Introduction and Purpose
The purpose of this policy is to articulate the function of student learning outcomes assessment at Great Falls College and to clarify campus stakeholders’ roles and responsibilities in carrying out student learning outcomes assessment.

The college encourages a flexible, iterative approach that allows programs and departments to assess student learning in a manner that best fits their goals and unique roles within the institution, while adhering to campus policies and procedures. We believe that effective assessment leads to two critical outcomes: using assessment results to inform decisions and creating a shared understanding of learning goals to enhance and improve curricula, teaching, and learning.

Policy
The college follows a collaborative approach to assessment, with departments and programs responsible for assessing general education or programmatic outcomes, as well as the institutional learning outcomes (College Learning Outcomes). The college’s student learning assessment process furthers two primary goals: 1) helping departments and programs make decisions about curricula and instructional practices to ensure student success, and 2) providing data to support institutional effectiveness, in conjunction with guidelines published by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities.

Faculty Role
Faculty assess student learning at the course level and are the driving force behind effective program-level assessment, as well as assessment of the College Learning Outcomes. Faculty are expected to participate in the assessment activities of their departments/programs in the following ways:

- assessing student learning at the course level using both formative and summative methods;
- identifying course-level assessments that document achievement of program and institutional learning outcomes;
- collecting, documenting, and reporting course-level assessment data to support programmatic and institutional assessment, as outlined in assessment plans;
- participating in annual reviews of department/program learning goals and assessment plans;
- participating in annual reviews of department/program assessment results and the resulting decision-making process;
- revising course content, assessments, and/or instructional practices based on student learning assessment results;
- participating in professional development activities to deepen their understanding of effective outcomes-based assessment practices and instructional design.
Department/Program Role
Department chairs and program directors take an active role in guiding faculty participating in the assessment process. This includes:

- ensuring that courses are accurately aligned with program outcomes and institutional outcomes, as reflected on the department/program assessment plan;
- identifying and referring faculty who need mentoring and support in carrying out the assessment process;
- leading the review and revision of annual reports, including following up on goals to improve effectiveness;
- reporting assessment plan changes to the director of teaching and learning innovation.

Student Learning Assessment Committee Role
The Student Learning Assessment Committee is comprised of faculty representatives from all academic divisions and is chaired by the director of teaching and learning innovation. The committee serves as champions of outcomes-based student learning assessment, promoting its importance to the college mission and supporting ongoing and effective assessment practices by educating and mentoring faculty. The Student Learning Assessment Committee's responsibilities include:

- helping the director of teaching and learning innovation to guide the campus assessment process;
- reviewing and providing collaborative peer feedback on assessment reports;
- mentoring faculty colleagues in applying effective outcomes-based assessment practices.

Administration Role
The director of teaching and learning innovation is responsible for guiding campus student learning assessment efforts, drafting program and institutional assessment reports based on course reflection data, reporting to CPBAC, and mentoring faculty who need support with the assessment process and/or instructional practices. The campus administration recognizes and supports faculty participation in assessment activities, supporting the foundational principle that student learning assessment is an iterative process leading to continuous improvement. Broadly, leadership at the divisional and executive levels:

- encourages faculty to accurately document and report assessment results, including both strengths and weaknesses. Assessment results are never viewed punitively and results demonstrating the need for improvement are viewed as an opportunity;
- accepts recommendations for improvement based on assessment data;
- supports the use of assessment data to make decisions that improve student learning and success, including allocating resources, e.g., time, people, funds, to make those improvements.

Definitions
Great Falls College MSU recognizes assessment as a systematic process of gathering, interpreting, and acting upon student learning data to promote growth and improvement in teaching and learning practices at the course, programmatic, and institutional levels. The essential question examined through student learning assessment is, “Is our curriculum working and how do we know?”

Related Forms/Manuals
Further information and current forms can be found on the assessment website at http://www.gfcmsu.edu/about/assessment/index.html.