OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT SUCCESS STORIES
DEAN INPUT

The following questions were asked of the division deans. "We are also looking for outcomes assessment "success stories" to report in the self-study. Would you please describe and provide any evidence of how your programs have used assessment to improve instruction and student learning? How have you closed the loop and what was the effect?"

<u>**Susan Tabor:**</u>

In particular, the Child Development is an example of a success story. The Psychology department is currently in progress, and should be able to demonstrate evidence of improvement next year (or possibly the next.)
Due to the accreditation process the Child Development program has been able to "close the loop." Outcome results have been used to modify curriculum.

A quote from faculty follows: "The first time we had results from a Key Assessment that actually meant something, was a wonderful a-ha moment. For example, we discovered that our students had ideas about what using democratic practices with young children that were filtered through their years of schooling and wasn't what we thought we were teaching. We were able to change our teaching strategies as a result; this has made improvements to the program. We also made significant revisions to the program itself based on the process, adding an introductory course based on the knowledge that students needed something to guide them through the program."

<u>**Max Simmons:**</u>

For the most part the changes produced by the process have not been large. Often times the results do not indicate any need for change. When change is indicated, the changes involve such things as how a concept is emphasized within a unit or spreading the emphasis on a concept throughout a course. There have been a couple of major changes that have come out of the process. Both occurred in the chemistry program and in both cases the faculty involved did more analysis than what the actual outcome or output called for. In one case analysis showed that students who had full time faculty as instructors did better on "end of course" assessments than students who had adjunct instructors. I was able to use that data in support of a proposal for an additional full time chemist (the new position was approved and hired). The other major change occurred when longitudinal data showed that students doing their laboratory work individually were less successful than those who did organized group labs under the supervision of a faculty member. We were able to use that data to get a $30,000 increase in our adjunct budget (which was enough to make all general chemistry labs group rather than individually paced).

Tom Ashby:

The assessment of object oriented programming found that the classes teaching the concept in Java were being more successful than the classes teaching the concept using Visual BASIC. The faculty discussed this and found the concept is introduced earlier in the semester in Java than VB. The faculty decided to move the concept earlier in the semester in VB to allow the student more time to use the concept. This has not been formally reassessed yet but early indicators are indicating that this has helped the students with this concept.

Jo Ann Cobble:

One means of assessing the attainment of cognitive objectives in program graduates is a survey entitled Employer Assessment of OCCC Nursing Graduates. The tool is administered annually to employers identified through the Graduate Survey process. A benchmark mean score of 3.5 or higher (5 point scale with 5 as "excellent" and 1 as "not acceptable") on designated items is the expected level of achievement (ELA). Seven General Education Skills are included. In FY 2007, it was noted that, for the third consecutive year, the low mean score (4.23) was for critical thinking skills. Although the outcome exceeded the ELA, the gap between Average Performance and Average Importance of the skill (-0.66%) was also noted to be the greatest gap score. By trending this data over three years, faculty recognized support for proposed curricular changes which add Chemistry and replace the Microbiology for Infectious Diseases with a 2000 level Microbiology course. However, faculty also recognized the need to continue development of learning activities and teaching strategies which promote critical thinking abilities critical to entry level nursing practice. More active learning strategies (e.g., case studies, scenarios, practice licensure exam type items, use of instant feedback technology in classrooms) are being utilized.

A second example of use of results to improve the program relies on the same survey (Employer Assessment of OCCC Nursing Graduates) to assess six specified Interpersonal Skills. In FY 2007, three of the skills had the lowest means and largest gaps between Performance and Importance. Although (again) each met the ELA, it was clear to faculty that the areas of leadership skills, negotiating skills, and conflict resolution skills merited consideration of improvement plans. Leadership content was strengthened in the final course of the curriculum by strategies such as group learning projects and guest/panels from clinical practice. In addition, ways to introduce leadership and conflict resolution skills in other courses have been implemented (e.g., introducing delegation earlier in the curriculum) with ongoing work to continue creative teaching/learning strategies throughout the program.

A third example of improvement as a result of outcomes assessment relates to an item on the Graduate Survey in FY 2007. A mean score of 3.5 or higher is expected on an item "Did the nursing program prepare you for clinical practice?" The 2007 results showed a slight decline (3.91) which alerted faculty to carefully consider comments and suggestions. As is typical in

nursing education programs, many graduates cited the need for more clinical time, but many also commented that better campus clinical laboratory experiences were needed (especially IV skills).

The data obtained from Outcomes Assessment methodologies helps nursing faculty target specific areas for program improvement. In this situation, review of campus lab instruction and practice opportunities resulted in obtaining two adjunct campus lab faculty who can assist individual students or small groups with review, remediation, or just practice of skills. Approximately 260 hours of adjunct campus lab instruction time is now funded each semester to address this need. Student response has been slow but steady in utilization of this resource to improve skills' acquisition. The data also supported faculty efforts to acquire more human patient simulators and to develop more realistic teaching experiences using simulations.