Hi All,

The Question Method that Chris Efthimiou presented at the Administrative Assessment Council meeting (11/20) provides a valuable path to determining appropriate tools and measures for our upcoming department, program, or unit assessment. A step-by-step walk through the boxes will be beneficial to both examine what we have already done, as well as our next steps. Please note that I have edited the information delivered that day so as to narrow our focus and to provide continuity to the earlier presentations and materials.

Help for Creating Tools and Establishing Measures

Information Required	Key Question(s)	Information Source(s)	Data Collection Methods	Data Analysis Methods	Report
What Do You Need To Answer The Question?	What Do You Want To Know?	Where Are You Going To Get It?	How Are You Going To Get It?	What Will You Do With Data Once You Get It?	What Can You Say?
•Mission Statement •Department or Program or Unit objectives or learning outcomes BOX 1	•Success rate •Scope •Timeframe •Population BOX 2	•Stakeholders •Program officials or participating students •Program documents •Databases BOX 3	•Structured surveys •Focus groups •Structured interviews •Case studies •Data extractions •Document retrieval BENCH MARKS BOX 4	•Descriptive statistics •Quantitative analysis •Qualitative analysis BOX 5	•Precise statements about what you discovered. *General/ specific information you need going forward • Focus Group notes from four groups. *Information to make changes •Impact of program changes. BOX 6

BOX 1 - We already have what we need—a Mission Statement that established the work of our department, program or unit, (basically, why it exists) and Program Objectives or Learning Outcomes that you earlier developed for your department, program or unit.

BOX 2 - Success rate examples: How many students are successfully meeting the benchmark(s) in your pre-college program, or how efficiently is trash being collected, or how quickly are students moving through their bursar stops, or how can the wait time for a student who requests a tutor be reduced, or how quickly does the Help Desk respond to requests, etc. Our timeframe is usually a semester, or the entire school year, and our population could be everything from servicing returning combat vets to parents who bring their children to the daycare center to probationary students seeking re-admittance to high-school students in our pre-college programs.

BOX 3 - The population you serve, or, in many cases, the services you provide. You might already have records or documents to get you started on the assessment cycle.

BOX 4 – Listed are some of the TOOLs you might use to retrieve or generate the information you seek. Many of you could use surveys, but there are other means as well. In departments, programs or units that have learning outcomes, a rubric might be more appropriate. For others, three focus groups per semester might be more appropriate. The crucial point is that you are consistent in whatever TOOLS you chose for the assessment over time so that you can see patterns, both good and bad, to which you can respond.

NOTE: A Benchmark is an arbitrary standard, usually a grade or number, used in quantitative analysis. In academic outcomes assessment, 70% might be the benchmark for a mathematics class. To say that all students should score at least 70% on the learning outcomes embedded in a final exam, is unrealistic. However, one might establish a benchmark that says 70% of all students will score 70% is more realistic, and, often a good place to start. Non-Academic assessment of a program or service can follow a similar path. For example, a benchmark for students going to a math center for help, might be "Students will wait no longer than fifteen minutes to see a tutor"; of "the floors of Colston Hall will be serviced (washed, waxed and buffed) three times each semester"; or, "students attending a summer orientation program will respond 'satisfactorily' on exist surveys 90% of the time."

BOX 5 – Now that you have data, you need to decide how we will use it. Once statistics are gathered, they become data; once data is interpreted, against a benchmark and among stakeholders, it becomes information to use. You will see those areas that need attention in your department, program, or unit. The next steps are to create a report. Your report might be only statistical and quantitative, or you might choose to analyze data and provide a narrative that highlights qualitative strengths and challenges. Do what you (and your colleagues) deem most appropriate. The key is to be consistent.

BOX 6 – Your report. What did you find out? Both good and bad are important. Where a program or service is weak, you can now make changes. Changes will likely involve a larger discussion within your department or program. As you make changes to improve your program or services, you are “closing the loop” of this assessment cycle and preparing to start the process once again.

Your report (due January 8th, 2016) functions as the key to changes you want to see.

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS OR WOULD LIKE ASSISTANCE ON ANY ELEMENT OF YOUR ASSESSMENT, PLEASE CONTACT EITHER THE ASSESSMENT TEAM OR OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH.