**Assessing Student Learning in Departments or Programs**

***The purpose of assessment*** is to *improve student learning* by:

* gathering evidence on what students are and are not learning and
* proposing changes to instruction or curriculum based on the findings.

***Assessment has three steps:***

1) Articulate learning goals or objectives: What do you want students to be able to **do** as a result of taking this course or completing this program?

2) Collect information on student achievement of these goals, both *direct* and *indirect* measures.

*Direct* includes specific measures of student learning, such as:

* performance on exam questions related to specific learning goals, not just overall grades;
* performance on written work related to specific learning goals as evaluated by specific criteria or rubrics;
* performance in capstone experiences, portfolios, exhibitions, presentations, internships, or creative or research experiences related to specific learning goals as evaluated using specific criteria or rubrics;
* scores on standardized national tests or pass rates on certification or licensure exams. It’s especially helpful if the standardized tests have sections that allow you to see where students are achieving specific learning aims and where they are not.

*Indirect* includes measures such as:

* surveys or focus groups of students’ or alumni perceptions of their own learning;
* surveys of employers;
* placement of graduates into jobs;
* placement of graduates into graduate and professional programs;
* department or program review data;
* student achievements such as honors, awards, and scholarships;
* exam or course grades

3) Use the results you collect, *especially the results from direct measures*, to determine what step(s) to take to improve student learning.

For additional information and support, please contact the Faculty Development Center at [fdc@umbc.edu](mailto:fdc@umbc.edu) or [lhodges@umbc.edu](mailto:lhodges@umbc.edu).

For examples of evidence of student learning see

<https://www.msche.org/publications/examples-of-evidence-of-student-learning.pdf> from the Middle States Commission of Higher Education web resources reprinted from Suskie, L. (2009). *Assessing student learning: A common sense guide* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.