JOHNSON C. SMITH UNIVERSITY

The Importance of Student Learning Outcomes: An Institutional Perspective

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President

Johnson C. Smith University

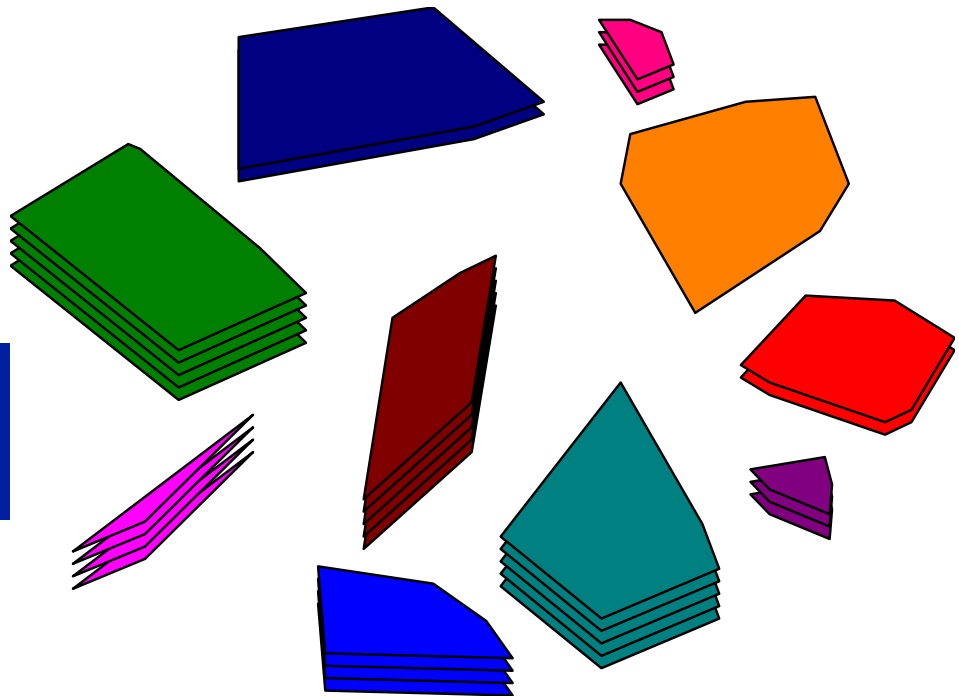
- HBCU, private, undergraduate institution
- Liberal Arts → Comprehensive
- Located in Charlotte, North Carolina
- 103 Faculty
- Enrollment 1474
- Faculty Development Program
- ThinkPad University (Technology Infrastructure)
- Freshman Academy – Learning Community Model

Our Mission

http://www.jcsu.edu

...The University endeavors to produce graduates who are able to communicate effectively, think critically, learn independently as well as collaboratively, and demonstrate competence in their chosen fields...

Our QEP



- Strengthening the Quality of the Freshman Year Experience through Increasing Student Engagement
- http://www.jcsu.edu/jcsusacs

History of Assessment of Learning Outcomes JCSU

- Phase I: 1987-92
  - Retention and Academic Achievement
- Phase II: 1993-1995
  - Early Outcomes Assessment by Program
- Phase III: 1996-2003 -
  - Technology and Learning Outcomes
- Phase IV: 2004 to Present
  - Transformative Assessment: Emerging Framework

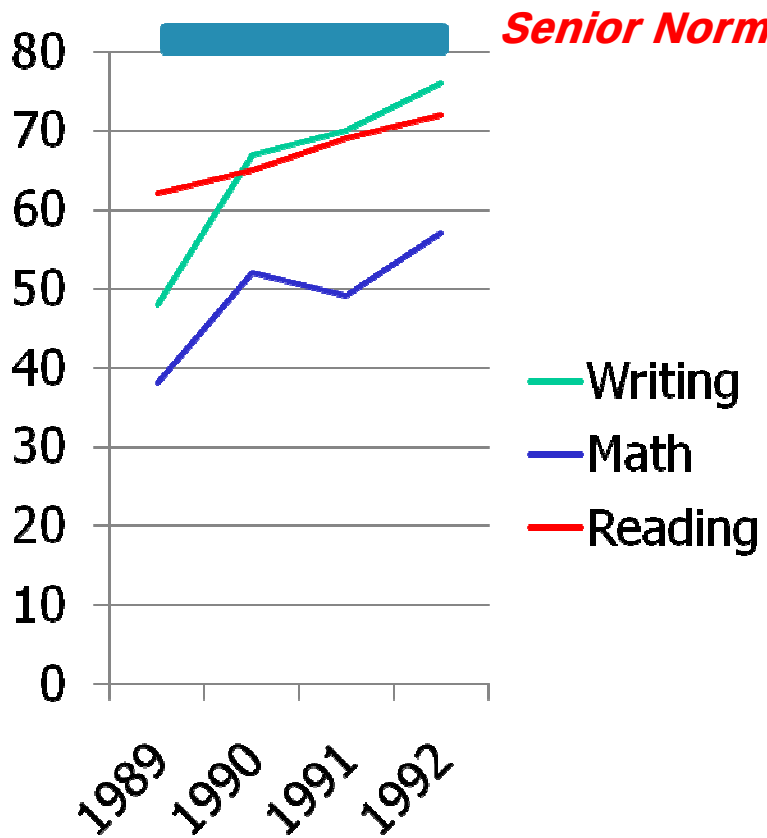
Phase I

- 1987-1992 Retention and Academic Achievement
  - Freshman Studies
  - Sophomore Competency Assessment
  - Major Field Assessment (MFAT, ACAT)
  - Establishment of Center for Teaching and Learning
    - General Studies
    - Faculty Development
    - Office of Assessment
    - Academic Support Services

Phase I: Lessons Learned

- Continuous Improvement as a standard for Institutional Assessment Practices
- Improvement statistically defined as an increase in means with a decrease in standard deviation

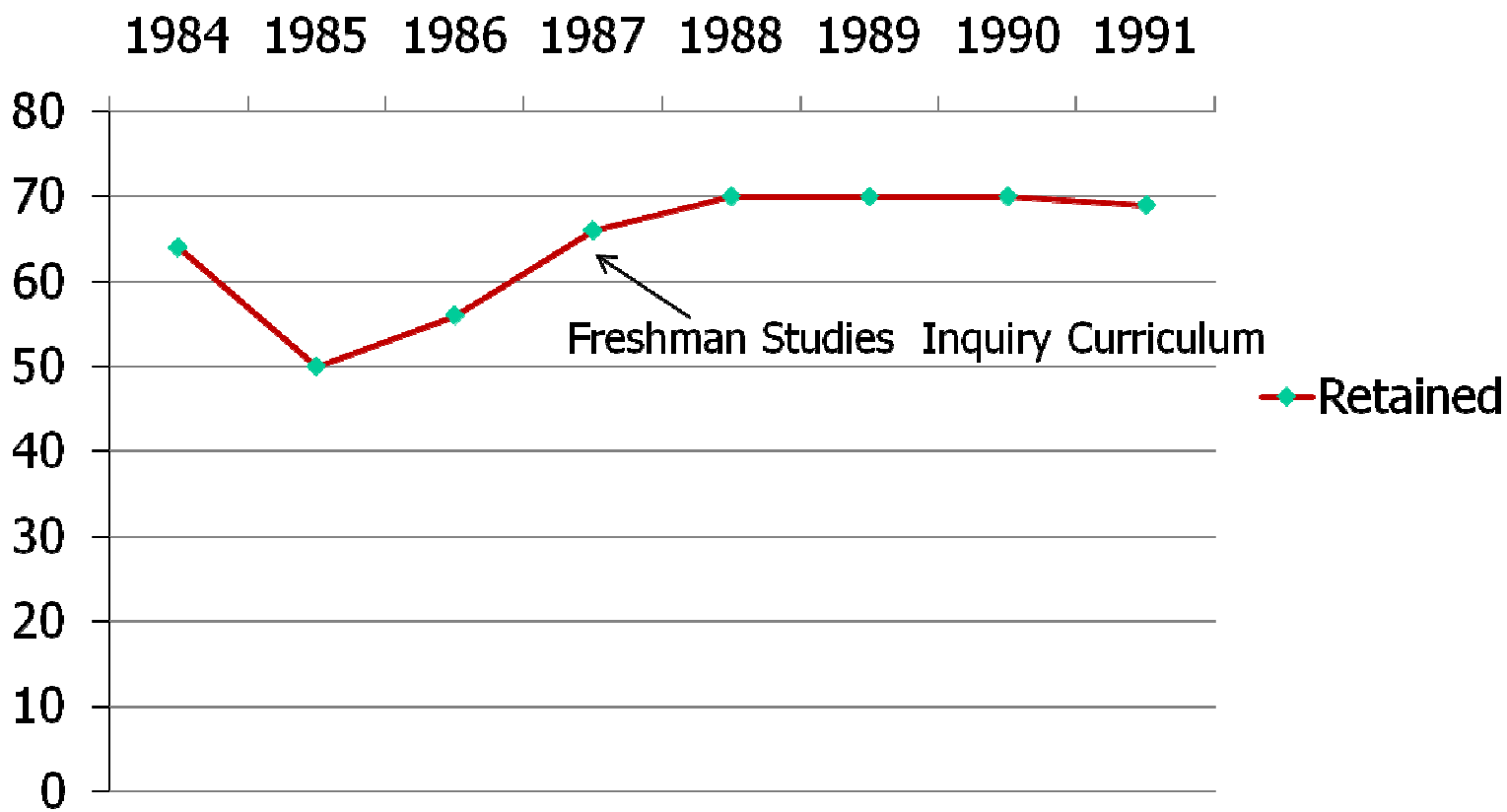
  -- Deming



Sophomore Competency Testing

Academic Profile – Sophomore Cohorts

Freshman to Sophomore Year Retention Results



Phase II: Assessment Activities

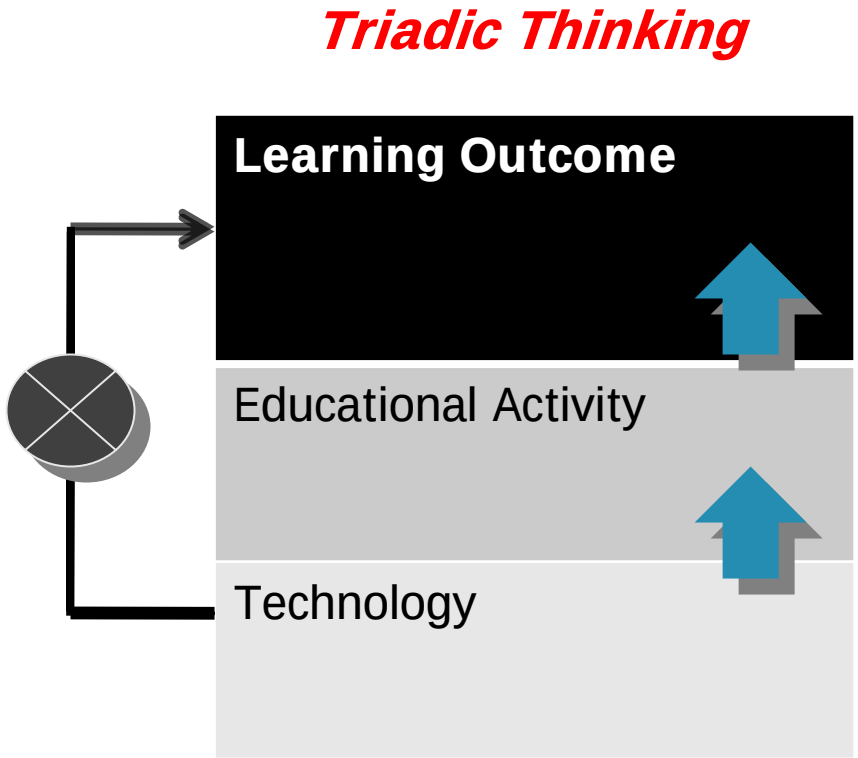
- 1992-1996 Institutional Coordination of Outcomes Assessment by Degree Programs
  - Formalization of MFAT, ACAT for degree programs
  - Student Satisfaction Surveys
  - Standardized Testing Day (Each Semester)
  - Senior Seminar and Capstone Courses
  - Senior Investigative Paper
  - Service Learning
  - Establishment of the combined Office of Institutional, Planning, Assessment, Effectiveness and Research (IPAER)
  - Formal Strategic Planning Initiative

Phase III: Assessment Activities

- 1996-2003 Technology and Learning Outcomes
  - Bush-Hewlett Faculty Development Program
  - Mellon Technology Improvement Project
  - ThinkPad University Planning
  - Teaching and Learning with Technology Roundtable
  - Flashlight Online and Small Classroom Studies
  - UNCF Faculty Development and Technology Project
  - Introduction of the Mini-Grant as Assessment Learning Strategy
  - STA Program Initiated
  - Instructional Technology (Information Services)

Phase III Lessons Learned

- How technology is used to carry out an educational activities determines the nature of learning outcomes, not the technology itself
- “Seven Principles of Good Practices in Undergraduate Education”
- Mini-Grants team projects of small classroom studies



Phase III Strategy: Mini-Grants Faculty Development Projects

- Early and Successful Strategy
  - 2 to 3 faculty working together on a classroom improvement project
  - Required an assessment plan
  - Pre- Faculty Learning Community focus which emphasizes Learning Outcomes within the context of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) values
  - Transformative Assessment Strategy

Phase IV

- 2003 – Present Transformative Assessment as an Emerging Framework
  - The Purpose of Assessment is align with institutional plans and supports collaboration of faculty, staff, and students
  - Data Acquisition and Analysis should be informed by multiple sources that can illuminate student learning processes and purposes
  - Assessment Findings are used for the improvement of teaching and learning and to support the operational “culture of evidence”
  - Dissemination internally and externally with the intention to expand collaborative partnerships

Transformative Assessment

- Transformative assessment systems are institution-wide assessment strategies that are:
  - Based on institutional vision and goals.
  - Implemented in an integrated way for all levels (the course, the program, and the institution)
  - Aligned around systematically transforming teaching and learning, to improve student learning outcomes.
  - Used as a tool for communicating the nature of the desired transformation of teaching and learning.
  - Includes the design, planning, implementation and evaluation of the use of technology.

-- Brown, Ehrmann, Suter, Lippencott

Phase IV Project Activities

- BeTA Project (Better Teaching through Assessment)
  - Transforming course evaluation data for the improvement of teaching and learning
  - Creating a culture of reflective practice among faculty and students
  - Linking learning outcomes to practices
  - Institutional ownership of course evaluations process
- Visible Knowledge Mapping (VKM) - useful technique for working with faculty, administrators, and students to clarify their ideas, individually and then collectively, about the nature of good teaching and good courses.
- Concept Mapping - Strategy for creating consensus and inquiry among a diverse constituency for program planning and evaluation

Phase IV Major Development

- Leaning Outcomes Assessment incorporated in **Strategic Plan**
- **Increased Use of Technology** to facilitate assessment activities (SharePoint Assessment Portal, Flashlight Online, TrueOutcomes Assessment Archive)
- **JCSU QEP** encourages the development of practices to increase student participation in Assessment as critical to increasing **Student Engagement**
  - Reflective Practice
  - Improving the quality and quantity of student responses and participation levels
  - Student academic and career development

Phase IV Current Status

- Increased granularity at the course and instructional activity level
- The university as Learning Community
- From Mini-Grants to Faculty Learning Communities

- Assessment Archive and Management Software - TrueOutcomes
- E-Portfolio Assessment Tools
- Learning Outcomes Assessment in each degree program
- QEP Focus on Student Engagement
- Learning Outcomes Institutional Process
- Emergence of Faculty Learning Communities

Special Focus: The JCSU QEP

- SACS QEP Requirement invites institutions to engage the issues of learning outcomes in the context of a transformative framework
- "Strengthening the Quality of the Freshman Year Experience through Student Engagement"
  - Active Learning
  - Critical Thinking
  - Student Engagement in Assessment
  - Student Planning for Future

Phase IV Strategy:
Faculty Learning Community (FLC)

- A faculty learning community (FLC) is a cross-disciplinary group of 6-15 faculty and staff engaging in an active, collaborative, year-long curriculum program about enhancing teaching and learning
- Transformative Assessment Strategy

Current Faculty Learning Communities

- Institutional Effectiveness
- E-portfolios
- Hybrid Courses
- Teaching with Course Management Packages
- Learning Communities in the Classroom
- Student Engagement (QEP Focus)
- Research and Scholarship of Teaching (SoTL)
- Mobile Computing and the Classroom
- Teaching and Scholarship (New Faculty Cohort)

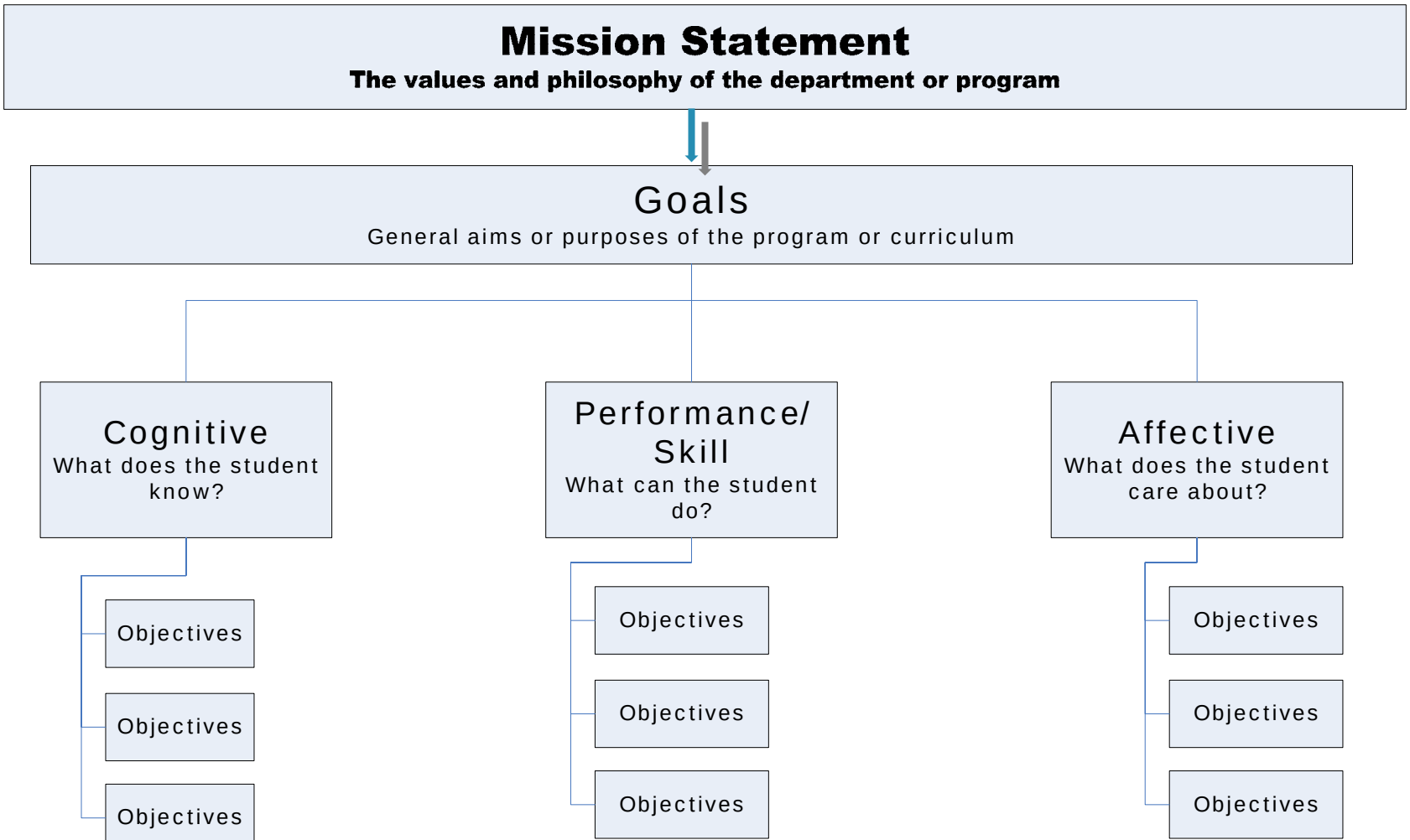
Activities of JCSU FLCs

- Bi-weekly meetings
- Website development
- Seminars and workshops on FLC topic
- Post School workshops on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
- Community Retreat on Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) Research Projects
- FLC Collaborative with Miami University to recruit other HBCUs for FLC projects

The Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan

- Mission
- Program Goals and Objectives
- Assessment Measures
- Program Alignment – Curriculum Matrix
- Explicit Assessment Implementation Plans
- Assessment Archive and Results Reporting
- Meaningful Assessment and Use of Results
- Continuous Improvement

Reflect on the Mission



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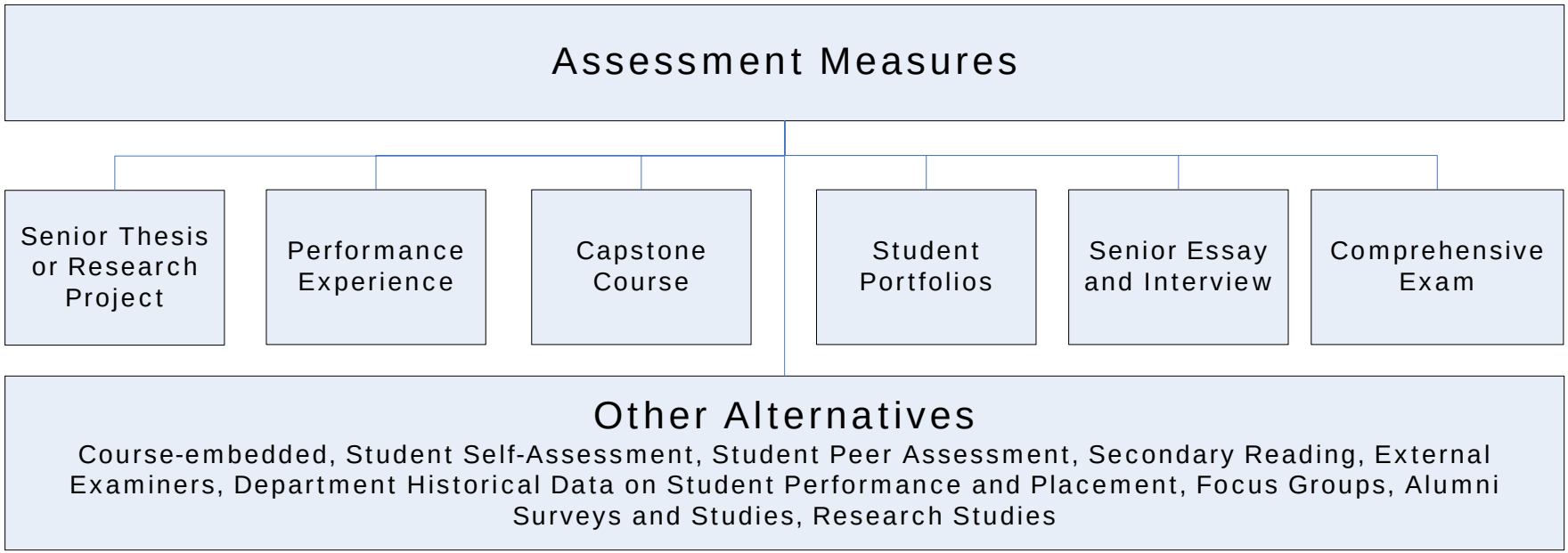
Use Variety of Instruments



Seek Coherence

Program Matrix

Goal	Objective 1	Objective 2	Objective 3	Objective 4
Course 1		◢		◢
Course 2			◢	◢
Course 3	◢			
Course 4	◢		◢	
Program Activity 1				◢

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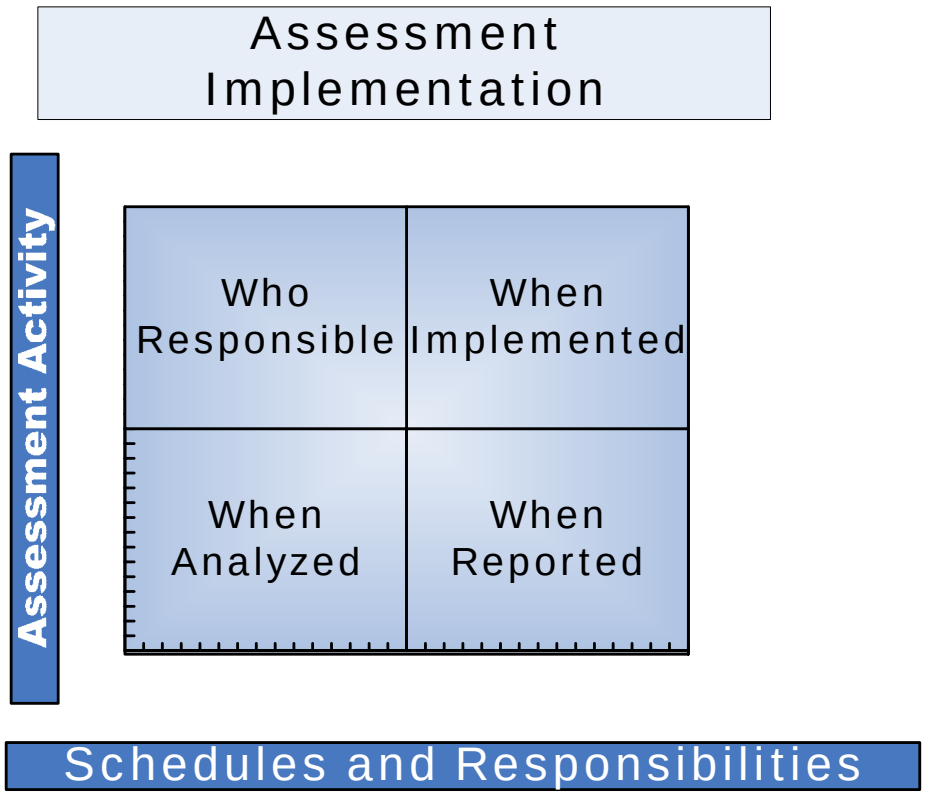
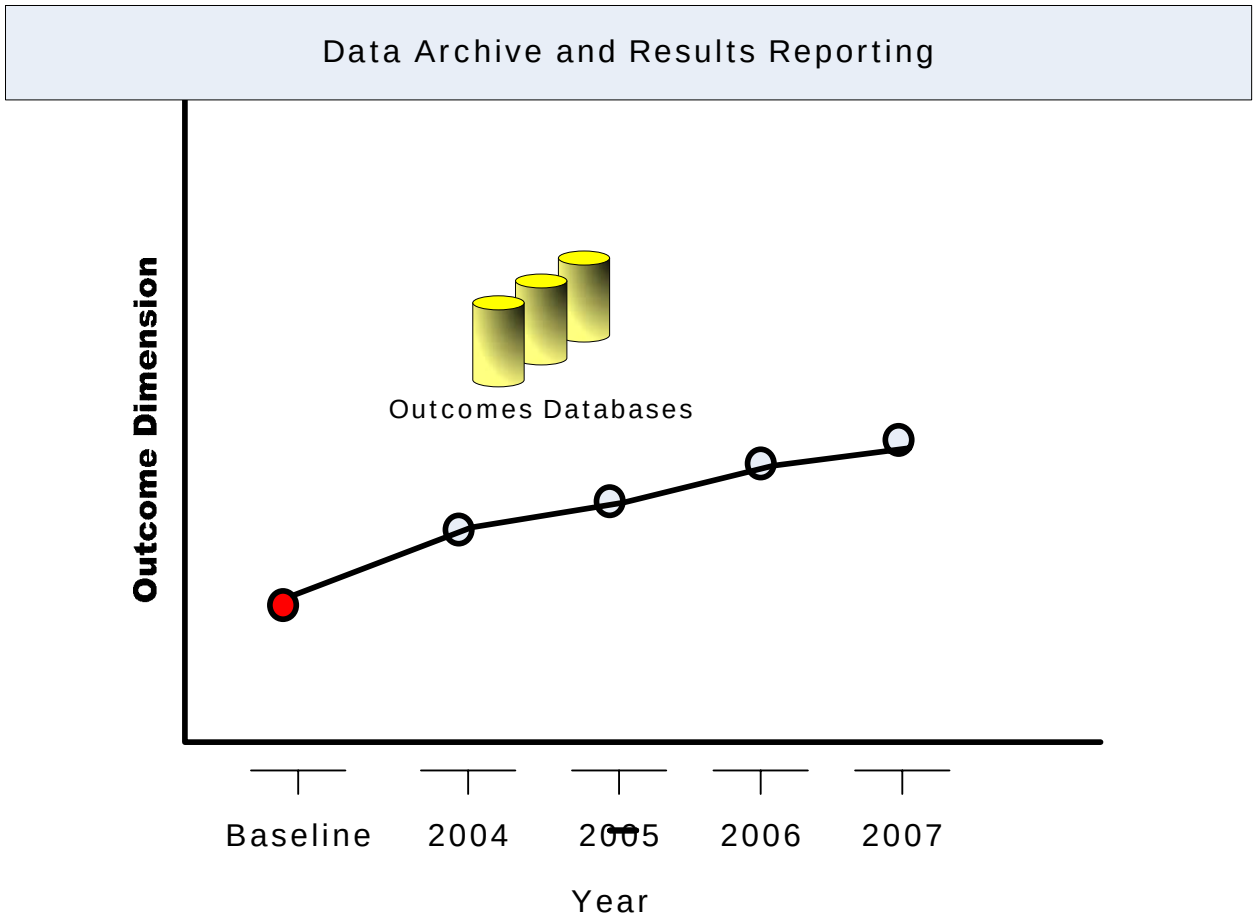
Explicit Implementation Plans



Simple and Consistent



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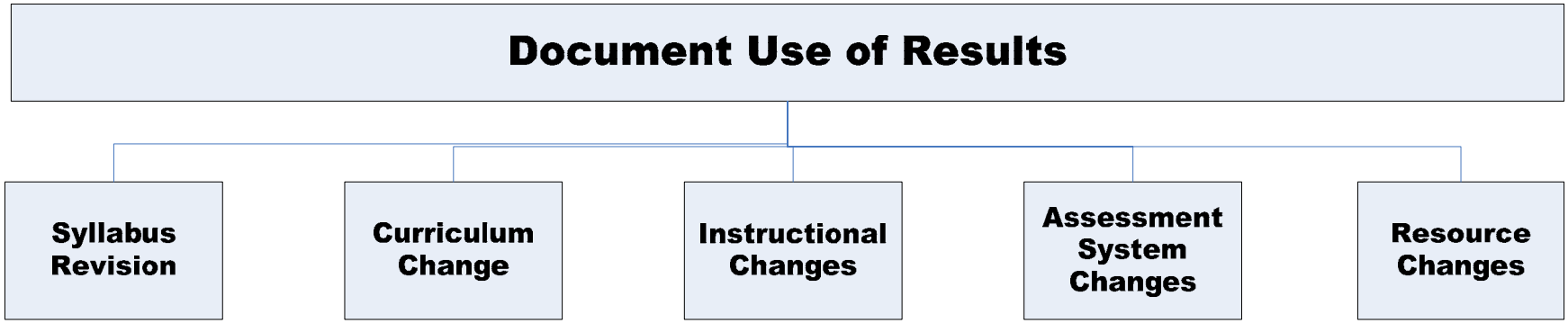
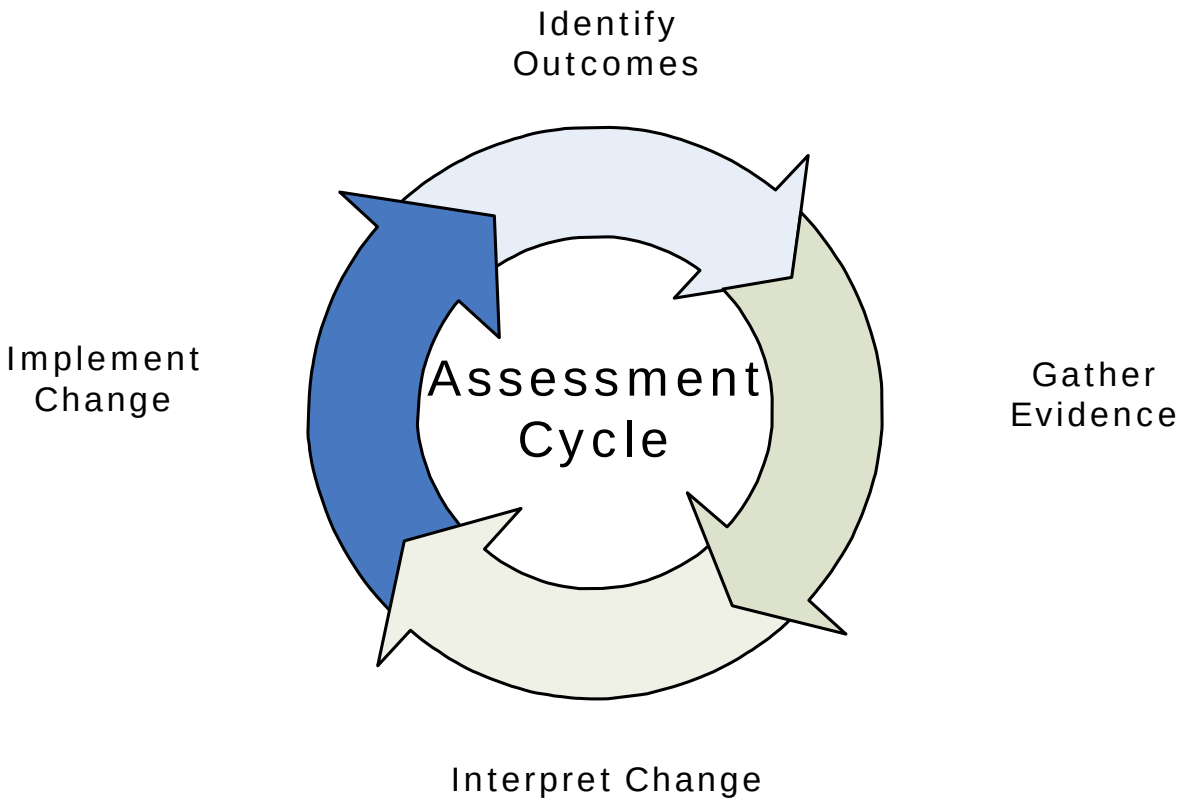
Meaningful Use of Results



Continuous Improvement



Some Challenges

- Trying to measure everything that moves
- Being overly rigorous or too precise
- Not focusing on really meaningful outcomes
- Lack of collaboration and public sharing
- Evidence should be cumulative and be collected throughout a program (Curriculum Matrix)
- Encouraging multiple perspectives, judgments, dimensions of student learning
- Developing a consensus of assessment tools and reflective practices
- Transforming “folklore” and “anecdotes” into “evidence”

Creating the Shift

- Commitment to change through planning and operational decision making; Assessment and Strategic Planning, and Budgeting are linked
- Collaboration among institutional stakeholders; Everyone must be engage to sustain a true transformation
- Organizational motivation with a commitment to individual and organizational learning
- Use of technology to facilitate change and assessment
- Faculty Development with on-going training and community support for Learning Outcomes Assessments

Our Networks

- Building Engagement and Attainment for Minority Students (BEAMS)
- NYU Faculty Resource Network
- HBCU Faculty Development Network (HBCUFDN)
- Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education(POD)
- The Collaboration for the Advancement of College Teaching and Learning
- Teaching Learning with Technology-Group

Primary Contributors to the JCSU Campus Dialogues on Assessment

- Milton Cox – Faculty Learning Community
- Vincent Tinto – Retention, Learning Community
- Steve Gilbert – Technology, Dangerous Questions
- Tom Angelo – Classroom Assessment, CATS
- Steve Erhmann – Technology and Assessment, Flashlight 1.0, 2.0
- Robin Zuninga – Technology and Assessment, BeTA Project
- James and Karen Nichols – Outcomes Assessment
- Virginia Lee – Inquiry in Education, Action Research
- Gillian Kinsey – Student Engagement and Assessment
- Gary Brown – Transformative Assessment, Rubrics, Critical Thinking,
- Jean MacGregor – Learning Community
- Barbara Lee Smith – Learning Community