

Measuring Educational Quality

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Dimensions of Educational Quality

- Student Learning Outcomes
- Institutional Effectiveness Outcomes
- The Extent to Which These Outcomes Inform Strategic Planning and Quality Improvement at the Institution

A Look Through The Accreditation Lens

- Accreditation agencies require that colleges and universities focus on continuous quality improvement.
- For purposes of this discussion, we'll focus on the accreditation standards employed by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.
- That said, there is great commonality in accreditation standards across the six regional accrediting bodies in the United States.
- Trustees should be fully aware of what the standards require and insist on evidence of compliance

Middle States Accreditation Standards Expectations: Assessment & Planning

It is the Commission's intent, through the self-study process, to prompt institutions to reflect on those assessment activities currently in place (both for institutional effectiveness and student learning), to consider how these assessment activities inform institutional planning, and to determine how to improve the effectiveness and integration of planning and assessment.

MSCHE Linked Accreditation Standards: Standard 14: Student Learning Outcomes

Assessment of student learning demonstrates that, at graduation, or other appropriate points, the institution's students have knowledge, skills, and competencies consistent with institutional and appropriate higher education goals.

Selected Fundamental Elements for MSCHE Standard 14

- Articulated expectations for student learning (at institutional, degree/program, and course levels)
- Documented, organized, and sustained assessment processes (that may include a formal assessment plan)
- Evidence that student learning assessment information is shared and used to improve teaching and learning
- Documented use of student learning assessment information as part of institutional assessment

MSCHE Linked Accreditation Standards: Standard 7: Institutional Assessment

The institution has developed and implemented an assessment process that evaluates its overall effectiveness in achieving its mission and goals and its compliance with accreditation standards.

Selected Fundamental Elements for MSCHE Standard 7

- Documented, organized, and sustained assessment processes to evaluate the total range of programs and services, achievement of mission, and compliance with accreditation standards
- Evidence that assessment results are shared and used in institutional planning, resource allocation and renewal.
- Written institutional strategic plan(s) that reflect(s) consideration of assessment results

MSCHE Linked Accreditation Standards: Standard 2: Planning, Resource Allocation and Institutional Renewal

An institution conducts ongoing planning and resource allocation based on its mission and goals, develops objectives to achieve them, and utilizes the results of its assessment activities for institutional renewal. Implementation and subsequent evaluation of the success of the strategic plan and resource allocation support the development and change necessary to improve and to maintain quality.

Selected Fundamental Elements for MSCHE Standard 2

- Clearly stated goals and objectives that reflect conclusions drawn from assessments that are used for planning and resource allocation at the institutional and unit levels
- Planning and improvement processes that are clearly communicated, provide for constituent participation, and **incorporate the use of assessment results**
- Assignment of responsibility for improvement and assurance of accountability

Student Learning Outcomes

Student Learning Outcomes

- Assessment of student learning is at the core of demonstrating overall institutional effectiveness.
- Assessment of student learning is a direct response to the inadequacy of student grades for describing general student learning outcomes.

According to Paul Dressel of Michigan State University
(1983), Grades Are:

“ An inadequate report of an inaccurate judgment by a biased and variable judge of the extent to which a student has attained an undefined level of mastery of an unknown proportion of an indefinite material. ”

What Should Be Assessed

- Discipline-specific learning outcomes: What are the basic competencies that we expect all graduates in this discipline to manifest? Do the learning outcomes for courses within the discipline clearly tie to these competencies?
- General education learning outcomes: What are the basic competencies that we expect all graduates of the institution to manifest? How are these competencies measured within the disciplines and at the institutional level of analysis?

There is no “one size fits all” approach to assessment of learning across the disciplines

None of these should be applied to evaluation of individual student performance for purposes of grading and completion/graduation status.

1. Standardized Tests
 - General Education or Discipline Specific
 - State, Regional, or National Licensure Exams
2. Locally Produced Tests/Items
 - “Stand Alone” or Imbedded
3. Portfolios/Student Artifacts
 - Collections of Students’ Work
 - Can Be Time Consuming, Labor Intensive, and Expensive
4. Final Projects
 - Demonstrate Mastery of Discipline and/or General Education
5. Capstone Experiences/Courses
 - Entire Course, Portion of a Course, or a Related Experience (Internship, Work Placement, etc.)

Institutional Effectiveness

Excellent Resource

- Taylor, B.E. and Massy, W.F. *Strategic Indicators for Higher Education: Vital Benchmarks and Information to Help You Evaluate and Improve Your Institution's Performance*. Princeton, New Jersey: Peterson's, 1996.

10 Key Strategic Indicators for Institutional Health

1. Revenue Structure
2. Expenditure Structure
3. Excess (Deficit) of Current Fund Revenues Over Current Fund Expenditures
4. Percentage of Freshman Applicants Accepted and Percentage of Applicants Who Enroll
5. Ratio of Full Time Students to Full Time Faculty

Major Revenue Streams

- Tuition and Fees
- Governmental Appropriations
- Contracts and Grants
- Endowment Income
- Sales and Services of Educational Activities
- Auxiliary Operations
- Other

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Major Expenditure Categories

- Instruction
- Research
- Public service
- Academic Support
- Student Services
- Institutional Support
- Operation and Maintenance of Plant
- Student Aid
- Mandatory Transfers
- Non-Mandatory Transfers
- Auxiliary Enterprises

Note: The term "Education and General Expenditures" refers to the core costs of doing business related to the institution's mission of teaching, research, and service. It does not include non-mission related activities which typically fall under the umbrella of auxiliary enterprises.

10 Key Strategic Indicators for Institutional Health

6. Institutional Scholarship and Fellowship Expenditures as a Percent of Total Tuition and Fees Income
7. Tenure Status of Full Time Faculty
8. Percent of Total Full Time Equivalent Employees Who Are Faculty
9. Estimated Maintenance Backlog as a Percentage of the Replacement Value of Plant
10. Percent of Living Alumni Who Have Given At Any Time During The Past Five Years

Institutional Planning

Words of Wisdom

“The nicest thing about not planning is that failure comes as a complete surprise and is not preceded by a period of worry and depression.”

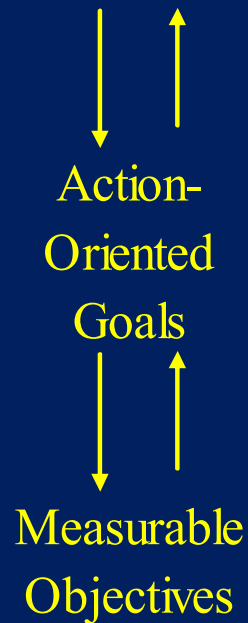
John Preston, Boston College

“A common mistake that people make when trying to design something completely foolproof is to underestimate the ingenuity of complete fools.”

Douglas Adams, *Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy*

Cornerstones of the Planning Process

Institutional Mission



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Central Threads Running Through All Accreditation Requirements:

- Planning must be systematic
- Planning must be rooted in an institution's mission
- Planning must be predicated on analytical and evaluative information
- Planning must be used for institutional decisions, including resource allocation

General Discussion and Questions

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