GSC ASSESSMENT

BOOT CAMP

FALL 2014

Goals for today

- Be able to articulate the **importance** of assessment.

- Make sense of assessment **terminology**.

- Become familiar with the **process** of assessment.

GS boot camp participants will be able to:

- Explain the fundamentals of GS assessment.
- Create/refine student learning outcomes.
- Create/refine a rubric.
- Thoughtfully reflect on assessment data.

The myths

- Assessment violates academic freedom.

- Assessment violates student privacy.

- I can't control how hard my students study so assessment is useless.

- Other favorites?
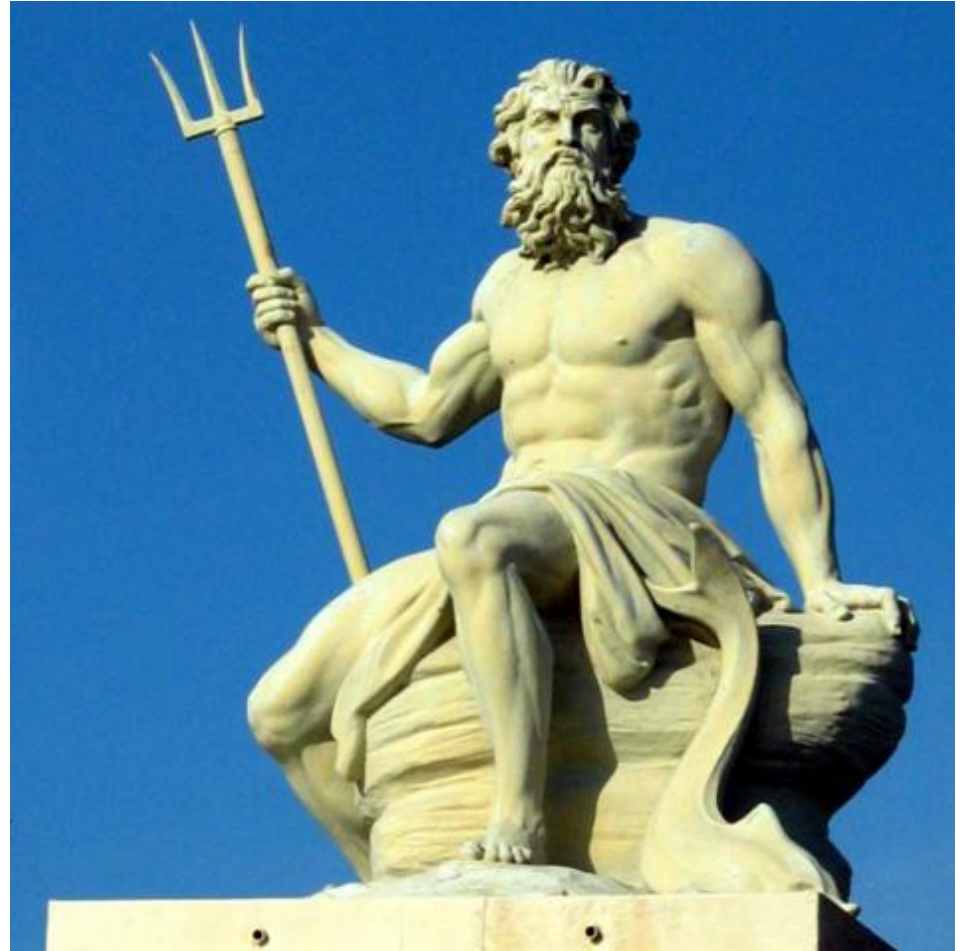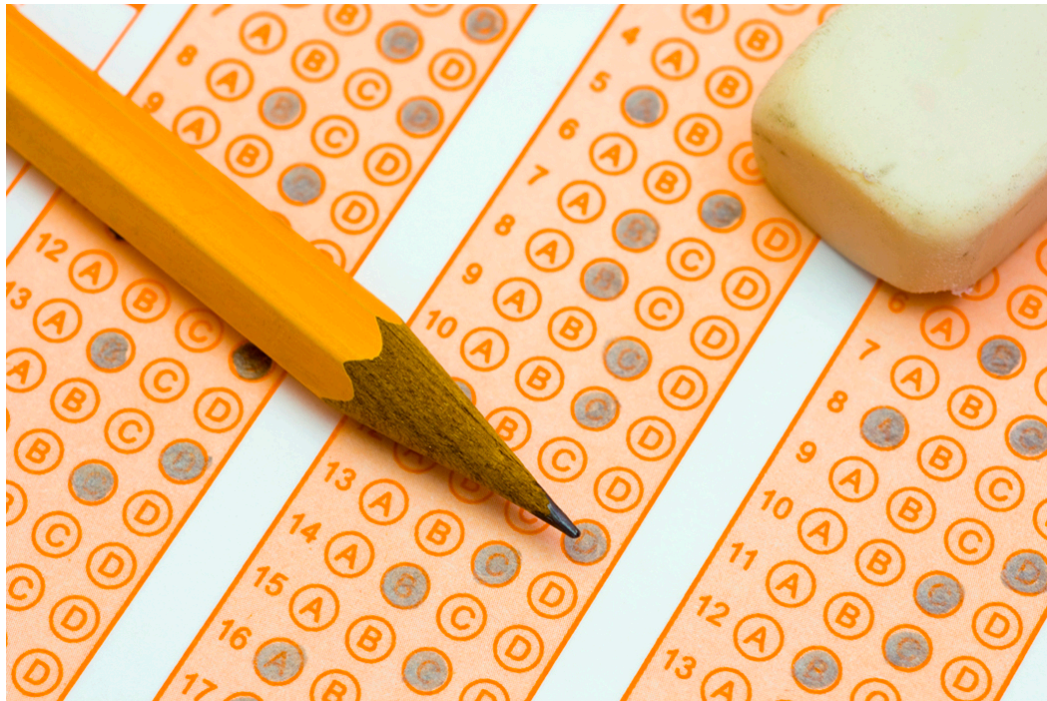
Counter-arguments

If done right, you:

- Build on what you're already doing.
- Use students' classroom work, evaluated by faculty.
- Keep it simple.
- Don't get buried in meaningless data.
- Use the tools that are out there to help you.

Assessment Terminology and Process

What is assessment? Why is it important?

Assessment is…

…systematic collection of information about student learning

…to inform decisions

…that lead to actions

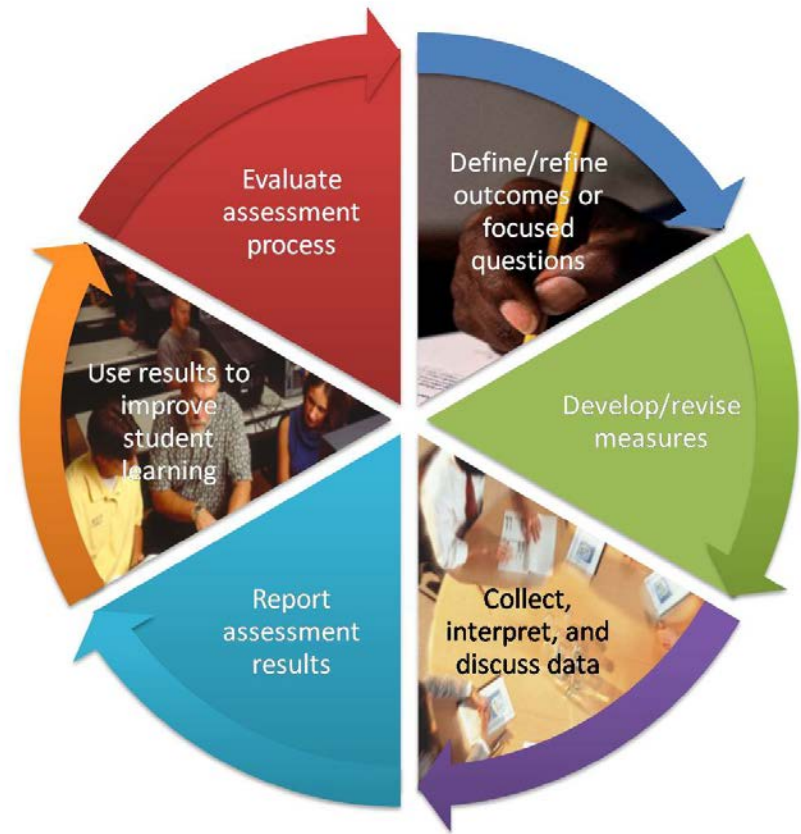…for the improvement of student learning.

In other words,

Are students learning what we want them to learn?

If not, why?

And what are we going to do about it?
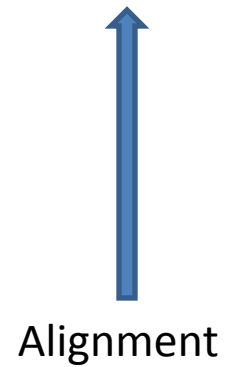
Components of Assessment

- Learning objectives/outcomes

- Measures with targets

- Findings

- Discussion/Analysis (Annual Report)

- Action plan

- Action

Levels of Assessment

- Institutional
- GS Program
- GS Courses

Alignment

Assessment is *everyone's* job.

Institutional Assessment

- NSSE (National Survey of Student Engagement)
- CAAP (Collegiate Assessment of Academic Progress)
- VSA College Portrait (Voluntary System of Accountability)

- **General Studies assessment**

So… where to start?

Terminology

A Learning Objective

The <u>knowledge</u>, <u>skills</u>, <u>behavior</u>, or <u>attitude</u> students have as a result of succeeding in the course, completing the program, or completing requirements for graduation.

In other words… a goal.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Learning outcomes should:

- Include core knowledge and skills GS

- Be stated with action verbs ("Students will be able to…")

- Generally be stated in about 3-6 objectives.

Building good outcomes...
Bloom's Taxonomy

Action Verbs

Knowledge	Comprehension	Application	Analysis	Synthesis	Evaluation
Count	Associate	Add	Analyze	Categorize	Appraise
Define	Compute	Apply	Arrange	Combine	Compare
Describe	Explain	Operate	Develop	Create	Criticize
Recognize	Summarize	Translate	Illustrate	Design	Judge

General Studies SLOs

1. Evaluate information appropriate to the task.
2. Apply principles of critical thinking to demonstrate integrative learning.
3. Communicate effectively in spoken form.
4. Communicate effectively in written form.
5. Analyze cultural issues within a global context.
6. Evaluate in context significant concepts relating to democracy.

Measures, Tools, and Instruments

An entire bottle of wine can fit in a Starbucks Trenta cup, just saying.

How do we determine if we're meeting our goals?

Through the use of measures that have targets.

A measure is a method we use to evaluate student work, attitudes, opinions, skills, etc.

A target is a performance goal.

Tool or Instrument

An item used to help a faculty member evaluate a student's work. The usual suspects:

Exam

Survey

Rubric for evaluation of written work

Rubrics

For essays, portfolios, projects, and any other written student work, a rubric is an essential tool or instrument for evaluating student work.

- Defines expectations
- Establishes levels of performance
- Provides transparency

GS Capstone Rubric

	Does not meet criteria for Beginning	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
1) Evaluate Information and its Sources Critically *Addresses Capstone outcome #1 and GS outcome #1*	---	Shows an emerging awareness of present assumptions (sometimes labels assertions as assumptions). Begins to identify some contexts when presenting a position.	Questions some assumptions. Identifies several relevant contexts when presenting a position. May be more aware of others' assumptions than one's own (or vice versa).	Identifies own and others' assumptions and several relevant contexts when presenting a position	Thoroughly (systematically and methodically) analyzes own and others' assumptions and carefully evaluates the relevance of contexts when presenting a position.
2) Make connections across disciplines *Addresses Capstone outcome #2*	---	When prompted, attempts to connect examples, facts, or theories from more than one field of study or perspective.	When prompted, connects examples, facts, or theories from more than one field of study or perspective.	Independently connects examples, facts, or theories from more than one field of study or perspective.	Independently creates wholes out of multiple parts (synthesizes) or draws conclusions by combining examples, facts, or theories from more than one field of study or perspective.
3) Employ approaches of more than one discipline in completing the capstone project *Addresses*		The capstone project has been completed by employing, in a basic way, knowledge from multiple disciplines.	The capstone project has been completed by employing knowledge from multiple disciplines, acknowledging multiple approaches.	The capstone project has been completed by employing knowledge from multiple disciplines, engaging multiple approaches.	The capstone project has been completed by fully integrating multiple approaches and/or strategies from all of the disciplines addressed and the learner has demonstrated a knowledge and/or understanding of how the disciplines are related.

Assessment measures are both direct and indirect.

Direct Measure – any direct evaluation of work the student has done.

Examples
- Exams
- Student portfolios
- Juried performances
- Oral exams

Indirect Measure – any evaluation of the student or program not derived from examination of student work.

Examples
- Student surveys
- Focus group data
- Admission rates to graduate or professional school
- Employment rates
- Graduation rates/persistence rates/retention rates
- Course grades

Direct or Indirect?

1. Student survey about a GS course
2. Portfolio with samples of students' work
3. Performance in courses
4. Standardized test of critical thinking
5. Reflections written after student completes service-learning project
6. Discussions with advisory board

Best practices

At least two measures (including *at least* one direct measure) for each Student Learning outcome.

This in theory provides TRIANGULATION (two findings pointing to the same result).

Example of a measure with a target

<u>SLO</u>: Students will be able to evaluate information and sources critically.

Measure	Target
Portal essay	75% of students will achieve the level of "proficient" in evaluating information on the portal assessment.

Findings – results of the "measure"

In the Portal essay example, results returned from evaluations by Portal teachers indicate that 81% of UNK Portals received at least a 3 (proficient) out of 4 on the Portal rubric item about evaluating information.
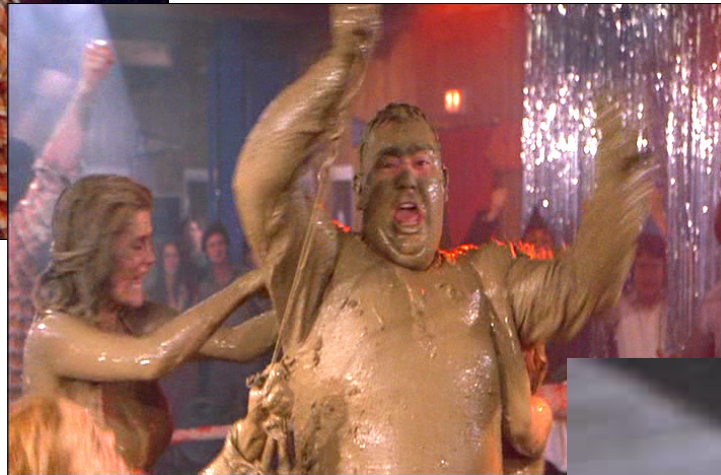
This is a finding for that measure.

Did students meet the target?

Does the target seem reasonable?

Meaningful Reflection on Findings (and creating action plans)

What do these objects have in common?

Measuring alone WILL NOT fix what's wrong.

Reflection on the data allows you to *diagnose* problems.

Actions based on data will *correct* problems.

Just gathering data about student learning will not create better student learning.

But looking at the data, talking, planning, and doing something different will!
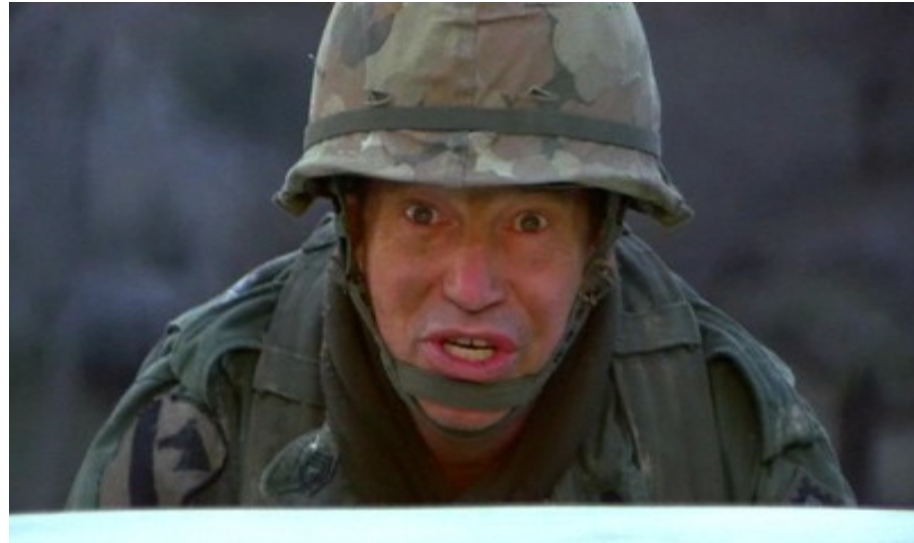
*** Process ***
3 steps of assessment

1. Goals
2. Information (i.e. data)
3. Action

Missteps can occur in any/all of these areas:

- Goals not appropriate to program
- Gathering data nobody will use
- Making process too complicated
- Mere compliance with external demands

The end result of assessment is ACTION.

This is where the good stuff happens...

When findings aren't quite what you hoped for... something isn't working well.

- Talk with the GS Council.
- Talk with colleagues in your college.
- Brainstorm ideas about what went wrong.
- Talk about what action can and should be taken.

DECIDE ON A COURSE OF ACTION.

Examples of action can include:

- Greater classroom or lab emphasis on a problem area.

- Curricular changes.

- Budget requests.

- Request for new faculty/staff lines.

- Staffing changes.

Characteristics of an effective action plan

- Developed collaboratively with departments.

- Specific in nature.

- Assigned to a specific person or group.

- Documented and communicated.

- Time frame indicated.

Action plan example

Finding: Portal students did not meet the target for critical thinking in fall 2013.

Action plan: Train faculty in teaching of critical thinking.

Who? GS Council and Center for Teaching Excellence.

When? Workshop on teaching critical thinking skills held in May 2013.

The Annual Report

1. [Number of majors, minors, and graduates.] N/A
2. Discuss strengths BASED ON DATA.
3. Discuss areas that need attention BASED ON DATA.
4. How were assessment results shared with faculty? And is everyone involved in decision making?
5. Evaluate the assessment process. Was data useful?
6. BASED ON DATA, what changes have been made over the last few years to improve student learning?

How can a program be more thoughtful about analyzing their data?
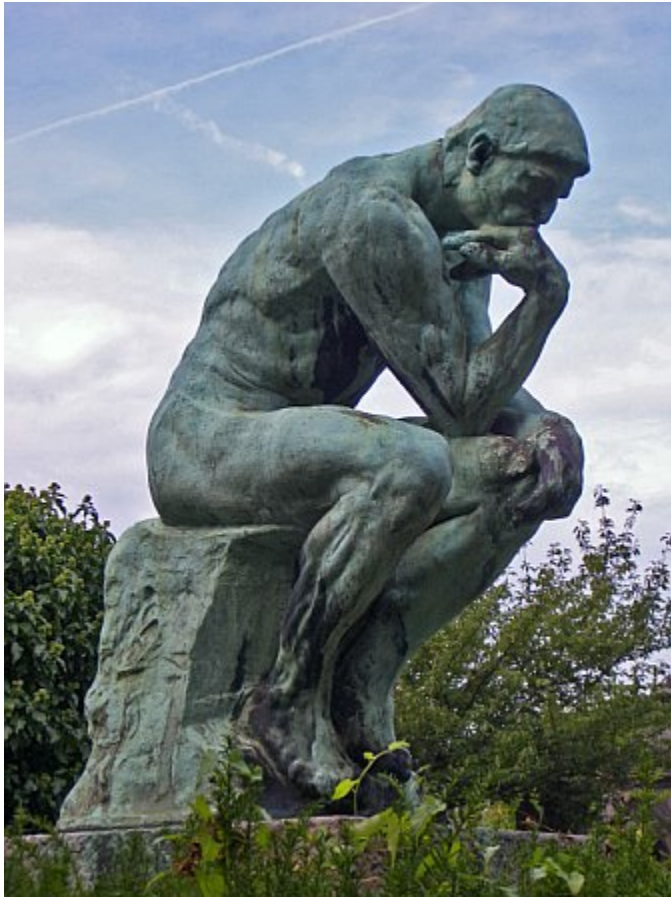
Are they gathering useful data? If not, change it!

Let the data lead the discussions… and have discussions!

Think of this as a research project.

Charge to the GSC

- Advise
- Review assessment materials
- Help others
- Be ambassadors