SELECT AN APPROPRIATE
<u>ASSESSMENT TOOL</u>

- Examine an outcome and its rubric.

- Decide which type of measure is needed (indirect or direct)

- Review assessments already used in your discipline, unit or service area and decide if any assessments already exist that address the outcome (or, with a bit of tweaking, can be made to fit).

- Check what colleagues at other colleges are using or research texts on the subject.

When selecting an assessment tool, it is important to know the type of measures available. Measures generally fall into one of two categories; indirect-measures or direct-measures.

Indirect measures examine perceptions relative of an outcome. They may collect information regarding individuals' perceptions of how well they completed a task or what they feel has been learned. Examples of indirect-measures (adapted from Suskie, 2009) include:

- Student satisfaction surveys

- Graduation or retention rates

- Student participation rates

- Admission rate into transfer programs

- Reflective essays

- Amount of time spent at extra-curricular activities related to course

- Focus Groups/Exit interviews

- Length of time to a degree

- Activity Volume

- Quality Survey

- Job placement data

Direct measures examine the actual results of completing a task (e.g., essay, test, exercise, and performance) and are evaluated by an expert or authority (e.g., instructor, national testing service). Examples of direct-measures (apdapted from Suskie, 2009) include:

- Scores and pass rates on licensure or certification exams

- Written work, performances or presentations

- Scores on locally-designed tests or essays (e.g., final examinations)

- Observation of student behavior

- Summaries and assessment of online class discussion threads

- Course/assignments evaluated using a rubric

- Evaluation of capstone course experiences

- Internship supervisor ratings of student skills

- Score gains between entry and exit tests

- Meeting of professional standards

- Evaluations

Employing the use of any evaluation method as listed in CurricuNet
http://www.curricunet.com/southwestern/

- Case studies

- Competency-based written and practical tests

- Essays

- Homework assignments

- Individual activities

- Objective tests

- Oral assignments

- Oral presentations

- Problem solving activities

- Quizzes

- Term papers

- Written assignments

When selecting an assessment tool, please consider the amount of time, resources and support you have to conduct measures. Yes, we want a method of assessment that is both systematic and reliable, but also one that can be completed within a reasonable time frame and with a reasonable amount of effort.

An excellent strategy to save both time and energy is opting for **embedded assessments**. Embedded assessments are measures that are already a part of your course, program or unit. Quite likely, there is no need to create additional surveys, papers, essays, tests, performances or projects to measure learning outcomes if there are already sound assessment tools (measures) in place.

Below are some questions about **embedded assessments** your program or unit already uses.
Student Services and Co-Curricular Units:

- What surveys are already in place? Can a survey be tweaked a bit to allow for additional questions to measure outcomes?

- If you don't have a survey in place, can one be easily created? Is there a place to distribute a questionnaire (next to a register or information counter) and collect student comments (e.g., an accessible box)? Or, is it possible to direct students to an online questionnaire?

- Can individuals interacting with students ask a couple of questions at the beginning, middle or end of an interaction and keep a tally of student responses on a checklist?

- Is there a computer program that already tracks student progress in regards to using services in your unit?

Classrooms and Academic Programs:

- Consult with colleagues to discern which assignments already exist in courses and how they can be used to measure learning outcomes.

- Consider revising existing tests, essays, papers and other assignments to add testing elements that allow for outcome assessment.

- Can you rearrange your existing assignments or delete old assignments then add new assignments to the course?

Integrating assessment into what you already do minimizes workload; creating new assessments and measuring outcomes outside of your regular duties adds to workload. We can collect accurate and reliable data and save time by using embedded assessments.

Please check the following sources for samples of reliable assessment tools.

1. **The Research & Planning Group for California Community Colleges website (http://www.rpgroup.org/), lists common assessments, their purposes and alignments to Bloom's Taxonomy.**

2. **Four excellent sources can be found in the Southwestern College Library.**
   <u>Assessing for Learning: Building a Sustainable Commitment Across The Institution</u>
   by Peggy L. Maki

   <u>Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide</u>
   by Linda Suski

Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers
by Thomas Angelo and Patricia Cross.

Effective Grading: A Tool for Learning and Assessment in College
by Barbara Walvoord and Virginia Johnson Anderson

Of the four sources, Classroom Assessment Techniques is the most comprehensive.

3. **On-campus workshops focused specifically on choosing appropriate assessment tools. Please visit the Staff Development page for details. (http://www.swccd.edu/~staffdev/Calendar/Calendar.asp)**

How Much Data Should Be Collected?

It is important to consider the amount of time, resources and support available for conducting assessments. It would be great if we could track every single assignment produced by every single student in every single one of his or her classes, and to track every single interaction every single student has with campus services, but the truth is we cannot. Further, according to the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (ASCCC) we should not.

> *Another important issue regarding outcomes assessment is the matter of student privacy. If course-level assessment focuses no areas in which learning can be improved by changes in the instructor's practice and methods, then the names of individual students are not relevant. Indeed, compiling data for individual students might even prove detrimental to assessment processes, as it could shift attention to the performance of specific students, each with their own needs and personal obstacles, rather than to the overall effectiveness of the teaching and learning in the course. In addition, even in regard to SLO assessment, the information regarding individual student performance remains subject to student privacy rights. Recording of data for individual students is therefore unnecessary to student learning outcomes assessment, and colleges need to exercise great care regarding the ways in which student information is compiled and stored. As software tools become more powerful and subject increasingly to control by external vendors, colleges must take all necessary precautions to safeguard students' privacy.*
>
> *ASCCC, 2010*

When collecting data, Walvoord (2010) offers two pieces of advice:

1. If you and your colleagues are going to put in the time and effort to measure outcomes, only collect data you will use. If you collect data just for the sake of collecting data (to meet program review and WASC standards), you're wasting your time and the collection of data is futile. Only collect information that will be useful.

2. It is better to collect a small amount of useful and reliable data than to collect a lot of unreliable data that you won't use.