



Center for Teaching Excellence Hampton University Teaching Matters

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Outcome Assessment at the Program Level

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Institutional Assessment Facilitator

As your “assessment geek,” I have the opportunity to speak with you every now and then about measurement. The topic of measurement and assessment is becoming more and more important in a world that demands accountability. The demand for accountability is evidenced clearly by the U.S. Department of Education mandates and recommendations to regional accrediting bodies including our own, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). Some of us believe that the U.S. Department of Education is looking at an outcome-based approach similar to No Child Left Behind for the post-secondary level. Of course, these initiatives of accountability have great impact on how we develop our syllabi, instructional objectives, and specific intended learner outcomes at the individual course level. For some of us at the post-secondary level, we shout about an infringement on our academic freedom in the classroom, while others of us seek to determine how we can adapt everything we are already doing to meet these accountability challenges. Both of these views can be accommodated while focusing on student learning.

How do we prepare for a focus on student learning? As I stated in my first communication with you, “we begin with the end in mind.” We start again with our driving concerns of what we expect our students to know and be able to do at the end of instruction. This requires a lot of work up front, especially for those courses with many sections taught by different professors. If you and your colleagues can sit down and have an honest discussion about the instructional objectives of the course (what we expect a student to know and be able to do), the overall program and the students will benefit. If there is more than one section of the course taught by others, you can maintain your academic freedom by developing your specific intended learning outcomes or adding other instructional objectives. In either situation, your course may also provide data for your departmental/program objective(s).

Once you decide upon your specific intended learner outcomes, you must then decide how to assess whether or not the student achieved the intended learner outcomes. Developing assessments for each specific intended learner outcome should not be taken lightly. This process includes designing rubrics to assess student performance. The Center for Teaching Excellence has provided you with several ongoing sessions related to how to

select the appropriate assessment for the specific intended learner outcome. Once you complete your initial development of assessments, you are not through. Assessments are developed over time and in light of evidence. This is a part of the iterative process of continuous improvement.

The specific intended learner outcomes must be evident in your syllabi along with the assessment procedure and rubrics. This practice will clearly tell all what your expectations are for a student in this course as well as what a successful student will know and be able to do at the end of instruction. This is where everyone wins! I have found that when my students know in advance *what* my expectations are and *how* they will be assessed, the students perform better. As a student myself, I always had two priorities in a class: my grade and a desire to learn! With all the secrets out of the way about how to earn a grade, your students may actually focus on a desire to learn.

Announcements

During the Spring 2008 semester, the CTE Associates will be available to conduct school-wide workshops on assessment, pedagogy, technology, research and advisement. Please contact us if you would like to schedule a workshop in any of these areas. We would be happy to accommodate you.

The *Grant Institute's Grants 101: Professional Grant Proposal Writing Workshop* will be held at the University of Richmond, March 13 - 15, 2008. Interested development professionals, researchers, faculty, and graduate students should register as soon as possible, as demand means that seats will fill up quickly. Please forward, post, and distribute this e-mail to your colleagues and listservs. All participants will receive certification in professional grant writing from the Institute. For more information call (888) 824 - 4424 or visit The Grant Institute at www.thegrantinstitute.com.

The *Grant Institute's Grants 101: Professional Grant Proposal Writing Workshop* will be held in Dover, Delaware, June 18 - 20, 2008. Interested development professionals, researchers, faculty, and graduate students should register as soon as possible, as demand means that seats will fill up quickly. Please forward, post, and distribute this e-mail to your colleagues and listservs. All participants will receive certification in professional grant writing from the Institute. For more information call (888) 824 - 4424 or visit The Grant Institute at www.thegrantinstitute.com.