



# Writing and Assessing Learning Outcomes

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# Overview of the session

- Outcomes assessment overview
- Starting with existing plans, goals, objectives
- Components of learning outcomes
- Writing learning outcomes
- Assessing learning outcomes



# Learning outcomes assessment

Outcomes assessment is the most valid way of demonstrating the effectiveness of services, programs, and facilities, especially in defending and promoting higher education, and also in meeting accreditation standards. It is also the most difficult, complex and misunderstood of all the assessment methodologies.

(Upcraft & Schuh, 2001)

# Outcomes assessment...

- Clarifies divisional and departmental “fit” with institutional vision, mission, goals and/or strategic plans
- Clarifies to students and other constituents what students can expect to gain and what the program will accomplish
- Provides different kinds of data and evidence about services – includes satisfaction and tracking use (Program outcomes) to describing effectiveness (Learning outcomes)
- Links Student Affairs and Academic Affairs; links curricular and co-curricular

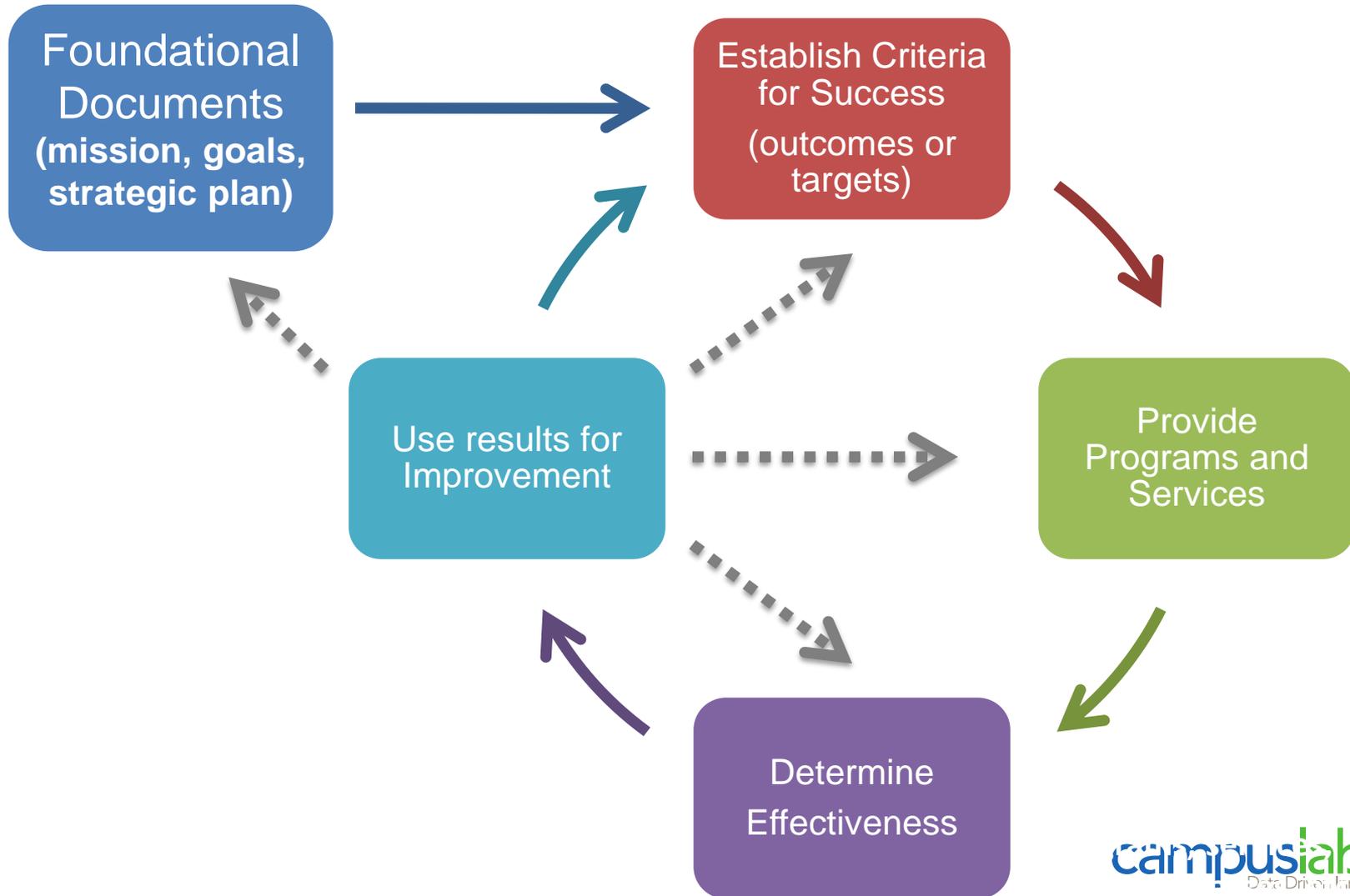
# Biggest challenges to assessing learning

- Students do not experience college in a way that makes outcomes assessment simple.
- Some learning outcomes may take months, years, or a lifetime to manifest.
- A survey may not cut it.
- Assessing learning is more time consuming and more difficult, compared to other assessments.
- Can be difficult to specifically identify what you want students to learn
- Just getting started...

# EXISTING PLANS, GOALS, & OBJECTIVES



# Focus on the assessment cycle



# Connecting to the bigger picture

College or University mission/goals



Division **mission**



Division/departmental **goals**



Division/departmental **objectives**



**Outcomes** for students and programs

## Student Affairs Strategic Initiatives at USFSP

### Inspire – Educate – Empower

Change through “creating a sense of urgency; pulling together a guiding team with the needed skills, credibility, connections, and authority to move things along; creating an uplifting vision and strategy; communicating the vision and strategy through a combination of words, deeds, and symbols; removing obstacles, or empowering people to move ahead; producing symbols of progress through short-term victories; sticking with the process and refusing to quit when things get tough; nurturing and shaping a new culture to support the emerging innovative ways.” – John Kotter

#### Strategic Initiatives:

- **Student Success:**
  - Retention
  - Graduation
  - Employment
- **Assessment:**
  - Student Learning
  - Student Satisfaction
  - Program Review
- **Partnership with Academic Affairs:**
  - Educating Campus Partners on Student Affairs Identity and Purpose
  - Branding the Message and Meaning of Student Affairs
  - Developing the Engaged Academic Student Citizen through Learning Communities



#### CAS Learning Domains & Outcomes Applied to the Division of Student Affairs:

- Knowledge acquisition, construction, integration, and application:
  - What do USFSP students learn about: “Understanding knowledge from a range of disciplines (acquisition), connecting knowledge to other knowledge, ideas, and experiences (integration); constructing knowledge (construction); relate knowledge to daily life (application)” through experiences in the Division of Student Affairs?
- Cognitive complexity:
  - What do USFSP students learn about: “critical thinking, reflective thinking, effective reasoning, creativity” through experiences in the Division of Student Affairs?
- Intrapersonal development:
  - What do USFSP students learn about: “realistic self-appraisal, self-understanding, and self-respect; identity development; commitment to ethics and integrity; and spiritual awareness” through experiences in the Division of Student Affairs?
- Interpersonal competence:
  - What do USFSP students learn about: “meaningful relationships, interdependence, collaboration, [and] effective leadership” through experiences in the Division of Student Affairs?
- Humanitarianism and civic engagement:
  - What do USFSP students learn about “understanding and appreciation of cultural and human differences; global perspective[s]; social responsibility; and sense of responsibility” through experiences in the Division of Student Affairs?
- Practical competence:
  - What do USFSP students learn about “pursuing goals; communicating effectively; technological competence; managing personal affairs; managing career development; demonstrating professionalism; maintaining health and wellness; and living a purposeful and satisfying life” through experiences in the Division of Student Affairs?

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- 1) Kotter, J. P. & Cohen, D. S. (2002). *The Heart of Change: Real Life Stories of How People Change Their Organizations*, as cited in Bolman, L. G. & Deal, T. E., (2013). *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, & Leadership* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- 2) Council for Advancement of Standards in Higher Education. (2012). *CAS professional standards for higher education* (8<sup>th</sup> ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

# Example of the connection

## University and Student Affairs Mission or Goal:

Students will become **life-long learners** and will use the skills they learned in college to approach life in a **global environment**

## Student Affairs Objective:

Provide experiences that develop and encourage the use of **critical thinking** skills

## Leadership Outcomes:

1. At the conclusion of the Greek Life Anti-Hazing presentation, students in attendance will be able to **identify** 5 behaviors or activities that constitute hazing.
2. Chapter leaders attending the Leadership Summit will be able to **compare and contrast** situations that may constitute hazing.
3. The Judicial Board members will be able to **assess** the cases brought before them in order to **evaluate** appropriate consequences for policy violations.

## Learning outcomes

- Examine what a **student** (or other stakeholders) is to do or think as a result of the program, course, service.

## Program outcomes

- Examine what a **program or process** is to do, achieve or accomplish for its own improvement; generally needs/satisfaction driven.

# Effective Learning Outcomes...

- ✓ Are student-focused
- ✓ **Focus on learning resulting from an activity rather than the activity itself**
- ✓ Reflect the institution's mission and the values it represents
- ✓ Align at the course/program, academic program/department, divisional, and institutional levels
- ✓ Focus on skills and abilities central to the discipline and based on professional standards of excellence
- ✓ Are general enough to capture important learning, but clear and specific enough to be measurable
- ✓ Focus on aspects of learning that will develop and endure but that can be assessed in some form now

Huba & Freed (2000)

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# Starting Points for Learning Outcomes

- National learning domains:
  - AAC&U LEAP outcomes
  - CAS Learning Outcomes
  - Learning Reconsidered
  - Professional organization
- Institutional or divisional learning domains
  - General Education Learning Outcomes
- Research, theory, or past assessment
- Google search!



# Institutional Framework

CASCADIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Think critically, creatively, and reflectively  
Reason and imagination are fundamental to  
problem solving and critical examination of  
self and others.

- Create, integrate, and evaluate ideas across a range of contexts, cultures, and areas of knowledge
- Recognize and solve problems using creativity, analysis, and intuition
- Examine your own attitudes, values, and assumptions, and reflect on their implications and consequences

[http://www.cascadia.edu/about\\_cascadia/proven\\_learning\\_environment/learning\\_outcomes.aspx](http://www.cascadia.edu/about_cascadia/proven_learning_environment/learning_outcomes.aspx)

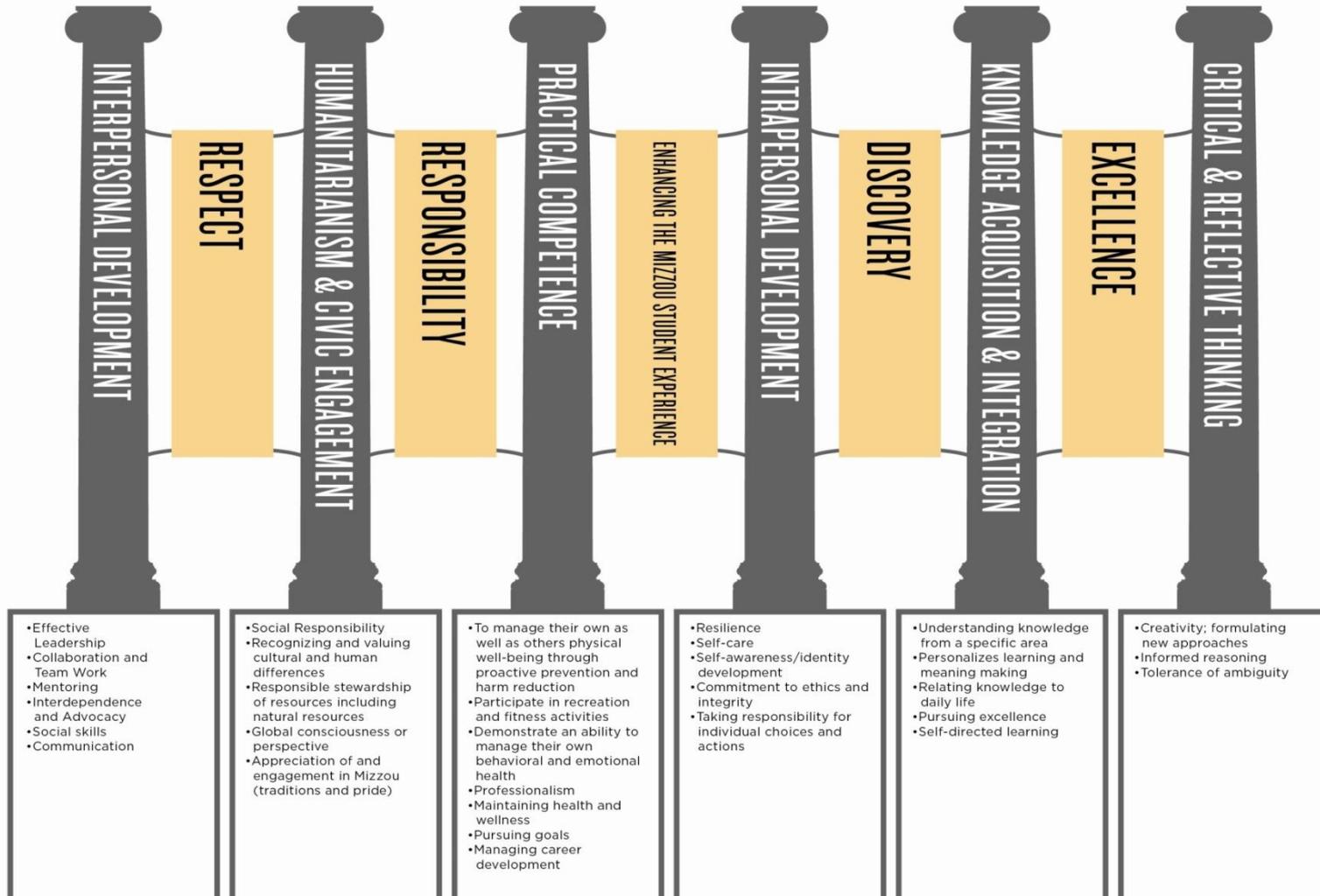


# Divisional Framework

## COLUMNS OF STUDENT LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT



DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS, UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI



# Individual Exercise



- Choose a learning opportunity
- What will students be able to ***do, think, or know*** differently as a result of that opportunity?

# COMPONENTS OF EFFECTIVE OUTCOMES



# ABCD Structure of a Learning Outcome

(Heinich, et al, 1996)

## Audience/Who

- Who does the outcome pertain to?

## Behavior/What

- What do you expect the audience to know/be able to do?

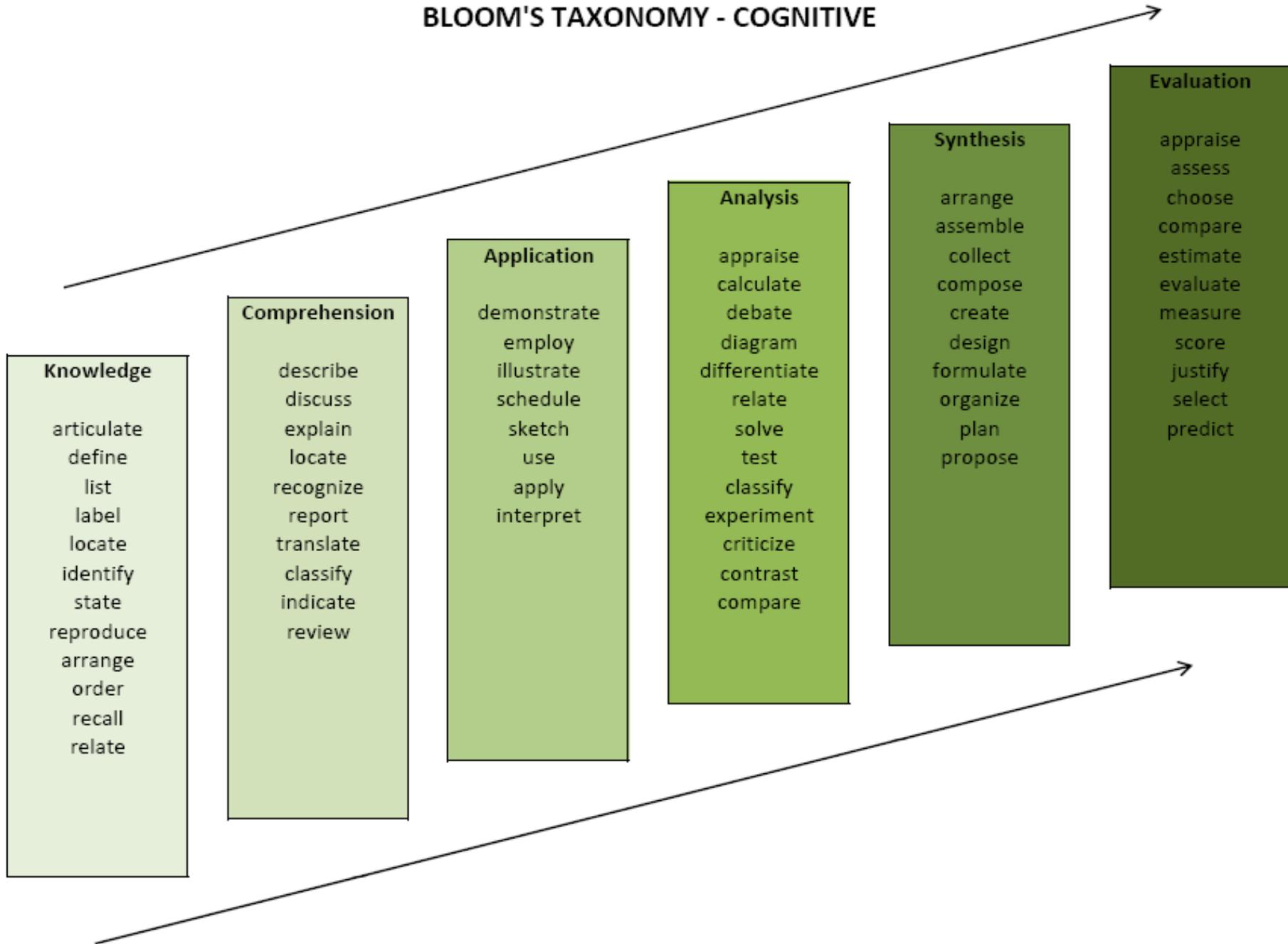
## Condition/How

- Under what conditions or circumstances will the learning occur?

## Degree/How much

- How much will be accomplished, how well will **the behavior** need to be performed, and to what level?

# BLOOM'S TAXONOMY - COGNITIVE



# Learning Outcome Statement:

A - Students will ...

B - <learn what>

C - <under these circumstances / conditions>

D - <to this level of efficiency / effectiveness>



# WRITING OUTCOMES



# Learning outcome examples

1. After attending a financial aid session, **students** will be able to accurately fill out the FAFSA form.
2. After completing their senior research project, **students** will be able to formulate up to three implications for future research.
3. After participating in a leadership retreat, **organization presidents** will be able to differentiate between tasks to complete themselves versus those to delegate to their executive board before their first spring semester planning meeting.

**Audience, Behavior, Condition, Degree**

# More learning outcome examples

- As a result of completing the Belay Clinic, **students** will be able to demonstrate **three** key safety principles (climber-belayer communication, knot tying and belay technique) **in accordance with established climbing standards.**
- As a result of reviewing the ODS online accommodations module, **faculty** will be able to **accurately** distinguish between appropriate online versus on-ground accommodations.

**Audience, Behavior, Condition, Degree**

# The 3 M's of outcomes

## Meaningful

- How does the outcome support the departmental mission or goal?

## Manageable

- What is needed to foster the achievement of the outcome? Is the outcome realistic?

## Measurable

- How will you know if the outcome is achieved? What will be the assessment method?

# Beware of these common challenges

- Too vast/complex, too wordy
- Multiple outcomes in one learning outcome statement (the word “and” is usually your first clue!)
- Not specific enough (e.g., effective communication skills)
- Not measurable
- Describe program outcomes, rather than learning outcomes



# Improve it!

Students will improve their communication skills.

**Students** will identify **two** strategies for **facilitation in the classroom** after attending the **Communication Skills for Educators** session.

Audience, Behavior, Condition, Degree

# Improve it!

At Orientation, students and parents will be given information about what kinds of career services exist on campus.

**The Career Center session at Orientation will provide students and parents information about at least 5 career exploration services available at the Career Center.**

**Audience, Behavior, Condition, Degree**

# Developing statements from domains

## Domains:

Diversity & Global Consciousness

Social & Civic Responsibility

Leadership Development

Self-Management

Professionalism

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# Developing statements from domains

## Self-Management

### We want students to:

- Develop self-knowledge and awareness of their beliefs, values and cultural background.
- Demonstrate an ability to prevent, manage, and resolve interpersonal conflicts in constructive ways.
- Develop interpersonal competence.
- Apply critical thinking skills in making decisions regarding healthy and responsible behavior.
- Explore and engage in new learning experiences and opportunities.
- Develop and manage personal plans, adjusting goals as needed given new experiences, priorities and information.

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# Developing statements from domains

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- Demonstrate respect for others
- Demonstrate willingness to assist others
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# Developing statements from domains

As a result of attending facilitator training, students who participate in Dialogues on Diversity will demonstrate respect for others when addressing them in the circle.

*As a result of attending the leadership 101 workshop, students will be able to identify their leadership style.*

*As a result of serving as an organization president, students will be able to evaluate their leadership strengths and weaknesses.*

*As a result of completing a group project in UNIV 101, students will be able to facilitate cohesion among group members.*

*As a result of serving as a peer mentor, students will be able to recognize the ethical components of leadership.*

*As a result of living in the Leadership LLC, students will be able to recall opportunities to develop or practice leadership on campus.*

*As a result of participating in the Global Leaders retreat, students will be able to compose a personal leadership statement.*

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# ASSESSING LEARNING OUTCOMES



# Things to consider

How will you use the data?

Available resources (i.e., time, materials, budget, expertise)

Potential for collaboration

More than one source of judgment

Direct vs. indirect

Quantitative vs. qualitative

## Direct Methods

Any process employed to gather data which requires subjects to display their knowledge, behavior, or thought processes.

*Where on campus would you go or who would you consult with if you had questions about which courses to register for the fall?*

## Indirect Methods

Any process employed to gather data which asks subjects to reflect upon their knowledge, behaviors, or thought processes.

*I know where to go on campus if I have questions about which courses to register for in the fall.*

*Strongly agree*

*Moderately agree*

*Neither agree nor disagree*

*Moderately disagree*

*Strongly disagree*

# Choosing an assessment method

Overall, your assessment method should be a reflection of the learning that you are seeking to assess

Do you have an opportunity to integrate the assessment into the learning process?

Is what you are asking students to do going to provide you with the evidence you need to make a statement about the learning that occurred?

Thinking about Bloom's taxonomy, the different levels of thinking would require different assessment methods. (More in-depth thinking level = more in-depth assessment)

# Measures to Assess Outcomes

- Database info
- Reports
- Records
- Document analysis
- Pre/post
- Reflection
- Demonstrations
- Observations
- Interviews
- Focus groups
- Rubrics
- Written papers, projects
- Posters and presentations
- Peer-evaluations
- Self-evaluations
- Surveys
- Portfolios
- Checklists
- Tests, exams, quizzes
- One minute assessments

# Survey examples

- Pre and post test of knowledge gained during a workshop
- Self-report of learning via:
  - Agreement statements
  - Extent to which performed
  - Proficiency scale
  - Yes/No questions
- Display of learning in open-ended questions (e.g., “What job search strategies have you used this past year?”) with scoring of responses
- Self-report of behavior via:
  - Yes/No
  - Check all that apply
  - Frequency scales

# Focus group examples

1. Focus group of new students two months after orientation:
  - What knowledge or skills did they develop from orientation? (target articulated learning outcomes)
  - What behavior have they engaged in?
  - In what ways did they NOT get the learning opportunities they needed?
2. Focus group of students who participated in experiential learning:
  - What skills did they gain from the experience?
  - How did the experience relate to their academic work?

# Rubric example

	1 = Novice	2 = Apprentice	3 = Proficient	4 = Distinguished
Opportunity seeking	Did not seek leadership opportunities	Responded to leadership opportunities presented to them	Sought leadership opportunities	Actively sought specific leadership opportunities
Challenging self	Opportunities provided little to no challenge, growth, change, innovation, and/or improvement	Opportunities provided minimal challenge, growth, change, innovation, and/or improvement	Leadership opportunities provided some challenge, growth, change, innovation, and/or improvement	Leadership opportunities provided challenge, growth, change, innovation, and/or improvement
Risk-taking	Did not demonstrate willingness to take risk	Demonstrates understanding of risk taking	Demonstrates willingness to take some risks	Demonstrates willingness to take risk
Managing fear	Avoids being different, failure	Does not successfully face and manage fear (of being different, failure)	Faces and manages the fears (of being different, failure)	Successfully faces and manages the fears (of being different, failure)

Using Portfolios to Assess the Outcomes of a Leadership Program, presented June 13, 2008 at International Assessment & Retention Conference by Katie Busby, University of Alabama

# Some friendly advice

Start with a small manageable win (outcomes and populations).

Select one student learning outcome area (e.g., intercultural competence, personal responsibility, or civic engagement) to focus on during an academic year.

Write learning outcome statements specific to that area that has meaning for your departmental context.

By focusing on one outcome as a division, that allows departments to see their role in some of the global/big picture outcomes, as well as interconnections between departments - creating opportunities to collaborate on assessments.



## Next steps...

Revisit or write your learning outcome

Look to see what others have done

Share your LO with others and get feedback

Start thinking about how you can measure

# QUESTIONS?

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