Creating a Program Assessment Plan

I. Review and/or develop programmatic learning goals.

A. Do the learning goals state, in action-oriented, assessable language, what your graduates will be able to show that they have learned?

B. Reality check: If your goals are not written correctly, you cannot build a legitimate assessment plan.

C. IMPORTANT: If you offer more than one program, you may need to develop more than one assessment plan.

II. Cross-reference learning goals to undergraduate Institutional Learning Goals.

A. You are NOT expected to support every goal.

B. Identify institutional goals that are most clearly supported by and appropriate for your major.

C. Establish clear connections from the course level through the department up to the overarching goals and back down again.

III. Cross-reference learning goals to the program curriculum (course mapping).

A. See attached example.

B. Note sequencing of courses and building of skills in relation to overall learning goals.

C. Some courses may support only one goal, while others could support two or more.

D. In your cross-referencing, if you have either a goal that is not being met or a course that appears not to contribute, then you have to decide: Is the goal inappropriate? Does the course need updating? Do either (or both) need to be completely revised or eliminated?

IV. Develop an inventory of current assessment activities within the program.

A. In many programs, assessments are already in place (e.g., learning rubrics) that can be used to support your goals.

B. Often you will be able to use "current practices" as solid foundations for your assessment plan.

V. Decide what methods you will use to assess your student learning goals.

A. Rubrics or scoring guides

B. Effective assignments

C. Objective testing via "homegrown" instrument

D. Selecting a published instrument

E. Evaluation of student portfolios

F. Conducting surveys, focus groups, interviews

G. Student self-reflections

VI. Decide what goals will be assessed when.

A. There is no expectation that you assess ALL your goals ALL the time with ALL your students.

B. Understanding WHEN you want information is vital in establishing an assessment cycle.

C. Decide if any goal demands assessment every semester or every year. Then make a decision regarding sample size. All seniors? All students in "x" course? A random sample of students in all sections of "x" courses?

D. Plot out an assessment cycle for all your goals. Some goals can be assessed once a year; others can be addressed every other year, or every third semester, etc.

VII. Establish the "how" of collecting and organizing evidence.

A. Who will conduct assessment?

B. Who will collect the raw evidence?

VIII. Decide when and how and by whom the evidence will be analyzed.

A. Assessment data should be analyzed as soon as possible after the assessment has been completed.

B. Determine who will review and analyze the data. Will it be limited to program faculty? How about alumni, administrators, other faculty in other departments?

IX. Use the results of the assessments to inform your decision-making about program improvement.

A. Effective discussion about the results and a dialogue about potential remedies should include all program/department faculty.

B. Be sure to document the decisions made.

X. Complete the necessary revisions/modifications as part of a strategy of continuous program improvement.

XI. Repeat the assessment cycle with the changes in place.

Course Mapping

COURSE ► GOAL ▼	Intro Course	Intro Course	Mid-Level Course	Mid-Level Course	Capstone
Identify fundamental theories	X	X			
Critique current trends			X		X
Demonstrate basic techniques		X			
Construct experiment based on disciplinary standards				X	X
Evaluate research				X	X