Assessment Terminology

To get started, some terminology needs defining:

**Assessment:** The systematic collection, review and use of information about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning and development. (Marchese, 1987; Palomba & Banta, 1999)

**Institutional effectiveness:** Assessment to determine the extent to which a college or university is achieving its mission.

**Program-level Assessment:** Assessment to determine the extent to which students in an academic program can demonstrate the learning outcomes for the program.

**Program Goals:** Statement that describe what the program as a whole will achieve.

**Institutional Learning Outcomes:** The knowledge, skills, and dispositions that students should be able to demonstrate upon graduating from an institution.

**Student Learning Outcomes:** The knowledge, skills, and dispositions that students should be able to demonstrate upon graduating from a program.

**Direct Evidence:** A tangible, visible, self-explanatory evidence of exactly what student have and have not learned.

**Indirect Evidence:** Evidence that deduces student achievement of learning outcomes through the students’ reported perception of their own learning.

**Quantitative Assessment:** Methods that rely on numerical scores or rating.

**Qualitative Assessment:** Methods that rely on descriptions rather than numbers.

**Formative Assessment:** The assessment of student achievement at different stages of a student’s academic career.

**Summative Assessment:** The assessment of student achievement at the end point of their education.

**Embedded Assessment (Course):** A method in which evidence of student learning outcomes for the program is obtained from assignments in particular courses in the curriculum.

**Add-on Assessment:** Assessment strategies beyond course requirements.

**Traditional Assessment:** Assessment strategies often completed in a controlled, timed examination setting and are usually designed only to collect assessment.

**Supportive Evidence:** Information gathered for the purpose of program evaluation, quality of the curriculum, and/or administrative purposes. These related measures may be used in conjunction with evidence gathered through direct and indirect measures to provide additional information about learning when viewed within the larger picture.
**Performance Indicator:** The standard by which student performance is evaluated. Criteria for assigning a score or the dimensions of proficiency in performance used to describe a student’s response to a task or judging the results of student learning.

- **Benchmarking:** Compares student performance or score against their peers either established by use of its own program or from other institutions.
- **Standards-based:** Compares student performance or score against an established standard.
- **Best-Practice:** Compares your results against the best of your peers.
- **Value-added:** Compares results against student scores when they started or entered the program to the end of the program or course of study.
- **Longitudinal:** Compares student performance or scores against peers in prior years.

**Scoring Rubric (tool):** A determined set of criteria that describes the characteristic(s) of a learning outcome and the level of achievement in each characteristic(s).

**Validity:** Refers to the degree to which a study accurately reflects or assesses the specific concept that the researcher is attempting to measure. Validity has three components: relevance (direct measurement), accuracy (how precise are the measurements), and utility (how clear are the implications for improvement).

**“Close the Loop”:** Using assessment results for program change and improvement.