

Assessment Essentials

In my previous message, I provided a definition for academic assessment that I had recommended to the CPC for approval: Academic assessment is the systematic and ongoing process used by faculty and students to gather, analyze, and use information to improve student learning. Noting that I wrote that having a common definition was a good first step in developing Morningside's assessment program, you may have wondered about the other necessary components. That is what I would like to share with you today.

In their excellent book, *Assessment Essentials*, Palomba & Banta (1999) set out six strategies that they consider to be essential for successful assessment. I have provided the CPC with my adaptation of Palomba & Banta's work and noted that the order of the "essentials", while not necessarily linear, can serve as a development guide for assessment programs at both the college and departmental level.

Essentials in an Assessment Program

1. There must be a collective agreement on the goals and objectives for learning.
2. There needs to be a shared understanding of where and how learning objectives are addressed in the curriculum (curriculum map/matrix).
3. There needs to be a shared understanding of the purpose of assessment.
4. An assessment plan should be developed and documented. The plan should outline the agreed upon purpose of assessment, give directions for action and provide a means to determine if progress is being made.
5. Faculty members of the institution must be highly involved in designing, implementing, and carrying out the assessment program.
6. Steps should be taken to insure the appropriate involvement of students, staff, administrators, and stakeholders in the development and review of the assessment program.
7. Data collection approaches must be selected or designed, and implemented. The most important criterion in selecting an approach is whether the method will provide information that indicates whether students are learning and developing in ways faculty have agreed are important.
8. Examine, share and act on assessment findings.
 - a. Provide feedback to participants
 - b. Share results with internal and external audiences
 - c. Use results to support curricular, planning, and budgeting decisions
9. Review the assessment program and components on a regular basis (usefulness, accuracy, feasibility, ethical, continuity, flexibility).