

## **Outline for Session on Examples of Best Practices in Program Assessment**

Dr. Lynn Merklin, Assistant Provost for Institutional Effectiveness at Andrews University, will introduce the session.

According to *Committing to Quality: Guidelines for assessment and accountability in higher education*, (2012)

The experience, skills, and knowledge students develop through higher education contribute to their personal development and promote their engagement in a democratic society. Breadth of knowledge, appreciation of diverse backgrounds and points of view, and analytical and problem-solving abilities all contribute to a student's capacity for individual growth and responsible citizenship. Personal and family health and rates of civic and political participation are strongly correlated with levels of education. (p. 2)

The achievement of these educational, economic, and political goals requires sustained attention to the quality of student learning. Awarding more degrees will only be meaningful if those degrees reflect a high level of student accomplishment. Persistence and learning are linked. Paying close attention to student engagement in learning and learning outcomes will likely help students remain enrolled and graduate.

The primary responsibility for assessing and improving student learning falls on (two- and four-year) colleges and universities. Those granting educational credentials must ensure that students have developed the requisite knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that prepare them for work, life, and responsible citizenship. U.S. higher education must focus on both quantity and quality — increasing graduation rates and the learning represented in the degree. (p.3)

Committing to quality means setting clear goals for student achievement, regularly measuring performance against those goals, reporting evidence of success, and continuously working to improve results. (p.4)

The general questions I've asked the presenters to consider are:

1. What are the student learning outcomes for your program, and how did you decide on them?
2. What are the primary measures for these outcomes, and when (in the curriculum) are they given?
3. What have you learned from your assessment results?
4. How have you used your assessment results to improve student learning? And has that been successful?

These questions relate to four points discussed in *Committing to Quality: Guidelines for assessment and accountability in higher education*, (2012). These points are:

1. Set ambitious goals
1. Gather evidence of student learning
2. Use evidence to support student learning

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### 3. Report evidence and results

Dr. Meredith Jones Gray, chair of the Department of English at Andrews University, will share the department's experience developing a curriculum map for the BA English program. The specific questions she will discuss are:

1. What are the learning outcomes for English? How did you decide on them? Did you benchmark with other English programs?
2. A. Share your curriculum map (handouts) and what you learned through the mapping process. Where in the curriculum do students encounter or be expected to achieve the outcomes?  
B. How do you plan to measure your outcomes? Will you be able to compare your students' learning with students in any other English programs? (if so, how?)
3. Do you have any tentative results from your measures? If so, is there anything that you have noticed?

Dr. Tom Goodwin, chair of the Department of Biology at Andrews University, will share his department's experience assessing student learning, and analyzing assessment results information learned from these assessments to improve student learning. The specific questions he will answer are:

1. Briefly share the Biology learning outcomes
2. What are the primary measures for these outcomes? How do these measures compare with other biology programs?
3. What is the department process for reviewing assessment data? What have you learned from assessment results? Have you reviewed data across student subgroups (e.g. minorities, first-generation, non-traditional)?
4. How have you used your assessment results to improve student learning? And has that been successful? Do you share any assessment data with stakeholders (students, other departments, public, etc.)? How?

**Reference: *Committing to Quality: Guidelines for assessment and accountability in higher education*, (2012). New Leadership Alliance for Student Learning and Accountability, available at <http://www.newleadershipalliance.org/>.**