# Meaningful Outcome Assessment Processes to Meet Accreditation Standards

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Achieving the Dream

Accreditation, Culture and Community

- Tribal Colleges have unique missions and are concerned with not only educating their students but helping their people survive and thrive. Colleges on reservations are often a focal point for their communities.

- I have heard staff from Tribal Colleges state that they feel the accrediting agencies do not understand their unique missions and the students they serve.

- Most accrediting agencies have standards relating to culture and diversity now, mostly because many colleges are becoming very diverse.
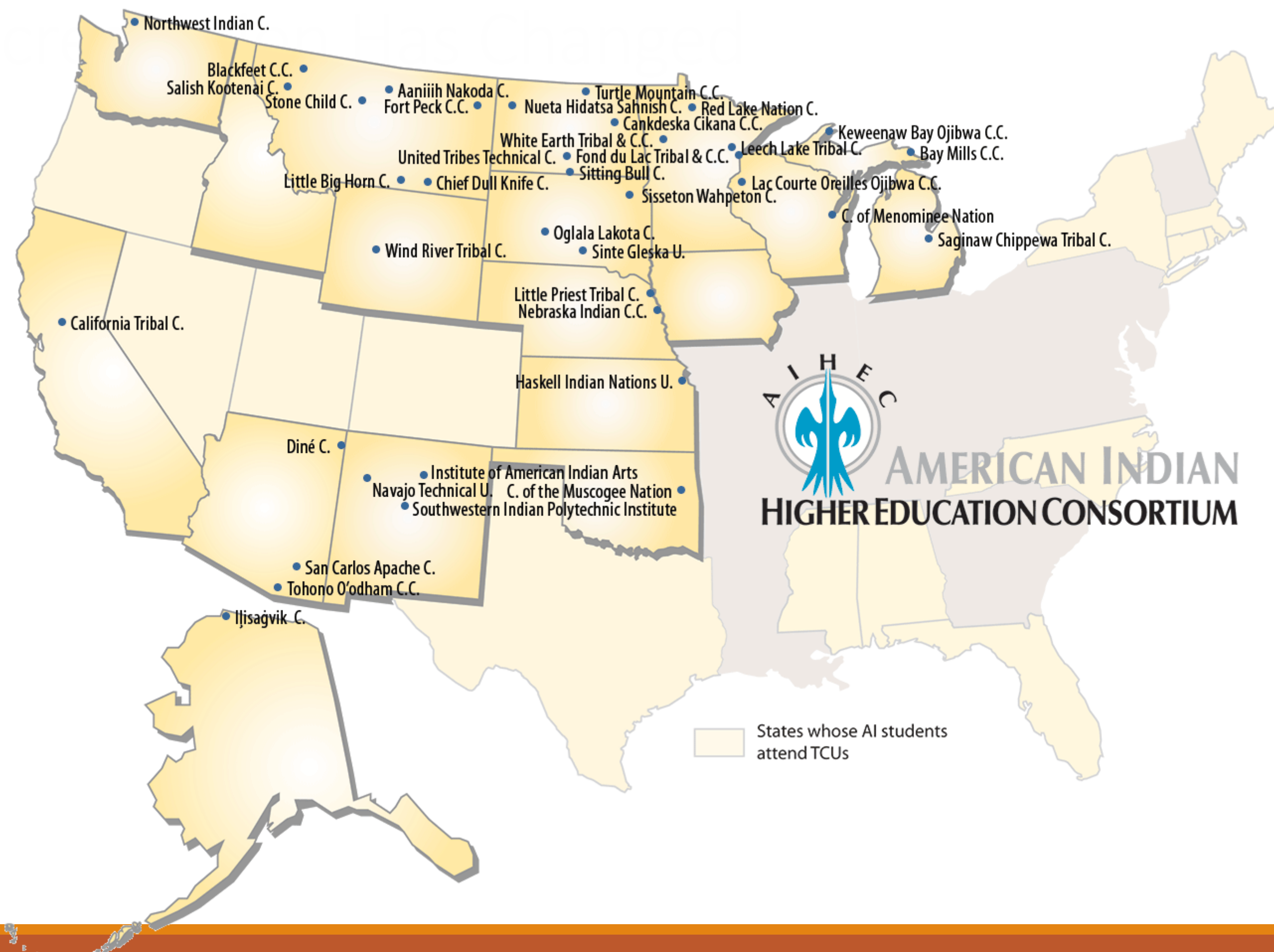
Northwest Indian C.

Blackfeet C.C.
Salish Kootenai C.
Stone Child C.
Aaniiih Nakoda C.
Fort Peck C.C.
Turtle Mountain C.C.
Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish C.
Red Lake Nation C.
Cankdeska Cikana C.C.
Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa C.C.
White Earth Tribal & C.C.
Leech Lake Tribal C.
Bay Mills C.C.
United Tribes Technical C.
Fond du Lac Tribal & C.C.
Sitting Bull C.
Little Big Horn C.
Chief Dull Knife C.
Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa C.C.
Sisseton Wahpeton C.
C. of Menominee Nation
Oglala Lakota C.
Saginaw Chippewa Tribal C.
Wind River Tribal C.
Sinte Gleska U.

Little Priest Tribal C.
Nebraska Indian C.C.

California Tribal C.

Haskell Indian Nations U.

Diné C.
Institute of American Indian Arts
Navajo Technical U.
C. of the Muscogee Nation
Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute

San Carlos Apache C.
Tohono O'odham C.C.

Iḷisaġvik C.

Accrediting Agencies

1 College WASC
29 Colleges HLC
10 Colleges NWCCU

AIHEC
AMERICAN INDIAN
HIGHER EDUCATION CONSORTIUM

States whose AI students
attend TCUs

The Higher Learning Commission in Standard 1 states:

1.C. The institution understands the relationship between its mission and the diversity of society.

- The institution addresses its role in a multicultural society.
- The institution's processes and activities reflect attention to human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

1.D. The institution's mission demonstrates commitment to the public good. Actions and decisions reflect an understanding that in its educational role the institution serves the public, not solely the institution, and thus entails a public obligation.

The institution engages with its identified external constituencies and communities of interest and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

Northwest Commission allows colleges to select their core themes:

1.B.1 The institution identifies core themes that individually manifest essential elements of its mission and collectively encompass its mission.

1.B.2 The institution establishes objectives for each of its core themes and identifies meaningful, assessable, and verifiable indicators of achievement that form the basis for evaluating accomplishment of the objectives of its core themes.

This allows colleges to identify themes unique to Tribal Colleges.

Tribal Colleges Are Allowed to Address Their Unique Mission

However, they need to document the process.

- How did you develop your mission?
- How did you identify institutional goals, outcomes or core themes?
- How do you know you are making a difference, how do you measure it?
- How do you address teaching and learning within you unique community? Because you are a college, you must assess that learning is happening.

If you ask the accrediting agencies......

... in what areas are colleges getting the most recommendations in the accreditation process? They will tell you:

*Learning and program outcomes assessment

*Assessing outcomes in general education

*Appropriate and effective evaluation or review process in academic programs, student services and administrative areas

*Using results of assessment to improve quality.

*Colleges creating a process and then not following it.

Organizational Stages of Outcome Evaluation

Acceptance & adaptation

Challenge & competition

Catalyst - Proactive

Stage 4

Depression - exhaustion

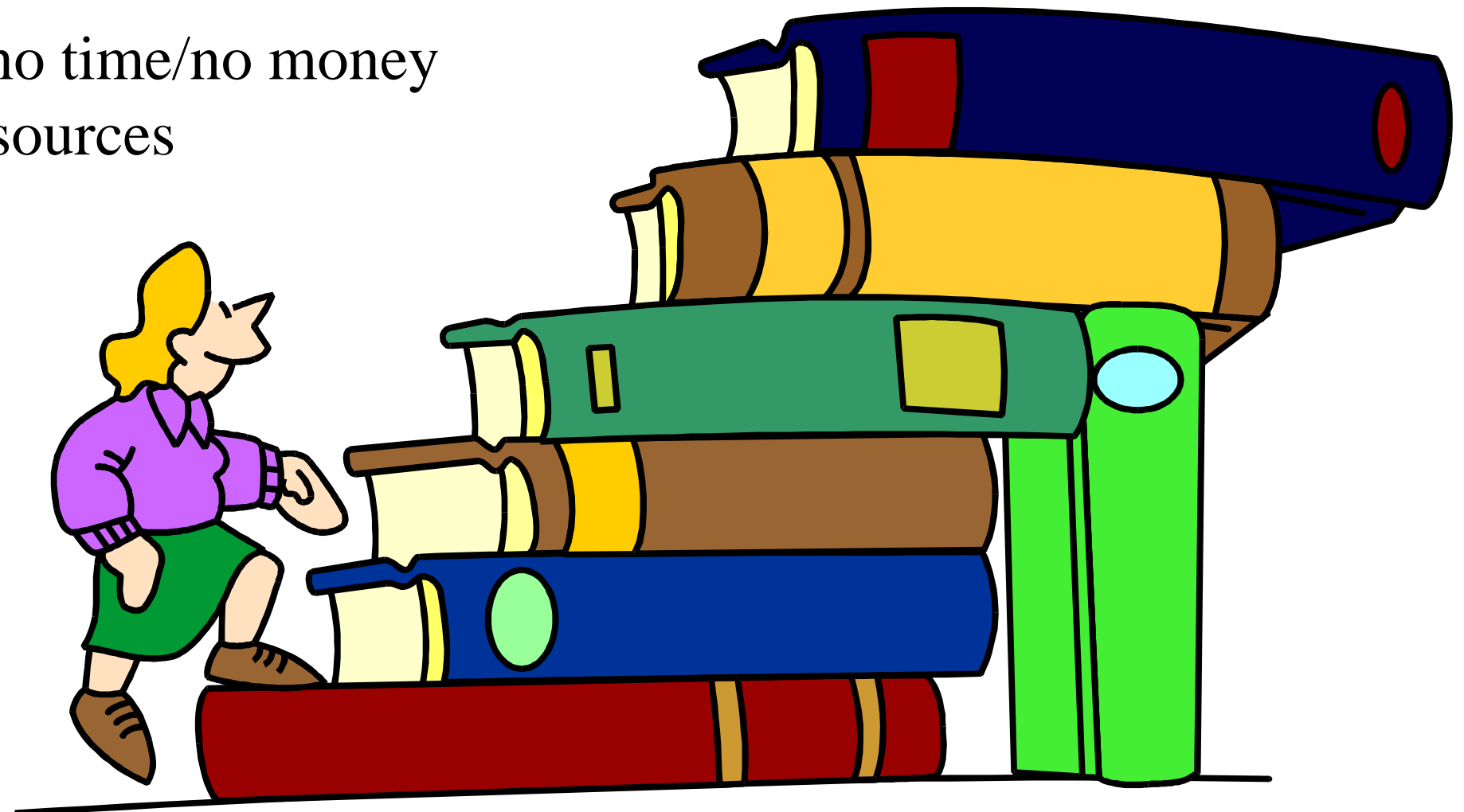Compliance - Passive reactive

Stage 3

Bargaining - no time/no money

Seek outside sources

Stage 2

Anger and antagonism

Resistant & Reactive

Stage 1

Disbelief & Denial

Paralysis - Passive resistance

The Never-ending Process

You would think that we would only have to work our way through this process once but that is never the way it works. When it is time for reaccreditation....

- The entire college has lost its memory of ever having worked on outcomes.

- We have new programs and new faculty and this is their *first time*.

- Some standards change slightly and we have to add something like benchmarks or results separated for every teaching modality.

NCA- Higher Learning Commission: Some Selected Standards

▶ The institution articulates the purposes, content, and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements.

▶ The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews.

▶ The institution has clearly stated goals for student learning and effective processes for assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals.

▶ The institution assesses achievement of the learning outcomes that it claims for its curricular and co-curricular programs.

▶ The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.

NCA- Higher Learning Commission: Some Selected Standards

➢The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members

➢The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting.

➢The institution develops and documents evidence of performance in its operations.

➢The institution learns from its operational experience and applies that learning to improve its institutional effectiveness, capabilities, and sustainability, overall and in its component parts.

Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

▶ The institution establishes objectives for each of its core themes and identifies meaningful, assessable, and verifiable indicators of achievement that form the basis for evaluating accomplishment of the objectives of its core themes.

▶ The institution demonstrates that the General Education components …… have identifiable and assessable learning outcomes that are stated in relation to the institution's mission and learning outcomes for those programs.

▶ The institution designs, maintains, and evaluates a systematic and effective program of academic advisement to support student development and success.

▶ The institution engages in ongoing systematic collection and analysis of meaningful, assessable, and verifiable data, quantitative and/or qualitative, as appropriate to its indicators of achievement, as the basis for evaluating the accomplishment of its core theme objectives.

▶ The institution engages in an effective system of evaluation of its programs and services, wherever offered and however delivered, to evaluate achievement of clearly identified program goals or intended outcomes. Faculty have a primary role in the evaluation of educational programs and services.

Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

➢The institution evaluates holistically the alignment, correlation, and integration of programs and services with respect to accomplishment of core theme objectives.

➢The institution evaluates holistically the alignment, correlation, and integration of planning, resources, capacity, practices, and assessment with respect to achievement of the goals or intended outcomes of its programs or services, wherever offered and however delivered.

➢Results of core theme assessments and results of assessments of programs and services are: a) based on meaningful institutionally identified indicators of achievement; b) used for improvement by informing planning, decision making, and allocation of resources and capacity; and c) made available ……

➢The institution uses the results of its assessment of student learning to inform academic and learning-support planning and practices that lead to enhancement of student learning achievements.

Common Themes in Assessment and Evaluation

▶ Continuous, ongoing

▶ Broad-based, integrated

▶ Use of results to improve institutional quality

▶ Proof of meeting mission or core themes

▶ Improvement of programs, services, policies, practices

▶ Assessment processes and practices reflect best practices

▶ Communicate intended outcomes

▶ Evaluation of the effectiveness of planning and the integration of planning

▶ Holistic, aligned

▶ Intentional, meaningful, useful assessment

Basically, What They All Want

Colleges and universities to:

➤ establish purpose statements, core themes, measurable objectives or outcomes in academic, administrative and student services areas (all operational areas);

➤ set acceptable performance levels or benchmarks;

➤ to assess if those are met;

➤ use the results to improve programs, services and institutional quality.

➤ But they don't tell you what those outcomes should be.

Why Measure Outcomes in Academic, Student Services and Administrative Areas?

▶ Let's you know what is going on in the classroom

▶ Makes good business sense, helps you plan

▶ Gives you needs assessment data

▶ Helps you know where staff need professional development

▶ Helps you know where resources need to go

▶ Helps you know where to expand your services

▶ Lastly – gives you the data you need for your accrediting agency

In Admin and Student Services, What We Don't Want

A laundry list of tasks for your department or a list of projects

What We Do Want

How you contribute to the overall effectiveness and success of the institution?

If you improve, how does it make us better?

Why is This Hard?

▶ Because it is education.

▶ Because the best results may not happen for years.

▶ Because so much of what we all do is inter-related and we can't claim full credit or control over it.

▶ Because we are so busy doing what we are doing…. we forget why we are doing it… what it is we really "do" for the college.

I Have Worked With a Lot of Colleges from All Six Regional Accrediting Agencies

1. Staff don't want to take the time to work through what needs to be done.

2. They spend a lot of time defining outcomes for their program or area and then walk away from the table. They don't document their processes.

3. A process was developed in the form of a workshop delivered at colleges that would get units from "understanding what they need to do" to walking away with meaningful outcomes and a plan to assess them, a timeline and a plan to use results – all in about six hours.

4. Colleges don't need a big flowery process, they need to get down to business, create something meaningful and doable and then get it done – and use the results to improve.

What This Helps You Do

With a broad, engaging group activity, identify and define your outcomes unique to your college.

- Develop institutional outcomes that not only include learning for students, but also your broader mission to your community.

- Collect feedback from a larger group of students, staff and community members,

- Document your process.

- Create an assessment method and timeline to measure how you are doing in meeting those outcomes.

I have a CD for each college to run these workshops. On the CD you have:

1. A copy of this presentation

2. The outline for the six hour workshop

3. Two different Powerpoint presentations – one for administrative units and student services (but do separate workshops for each) and one for academic departments (large colleges won't want to do them all at once)

4. A set of hand outs for administrative units with customized forms

5. A set of hand outs for student services units with customized forms

6. A set of hand outs for academic programs and gen ed with customized forms

Your director of assessment or institutional effectiveness or institutional research and a key staff person from the area should co-facilitate these sessions.

The Handouts

1. IDENTIFYING OUTCOMES
2. OUTCOME PRIORITIZATION
3. CREATING OUTCOME STATEMENTS - BROAD
4. CREATING OUTCOME STATEMENTS – SPECIFIC
5. EFFICIENCY METRICS
6. ASSESSMENT METHOD

- There is a set for academic programs and a set for administrative units and student services.
- Each set contains a blank form and a sample one completed by a unit.
- There is a set of sample outcomes for administrative and student services areas to use as guides.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ACTIVITY
DEVELOPING OUTCOMES IN ACADEMIC, EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT AND ADMINISTRATIVE AREAS

Use the presentation titled "Admin and stu serv outcomes" or " Academic Outcomes"

Suggested Schedule:

9:00 – 9:15 am   Introduction and Purpose of Outcomes Assessment, Goals of the Day

9:15 – 10:30 am   Presentation on Outcomes for Academic or Administrative/Student Services Units

10:30 am – noon   The Identification of Unit Outcomes
Session with invited guests (if possible) (other college employees/customers for admin units and students for student services units) (faculty will work with each other)

**this session will need flip chart paper and markers

noon – 12:45 pm   Lunch

12:45 – 2:30 pm   Group working session (by area/department) on formulating outcomes

2:30 – 2:45 pm   Break

2:45 – 4:30 pm   Working session on assessment tools, data collection and reporting process
                      Creating a structure, timeline and reporting process

It is suggested that you conduct one session for administrative units one or more for faculty and one for student services units because the focus will be very different. For the 10:30am session, ask each unit represented to invite 3-5 individuals they consider their customers (students for student services and you may need to feed them to get them there).

Use Forms 1-4. The PowerPoint gives the group breaks to complete the forms as they work through it.

Suggestions:
Seat them at round tables if possible so they can work together.
Put one piece of flip chart paper on the wall for each unit present with their name at the top
Have markers for each person in the room

When faculty and staff walk away from this session, they will have:
Established workable outcomes
Prioritized them to 2-4 critical ones
Broken them down for an assessment process
Written outcome statements
Thought through the assessments they intend to use
Discussed a timeline and plan

There isn't time in this session to create a program or unit review process. I am assuming you have that or a team of people will put together a useful process.

It Begins - Today's Opportunity

➢You have been given 5-6 hours today to work together in a group and get this work done.

➢This work has to be done and if you don't get it done today, you will have to come back again and start over.

➢So take advantage of this time, concentrate and work together to create something you can stand behind.

➢Try to stay on task.

Identifying Outcomes – Get Some Help

▶ Faculty/staff in an area are often the worst in defining outcomes because they are too close to the subject.

▶ So let's take a few minutes and help each other.

▶ Form #1 (a & b for enrollment and student service)

#1 IDENTIFYING ADMINISTRATIVE/STUDENT SERVICES OUTCOMES (BLANK FORM)

Unit Name _____

Outcomes *are benefits for students, the faculty/staff or the college as a whole. Things such as changes or improvements in efficiency, skill-level of faculty/staff, opportunities for the college, life circumstances for students and potential for the future. These should be things over which you have a certain amount of control. For example: While clean and well lighted facilities create an environment conducive to learning, it would be hard to determine how much of the learning going on in a class was due to the cleanliness and lighting. How would you split that effect apart from the teacher's methods, the impact of the other students in the class and the students' basic intellectual ability?*

Answering these questions will help you determine what your outcomes are:

1. **If your unit operates efficiently and effectively, what are the benefits to faculty/staff and/or students? What are the benefits to the college?**

2. **If your unit improves its quality, what will be observed by others? What better outcomes will occur for students and/or faculty/staff at the college?**

3. **In what way does your unit help the college meet its mission?**

4. **What is the highest "value-added" asset your unit provides for the college?**

#1 IDENTIFYING ADMINISTRATIVE/STUDENT SERVICES OUTCOMES

Unit Name: Academic Computing

Outcomes *are benefits for students, the faculty/staff or the college as a whole. Things such as changes or improvements in efficiency, skill-level of faculty/staff, opportunities for the college, life circumstances for students and potential for the future. These should be things over which you have a certain amount of control. For example: While clean and well lighted facilities create an environment conducive to learning, it would be hard to determine how much of the learning going on in a class was due to the cleanliness and lighting. How would you split that effect apart from the teacher's methods, the impact of the other students in the class and the students' basic intellectual ability?*

Answering these questions will help you determine what your outcomes are:

If your unit operates efficiently and effectively, what are the benefits to faculty/staff and/or students? What are the benefits to the college?

Their communication with students and other staff/faculty is accurate and efficient.
The computer labs are up-to-date so students can learn the latest technology.
The college recognizes efficiencies.

If your unit improves its quality, what will be observed by others? What better outcomes will occur for students and/or faculty/staff at the college?
Customer service from ACU is rated high.
Units call us to help them with their problems/issues and to assist with planning.
Fewer complaints.
Increased productivity within our staff and across the college

In what way does your unit help the college meet its mission?

By helping students learn through technology (labs, technology applications)
By providing better access to the college via technology.

How does the effective and efficient operation of your unit create benefits for students and/or faculty/staff?

Everything takes less time – more efficient for everyone.
Everyone can gain access even from remote locations so faculty, staff and students can work from home or work.

What is the highest "value-added" asset your unit provides for the college?

With tight budgets, using IT to improve college processes saves time and money.

Wall Activity

Staff from other areas….. and students… what do they think our purpose is and what value we provide to the college?

Answer this question

If this unit does its job well, what are the benefits to the college (its students, faculty and/or staff)?

◦ In other words, of what value are they to us?

OR…

What is the purpose of this unit?

What are they supposed to do for the college?

If they do their job well – how does the college benefit?

Next - Prioritize

What do we consider is most important?

Use Results on Sheets

▶ Now let's prioritize what we see. Among the items you have listed, what would your staff be most able to:

  ▶ Use

  ▶ Value

  ▶ Inform decisions

  ▶ Consider critical or important

▶ Work through prioritization sheet (#2)

	OUTCOME PRIORITIZATION	
USE	If you could know anything about your students in regard to program outcomes, what would be of greatest use to you?	
VALUE	What outcomes are most valued by your program faculty for your students?	
INFORM DECISION-MAKING	What outcomes would be the most important in determining strategic planning, needs for professional development, marketing, making curricular changes and hiring staff?	
IMPORTANT	Of all possible outcomes students achieve from their courses, what 2-4 are most critical for them to be able to survive and achieve in their field?	

OUTCOME PRIORITIZATION - Nursing Program

USE	**If you could know anything about your students in regard to program outcomes, what would be of greatest use to you?** Knowing what percent are employed within six months. To know that their employers are satisfied with the training they received. To know that they have the skills needed to make it in the workforce.
VALUE	**What outcomes are most valued by your program faculty for your students?** Passing rates on licensure exams. Salary increases for the students so they are better off than before they entered the program. That they continue learning by taking additional courses and trainings; keep up with professional development requirements.
INFORM DECISION-MAKING	**What outcomes would be the most important in determining strategic planning, needs for professional development, marketing, making curricular changes and hiring staff?** What did they need to know that we did not cover in classes? That they improved basic skills (reading, writing, speaking, etc.) over the course of the program. That they had adequate profession-specific skills. That they would recommend the program to others.
IMPORTANT	**Of all possible outcomes students achieve from their courses, what 2-4 are most critical for them to be able to survive and achieve in their field?** People skills – being able to talk and interact with their patients. Safety and medical skills – they will lose their jobs, license and livelihood if they don't know these things. Basic program-specific skills – the basics of patient care, skills for treatment methods and knowledge of health issues.

Outcome Statements

What do we consider to be our outcomes?

Creating Outcome Statements

▶ Form #3

▶ Are there a few major themes?

   ▶ From all the sections on form #2, are there a few topics that come up over and over?

▶ Categorize your outcomes into major themes.

   ▶ Can those topics be organized into major themes, e.g. improving engagement, communication

▶ Can you word-smith those themes into outcome statements?

Specifics of Outcomes

▶ Written in present or future tense – stating what your current or future success will be...

▶ **Present examples.....**

   ▶ The grants office expands educational opportunities for the college community through innovative planning, partnerships and grant proposals.

▶ **Future examples:**

   ▶ Financial aide will create opportunities for students to attend college who would otherwise not have been able to.

Outcome Data Informs Action

▶ Tells you how you are doing

▶ Tells what people think about your efficiency and effectiveness

▶ Tells you what they want in the future (needs assessment)

▶ Helps you plan and take action

▶ Gives you data for what needs to happen

▶ Makes it specific enough to inform you

   ▶ Not "overall I am satisfied with financial aid."

   ▶ But "there are adequate staff in financial aide to serve the needs of students."

The Specifics of Assessment

Operationalize what we assess.

What must we address – specifically?

▶ Form #4

▶ Outcome statement: The Learning Center will facilitate improvements in the teaching and learning process at the college.

▶ Operational definition (what we mean) -

  ▶ Facilitating improvements means we work with both faculty and students to offer the appropriate tutoring techniques for students by subject.

- What specifically must be measured?
  - Faculty satisfaction with tutoring;
  - The success of students who attend a minimum number of tutoring sessions;
  - Student satisfaction with the tutors, hours of operation, services provided;
  - Students' perceptions of improvements in content knowledge, study skills, confidence;
- Activity/survey/assessment used to measure
  - Faculty focus group about tutoring services
  - Survey of students
  - Data from IR

Methods of Assessment

Now what do we do?

Five Often Used Methods of Assessment

▶Focus Groups

▶Pre-test/post-test assessments

▶Direct assessments (training classes or follow-up after service)

▶Document Evaluation/Work Sample Evaluation (e.g. work orders, grant applications)

▶Surveys

▶Unit metrics (examples?)

A Process and a Timeline

How and when do we do it?

Create Your Own Assessment Process

What clients/participants and when?

Who distributes and collects the results?

Who writes up results?

How will you gather input and use results?

Always ask "how can this unit better serve the college?"

Who in the department will have ultimate responsibility for reporting the results?

Timeline -

	First Round	Document Due	HLC Visit
Outcome statements due	Now	Spring 2019	Fall 2019
Assessment plan (with questions) ready	Fall 2018		
Assessment Conducted	Fall 2018		
Use of Results Written Up	Late Fall 2018		

Disappointing Outcome Findings:

Internal Factors:

* Sudden staff turnover
* New teaching philosophy/institutional strategy
* Curricular change (campus move)
* Unrealistic outcome targets
* Measurement problems (lack of follow-through)

Disappointing Outcome Findings

External Factors:

* Community unemployment increases
* State/federal funding changes
* Related programs (BS or MS programs) close
* Public transportation increases fares or shuts down some routes serving your campus or time slot
* Employment trends change

Most Important

Use Your Results to Improve

How Do We Use What We Learn

▶ You have spent time creating a list of agreed-upon outcomes

▶ You have created an assessment tool (s)

▶ You have created a benchmark for "success"

▶ You use the assessment tool and pull together the results

▶ You do well on some outcomes and not others

▶ What do you do?

Use of Results

- What processes are in place to make sure you use results to improve programs, services and student learning?

- What about negative results?

- Just because you have data showing that you didn't do as well as you wanted on your outcomes assessment - doesn't mean you know what to do to fix it?

- Can you measure, report and forget it? Then why do it?

- Write faculty group analysis or department analysis and a one year follow-up into your program or unit review.

Using Results

▶ If you can easily figure it out – make changes and move on

▶ Do some research

   ▶ Methods that have been proven to work

   ▶ May have to make some changes

   ▶ May need more info – to drill down further

Things to Remember

- Outcome measurement must be initiated from the unit/department level (promotes ownership of process).
- Measure only what you are teaching or facilitating.
- Measure what is "important" to you or your unit/program.
- Prioritize your outcomes.
- Be selective (2-3 outcomes only at first and build).
- Use what you find.

Internal Uses for Outcome Findings

- Provide direction for curricular changes

- Improve educational and support programs

- Identify training needs for staff and students

- Support annual and long-range planning

- Guide budgets and justify resource allocations

- Suggest outcome targets (expected change)

- Focus board members' attention on programmatic issues

- Help the college expand its most effective services

- Facilitates an atmosphere of change within the institution

External Uses of Outcome Findings

- Recruit talented faculty and staff
- Promote college programs to potential students
- Identify partners for collaboration (hospitals, businesses, etc....)
- Enhance the college's public image
- Retain and increase funding
- Garner support for innovative efforts
- Win designation as a model or demonstration site

Some Red Flags for Accreditors

1. Weak assessments like "one multiple choice question on the final exam to measure my outcome."

2. My benchmark was 70%, 72% passed, I met the benchmark – no changes needed (RIGHT you are so good, no one can improve).

3. Using the results is the most important thing. Colleges often spend too much time on the assessment process and very little on analysis of the results and how you plan to use them.

Final Words

- Create a meaningful process for your institution and your students. That is the only way you will make significant improvements.

- Document this process as justification for your selected outcomes.

- You must measure learning but you have a lot of freedom on what you measure and how you measure.

- You must evaluate all your operations and use results to improve including facilities, HR, payroll, etc.

- If two is good then 16 must be better should not be your philosophy – your outcome results are not measured by the pound.

Overall the Outcomes Movement

- Hasn't been as successful as it was intended to be.

- In large part, colleges have tried to game" the system and haven't put the time into creating a meaningful and useful process.

- My litmus test: whatever you are doing at your college, ask yourself "are things Improving?"
  - If the answer is yes, then it is working.
  - If the answer is no, is it a purely academic exercise that we put on the shelf and forget or a useful process that facilitates change, innovation and improvement.
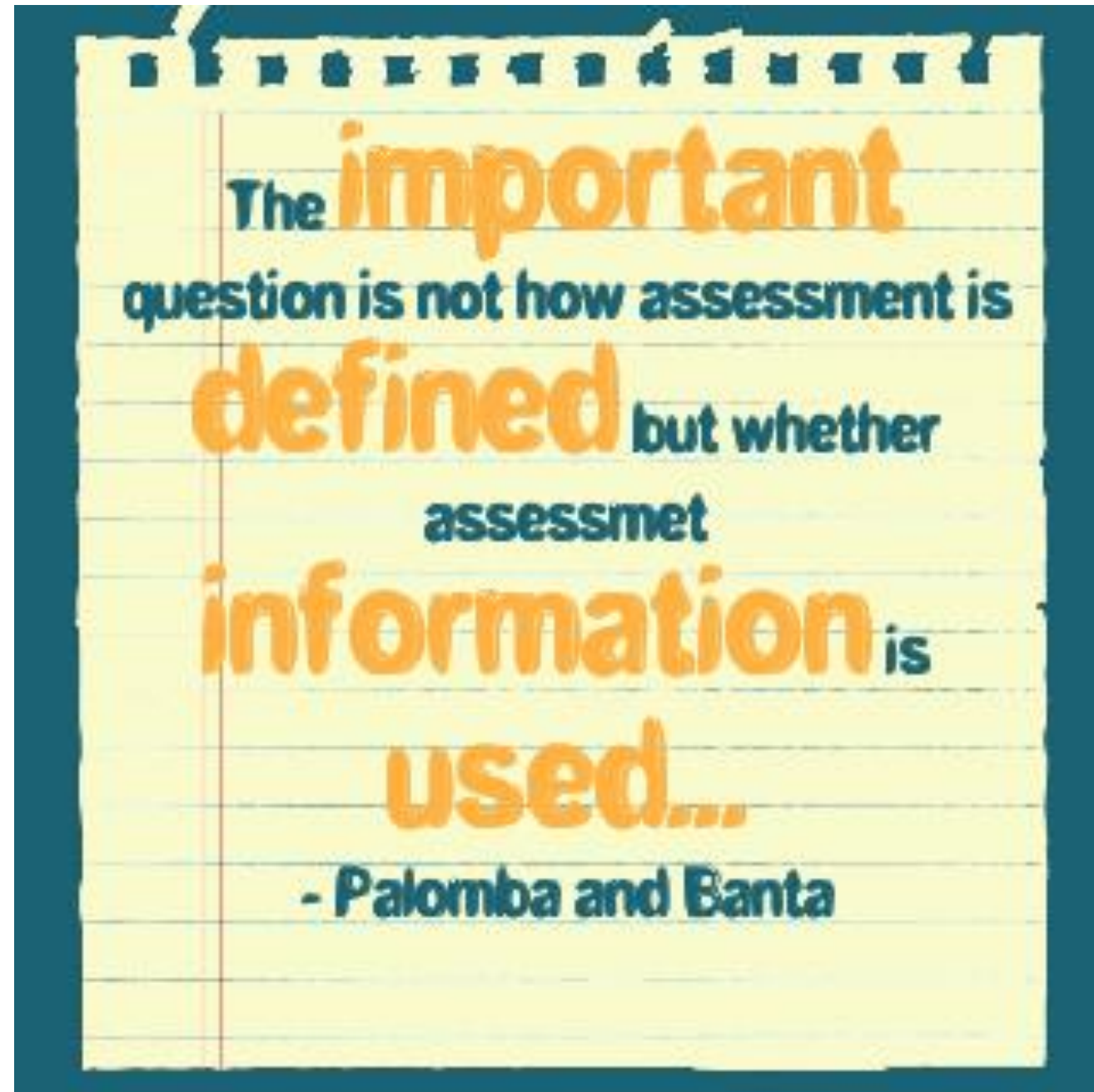
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