

# **Assessment Strategies for a Comprehensive Assessment Plan**

*Cabinet Retreat*

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Division of Student Affairs  
Northern Illinois University

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# **Learning Outcomes**

**Describe the elements of a comprehensive assessment program**

**Discuss general principles involved in all assessment strategies**

**Identify where to get additional information about assessment strategies**

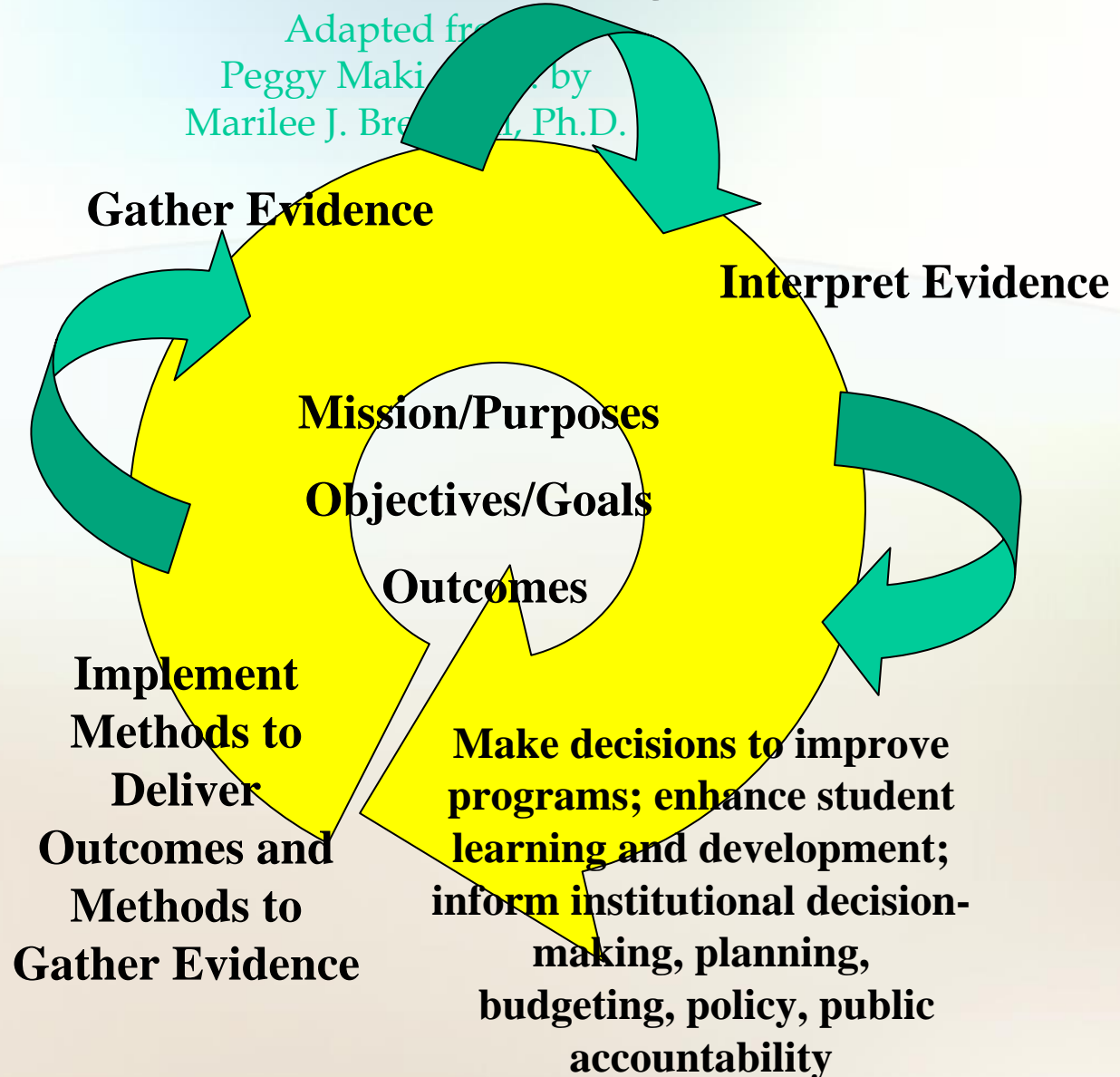
# Quick Review

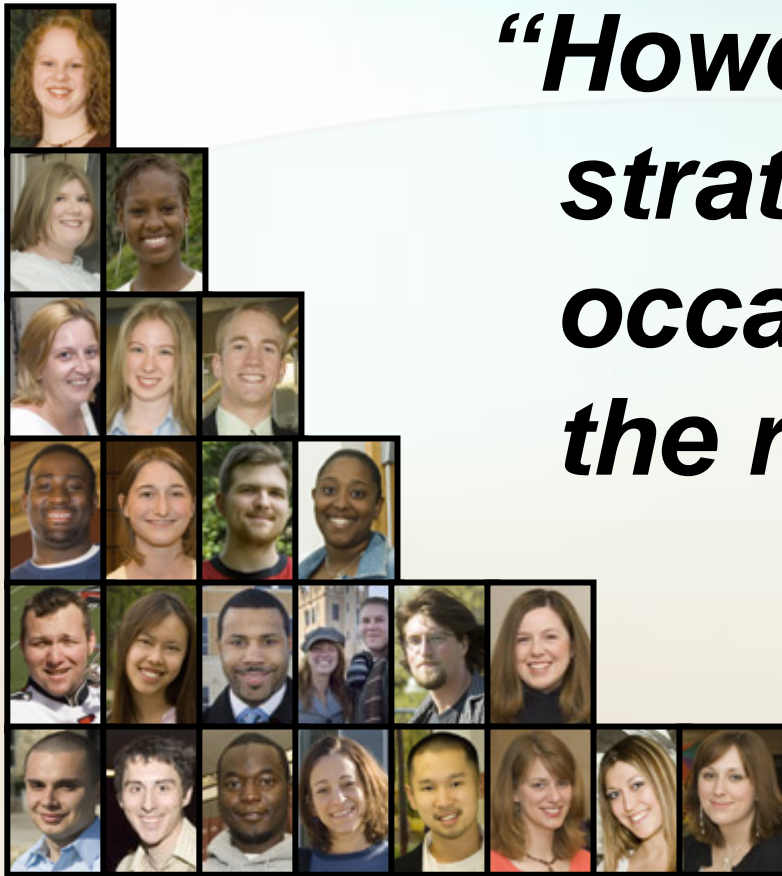
**Assessment attempts to answer certain questions about a programs intended outcomes:**

- 1) What are we trying to do and why are we doing it?**
- 2) What do we expect the student to know or to do as a result of our program?**
- 3) How well are we doing it?**
- 4) How do we know?**
- 5) How do we use the information to improve?**
- 6) Does that work?**

# Assessment Cycle

Adapted from  
Peggy Makin, Ph.D. by  
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***“However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results.”***

***-Winston Churchill***

# A strategy is . . .

***“ a plan, method, or series of maneuvers or stratagems for obtaining a specific goal or result. . . ”***

**To reach our goal of  
enhancing student learning,  
we need to be strategic.**

**Strategies are useful for**

**Planning/budgeting/succession  
plan**

**Looking at student success**

**Being intentional about what we  
assess**

# **Where We've Been**

**Introduction to assessment**

**Assessment of student learning  
outcomes**

**Benchmarking**

**Assessment Summary Reports (UAP)**

# Assessment Strategies

**Frequency**

**Needs assessment**

**Satisfaction  
assessment**

**Student cultures  
assessment**

**Campus environment  
assessment**

**Outcomes assessment**

**Comparable institutional  
assessment (Benchmarking)**

**Measuring effectiveness**

**What are some of the first steps you've taken when you wanted to assess a program or a service?**

# **Pre Assessment Questions**

**Why are we doing this assessment?**

**What will we assess?**

**How will we assess?**

**Who will assess?**

**How will the results be analyzed?**

**How will the results be communicated and to whom?**

**Once we have the answers  
to those 6 questions, we  
can proceed with our  
selected strategy**

# **Strategy 1: Frequency**

## ***Tracking, utilization, contacts***

**Identifies who is benefiting from our programs and services**

**Helps identify who is NOT using programs and services**

# **Strategy 2: Needs Assessment**

**Provides information about  
students' needs**

**Focus groups**

**Interviews**

**Surveys**

**Open forums**

**More methods = richer data**

# **Strategy 3: Satisfaction Assessment**

**May or may not be related to “good educational practice”**

**Static vs. Active measures**

**secret shoppers, national vs. local surveys, interviews, document review, observation**

**More methods = richer data**

# **Strategy 4: Student Cultures Assessment**

**Student cultures impact learning environment**

**Helps us address student learning in context of students' culture**

**Qualitative data collection**

# **Strategy 5: Campus Environment Assessment**

**Investigates interaction between students and their environment**

**Focus groups, surveys, interviews**

**Team approach allows varying perspectives to process (faculty, staff, students)**

# **Strategy 6: Reporting Outcomes (University Assessment Panel Report)**

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## ***Assessment Summary Report –***

**On a 5 year cycle, departments are asked to provide documentation to the UAP of their efforts toward meeting their assessment targets listed in their Assessment Plans**

# **Assessment Plans**

***Include the following sections of the 5-year Assessment Summary Report***

**Brief History/Description**

**Mission, Goals & Objectives**

**Methods**

**Objectives by Method**

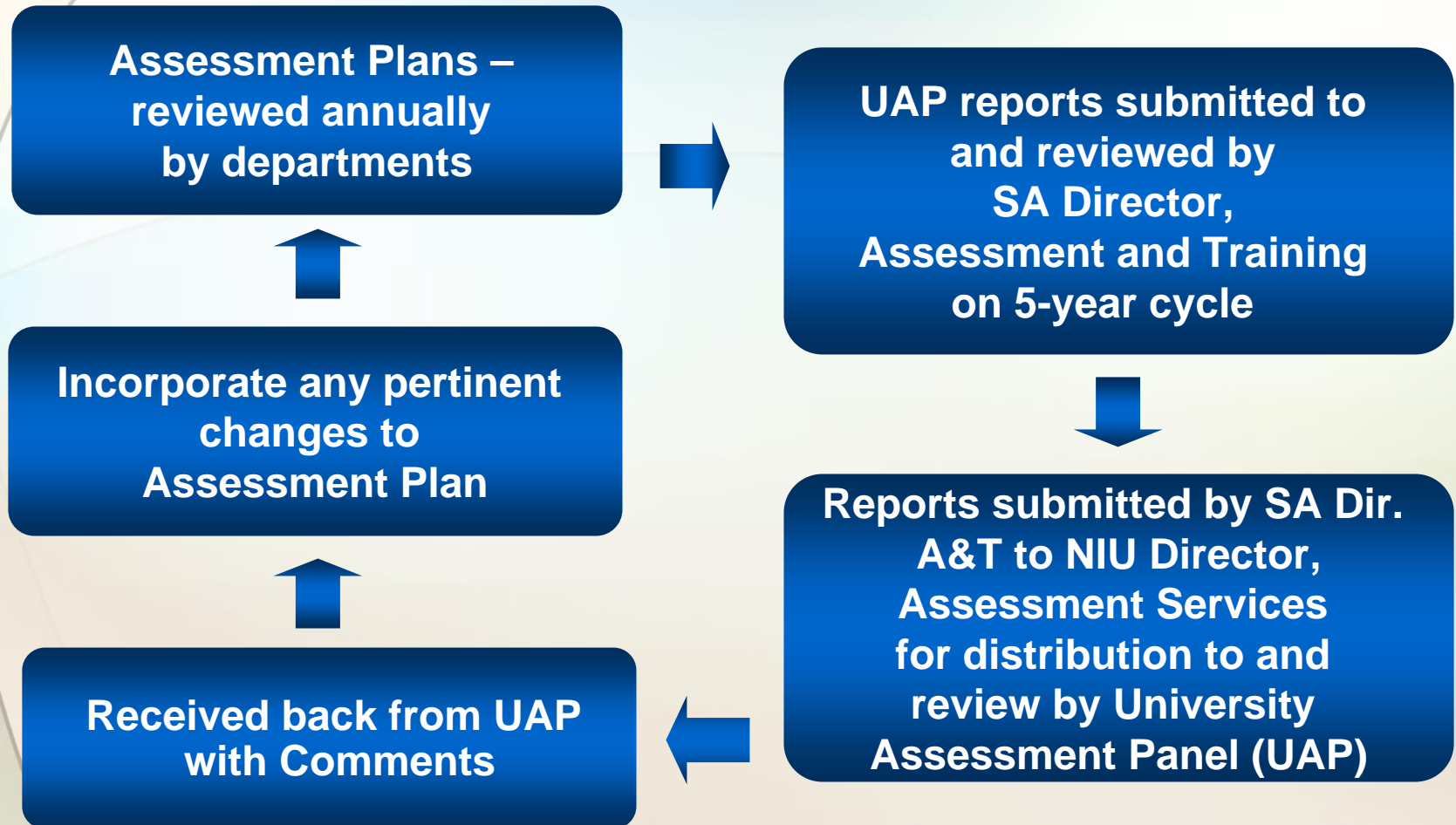
# Assessment Plan/Report “Journey”

Assessment Plans – reviewed annually by departments

## Assessment Reports

1. Submitted to and reviewed by SA Director, Assessment and Training on 5-year cycle. Submitted via AVP.
2. Submitted by Director, Assessment and Training to NIU Director, Assessment Services for distribution to and review by University Assessment Panel (UAP)
3. Received back from UAP with comments; Depts. incorporate pertinent changes

# Assessment Plan/Report “Journey”



# Strategy 7: Comparable Institutional Assessment (Benchmarking)



# **Strategy 8: Measuring Effectiveness (Internal/External Review)**

## ***Accreditation - form of I/E Review***

**If no accrediting process, I/E Review is based on the Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS)**

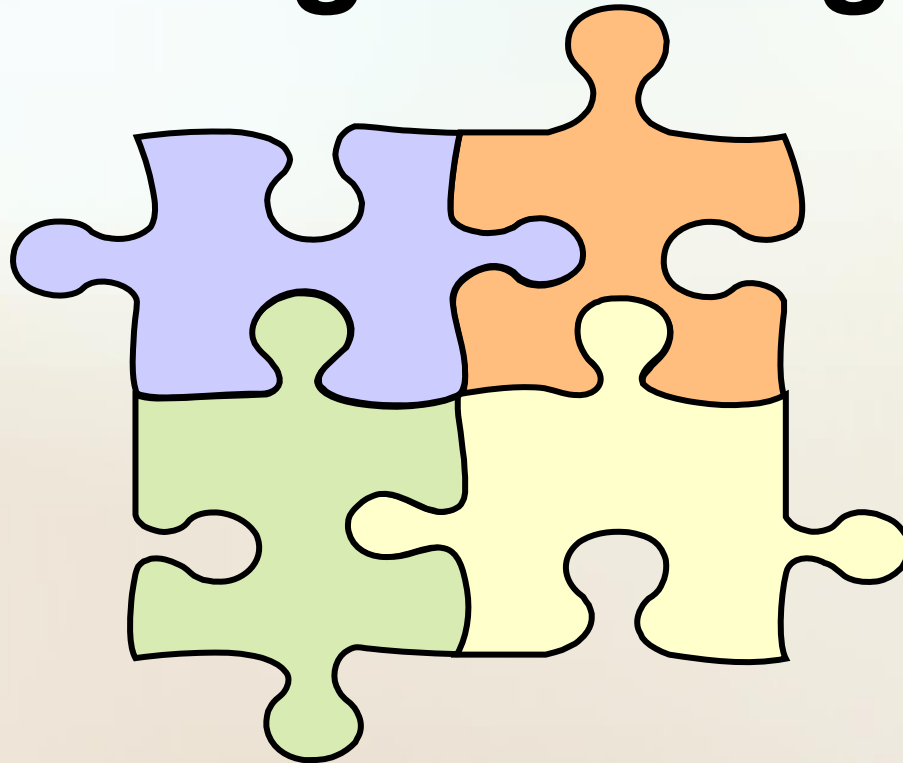
## ***Internal Review***

**CAS Self-Assessment Guide (SAG)**

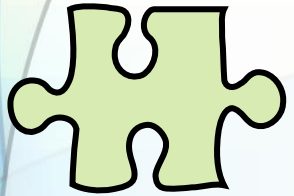
## ***External Review***

**Process includes: External Review Team, Final Report and Action Plan**

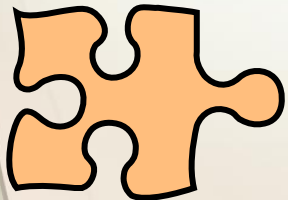
# **Assessment Strategy Grid:** ***Putting it all together***



# Assessment Strategy Grid



**Organizes the major assessment-related activities in your department**



**Specific project is flexible based on what makes sense given your departmental assessment plan**



# Assessment Strategy Guides

The strategies identified have *Guides*

“Quick reference” – general information

Some *Guides* include more than one strategy

Further assistance will be available,  
as needed

# Sample Strategy Guide - Benchmarking

## **Benchmarking Assessment Strategy Guide**

*Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs*

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### **Benchmarking**

Benchmarking is a five-step process which can be guided by answering the following five questions:

#### **1) What elements would you benchmark and why?**

- a. Ask yourself, "What does my department need to learn more about? What is critical to our ability to serve students?" Is it a new program, a different way of implementing an existing program or process, or specific assessment criteria and/or outcomes achieved by others?

#### **2) Who's on your benchmarking team?**

- a. Departments may elect to conduct their benchmarking projects, either individually or by using a team approach. Taking an individual approach has these benefits: You know what you want, can move quickly, and can ask very specific follow-up questions. Benefits of a team effort are that you can gain diverse perspectives, share the work, and enhance collaboration.
- b. If you want to build a team to assist with your benchmarking project, team members need to have functional expertise, communications skills, and a team spirit (listening, consensus-building ability, and respect for differing opinions). Team members also need motivation, in order to be interested and willing to participate.

#### **3) Who are your potential benchmarking partners?**

According to Spendolini (1992), "...a benchmark partner is any person or organization that supplies you with information related to your benchmarking investigation." To create your own network:

- a. Find reliable, valid, and accessible information.
- b. Recognize that it takes time to establish and that it will change over time.
- c. Define a network that is helpful in the present and in the future.
- d. Include partners who represent what you hope to achieve (best practices vs. just something different).
- e. These potential benchmark partners and best practices may be identified through special awards/citations, media attention, professional associations, independent reports, word of mouth, consultants, or other professionals.

# Sample Strategy Guide – I/E Review

## **Internal/External Review Assessment Strategy Guide**

*Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs*

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### *First Semester*

#### **1) Internal Review Process completed by each Department**

- a. Departments will be guided by a *CAS Self-Assessment Guide (SAG)*; information to order this resource can be found at [www.cas.edu](http://www.cas.edu). The cost of the guide is \$35. If a department would like to use a different professional tool to assess the functional area, they must show significant relevance and seek approval of the Student Affairs Executive Group via the Director of Assessment and Training.
- b. The Internal Review Team will include staff from the department and at least two non-departmental staff members (e.g., faculty members, Student Affairs staff, etc.). You should work directly with your Associate or Vice President to construct your review team. Once selected, please notify the Director of Assessment and Training of your proposed committee and timeline.

#### **2) Submit Internal Review Report to Director of Assessment and Training**

- a. In your report please include the following information:
  1. Overview of Internal Review Process
  2. Team members (e.g. team member name and department)
  3. Areas of Compliance
  4. Areas of Concern
  5. Outcomes/Next Steps (with timeline)
  6. Recommended members of the External Review Team – *these should be experts of the functional area*
- b. The Student Affairs Executive Group will review the report and offer feedback such as: specific questions for the External Review Team to address and approval of the External Review Team.

### *Second Semester*

#### **1) Contact and recruit your External Review Team**

- a. Once your proposed External Review Team has been approved by the Student Affairs Executive Group you may proceed with their invitation to campus.
- b. Approach this process in an organized and professional manner. Be sure all team members have a copy of the Internal Review Report, as well as any additional information (e.g., performance standards, prior internal/external review outcomes, policy/procedural handbooks, marketing materials, organizational chart or job descriptions, etc.) They need to understand the full scope of the department's activities.
- c. All team members must incorporate the questions posed by the Executive Group to direct their assessment.

# **Summary & Learning Outcomes Review**

- ✓ **Describe the elements of a comprehensive assessment program**
- ✓ **Discuss general principles involved in all assessment strategies**
- ✓ **Identify where to get additional information about assessment strategies**

# **Discussion and Questions**

# References

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