Outcomes Assessment Focus Groups
February 2017

Who: Faculty (full-time and adjunct)

What: Focus groups to discuss outcomes assessment process, procedures, and ideas

When: All faculty should select **one** of the below meeting times. Those at a distance will have WebEx meeting choices (coming soon). Send one email to distribution—faculty all for full-time folks, and one email to distribution—adjuncts all for part-time (delete list of Life Long Learning adjuncts).

Outcomes Assessment Focus Group

1. Friday, Feb. 10 8:30-9:45 a.m. **B108**
2. Friday, Feb. 10 12:15-1:30 p.m. **B108**
3. Friday, Feb. 10 1:30-2:45 p.m. **B108**
4. Monday, Feb. 13 12:30-1:45 p.m. **B133**
5. Monday, Feb. 13 2:00-3:15 p.m. **B133**
6. Wednesday, Feb. 15 9:15-10:30 a.m. **B136**
7. Friday, Feb. 17 10:30-11:45 a.m. **B108**
8. Friday, Feb. 17 12:00-1:15 p.m. **B108**
9. ONLINE ONLY: Wednesday, Feb. 15 7:00-8:15 (via WebEx)
10. ONLINE ONLY: Wed., Feb. 22 2:00-3:15 (via WebEx)

Message to include with meeting requests:

Dear colleagues,

As we move forward to meet the NWCCU recommendations regarding learning outcomes assessment, I need your help to evaluate our current process. I will be conducting focus groups/listening sessions so that all faculty have a voice in evaluating our outcomes assessment process. You are going to receive several meeting invitations, but you only need to choose **one** session. Only faculty will be attending these meetings. There are two evening, online sessions scheduled only for faculty working at a distance.

Please plan to accept a meeting invite to **one** of the following sessions (meeting invites following this email):

11. Friday, Feb. 10 8:30-9:45 a.m.
12. Friday, Feb. 10 12:15-1:30 p.m.
13. Friday, Feb. 10 1:30-2:45 p.m.
14. Monday, Feb. 13 12:30-1:45 p.m.
15. Monday, Feb. 13 2:00-3:15 p.m.
16. Wednesday, Feb. 15 9:15-10:30 a.m.
17. Friday, Feb. 17 10:30-11:45 a.m.
18. Friday, Feb. 17 12:00-1:15 p.m.
Focus group questions

1. What does outcomes assessment mean to you?
2. How do you use the outcomes assessment information now?
3. How would you like to be able to use it? How can the outcomes assessment process be more useful/relevant to you as an instructor?
4. How should the CLOs be conveyed to students?
5. Considering our current process, what is working well? (i.e. syllabus outcomes chart, phase IV forms)
6. Considering our current process, what is not working well?
7. What kind of training do you want/need to help improve the way you are able to use outcomes assessment?
8. Institutionally, how can we improve our process? For instance, what should be done with the data that comes from our classes? How should students demonstrate competency in the CLOs?
   a. What should happen if students do not demonstrate competency?
Recommendations for Outcomes Assessment at GFCMSU

Big picture
As a campus, we are on the right track in our outcomes assessment process, but there are some essential steps and processes missing. Beginning with some institutional information finding will set a foundation for continuing to build on and improve our process, with the dual goal of meeting NWCCU’s recommendations and of creating and maintaining a culture of authentic assessment.

Foundation steps:
- Assessment coordinator
  - Coordinates assessment efforts, prodding reluctant people, assisting those who are struggling
  - Part-time basis as part of faculty workload
  - Assist with writing assessment portion of mid-cycle accreditation report
- OA advisory board
  - Consider working with Curriculum Committee as advisory board instead of forming a new or separate assessment committee.
    - Curriculum Committee is already closely involved with curriculum decisions and seem like a logical place to share ideas and gain input on assessment, particularly in early stages.
    - Will offer consistent membership and an already formalized vetting process
- Develop project management framework to set clear plan and schedule for ongoing assessment efforts (see Minneapolis Community and Technical College info from AACC)
- Conduct syllabus audit to gain perspective on which courses are mapping to which CLOs
  - Show if/where any gaps are occurring
  - Opportunity to frame conversation about types and meaningfulness of assessment taking place and
- Begin developing outcomes assessment guide (see Minneapolis Community and Technical College guide) and early training modules
  - Focus on curriculum mapping, setting benchmarks
  - Include examples of direct/indirect assessments, completed examples of forms, definitions of different types of assessments and how they can be used
in outcomes assessment (see Suskie ch. 1-2; Suskie table 2.9 assessment strategies to consider).

- Explore membership in Reflective Learning Institute [https://reflectivepractice.laguardia.edu](https://reflectivepractice.laguardia.edu)
  - Cohort of up to 6 faculty learn reflective learning framework
    - Opportunity for institutional sustainability model where these faculty will train other faculty
  - Offers potential framework to help “close the loop”
  - If membership isn’t an option, consider using *Taking College Teaching Seriously* to help develop a framework and voluntary cohort on campus

- Explore ETS HEIghten outcomes assessment suite as potential software tool to help “close the loop” [http://www.ets.org/heighen/](http://www.ets.org/heighen/)
  - Mandy will attend a webinar on May 17 to learn more
  - Cost is $10 per module per student for 1000+ students

- Continue exploring options of using Google Forms to simplify input process and export results into spreadsheets.
  - Alternatively, explore options to build a simple database for recording and sharing OA data

**Evaluation and growth steps:**

**Begin with General Education courses (AA & AS) to evaluate, improve, and grow the outcomes assessment process. Develop a summative assessment framework of the formative work being done at the course level**

Focus on Gen Ed and AA/AS initially to serve as model and show progress for accreditation, then move to programs

- Programs are already conducting assessment for their own accreditation purposes, but Gen Ed is not as focused
- English department can serve as “guinea pig” department to test and illustrate these steps and serve as an example for the NWCCU mid-cycle report

- **Division**
  - Write divisional mission statement re: student learning, tied to College’s mission and vision
  - Audit AA and AS program outcomes: measurable? Demonstrable?
    - Revise if necessary
  - Determine what role MUS Core outcomes will play in overall mapping—should AA/AS outcomes map to those?
  - Map (revised) program outcomes to CLOs

- **Department**
  - Each department write a mission statement re: student learning
  - Each department choose one course to audit
    - Create common course outline: only include what should and actually
is covered and assessed (see example from Minneapolis Community and Technical College)

- Audit current course objectives: are they measurable? Are there other objectives (i.e., from professional organization like HAPS or NCTE) that would be more appropriate?
- Audit benchmarks and assessment tools: what is working, what isn’t? Set clear benchmarks and consider implementing multiple types of assessment tools.
- Gather evidence to serve as a base-line for previous and future assessment (opportunity to show growth and change in teaching)

> Map course objectives to broader area to be determined by division: either AA/AS outcomes, MUS Core, etc.
  - Determine how course meets those learning goals (introduce, reinforce, demonstrate)—see green chart from Minneapolis

> Use Salt Lake Community College’s college-wide assessment plan as a model for a summative snapshot
  
https://www.slcc.edu/assessment/docs/collegewide_assess_plan.pdf:
  - Link department mission statements, course outlines, evidence, etc.

**Longer-term steps:**

> Based on results from Gen Ed audits and reviews:
  - Using Gen Ed results and experience as a model, ask individual programs to begin audit process
  - Develop a process for Curriculum Committee to review and assess common course outlines (create scoring rubrics)
  - Develop a regular assessment plan cycle to coincide with accreditation cycle. See SLCC’s assessment plan for example.
    - Ideally, faculty will submit an annual report explaining how they closed the loop (perhaps in a narrative format), sent to Assessment Coordinator. See this Google Form as a possible solution:
      - https://drive.google.com/open?id=1AwBHs4e1qFO0djxo7kEa_91dazI0-WAnRs7OzLx4UEY
    - The annual report might include the following information:
      - Time, date, and a list of faculty who participated in the course review
      - Data (student work, scores, a common question, etc.) discussed; conclusions reached regarding the next steps for the course
      - Items chosen by the faculty for action
      - Follow-up plans and action regarding the course
      - Recommendation for items that need action at higher levels than the department.

> Work to create and maintain a culture of assessment on campus
  - Offer training and professional development opportunities
- Assessment vs grading
- How to set benchmarks
- Multiple assessment measures and methods
- Curriculum mapping
- Review current process and forms: consider that current mapping process is not working for all faculty and offer more flexibility in recording and reporting outcomes data
  - Are the current forms asking the right questions?
  - Are the current forms too rigid?
  - How can we get the information we need without being overly rigid?
- Work with faculty to develop signature assignments in key courses that demonstrate student learning via CLOs
  - Use CLO Signature Assignment/Task Proposal Form
    https://goo.gl/forms/EgdwbHkZTA8Tu8303

**Faculty concerns/recommendations**

Faculty members recognize the importance of effective assessment and are interested in improving the outcomes assessment process to continue improving their teaching and students’ learning. Faculty members particularly appreciate the opportunity to reflect on their work (via the LOAF). Based on 9 focus groups conducted with 31 faculty (mix of full-time and adjunct), the following concerns were expressed. For each concern, I have included suggestions and comments made by faculty during the focus groups.

**Need for centralized leadership in outcomes assessment process**

- Create role for Outcomes Assessment Coordinator
  - Facilitate OA process, conduct training, act as assessment champion
- Don’t create more committees or meetings

**General confusion regarding outcomes assessment, its purpose, and procedures**

- Develop campus metrics/goals for CLO attainment and completion
- Develop handbook detailing audience, purpose, and procedures for OA
- Offer training on setting benchmarks, choosing and creating effective assessment tools, curriculum mapping, etc.
  - Explore opportunity to use D2L as platform for training
- Create a FAQ to help faculty easily find quick answers to general OA questions
- Ensure that new faculty and adjuncts have consistent, ongoing support

**Lack of clarity regarding what needs to be assessed, how, and when; one-size approach to OA does not fit across departments, programs, or divisions**

- Consistent guidance on where similarities need to lie between course sections within department (i.e., should there be departmental benchmarks & measurements or is it based on instructor preference)
Consistent reporting standards, i.e. Do we measure benchmarks by # of students completing the course or by # of students enrolled in the course

Work to develop a flexible system that acknowledges the different functions and needs of programs vs general education

- Programs are already meeting their accreditation standards so our campus OA process may be redundant or not meaningful

- Explore different options for reporting; the end of the semester sometimes causes completion of the LOAF to be an afterthought and student evals are not available to help inform changes

Need for meaningful learning goals; State Common Course Numbering course objectives are not always measurable

- Create consistent guidelines for writing and mapping course outcomes
- Refocus our efforts on backwards design and mapping, starting with CLOs and moving down to the course level

Lack of consistent talking points/guidance for helping students understand CLOs and Outcomes Assessment

- Make a short video explaining CLOs and their purpose for students—include in Essential Start or COLS class
- Offer general awareness that CLOs exist, but focus more on how course outcomes impact student learning

Lack of faculty collaboration and transparency in outcomes assessment process

- Make LOAFs or other form of outcomes data more available to faculty across campus to serve as examples and improve communication about what is happening in our courses
- Or, at least ensure that program directors/dept. chairs have access to their area’s forms so they can facilitate discussion among colleagues
- Periodic faculty-wide meetings based on CLOs (i.e., everyone interested in Effective Communication) to share how they are assessing, gather and record evidence
- Focused time during department meetings to discuss and record how learning is happening and assessed in courses

Lack of process/procedures to “close the loop”

- Need central repository for course-level data
- Explore D2L as an option; can the objective tool be used for reporting?

- Develop opportunities for students to show how they have met outcomes/CLOs
- Is it possible to include survey question(s) on course evaluations to determine student perspectives on their learning
- Develop system of signature assignments in “key courses” that specifically assess for CLOs

- Ensure that course learning outcomes and subsequent mapping are done well enough that students can easily meet all CLOs upon program completion