Vocabulary for Assessment and Evaluation

Accountability – Requirement of both teachers and students to show mastery of a minimum level of skills. Various tests are used to provide evidence of mastery. Accountability is usually required of institutions by funding and governing bodies for resources used and for goods and services produced.

Assessment – the ability to appraise or estimate the attributes of a person, group or program. Tools of assessment can include checklists, inventories, observations, needs assessments, rating scales and all types of tests. There are two types of assessment.

Direct assessment involves looking at actual samples of student work produced in our programs.

Indirect assessment is gathering information through means other than looking at actual samples of student work, such as surveys, exit interviews, and focus groups.

Goal – A statement of a quantifiable desired future state or condition (broad and vague).

Objective – A short-term, measurable, specific activity having a time limit or timeline for completion. They specify who, will do what, under what condition, by what standard and within what time period.

Outcome – benefits for people: changes in knowledge, ability, values, position, skills, behavior or status. More simply stated, outcomes are typically what service providers hope recipients achieve once they complete a program or receive services.

There are also multiple types of outcomes:

Learning outcomes – the changes in knowledge, ability, skills, values, etc. that occur as a result of individual learning that takes place in the classroom. Some of those things might be the ability to write effectively (appropriate to discipline), ability to properly diagnose and treat a patient, content knowledge applied to real world settings, demonstrated skills, etc.

Program outcomes – the benefits (changes in values, status, position, etc.) students receive as a result of the completing the entire program of study (rather than a few courses). Some of those things might be employment, licensure pass rates, opportunities for advancement, improved conditions, lifelong learning issues or employer satisfaction with recently hired students.

Administrative outcomes – benefits for the department, administrative unit or college as a whole. If you want to improve programs and services, attempt a new solution to an old problem, or help improve conditions for student, faculty and staff. Some examples are: recruiting a new faculty member with expertise in a
needed area, improving turn-around time for hiring new employees, increasing student/faculty/staff perceptions of safety on campus by upgrading lighting, etc.

**Outcome Objective** - A short-term, measurable, specific activity having a time limit or timeline for completion related to a specific outcome. Typical tell you *who* will do *what* by *how much* and by *when*.

**Outcome Indicator** - Usually referred to as a key indicator, this is that data set, or set of statistics that best verifies the accomplishment of a specific outcome. An outcome indicator for college readiness might be an SAT score of 1100 or above. It is typically the accomplishment of a specific skill or assessment at a certain level that indicates an outcome is met.

**Outcome Target** – the benchmark set as a performance indicator for a given outcome. An example would be that 80% of students would score a 75% or above on a reading assessment. The outcome target would be “80% of students.”

**Measurement** – the process used to assign numerals to objects or constructs according to rules so that the numbers have quantitative meaning.

**Tests** – tools used in measurement of knowledge, attitude and behavior. Tests and testing are specific to a defined circumstances, a period of time or set of outcomes.