Program goals and constituents

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Overview of assessment process

- Determine goals for degree program graduates
- Determine constituents that have stake in the success of your graduates
- Determine skills or learning outcomes students will need to achieve program goals
- Assessment of student learning outcomes and program goals
- Make changes based on assessment results and constituent input
Program goals

- All degree programs exist to produce graduates
- Degree programs should have goals for their graduates
- Program goals are a statement of what graduates will do with their degrees within a few years of program completion
- Program goals determine curricular content

Program goal examples

- Graduates with degree X will be admitted to and successfully complete medical school
- Graduates with degree Y will have the ability to produce publishable compositions in a variety of media
- Graduates with degree Z will be employed as sales professionals for Fortune 500 companies
Program goals and assessment

- Program goals should be written to allow for direct measurement on whether goals are being achieved.
- Statement of what graduates will do with their degrees is typically measurable.
- Assessment generally requires tracking or sampling alumni.
- Provides incentive to maintain contact between alumni and degree program.

Program goals & learning outcomes

- Goals should not state skills or expertise students will have when they complete degree program.
  - Ex: students will demonstrate proficiency in oral and written communication.
  - Ex: students will be able to solve problems utilizing calculus and higher level mathematics.
- These skills will be described as student learning outcomes.
Program goals & learning outcomes

- Both program goals and learning outcomes are required for program assessment.
- Learning outcomes can be assessed on a shorter time scale before students complete their degree program.
- Program goals are assessed over a longer time scale after students complete their degree program.

Degree program constituents

- Degree programs will have constituents that comprise the destination of their graduates.
- Constituents are determined by program goals.
- Constituents or customers should provide input to degree programs about their needs.
- Needs of constituents determine program goals and student learning outcomes.
- No reason to produce graduates that do not serve the needs of the program constituents.
Constituent examples

- Medical schools are constituents of degree program X
- Publishers or multimedia companies are constituents of degree program Y
- Fortune 500 companies are constituents of degree program Y

Constituents as customers

- View constituents as customers of your degree program
- Constituents or customers should provide input to degree programs about their needs
- Many programs consider their own students to be constituents
- Alternative analogy is degree program → service, constituent → customer and student → product
- Should seek student input regardless of whether you view them as constituent or product
Obtaining input from constituents

- Input from constituents is imperative to insure the success of your graduates
- Constituents provide information about recent trends and changes
- Constituents provide perspective on skills that graduates need in order to succeed
- Not feasible to solicit advice from all constituents

Obtaining input from constituents

- Practical implementation is external advisory board
  - Contains representatives from all constituent groups
- Surveys of alumni employers can be another source of constituent input
- Constituents are typically willing to participate
- Motivation is for degree program to produce graduates that satisfy constituent needs
Responding to constituent input

- Faculty, not constituents, are ultimately responsible for curricular content
- Faculty should always listen to constituents
- But faculty are not obligated to follow advice of constituents in every case
- Faculty should try to implement constituent suggestions whenever possible!