Creating an Assessment Plan

Office of the Vice President for Student Life

The University of Iowa

Outline

- Assessment defined
- Elements of an assessment plan
- Creating mission rich student learning outcomes (SLOs)
- Determining essential SLOs
- Determining a cycle for assessment activities

Learning Outcomes

- As a result of this workshop you will be able to…
  - Define assessment
  - Identify the core elements of an assessment plan
  - Create a mission rich student learning outcome
  - Write an essential learning outcome for a program/service
  - Explain the elements of an assessment cycle

Defining our terms

- "Any effort to gather, analyze, and interpret evidence that describes institutional, departmental, divisional, or agency effectiveness"

  (Upcraft & Schuh, 1996, p. 18)

What is assessment?

In practice, assessment is making decisions based on [systematically collected] evidence vs. instinct or tradition.
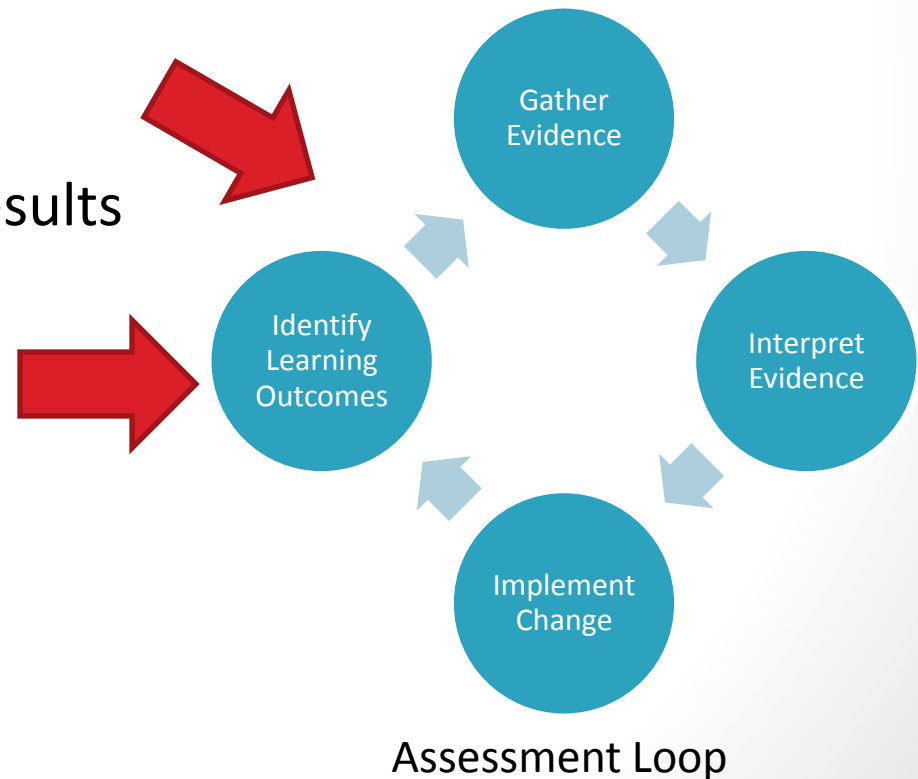
A bit of philosophy

- A way to be mindful in our work
- A means (a type of *disciplined thought*), rather than an end
- Goal is to get better, not just report successes
- Assessment makes a difference when it begins and ends with issues we really care about
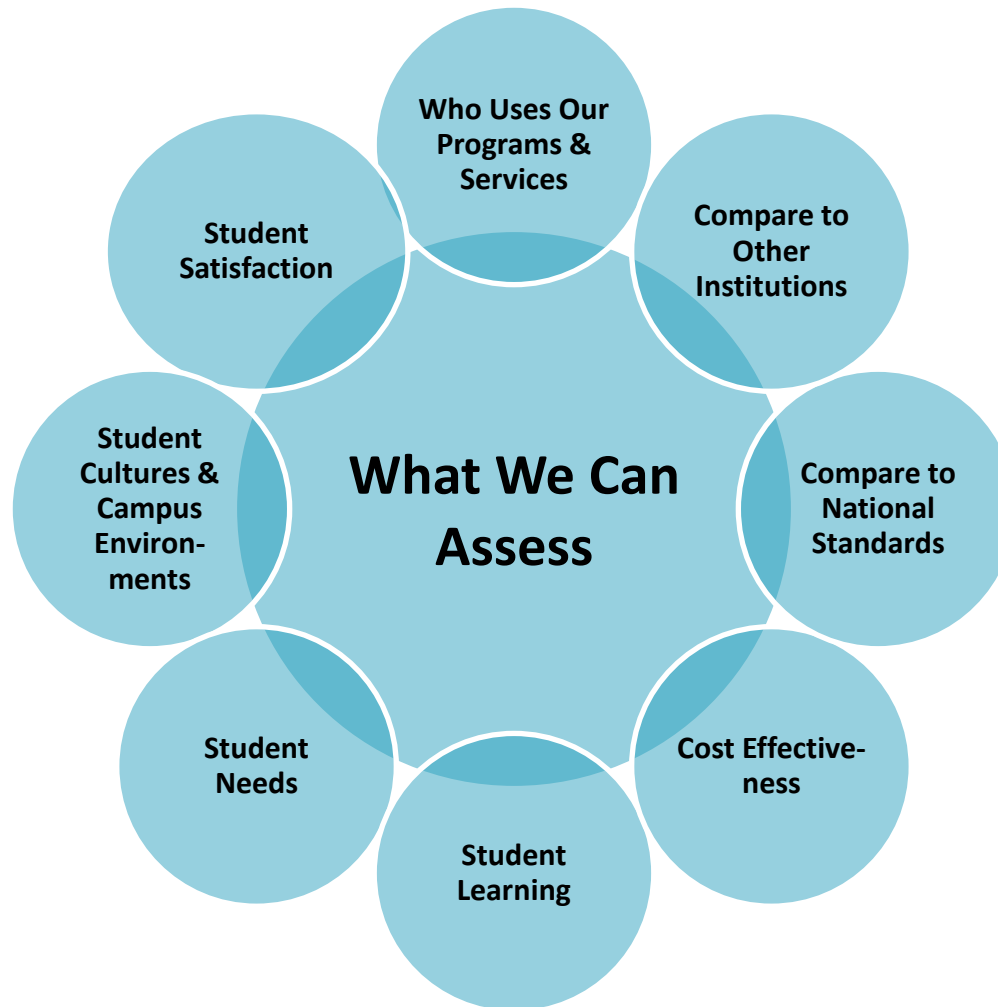
Assessment Plan

- Steps
  - Determine outcomes
  - Define the criteria
  - Choose a method
  - Establish a timeline
  - Determine how to use results

Gather Evidence

Identify Learning Outcomes

Interpret Evidence

Implement Change

Assessment Loop

Outcomes

- Who Uses Our Programs & Services
- Compare to Other Institutions
- Compare to National Standards
- Cost Effective-ness
- Student Learning
- Student Needs
- Student Cultures & Campus Environ-ments
- Student Satisfaction

What We Can Assess

Outcomes

- The Hub
  - Assess customer experience - Satisfaction
  - Assess student employee experience – Student Learning

- Sample Outcomes
  - Customer: The assistance students received was timely.
  - Student employee: Students are able to effectively deal with conflict.

Student Learning Outcomes

- Goals that describe "the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and habits of mind that students take with them from a learning experience" (Suskie, 2009, p. 75)
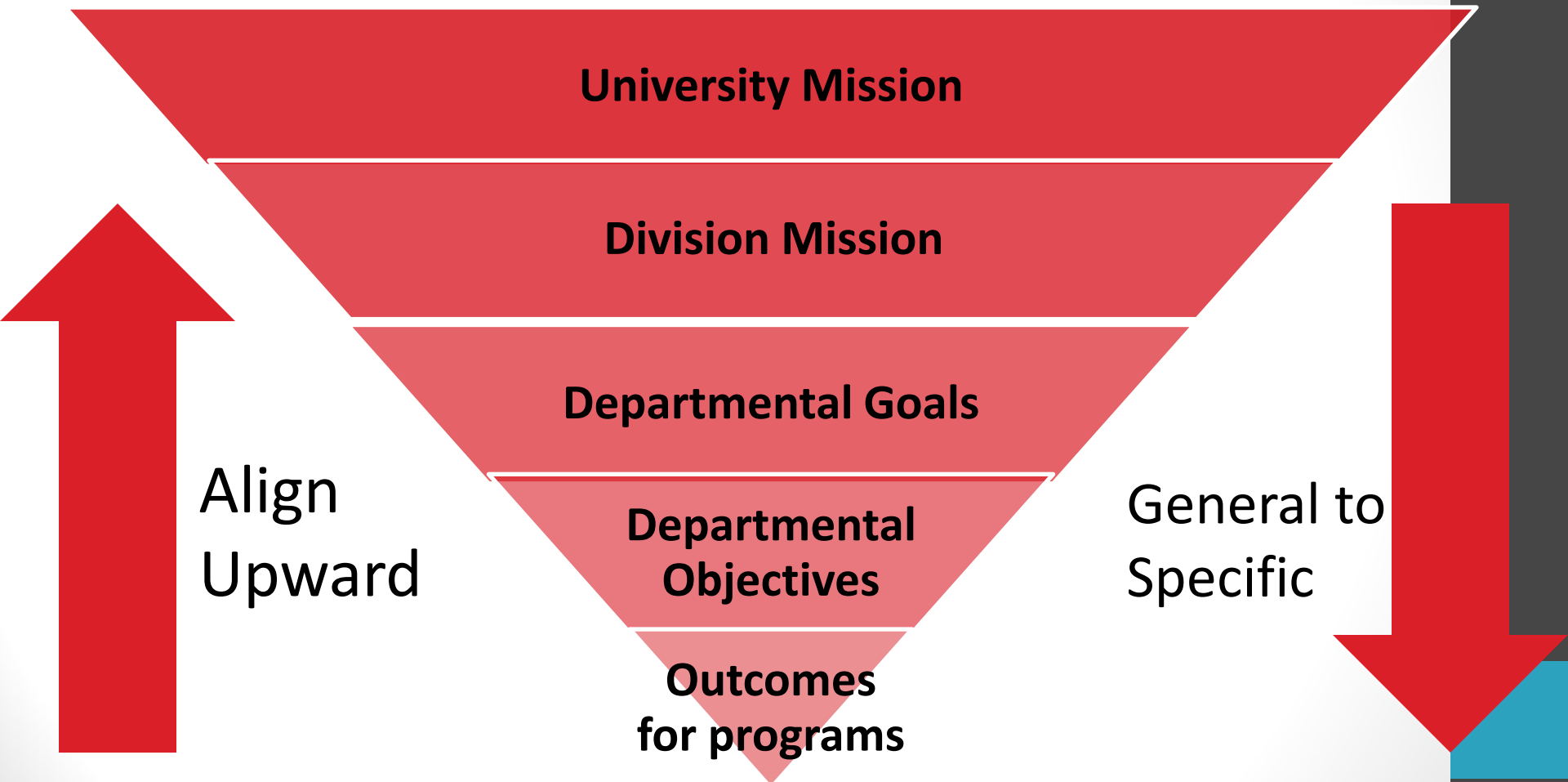
What should students be able to do as a result of the programs and services we provide?

EXPERIENCE

Time 1

Time 2
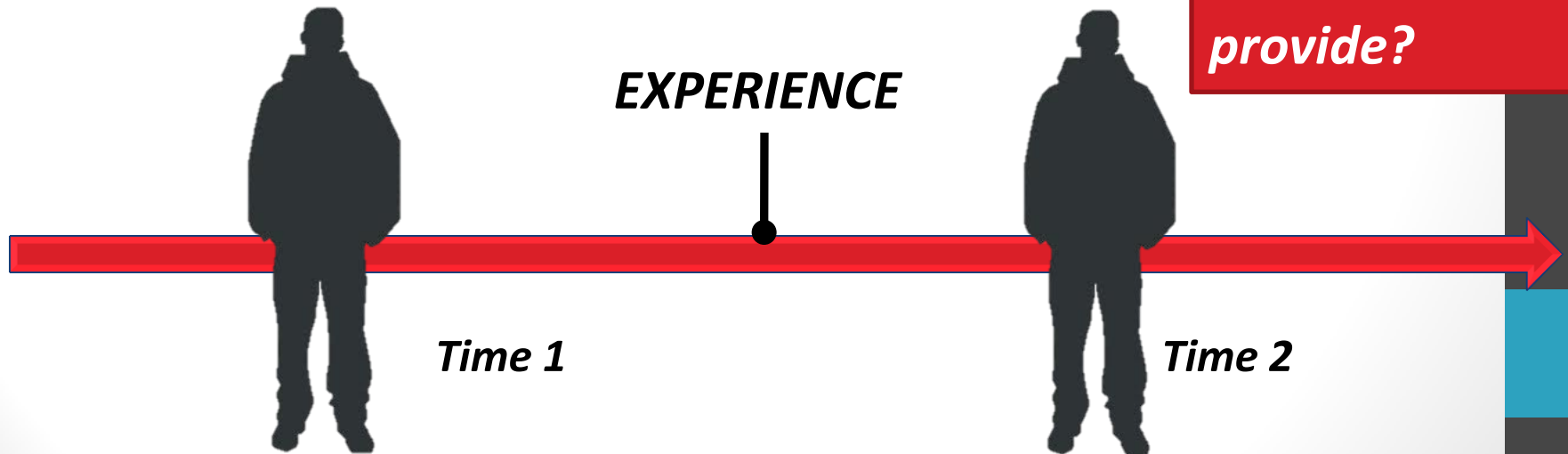
Prioritizing SLOs

- 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

University Mission

Division Mission

Departmental Goals

Departmental Objectives

Outcomes for programs

Align Upward

General to Specific

Example

"To educate students for success and fulfillment in a diverse world..."

"To support student success...through educationally purposeful activities"

"CSIL provides diverse social, cultural, and educational programs..."

"Students participating in Dance Marathon will be able to define philanthropy."
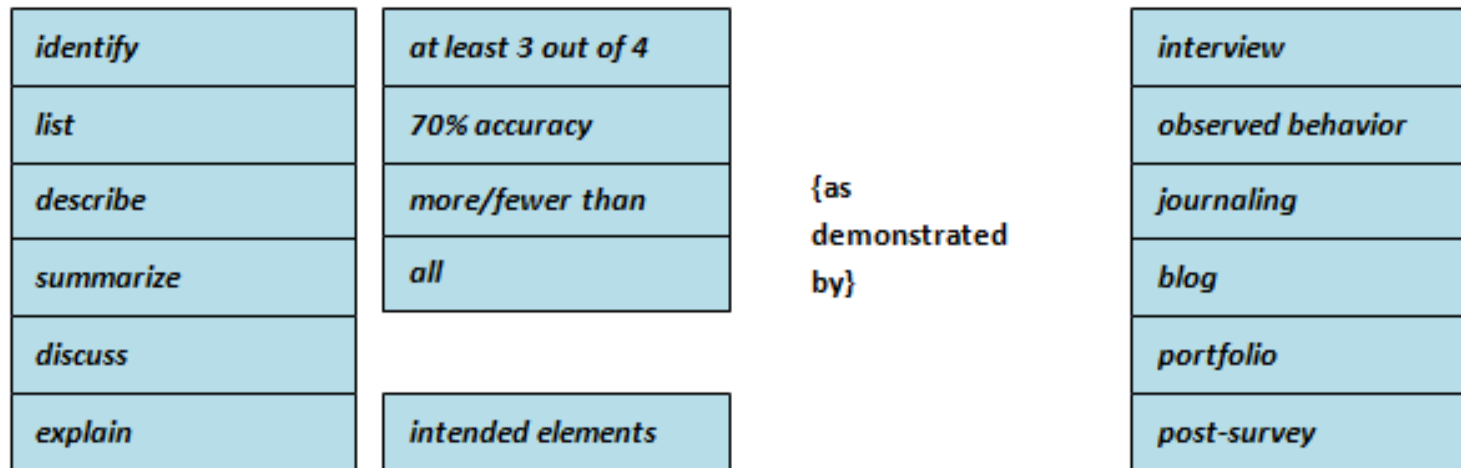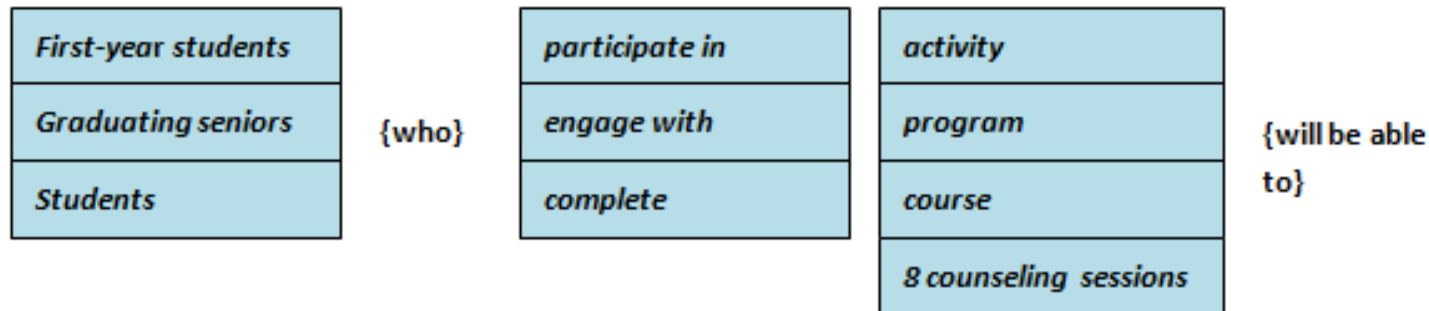
It's all nice, but what's *really* essential?

- What really *has* to happen for you to know that program or service (training, etc.) did its job?

- What *must* occur for you to know that the time and energy devoted to that program or service was well spent?

Format of SLOs

- SWiBAT: Students will be able to _____.
  - Examples:
    - 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 an educational program will be able to identify two strategies for promoting health (Student Health Services)

Format of SLOs

First-year students	{who}	participate in		activity	{will be able to}
Graduating seniors		engage with		program	
Students		complete		course	
				8 counseling sessions	

identify	at least 3 out of 4	{as demonstrated by}	interview
list	70% accuracy		observed behavior
describe	more/fewer than		journaling
summarize	all		blog
discuss			portfolio
explain	intended elements		post-survey

Keeling & Associates, 2007

Desired characteristics of SLOs

- Align with department, division, and institution goals

- Describe a behavior that is:
  - meaningful,
  - specific,
  - measureable, and
  - attainable

- Describe a <u>single</u> behavior

- Describe knowledge, skills, attitudes, and habits of mind (i.e., <u>learning</u>)

Exercise

- Determine **one** outcome that is essential- What really *has* to happen for you to know that program or service (training, etc.) did its job?

- How does this outcome **fit** within the mission of your department, division, etc.?

Criteria

- Example learning outcome: *Students will be able to demonstrate excellent oral communication when presenting their agendas to the student senate*

  - Example criteria:
    - Speaks in a clear voice
    - Uses culturally appropriate eye contact
    - Is dressed appropriately
    - Maintains appropriate posture
    - Is well organized
    - Uses appropriate and meaningful visual aids

Criteria help us know when a learning outcome has been met by describing what meeting that outcome entails or looks like.

Bresciani, Zelna, & Anderson (2004)

Exercise

- Using the outcome you created in the last exercise list **two** criteria for that outcome.

- What does meeting the outcome look like or entail?

Choosing a Method

- The best assessment method is one that gives you useable and useful information.

- The goal is to help you find a method that will best answer your questions about your work.

- All methods and data have flaws.

Before Choosing an Assessment Method…

- Be sure to describe the end result of the outcome by using active verbs
  - This helps articulate the criteria for identifying when the outcome has been met

- Describe how your program [service/training, etc.] is delivering the outcome

- There may be clues in the delivery of the outcome that help you determine how to evaluate it

Choosing a Method

If You Want To…	Consider Using…
Assess thinking and performance skills	Assignments or prompts planned and evaluated using scoring guides or rubrics
Assess knowledge, conceptual understanding, or skill in application and analysis	Multiple choice tests
Assess attitudes, values, dispositions, or habits of mind	Reflective writing, surveys, focus groups, or interviews
Draw an overall picture of student learning	Portfolios
Compare your students against peers elsewhere	Published tests or surveys

Example: Student Health Service

Department Student Learning Outcomes

Students will be active and informed participants in promoting personal and community health

- Students will develop a deeper understanding of their personal health status and the role of environmental influences on health issues and practices.
- Students will make decisions aimed at living a purposeful, healthy, and balanced life.
- Students will recognize and act on the value of a campus environment supportive of health and intolerant of abuse.
- Students will partner with healthcare providers, ask questions, provide information and act upon mutually developed treatment plans.

1. Students that participate in an individual consultation(1)/group education(2)/peer education programs(3) (fitness, nutrition, tobacco, stress, substance abuse) will be able to: Explain the relationship between their behavior and their overall health	
Criteria	**Assessment Method(s)**
• Percent of students that could state how their behavior affects their overall health (a) (b).	• Rubric - Check box: Does not meet, Meets, Exceeds – done at initial consultation

| 2. Students that participate in an individual consultation(1)/group education(2)/peer education programs(3) (fitness, nutrition, tobacco, stress, substance abuse) will be able to: Describe the actions needed to meet their behavior change goals.	
Criteria	**Assessment Method(s)**
• Percent of students that could describe one or more action(s) they planned to incorporate to reach goals (a)	• Rubric - Check box: Does not meet, Meets, Exceeds – done at all consultations

Use of Results

Learning outcomes 1 – 2
- Determine what is working well/what isn't working well
- Identify areas that we need to focus on to meet students' needs
- Track trends over time

Implementation Plan

Learning outcomes 1-2
- Health Iowa staff will incorporate Rubrics (as identified above) into all individual consultations (fitness, nutrition, tobacco, stress & substance abuse) and into follow-up consults as specified by June 1st.
- Health Iowa staff will incorporate Rubrics (as identified above) into all group education (fitness, nutrition, tobacco, stress & substance abuse) and into follow-up consults as specified by July 1st.

Assessment – a cyclical process

Gather Evidence

Interpret Evidence

Implement Change

Identify Learning Outcomes
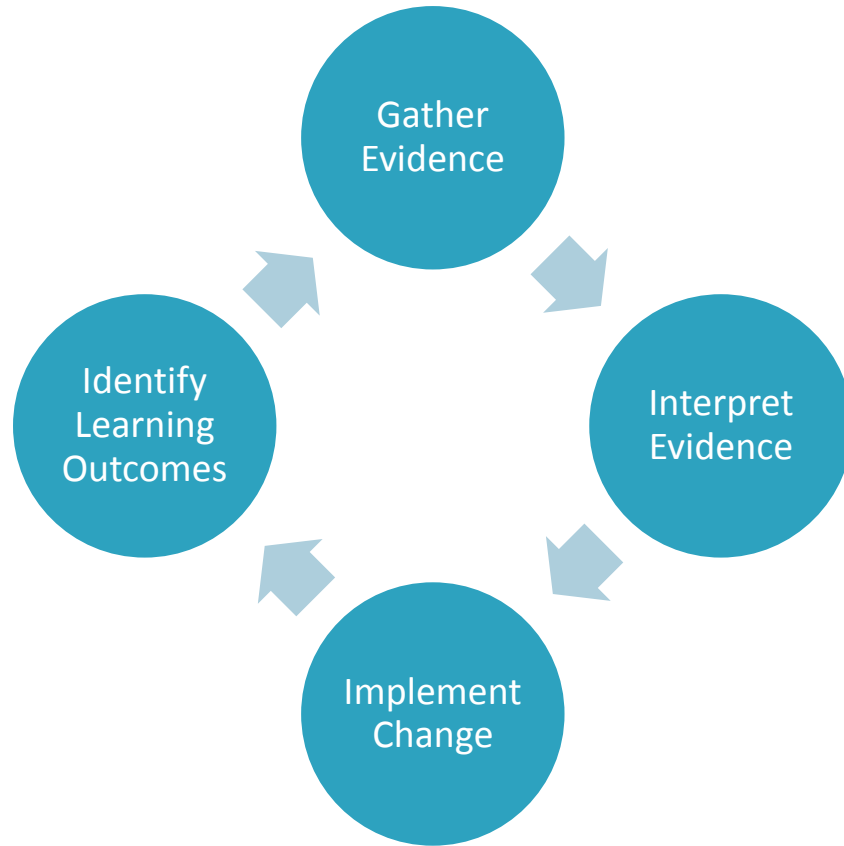
After you implement change, the assessment process begins again, as you assess whether or not the changes you made had their intended effect

Assessment Cycle – the big picture

- Overarching goal is for assessment to be a part of our regular practice rather than an add-on

- Setting an assessment cycle can be a way to assess what we value, and value what we assess, while still keeping assessment manageable, valuable, and do-able.

- Focus on the concept of assessment being *thorough over time*.

Assessment Cycle – the big picture

- It is difficult to assess "everything, all the time" – while everything is important, we are not in a position to act or make change on "everything, all the time"

- Any new program should have learning outcomes and an assessment plan.

- There may be a gap between implementing change and reassessing

Anchor – Departmental Outcomes

- The most effective way to determine an assessment cycle for individual programs/services is to anchor it in higher-level, departmental outcomes or institutional outcomes.

- Departmental outcomes
  - Personal responsibility
  - Multicultural competence
  - Leadership skills
  - Critical thinking skills

- Programs and services are mapped to themes noting which programs respond to which outcomes as their primary focus.

Anchor – Departmental Outcomes

- Develop a cycle
  - Example: 4 years

- Choose an area to focus on each year
  - Personal Responsibility: Year 2013-14
  - Multicultural Competence: Year 2014-15
  - Leadership Skills: Year 2015-16
  - Critical Thinking Skills: Year 2016-17

- Each program which has that outcome area as a primary focus would be assessed during that particular year
  - Example: Dance Marathon

Anchor – Institutional Outcomes

- Outcomes:
  - Gain broad-based knowledge and understanding of human cultures and of the physical and natural worlds.
  - Acquire intellectual and practical skills.
  - Develop personal, intellectual, and social responsibility.
  - Be able to apply knowledge and skills in new settings and situations.

- 4-year cycle – no cohort of students at Iowa would be able to go their entire career without some outcomes assessment in each domain

Elements of an Assessment Cycle

- Timeline – be realistic
- An organizing framework for determining what to assess and when
  - E.g., departmental learning outcomes, Undergraduate Learning Outcomes

Department Learning Outcome	Year(s) when outcome is assessed				
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Every year

Example

Department Learning Outcome	Year(s) when outcome is assessed				
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Every year
Personal responsibility	√				
Multicultural competence		√			
Leadership skills			√		
Critical thinking skills				√	

Resources

- Individual consultations
- Division of Student Life: Student Learning and Assessment website
  - http://studentlife.uiowa.edu/assessment/
- Available Publications page
  - UI Assessment Handbook
  - One Page Information Sheets
  - Books and Journals
  - http://studentlife.uiowa.edu/assessment/tools-for-assessment/available-publications/

Questions?