Performance Evaluation in Higher Education

Generally has focused on measuring outcomes of the educational process
1. Student Learning
2. Student Attitudes toward Learning and the Institution
3. Generally termed ‘outcomes assessment’
4. Focuses not on assessment process itself, but understanding and using results to improve the process

Began with demands for accountability in the 1980s from public and governmental bodies

Several colleges jumped on the “assessment bandwagon” in the 1980s and achieved notoriety for extensive use of assessment results for program improvement:
• Truman State in Missouri (backwater compass school in a demographic desert) and
• Alverno college (4yr Liberal Arts Catholic Women’s college in Milwaukee).

Wide acceptance of assessment in higher education came as mandate from accrediting bodies.
• Regional accrediting bodies began the crusade with SACS institutional effectiveness criterion in 1986 – must show that evaluation of programs regularly takes place.
  North Central Association also made assessment a priority
• In the 1990s, SACS rewrote the Institutional Effectiveness Criterion to require “closing of loop,” that is demonstrating that assessment results are used to improve programs – both instructional and support (administrative)
• Currently, SACS makes Institutional Effectiveness or program evaluation the centerpiece of the accreditation process. Institutions are required to develop a comprehensive improvement
• Other regional and most disciplinary and professional accreditation agencies (SACS, NCATE, ABET,) now require evidence of an ongoing process of evaluation and improvement in all programs seeking reaccreditation.

The essential ingredient of assessing learning outcomes is systematic data collection through one or more vehicles that measure student learning:
• Standardized Test: General Education: CAAP or MAPP or Cal Critical Thinking Test, Major Fieds: ETS Major Field Tests or Area Concentration Achievement Tests (ACAT)
• Faculty-made tests: Communication Department at UTC
• Portfolios
• Direct Observation of Student Performance – Fine Arts
• Portfolio
• Employer evaluations
Results of tests and portfolios are studied to identify areas of unsatisfactory student performance. Plans are developed and implemented to improve these areas.

- Curricular revision – courses and content
- Advisement
- Methodology/ technology

Surveys are also used as measures of attitudinal factors associated with student success

- Student and Alumni Satisfaction
- Student Engagement

The standard has become that one must demonstrate how results of assessment are used for improvement.