Learning Outcomes
Assessment and Libraries

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Presentation at Rutgers University Libraries
May 2, 2008
Outline

- What is student learning outcomes assessment (LOA)?
- Why assess student learning?
- LOA in libraries
- LOA at UM
- Starting a LOA program
Learning Outcomes Assessment: what is it?

- Systematic look at what students are learning in library instruction
- A way of seeing patterns of student learning
- Moving from “What am I going to teach today?” to “What do I want students to learn today?”
Learning Outcomes Assessment: what is it?

- Not the same as evaluating teaching
- Different from other library assessment efforts
Assessment climate in higher education

- Spellings Commission
  http://www.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/hiedfuture/index.html

- Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA)
  http://www.voluntarysystem.org/

- Accrediting Agencies
  http://www.msche.org/
Assessment in libraries

- Focus on collections and services (e.g. ARL LibQUAL)
- Focus on standards (e.g. ACRL Info Lit Competency Standards)
Why assess student learning in libraries?

- Affirm commitment to student learning
- Improve effectiveness of instructional programs
- Align with campus, disciplinary, and higher ed efforts
- Be recognized on campus for contributions to student learning
Levels of assessment

- Institutional (University wide)
- Program (e.g. Department)
- Course
- Session (e.g. IL instruction)
LOA in libraries: constraints

- Lack of consistent, reliable access to students
- IL instruction: is it a “program”?
- Program assessment vs. session assessment
- IL skills are more process than content
- Difficult to isolate effects of library instruction
LOA cycle

1. Do assessment
2. Devise assessment measures
3. Set criteria
4. Work with results
5. Develop student learning outcomes
What are Learning Outcomes?

A learning outcome is one sentence that indicates what students should represent, demonstrate or produce as a result of what they learn.

- source: Peggy Maki
Goals, objectives, outcomes?

- Not interchangeable!
- Goals: broad expectations
- Objectives: strategies
- Outcomes: student learning behaviors, actions, skill demonstrations
Good learning outcomes:

- Focus on what students will learn/know/be able to do
- Describe actions or behaviors
- Are results oriented
- Are observable and measurable
- Include a time frame
- Are the result of discussion, consensus, shared expectations for learning
Learning outcomes: examples

- Students **construct and implement** effective search strategy.
- Students will **identify and locate** two relevant articles using MLA database.
- Students will **develop** viable research question from topic.
Learning outcomes: examples

At the conclusion of a session, students will be able to:

- **Develop** a research question suitable for a Professional Writing project. (ACRL Standard One)
- **Generate** concepts, keywords and subject perspectives on their research question. (ACRL Standard Two)
- **Identify** at least two relevant resources using the Libraries catalog, general and subject-specific databases, and information from authoritative and credible non-library resources (ACRL Standards Two and Three)

- source: UM Libraries User Education Services
Assessment measures: examples

- Pre/post test
- Minute paper
- 3-2-1 exercise
- Bibliography analysis
Using assessment: examples

- Rewrite learning outcomes
- Change what you do in session
- Work collaboratively with colleagues
- Revise assessment measures
LOA at UM: 2003-2006

- Middle States re-accreditation planning begins
- Provost’s Commission
- Campus-wide learning outcomes (includes IL)
- Libraries decide to participate and to prepare LOA plan
- College Coordinators group
- Libraries LOA plan for first year/gateway programs
- First learning outcome assessment cycle
LOA at UM: 2007

- Middle States self-study and visit
- First set of assessment results
- Provost: “culture of assessment”
- Four year assessment cycle in place
- Second learning outcome assessment cycle
LOA at UM: current & future

- Continue assessing gateway/gen ed LOA
- Extend LOA to subject specific instruction
- Participate in effort to measure IL campus wide learning outcome
Starting a LOA program

- Develop shared commitment to LOA
- Know the ‘shape’ of your instructional program
- Understand constraints of LOA in libraries
Starting a LOA program

- Create LOA structure for libraries
- Be part of campus efforts
- “Make a beginning” (Peggy Maki)
Resources

- University of Maryland Libraries LOA
  http://www.lib.umd.edu/groups/ilt/assessment.html

- University of Maryland campus LOA
  https://www.irpa.umd.edu/Assessment/LearningOutcomes/

- ACRL Information Literacy page
  http://www.acrl.org/ala/acrl/acrlissues/acrlinfolit/informationliteracy.cfm

- NCSU Internet Resources for Higher Education Outcomes Assessment
  http://www2.acs.ncsu.edu/UPA/assmt/resource.htm
Resources (cont.)

- Radcliff, Carolyn et al. (2007). A practical guide to information literacy assessment for academic librarians.
Thank you to:

- Jeanne Boyle and Valeda Dent

- UM User Education Services and Information Literacy Team
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