Assessment and Improvement:

Enduring Principles, Promising Opportunities

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Session Resources

Website:

https://go.iu.edu/8rKh

QR Code:

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About Stephen

Professor of Organizational Leadership

Serve as Founding Executive Director of the Center for Leading Improvements in Higher Education:

- Chair of the Assessment Institute in Indianapolis
- Chair of the International Conference on Assessing Quality in Higher Education
- Editor of *Assessment Update*
- Series Editor of the Assessment and Improvement book series
- Host of *Leading Improvements in Higher Education* podcast

Held various leadership roles in higher education

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Learning Goals for Our Time Together

Upon conclusion of this session, you should be able to:

- Explain the importance of assessment and its significance to higher education

- Identify some enduring principles related to assessment

- Describe some promising opportunities for assessment

- Promote a culture of assessment and improvement in your context

- Use resources from the Assessment Institute in Indianapolis and elsewhere

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About the Assessment Institute in Indianapolis

- **Oldest and largest U.S. event** focused on assessment and improvement

- **International Conference** on Assessing Quality in Higher Education

- *Assessment Update*, a bimonthly periodical with Wiley

- **Assessment and Improvement Book Series** with Routledge/Taylor & Francis

- *Leading Improvements in Higher Education* podcast

- **Free Webinar Series** offered from throughout the year via Zoom

- **Partnerships** with several national associations and research organizations

- **Resources** at go.iu.edu/assessmentinstitute

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Initial Discussion

What is assessment?

Why is assessment important?

How is assessment used in your context?

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Enduring Principles

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Definition/Purpose of Assessment

- **Systematic analysis of *credible evidence* involving**:
  - Resources (faculty, students, facilities, budgets, etc.)
  - Processes (curriculum, teaching, instructional technology, services, etc.)
  - Outcomes (learning, program effectiveness, institutional effectiveness, etc.)

- **To improve:**
  - Institution-level instruction
  - Program-level instruction
  - Course- and activity-level instruction
  - Assignment-level instruction
  - Services, experiences, and operations in higher education
  - Student learning and success

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Watchwords for Higher Education in 2025

Relevance

Evidence

Perseverance

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Significance of Assessment: *Why?*

- Concern about the real costs of college

- Concern about the opportunity costs of college

- Concern about evidence of collegiate outcomes

- Concern about governmental, employer, and societal expectations of graduates

- Concern about the return-on-investment of a college degree

- Other concerns?

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Significance of Assessment: *How?*

- Feedback from stakeholders

- Productivity measures and cost analyses

- Accreditation, program review, and peer review feedback

- Rankings, reputation, and stakeholder engagement

- Institutional effectiveness and related determinants of quality

- Student achievement of learning outcomes:
  What do we want students to know/be able to do upon completion of ___?

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Significance of Assessment: *Where?*

- At the time of graduation and beyond:
  - Goals for higher education graduates

- Through Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) cascaded and aligned across campus:
  - Institutional-level SLOs
  - Program-level SLOs
  - Course- and Activity-level SLOs
  - Assignment-level SLOs

- With resources to support a learning-centric culture:
  - Mission, vision, values and strategic plan
  - Offices and committees
  - Processes and tools

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Goals for Higher Education Graduates

- Demonstrating civic mindedness

- Finding employment

- Engaging in lifelong learning

- Pursuing graduate and professional education

- Thriving in a diverse and global world

- Remaining connected to us as alumni

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Institutional-level Student Learning Outcomes

- What we expect students of any program to know and be able to do at the time of graduation from our institution

- These institutional student learning outcomes are often introduced in First Year Experiences and General Education Courses

- They get reinforced in discipline-specific, inter- and multi-disciplinary courses, and through other venues for learning, including the co-curriculum

- Example: Profiles of Learning for Undergraduate Success from IU Indianapolis

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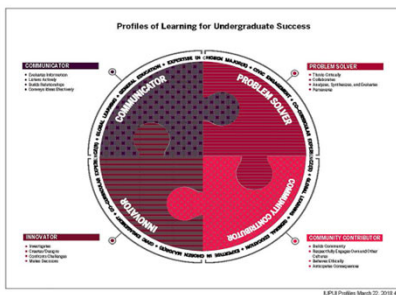
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Program-level Student Learning Outcomes

- What students should know and be able to do upon completion of a specific academic program (degree, certificate, minor, or credential)

- Program-level learning outcomes should be derived from and aligned with institutional-level learning outcomes

- Curriculum mapping is a useful way to identify the courses in which learning outcomes get introduced, reinforced, and/or assessed

- Program-level learning outcomes also inform course- and activity-level learning outcomes

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Course- and Activity-level Student Learning Outcomes

- These include academic, experiential, community, global, and co-curricular learning (with on- and off-campus partners)

- Course-level learning outcomes should be derived from and aligned with the program- and institutional-level learning outcomes

- Activity-level learning outcomes are the comparable interventions occurring in out-of-class settings

- Issues include course creep, multi-section alignment, and instructor style and emphasis

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Assignment-level Student Learning Outcomes

- Assignments are ways in which course-level learning is assessed

- Quality of assignment design and explicit relationship to learning goals are necessary (e.g., Transparency in Learning and Teaching, or TiLT; use of rubrics)

- Everything we ask students to do, assignment-wise, should intentionally scaffold to a course-level learning goal

- Issues include clarity of assignment, implementation fidelity, and periodic review of all assignments in courses/programs to ensure intended instructional approaches are appropriate (e.g., individual vs. group work; foundation-intermediate-advanced assignments; use of High Impact Practices, or HIPs)
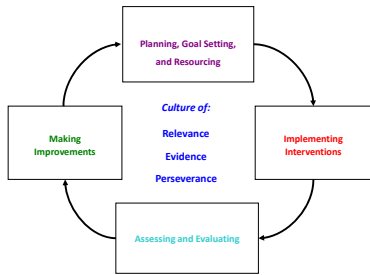
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Foundations of Support

- Mission, vision, values, and strategic plan

- Offices and committees

- Processes and tools

- Integrative aspects of all of these

- Includes an understanding of our collective responsibilities to promote a **culture of relevance, evidence, and perseverance**
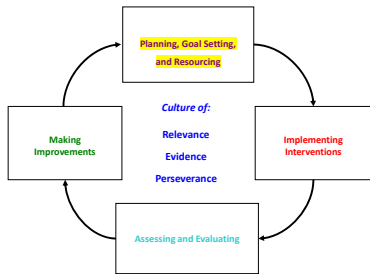
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Promoting a Culture of Relevance, Evidence, and Perseverance

Planning, Goal Setting, and Resourcing

Culture of:
Relevance
Evidence
Perseverance

Making Improvements

Implementing Interventions

Assessing and Evaluating

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Promoting a Culture of Relevance, Evidence, and Perseverance

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Planning, Goal Setting, and Resourcing

- Mission/vision/values and strategic/academic/enrollment plans to inform goals for student learning and success across "altitudes" and contexts

- Develop/revise learning goals to articulate what students should know/do from completing a program/course/assignment/experience

- Use a program curriculum map to identify where learning goals get introduced, reinforced, and assessed, including an assessment schedule

- Secure and (re)allocate resources to support plans and goals

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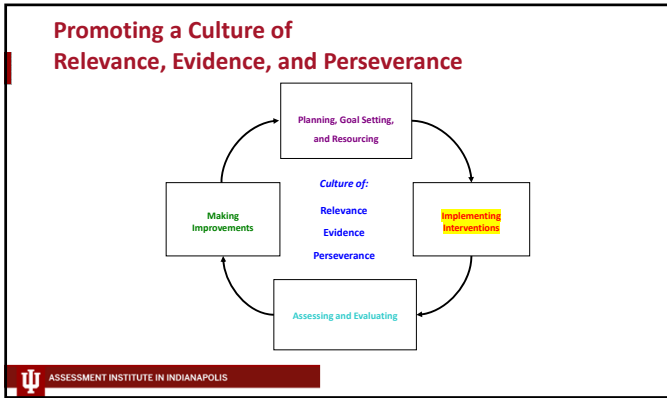### Example Program-Level Goals (Organizational Leadership)

Upon completion of the B.S. in Organizational Leadership, students should:
1. Provide leadership for processes and functions within an organization.
2. Identify and apply leadership styles appropriate to a given context.
3. Determine how political, economic, societal, global, and technological issues and trends affect organizations.
4. Promote inclusive, ethical, and sustainable organizational cultures.
5. Conduct organizational research to inform leadership decision-making.
6. Communicate effectively for a variety of purposes, audiences, and contexts.
7. Function effectively as a member of an interdependent team.

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Example Curriculum and Assessment Map (Organizational Leadership)

	Goal 1	Goal 2	Goal 3	Goal 4	Goal 5	Goal 6	Goal 7
100		X	X			X	
252		X			X		X
263	X		X	X			
274	X	X				X	
327	XX		XX		XX		XX
390		XX	XXX	XX			XXX
410	XX	XXX	XXX		XX	XX	XXX
490	XXX	XX		XXX	XXX	XXX	

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Promoting a Culture of
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Implementing Evidence-Informed Interventions

- Implement goals for learning using evidence-informed interventions

- Interventions can come from:
  - Faculty, staff, and subject matter experts locally
  - Disciplinary or professional standards
  - Trends in higher education (e.g., HIPs, TiLT, VALUE rubric use)

- Informed by a review of:
  - Assessment findings and other internal sources of evidence
  - Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
  - Discipline-Based Educational Research

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Example: High Impact Practices (HIPs)

1. First-Year Seminars and Experiences
2. Common Intellectual Experiences
3. Learning Communities
4. Writing-Intensive Courses
5. Collaborative Assignments and Projects
6. Undergraduate Research
7. Diversity/Global Learning
8. Service Learning and Community-Based Learning
9. Internships
10. Capstone Courses and Projects
11. ePortfolios

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Elements of HIPs

- **Performance expectations** set at appropriately high levels

- Significant **investment of concentrated effort** by students over an extended time

- **Interactions with faculty and peers** about substantive matters

- **Experiences with diversity**, wherein students are exposed to and must contend with people and circumstances that differ from those with which students are familiar

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Elements of HIPs (continued)

- Frequent, timely, and constructive **feedback**

- Opportunities to discover **relevance of learning** through real-world work

- **Public demonstration** of competence

- Periodic, structured **opportunities to reflect and integrate learning**

- **Making a difference** for others

- **Agency** and **accomplishment**
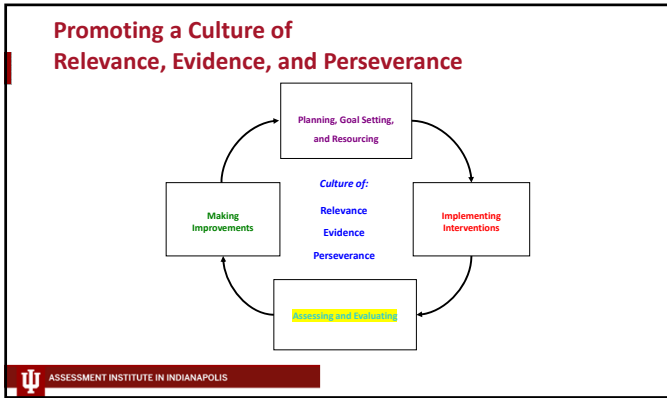
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Some Issues Related to HIPs

- Advancing Equity

- Assuring Fidelity

- Achieving Scale

- Assessing and Evaluating Learning Progress and Outcomes

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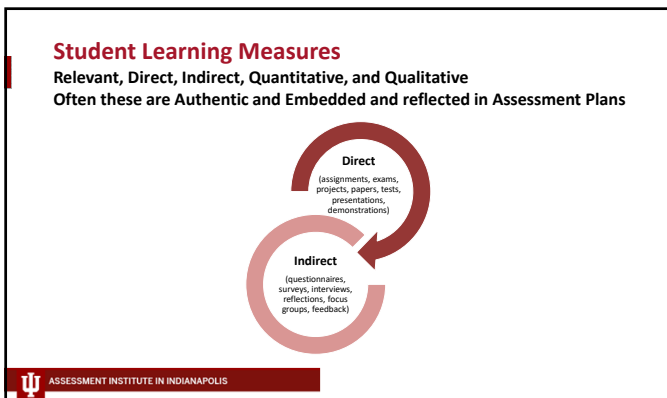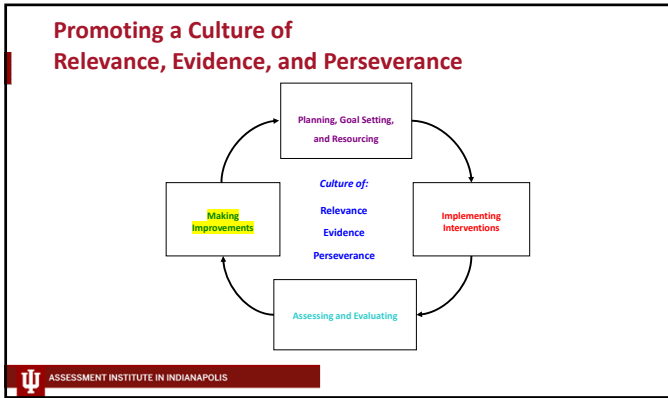Assessing and Evaluating

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Assessing and Evaluating Progress and Outcomes

- Assessment tends to focus on group or cohort performance
  - Understanding strengths and weaknesses to identify trends over time
  - Collaborating across courses, programs, and the institution
  - Applying professional judgement to evaluate findings and plan actions

- Assessment measures need to be **relevant** to goals and employ a blend of:
  - **Direct** evidence of learning
  - **Indirect** evidence of learning
  - **Quantitative** sources
  - **Qualitative** sources
    (the next slide lists some of these)

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Student Learning Measures
Relevant, Direct, Indirect, Quantitative, and Qualitative
Often these are Authentic and Embedded and reflected in Assessment Plans

Direct
(assignments, exams, projects, papers, tests, presentations, demonstrations)

Indirect
(questionnaires, surveys, interviews, reflections, focus groups, feedback)

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Making Ongoing Improvements

- Reporting to internal constituents

- Demonstrating accountability to external stakeholders

- Proposing improvement initiatives based on assessment findings

- Improving instructional contexts (programs, courses, services, etc.) and assessment methods

- Using results of improvement to inform subsequent planning, goal setting, and resourcing activities (a recursive cycle)

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Change Management's Role in Improvement: 8 Considerations (refer to handout)

1. Context
2. Category
3. Capacity
4. Connections
5. Concerns
6. Communication
7. Coordination
8. Consequences

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**Reporting Assessment Outcomes:
4 Key Questions**

1. What did you do? (**process**)

2. What did you learn from it? (**assessment results**)

3. What changes did you make because of your findings? (**improvement**)

4. What were the results of those changes? (**closing the loop**)

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Summary of Enduring Principles

- **Defining assessment**, including its significance and contexts

- Setting **goals for learning** at multiple levels and resourcing those goals

- Designing **evidence-informed interventions** to achieve learning goals

- **Assessing student learning outcomes** using credible evidence that is relevant and uses direct, indirect, quantitative, and qualitative methods

- Evaluating assessment findings by **applying professional judgment**

- Using assessment findings to drive **improvements** on an ongoing basis

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Promising Opportunities

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Trends in Assessment:
Ideas, Opportunities, and Issues for Higher Education

- Periodic volume encapsulating enduring and emerging trends in teaching, learning, assessment, and improvement

- 2nd Edition (released October 2023) features 50+ contributors, many of whom serve as organizers and partners of the Assessment Institute in Indianapolis
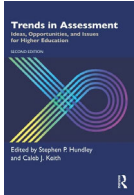
  Accompanying resources: **go.iu.edu/trends**

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Meta-Trends in Assessment

- Meta-Trends in assessment organized around these themes recurring throughout *Trends in Assessment* and elsewhere (refer to handout)

- Student Success

- Teaching and Learning

- Professional Development

- Assessment and Improvement

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Meta-Trends: Student Success

- Meta-Trend 1:
  Foster opportunities to intentionally integrate **diversity, equity, and inclusion** in our work

- Meta-Trend 2:
  Collaborate with students—as learning partners—to advance student learning and success

- Meta-Trend 3:
  Support the **holistic development of students**, including their personal, academic, and professional needs and identities

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Meta-Trends: Teaching and Learning

- Meta-Trend 4:
  Focus on **quality and fidelity** in designing and implementing learning experiences

- Meta-Trend 5:
  Engage stakeholders throughout the learning enterprise, including in curricular, cocurricular, community, and experiential settings

- Meta-Trend 6:
  Use **inclusive sources and credible evidence** in assessing learning

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Meta-Trends: Professional Development

- Meta-Trend 7:
  Build capacity for assessment through professional development, rewards, and recognition

- Meta-Trend 8:
  Promote institutional cultures to **sustain, scale, and improve** learning interventions

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Meta-Trends: Assessment and Improvement

- Meta-Trend 9:
  Appreciate the role **assessment contributes to understanding and improving the higher education ecosystem**

- Meta-Trend 10:
  Recognize that **assessment remains a work-in-progress**, reliant on individual and collective efforts to achieve its potential

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Crosscutting Themes in *Trends in Assessment*

- Clarifying, implementing, and assessing specific goals for learning

- Engaging students in the teaching and learning process

- Encouraging the use of evidence-informed High Impact Practices

- Centering equity in our work

An undercurrent of all the *Trends in Assessment* is
promoting inclusive instructional contexts for students

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Promoting Inclusive Instructional Contexts for Students

- Creating a campus culture and climate that fosters **student belongingness and mattering**

- Developing interventions to support the **holistic needs of learners**

- Designing courses and learning experiences to intentionally include **student voices, perspectives, and lived experiences**

- Employing assignments and assessments to provide **agency for students**

- **Engaging students and other constituents** in processes related to teaching, learning, assessment, and improvement

- **Identifying and addressing equity gaps** in instructional contexts

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To Conclude: Encouraging a "Distributed Leadership" Approach

- Various people and contexts are involved in assessment and improvement

- Specialized knowledge and professional/disciplinary expertise abounds

- Need for a *"distributed leadership"* approach to our work (refer to handout)

"Distributed leadership for teaching, learning, assessment, and improvement encourages vesting approaches to and decisions about student learning and institutional effectiveness in individuals and groups using collaborative, inclusive, and democratic processes, including sharing responsibility and authority for this work with stakeholders throughout the collegiate learning enterprise."

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To Conclude: Encouraging a "Distributed Leadership" Approach

We can support a "distributed leadership" approach by:

- Leading by example
- Setting goals for learning
- Building a coalition of the willing
- Using credible evidence in to promote a learning-centric culture
- Investing in ongoing personal and professional development
- Recognizing and celebrating successes—early and often

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Concluding Discussion

What are our current assessment strengths?

Where do we need to improve?

What ideas or concepts have been reinforced today?

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Conclusion

- Following our break, we will have a moderated panel discussion featuring CMU colleagues
- After lunch, CMU faculty- and staff-led break-out sessions will offer opportunities for additional learning
- We will regroup this afternoon to wrap-up and discuss next steps, including previewing our Zoom-based follow-up sessions
- Please stay in touch:
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