:
 - Personnel evaluation
 - Management's evaluation of departmental performance

©Harrington/Hobbs, 2008



Provide Support

- Training
- Resources
- Good examples
- Positive feedback

©Harrington/Hobbs, 2008



Clarify IE and Strategic

INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

- **Current** status
- Focus on current services, processes, or operations
- Asks "How well are we performing?"
- Driven by whole unit (participatory)
- Informs budget

STRATEGIC

- **Future** initiatives
- Focus on new processes or resources
- Asks "Where do we want to go?"
- Often developed by administrators only
- Drives budget

©Harrington/Hobbs, 2008



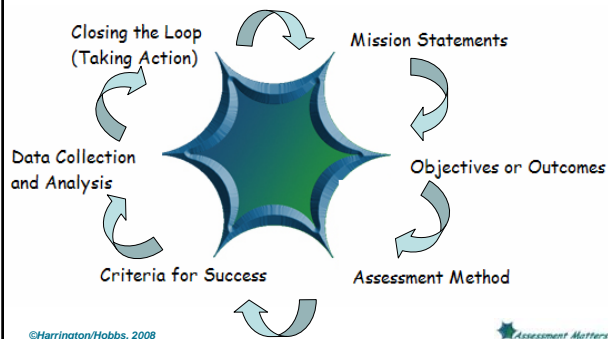
Getting Specific:

Six Steps of IE Assessment

©Harrington/Hobbs, 2008



Six Steps in IE Assessment



Six Steps in IE Assessment

Planning the Assessment

- Mission Statements
- AES Outcomes
- Assessment Methods
- Targets for Success

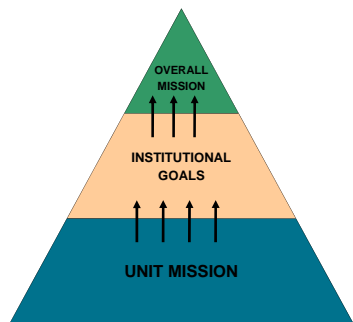
Implementing the Assessment

- Data Collection and Analysis
- Closing the Loop (Taking Action)

©Harrington/Hobbs, 2008

Assessment Matters

I. Linkage to Institution



Institution Level

- Institutional Mission
 - Provides foundation, role, and scope
 - Overarching guidance
- Institutional Goals
 - Derived from mission
 - Support mission
 - Linkage to implement mission

©Harrington/Hobbs, 2008

Assessment Matters

Unit Mission Statement

- Describes key services and processes
- Gives unit unique identity
- Puts unit in context with entire institution

©Harrington/Hobbs, 2008



Write down two of your
unit's key services or
processes

II. IE Outcomes

- Should describe current services, processes, or outcomes
- One suggested approach
 - First develop master list of "what do we do"
 - Then identify *key* services or functions

©Harrington/Hobbs, 2008



Possible Outcomes to Measure

Efficiency
Accuracy
Effectiveness
Client Satisfaction
Quality
Comprehensiveness
Compliance with Standards

©Harrington/Hobbs, 2008



And For Some Units ...

Student Learning Outcomes
(SLOs)
if appropriate

©Harrington/Hobbs, 2008



Introducing Our Example ...

©Harrington/Hobbs, 2008



Outcome

The Institutional Research
Department will provide
a website that is
informative and useful
to its various audiences.

IE outcomes should

- ✓ Identify unit's services, processes, SLOs
- ✓ Describe a *current* function
- ✓ Be under the control of or responsibility of the unit
- ✓ Be measurable/ascertainable and specific
- ✓ Lend itself to improvements
- ✓ Be singular, not "bundled"
- ✓ Be meaningful and not trivial
- ✓ Not lead to "yes/no" answer

©Harrington/Hobbs, 2008





III. Means of Assessment

Means of Assessment should:

- Be directly related to outcome
- Be measurable/ascertainable
- Consider all aspects of the outcome statement
- Provide adequate data for analysis
- Provide actionable data

©Harrington/Hobbs, 2008

Assessment Matters

Assessment Methods Should ...

- Outline (in detail) a systematic way to evaluate the outcome
- Include the following details:
 - **What** data will be collected?
 - **When** will the data be collected?
 - **What** assessment tool will be used?
 - **How** will the data be analyzed?

©Harrington/Hobbs, 2008

Assessment Matters

Assessment Methods

- Quantitative data
 - Response time, count or percent of errors, number of people served, cost savings
- Client satisfaction level
 - Surveys, focus groups, observation of client behavior
- External or peer comparisons
 - Auditors, fire marshal, other outside agencies

©Harrington/Hobbs, 2008

Assessment Matters

And For Units with SLOs ...

- Direct assessment
 - Quiz, test, observation of student behavior
- Indirect assessment
 - Surveys, focus groups, External or peer comparisons

©Harrington/Hobbs, 2008



An assessment method should:

- ✓ Address all aspects of the outcome (over time)
- ✓ Describe process, service or instruction to be evaluated
- ✓ Describe evaluation tool
- ✓ Identify data collection plan
- ✓ Outline data analysis plan

Multiple assessment methods should be identified if possible.

©Harrington/Hobbs, 2008



Assessment Method (Part 1)

The IR Department staff will develop a series of 12 questions representing information that should be readily available on our website.

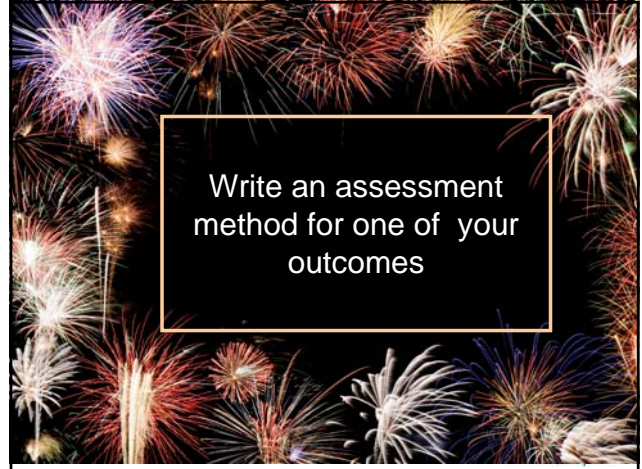
Assessment Method (Part 2)

Five staff members from outside the IR Department will be asked to use the website to answer the 12 questions and log the following information:

1. *What is the answer?*
2. *How long did it take you?*
3. *Was anything confusing?*

Assessment Method (Part 3)

The IR Department will create a spreadsheet to analyze the log by question across all evaluators. An additional column will be added indicating whether the *correct* answer was found.



Write an assessment method for one of your outcomes

IV. Establish Criteria for Success

Why establish criteria for success?

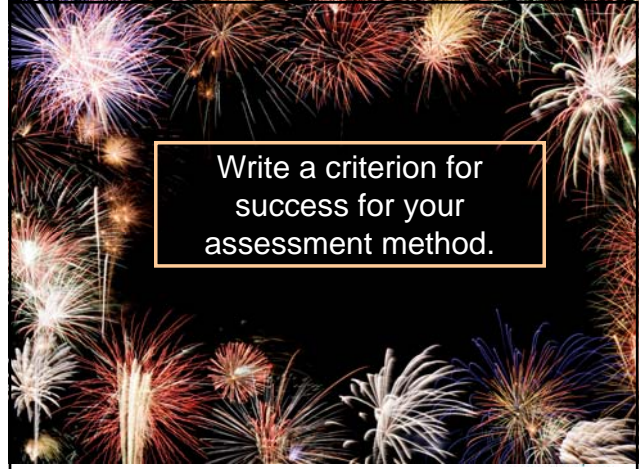
- Provides standard for determining success
- Puts data analysis in perspective
- Allows program to identify desired performance levels

When setting criteria for success:

- ✓ Use component (not individual) as unit of analysis
- ✓ **Be specific (x% of survey responses will be “satisfied” or “very satisfied” for each item)**
- ✓ Avoid vague words such as “most” or “majority”
- ✓ Avoid “all” or “100%” targets
- ✓ Relate directly to outcome statement and assessment methodology
- ✓ Identify component and overall target scores

Criteria for Success

1. For each of the 12 questions, at least 4 out of 5 evaluators will find the answer.
2. Each question will require no more than two minutes to answer.
3. All answers will be correct.



Write a criterion for success for your assessment method.

V. Data Collection and Analysis

- Move from planning the assessment to conducting it
- Keep detailed documentation
- Be candid in your analysis
- Report in detail sufficient to be convincing

Composite vs. Component Scores *Campus Dining Survey*

Composite score:

"X% of students' overall rating of dining services will be 4.0 or above."

Component Score:

"90% of students will rate each item as Satisfactory or Very Satisfactory."

Component	Very Satisfied			Very Dissatisfied	Nbr of 4 or 5 Scores
Dining Hall hours	5	4	3	2 1	
Courtesy of servers	5	4	3	2 1	
Quality of food	5	4	3	2 1	
Variety of selections	5	4	3	2 1	

AVOID THE USE OF MEAN SCORES

Data collection and analysis should:

- ✓ Provide detailed data (avoid use “a majority” or “most”)
- ✓ Use specific numbers (avoid rounding)
- ✓ Avoid technical language
- ✓ Directly link to and support outcome statement
- ✓ Be consistent with target
- ✓ Be clearly and succinctly presented
- ✓ Be credible and mathematically possible
- ✓ Support actions taken later to improve program

©Harrington/Hobbs, 2008



Spreadsheet in TracDat

Question	Nbr Found	Nbr Found In < 2 Minutes	Nbr Correct	Notes
Five-Year Enrollment	5	5	5	
Number of Graduates in Chemistry	5	5	3	Only undergraduates were counted
% of Students Living On Campus	2	2	2	

©Harrington/Hobbs, 2008



Comments from Evaluators

- *Put your phone number on your front page so people can call if they can't find something on your website.*
- *What is the Common Dataset? I'm not familiar with that term.*
- *Where do I go to get GPA information?*

©Harrington/Hobbs, 2008



Results

1. All evaluators were able to find answers to 11 of 12 questions. Only two evaluators answered question 3 (% of students living on campus). **Criterion NOT met.**
2. The evaluators answered all questions in less than two minutes. **Criterion met.**
3. Three out of five evaluators answered one question incorrectly. **Criterion NOT met.**

Results (continued)

The evaluators also made the following suggestions:

- Explain what the Common Dataset is
- Add your phone number to the front page of your website

VI. Closing the Loop - Taking Action

- Describes actions taken based on data collected or lessons learned
- If no improvements are necessary, next cycle:
 - Change criterion for success or
 - Choose another outcome to assess

©Harrington/Hobbs, 2008



Improvements related to IE should:

- ✓ Address gaps identified by assessment results
- ✓ Provide details of improvement made
- ✓ Relate to IE outcome
- ✓ Result from data collected
- ✓ Be substantive, not trivial
- ✓ Be stated in *past* tense
- ✓ Avoid words like "continue," "maintain"

©Harrington/Hobbs, 2008



Use of Results (Part 1)

Based on the evaluators' difficulty finding the *correct* answer for the number of graduates by major, we created a new webpage where the user can select a major, and all graduates are displayed.

Use of Results (Part 2)

2. The Common Dataset (CDS) contains key information about the University, but evaluators indicated they are not familiar with that term. Therefore, a list of the major content items contained in the CDS is now displayed under the CDS link.

Use of Results (Part 3)

The telephone number has been added to IR's front web page.

Closing the Loop

Now that improvements have been made ...

**Next assessment cycle,
IR will evaluate whether
the changes made were effective.**

Assessment Matters!

Questions?

Contact:

Mary Harrington
ccmary@olemiss.edu

Margie Hobbs
margiehobbs@bellsouth.net



©Harrington/Hobbs, 2008



Sources

- Allen, M. J. (2004). *Assessing Academic Programs in Higher Education*. Bolton, MA: Sage.
- Banta, Trudy (2004). *Hallmarks of Effective Outcomes Assessment*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Bloom, B. S. (1956). *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals Handbook I: Cognitive Domain*. New York, NY: Longmans, Green.
- Hobbs, M. (2005). "Assessment Issues in Graduate and Professional Programs." In Nichols, J. O. & Nichols, K. W. (2005). *A Road Map for Improvement of Student Learning and Support Services Through Assessment*. New York, NY: Agathon Press, 229-233.
- Krueger, R. A. & Casey, M.A. (2000). *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Nichols, J. O. & Nichols, K. W. (2005). *A Road Map for Improvement of Student Learning and Support Services Through Assessment*. New York, NY: Agathon Press.
- Palomba, C. A. & Banta, T. W. (1999) *Assessment Essentials: Planning, Implementing and Improving Assessment in Higher Education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

©Harrington/Hobbs, 2008

