Assessment Methods for Measuring Student Learning & Engagement

In order to gather evidence of student learning, a variety of assessment methods, direct and indirect, qualitative and quantitative methods, should be used to give adequate feedback to the program to identify strengths and weaknesses.

Types of Assessment Measures

Direct Measures

Direct measures are probably more familiar to teaching faculty. The strength of direct measurement is that faculty members are capturing a sample of what students can do, which can be very strong evidence of student learning. A possible weakness of direct measurement is that not everything can be demonstrated in a direct way, such as values, perceptions, feelings, and attitudes.

Examples of Direct Measures

- Course – embedded assessment (Homework assignment, Essays, Locally developed tests)
- Pre and Posttests
- Senior thesis or major project
- Case studies
- Reflective journals
- Capstone projects

Indirect Measures

An indirect measure is based upon a report of perceived student learning. The reports can come from many perspectives, including students, faculty, internship supervisors, transfer institutions, and employers. Indirect measures can provide additional information about what students are learning and how this learning is valued by different constituencies. However, as evidence of student learning, indirect measures are not as strong as direct measures because we have to make assumptions about what exactly the self-report means. For example, if students report that they have attained a particular learning goal, how do we know that their report is accurate? The strength of indirect measurement is that it can assess certain implicit qualities of student learning, such as values, feelings, perceptions, and attitudes, from a variety of perspectives. The weakness of this approach is that, in the absence of direct evidence, assumptions must be made about how well perceptions match the reality of actual achievement.

Examples of Indirect Measures

- Student Survey
- Exit interviews
- Focus groups
- Graduation and retention rates