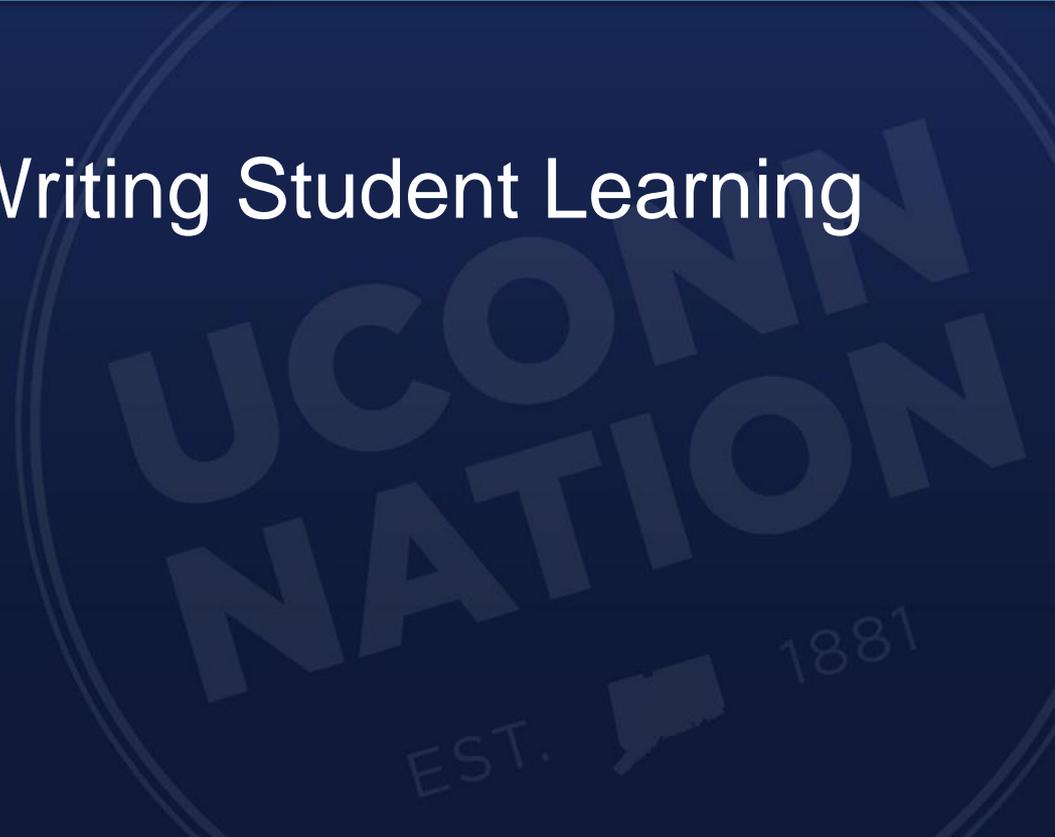# UCONN

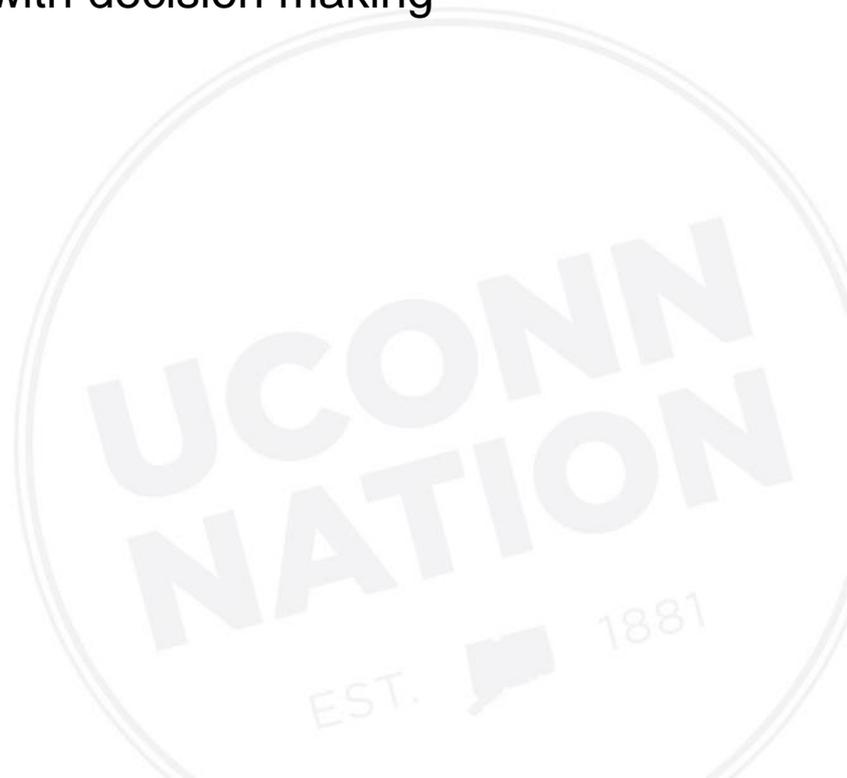# Naming the Game: Writing Student Learning Outcomes

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May 24, 2019

Learning Outcomes: a tool to help answer the question "Are we doing what we say we're doing"?
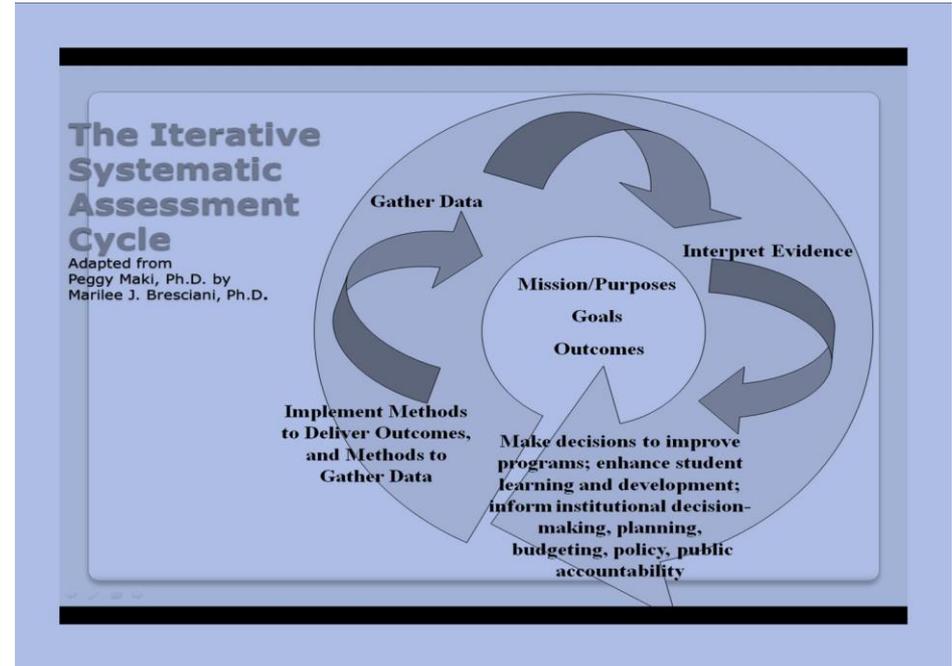
They are also a tool to help decision makers with decision making

Assessment Cycle Questions

- What are we trying to do and why?
- What is my program supposed to accomplish?
- How well are we doing it?
- How do we know?
- How do we use the information to improve or celebrate successes?
- Do the improvements/changes we make work?

Source: Bresciani, 2002, p. 1

The Iterative Systematic Assessment Cycle
Adapted from Peggy Maki, Ph.D. by Marilee J. Bresciani, Ph.D.

Gather Data

Interpret Evidence

Mission/Purposes
Goals
Outcomes

Make decisions to improve programs; enhance student learning and development; inform institutional decision-making, planning, budgeting, policy, public accountability

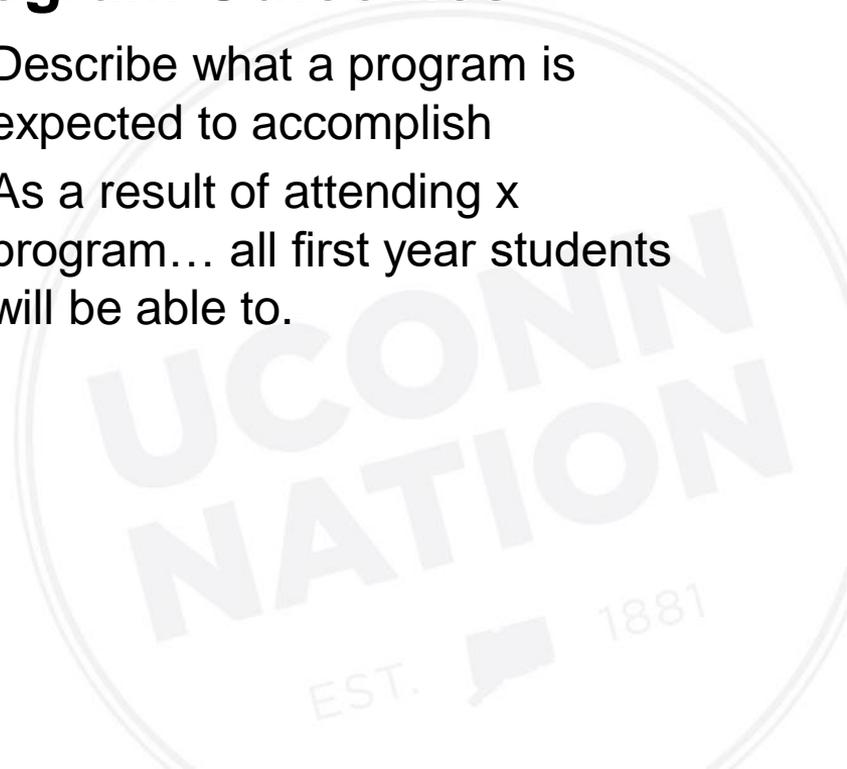Implement Methods to Deliver Outcomes, and Methods to Gather Data

Outcomes

Learning Outcomes

- Describe what students are expected to demonstrate
- What will they know?
- How will we know?
- Students will be able to…

Program Outcomes

- Describe what a program is expected to accomplish
- As a result of attending x program… all first year students will be able to.

Learning Outcomes must be measurable. However, measurable is not equal to countable.

We measure by being able to identify or observe how we know that students are **able to do what we said they would be able to do** as a result of completing your program. These outcomes come from your goals/objectives.

Note: Bloom's Taxonomy can be a useful resource in developing learning outcomes. The following are action verbs that can be used for various levels of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor learning.

- ACTION VERBS Concrete verbs such as "define," "apply," or "analyze" are more helpful for assessment than verbs such as "be exposed to," "understand," "know," "be familiar with."

- **Cognitive Learning Action Verbs**: Knowledge - to recall or remember facts without necessarily understanding them

- **Comprehension**: to understand and interpret learned information

- **Application:** to put ideas and concepts to work in solving problems

- **Analysis:** to break information into its components to see interrelationships and ideas

Synthesis – to use creativity to compose and design something original

Evaluation – to judge the value of information based on established criteria

Affective Learning appreciate, accept, attempt, challenge, defend, dispute, join, judge, praise, question, share, support

Psychomotor Learning bend, grasp, handle, operate, reach, relax, shorten, stretch, differentiate (by touch), express (facially), perform

Source: Osters, Sandi. Writing Measurable Learning Outcomes.

Let's practice!

The mission and goals of your office will drive the outcomes you want to measure.

Examples of Direct Assessment Methods	Examples of Indirect Assessment Methods
Tracking use of services Tracking program participation by desired demographics Satisfaction surveys Focus Group Discussions GPA Timelines and budgets Certificates of completion	Peer Institutions Benchmarking Observation Former student surveys Student Leadership Transcripts

References

Bresciani, M.J., Zelna, C., and Anderson, J.A. (2004). Assessing Student Learning and Development: A Handbook for Practitioners. National Association of Student Personnel Administrators.

Osters, S. (date unknown) Handout from 3rd Annual Texas A & M Assessment Conference. General Format retrieved from http://www.gavilan.edu/research/spd/Writing-Measurable-Learning-Outcomes.pdf

(Gilchrist, Goldstein & Bays [i2a], version 4.0, 8/3/2011.General Format. Retrieved 5/10/18. https://www.uwlax.edu/globalassets/academics/colleges-schools/csh/handout_writing-slos.pdf