**Harris-Stowe State University**
**Guidelines for Student Outcomes Assessment**
**Spring 2010**

**Purpose and Steps**

**Purpose of Student Outcomes Assessment**
Student outcomes assessment is the systematic gathering of evidence to examine the effectiveness of programs and services. The results are used to inform decisions for improvement.

**Steps**

**Step One: Establish Student Outcomes**
Student outcomes address the question: What should your students know or be able to do at the end of your program or as a result of using your service? Outcome statements begin with "The students will" and state in measurable terms what the students should know or be able to do at the end of your program.

Outcome statements express your expectations for student (1) learning, (2) action, or (3) satisfaction. At HSSU, the Hallmarks of Student Learning and Development is the framework for student learning outcomes. Thus, if an outcome is about learning, the hallmark that it is aligned with should be designated. Outcomes may be about action that you expect the students to take, for example, changing their behavior or making a decision. For some activities, your goal may be for the students to be satisfied with their participation.

Identifying and communicating outcomes to students lets them know what is expected of them. Outcomes should be clearly communicated to students in print, on the web, or in other ways.

**Step Two: Assess Student Learning, Performance, or Satisfaction**
Once outcomes are determined, the next step is to decide on the assessment techniques that will provide the best measurement. Assessment instruments should measure what you value most. Assessment techniques should fit the outcomes, and the program or service should help students understand the fit. The program or service will need to determine a schedule and responsibility for assessment; in other words, who will assess what and when?

**Step Three: Analyze Assessment Results**
The program or service needs to determine who will analyze the assessment results, how they will be analyzed, when the analysis will take place, and what will be included in the analysis.

**Step Four: Discuss Assessment Results**
The value of assessment is the evidence it provides to improve a program or service which, in turn, improves student learning, performance, and satisfaction. The discussion of assessment results should address the questions: What do the results mean about the effectiveness of the

program or service? What are your plans for improving student learning, performance, or satisfaction based on the results?

**Step Five: Document Discussions and Decisions**
An important component in the assessment process is to document the evidence gathered and changes made. This type of documentation allows the program/service to provide solid evidence of improvements and the rationale for improvements to external audiences such as accrediting and funding agencies and to internal audiences such as planning committees. The program/service needs to determine who will document the discussions of assessment results and how and when they will be documented. The program should track the changes made and plan to assess whether the changes were effective in improving student learning, performance, or satisfaction.

## Examples of Assessment Techniques

There are two types of assessment: direct and indirect. Direct assessment, such as exams, measures actual student learning. For direct measures such as performances, presentations, portfolios, papers, and internships, instructors should develop scoring rubrics that address quality and content of learning or performance. Rubrics make the criteria for evaluation very clear and explicit and offer the advantage of evaluating students in similar ways. Rubrics should be shared with the students so that they understand the criteria on which they will be evaluated. Using the results, instructors analyze the rubrics to find areas of strength and weakness across student learning or performance.

Indirect measures collect data about students, for example, retention, graduation, and placement rates (jobs and graduate school) or ask students about their perceptions. Techniques that gather information about perceptions include surveys, interviews, and focus groups, for example, surveys of graduating students, alumni, and employers.