

ASSESSMENT MATTERS

ANNUAL REPORTING ON PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

Thank you to those programs that have already submitted their 2018-2019 Assessment Cycle in Taskstream. This is just a reminder that the deadline for reporting is September 30th. Need help? Check out our [Best Practices](#) in Taskstream reporting for more information.

VALUING STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOME ASSESSMENT

As the new academic year begins, we would like to remind everyone of the value of communicating your program and course learning outcomes to your students. Why? *Because it is easier for a student to write a letter for employment about the learning outcomes they have achieved, than what classes were taken.* By emphasizing the outcomes of your program to your students, they will be able to make themselves much more marketable upon graduation. So first steps are to align course outcomes to the program outcomes. Then make sure the students in your program know and understand their value. To follow up on value, it is also time to remind everyone why we do assessment. Linda Suskie has summed up the “why” very succinctly in this [blog post](#):

“...three purposes of assessment. Its fundamental purpose is, of course, giving students the best possible education. Assessment accomplishes this by giving faculty and staff feedback on what is and isn’t working and insight into changes that might help students learn and succeed even more effectively.

The second purpose of assessment is what I call stewardship. All colleges run on other people’s money, including tuition and fees paid by students and their families, government funds paid by taxpayers, and scholarships paid by donors. All these people deserve assurance that your college will be a wise steward of their resources, spending those resources prudently, effectively, and judiciously. Stewardship includes using good-quality evidence of student learning to help inform decisions on how those resources are spent, including how everyone spends their time. Does service learning really help develop students’ commitment to a life of service? Does the gen ed curriculum really help improve students’ critical thinking skills? Does the math requirement really help students analyze data? And are the improvements big enough to warrant the time and effort faculty and staff put into developing and delivering these learning experiences?

The third purpose of assessment is accountability: assuring your stakeholders of the effectiveness of your college, program, service, or initiative. Stakeholders include current and prospective students and their families, employers, government policy makers, alumni, taxpayers, governing board members...and, yes, accreditors. Accountability includes sharing both successes and steps being taken to make appropriate, evidence-based improvements.

So your answers to “Why are we doing this?” will probably be variations on the following themes, all of which require good-quality assessment evidence:

- We want to understand what is and isn’t working and what changes might help students learn and succeed even more effectively.
- We want to understand if what we’re doing has the desired impact on student learning and success and whether the impact is enough to justify the time and resources we’re investing.
- Our stakeholders deserve to see our successes in helping students learn and succeed and what we’re doing to improve student learning and success.”