**What is assessment?**

Assessment is the systematic collection, review, and use of information about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning and development.

*Palomba & Banta*

The systematic and regular gathering and analyzing of both qualitative and quantitative data in order to facilitate the continuous improvement of each program, to guide resource allocation, and to assist the administration in making decisions about programs.

*Austin Community College*

**What are the different levels of assessment?**

Assessment of student learning can be conducted at various levels including the institutional, program, and classroom level as well as with individual students. Assessment at each of these levels is guided by the goal of increasing student learning. Even though this document focuses on program level assessment, the information and tools are applicable to other levels.

**What is program level assessment?**

The curriculum of an academic program consists of many courses as well as other learning opportunities that may include internships, field work, projects, and service learning opportunities. Program assessment is the “systematic and ongoing method of gathering, analyzing, and using information from various sources about a program and measuring program outcomes in order to improve student learning.” This is accomplished by determining what the program’s graduates know, what they can do with the knowledge, and what they value as a result of the knowledge. Program assessment is often called student learning outcomes assessment since the emphasis is placed on the learning, development, and growth of students.

*Adapted from definitions by Huba and Freed, 2000; Hutchings and Marchese, 1990; and Palomba and Banta, 1999*
What is the purpose of assessment?
Assessment serves a variety of purposes including demonstrating accountability to stakeholders, increasing institutional effectiveness, and especially improving programs to increase student learning. Assessment provides academic programs with the tools and the information to make improvements to the curriculum in order to effectively assist students in the mastery of their knowledge, skills, and values.

What are the benefits of program assessment?
Listed below are a few of the many benefits of assessment:

- **Program Improvement** - Assessment provides information for programs to determine how they can be improved
- **Program Instruction** - Results of assessments can be used by faculty to assist them in reviewing and revising their instruction strategies and methods
- **New Courses & Course Revisions** - Assessment of SLO will assist programs in revising existing course content as well as developing the content for new courses
- **Curriculum Revision** - SLO assessment allows programs to determine whether redundancy occurs and where gaps exist in the curriculum
- **Increased Learning Awareness** (for students) - By participating in SLO assessments, students will know what learning is expected of them as well as the criteria used to grade both assignments and tests
- **Improved Marketing Materials** - Assessment findings can be included in current materials used to promote programs as well used to develop new marketing strategies and materials
- **Resource Allocation** - Assessment can provide information to assist in determining appropriate allocation of resources
- **Stakeholder Communication** - The results of program assessments should be communicated to stakeholders in order to demonstrate accountability of student learning
- **Accreditation Requirements** - Participating in the ongoing process of assessment will demonstrate to accreditation bodies that the academic programs are achieving accreditation requirements

Who participates in assessment?
Assessment should be conducted collaboratively within each program. It is recommended that programs form a “program assessment team/task force” that involves faculty, students, as well as external members. Collaboratively sharing in the assessment process, results in greater efficiency and effectiveness.

What is the role of faculty in assessment?
Faculty are involved in every step of the assessment process. Faculty establish student learning outcomes, identify the methods to assess them, review the data to determine whether the outcomes have been achieved, and recommend program improvement
initiatives. Faculty participation is essential to successful and meaningful program assessment.

**What is the role of students in assessment?**
The assessment process will assure students that upon successful completion of their program, they will have the essential knowledge, skills, and values for either employment or transfer.

**When does assessment take place?**
In meeting the requirements of the SUNY Assessment Initiative, programs are to participate in a continuous cycle of assessment. SUNY recommends that programs follow a five to seven year assessment cycle. Programs are encouraged to align any accreditation requirements with SUNY assessment initiatives. A (SUNY) schedule of assessment for academic programs can be found in Appendix #.