

Common Language of Assessment at Meredith College

The Council on Institutional Effectiveness (CIE) recognizes the need to have a shared language of assessment across the Meredith campus. There is no one, common definition of assessment terms across campuses but there are some common uses of assessment terms. The following glossary is intended to be consistent both with common uses of assessment terms and with the culture of assessment at Meredith College.

Goals: Goals are very broad, general statements of what the program/department wants to happen in order to meet outcomes. Goals may be stated from either the perspective of faculty/staff or students/other constituents. Goals should align with mission statements and provide a layer of program intent between the mission statement and the outcomes.

Outcomes: Outcomes represent the most important intended impacts of the program and are stated in terms of who is being impacted (e.g., students, faculty, community). Outcome statements can be put in the following framework, *As a result of (insert program/department), (insert constituents/who) will....* . Outcomes provide the most meaningful level of impact. They are neither so broad that they do not allow for direct measurement, nor are they so specific that they are tied to a single measure

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs): SLOs represent what students will know or be able to do, or what attitudes and dispositions they will develop as a result of the program/department. SLOs are appropriate for both learning in academic programs, and learning and development in college programs. SLOs may be cognitive, behavioral, affective or dispositional.

Indicators: Indicators are criteria that indicate that the outcomes are being met. Indicators are more specific than outcomes. Indicators may be captured in a rubric including standards or levels, and are more closely tied to specific measures than outcomes.

Performance Standards: Specification of where the program wants to be in terms of a specific indicator or measure (e.g., 95 % of students; 85th percentile of normative data). Meeting or not meeting specific performance standards is not enough information to specify what program enhancements are needed to better meet outcomes.

Activities/Strategies: Program or instructional activities/strategies that specify how outcomes are being met in that program. For academic programs these will be instructional strategies or pedagogical approaches that most often occur within the curriculum, whereas for administrative services and college programs these will be the major services or program activities of the department.

Methods: Methods for measuring outcomes. Methods may be associated with a specific indicator or activity but they do not have to be. Multiple methods are often needed to make meaningful program enhancements.

Results: The results of the data collected using the methods specified. Results may be quantitative or qualitative.

Program Enhancements: Improvements made to the program based on assessment data. There should be a clear, logical relationship between reported results and the program enhancements. Using assessment data for program enhancement/improvement is sometimes referred to as “closing the loop” in assessment discussions.

Continuous Improvement Reports (CIRs): This is the current name of Meredith’s annual assessment reports. These were formerly referred to Institutional Effectiveness Plans (IEPs).