Assessment Avenue

Collegewide Collaboration on Student Success
AESS Assessment at BCC

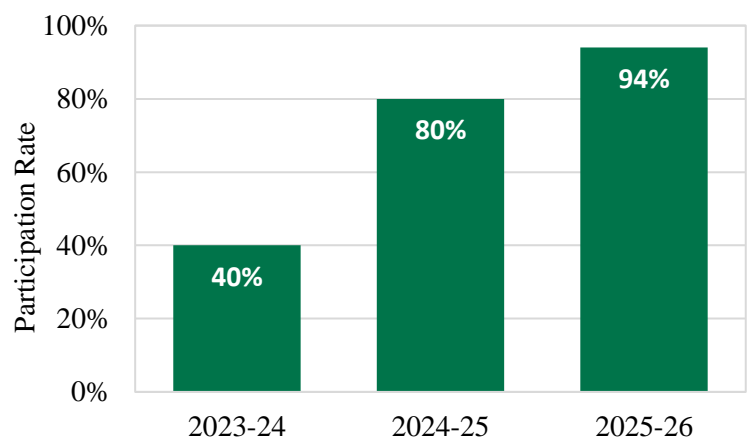Handan Hizmetli, Associate Director, Office of Institutional Effectiveness

Administrative, Educational, and Student Support (AESS) departments are non-instructional areas that provide essential services to the college. Some of these departments may also have a direct learning component, like Career Development and Student Life, where students may learn to write a resume or acquire leadership skills. Bronx Community College's approach to assessment within AESS areas emphasizes the importance of aligning services with student needs and using assessment results to help improve the student experience. This approach is guided by the expectations of our accreditor, Middle States, which requires ongoing assessments of the effectiveness of student support services for all student populations. While these expectations provide a strong impetus for departments to engage in assessment activities, they do not define the purpose of assessment at BCC. At the college, assessment is embraced as a catalyst for continuous improvement that encourages reflection and helps us grow in ways that truly benefit our students and community.

The AESS Assessment Process

In the 2024–2025 academic year, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) reimagined the AESS assessment process using a user-friendly digital reporting platform that streamlines data collection, simplifies reporting, and enhances transparency. Through this platform, departments conduct AESS assessments using a two-phase model. In the planning phase, departments define their goals for the academic year, outline the activities they will undertake to achieve those goals, identify metrics to evaluate progress, and align their goals with the College's strategic goals. During the reporting phase—typically at the end of the academic year— departments analyze their assessment results, reflect on the progress they made, and identify the resources they need support ongoing improvements. Between these two phases, OIE staff works closely with department representatives to refine their plans and develop assessment strategies that will result in meaningful results leading to actionable improvement strategies.

This revised process has resulted in improvements in department participation. When the AESS assessment process was re-launched in 2023-2024, less than half of departments participated (Figure 1). Since then, participation has increased steadily. This academic year, nearly all of the 50 AESS units invited to participate, did so, demonstrating strong, campus-wide commitment to the process across the college's six divisions: Academic Affairs, Administration, Advancement, Communications and External Relations, Enrollment Management, Finance, and Student Success.

Figure 1. *College-Wide Participation in AESS Assessment*

AESS Assessment Results and Goal Alignment

The 2024–2025 assessment results not only highlight the accomplishments of individual departments but also demonstrate how these efforts collectively align with BCC's broader strategic priorities. Across all divisions departmental goals were closely mapped to the College's strategic goals, emphasizing student success, academic excellence, and institutional effectiveness. As displayed in Table 1, most divisions aligned their goals with BCC's first Strategic Goal, *Fostering Student Success*. In fact, more than two-thirds of all divisional goals were aligned with this goal. Goal 1 was followed by Goal 2, *Advance Academic Excellence*, and Goal 3, *Strengthening Institutional Effectiveness.*

Table 1. *Alignment of Division Goals with BCC's Strategic Goals, 2024-2025*

Division	Goal 1: Foster Student Success	Goal 2: Advance Academic Excellence	Goal 3: Strengthen Institutional Effectiveness
Academic Affairs	7	6	4
Administration	0	0	7
Adv., Comm. & Ext. Relations	8	1	3
Enrollment Management	15	0	2
Finance	16	0	0
Student Success	26	0	7
Total	68	7	23

AESS Assessment Results and Themes

Positive outcomes were achieved throughout last year's assessment cycle. For example, the Divisions of Academic Affairs and Student Success achieved 90% of their goals. Advancement and Enrollment Management achieved 73%, and Finance met 62%. After careful review of departmental goals, several central themes emerged:

1) Advancing Student Success, Readiness and Retention

Academic Affairs units advanced students' academic readiness by strengthening tutoring, advising, career development, and programs such as CUNY Language Immersion Program (CLIP) and CUNY Start. CLIP met all goals by expanding outreach efforts, enhancing faculty training, aligning curricula to better support ESL students, and increasing student use of Writing Center tutoring. CUNY Start improved student engagement and access to support services, reduced rates of disengagement, and helped more students complete developmental course requirements and transition into credit-bearing coursework.

The Division of Enrollment Management enhanced enrollment and persistence through targeted outreach, admissions support, and pre-college initiatives such as College Now, College Discovery, Early College, Financial Aid, Future Now, and CUNY Edge. Admissions and Recruitment strengthened student engagement through Bronco Commitment Day, which brought over 140 students to campus for advising and enrollment support; Financial Aid boosted FAFSA completions through expanded support and launched the Help a Bronco Graduate Endowed Scholarship; and Future Now exceeded all enrollment and academic outcome targets.

Student Success departments expanded holistic supports across Athletics, CARES, Disability and Health Services, Early Childhood, MEN, Judicial Affairs, Student Life, and Veterans Services. Athletics improved student-athlete retention and strengthened championship performance; the CARES program delivered

a wide range of impactful workshops, with 96% of Mental Health First Aid participants demonstrating increased comprehension and participants reporting improved well-being and stress management. Other accomplishments include record Disability Services intake, exceeded enrollment expectations in Early Childhood program, increased student engagement through MEN initiatives, streamlined Special Projects processes, growth in student clubs, and implementation of a real-time credit tracking system to support student-veteran success.

2) Enhancing Operational Efficiency and Campus Services

The Division of Administration strengthened operational efficiency, compliance, and campus effectiveness through targeted initiatives. For example, Campus Services established a centralized shredding station, trained staff on records retention and destruction practices and assigning departmental records retention coordinators to oversee compliance. Campus Operations improved project oversight through regular stakeholder meetings, while the Office of Environmental Health and Safety implemented a customized online safety training program across departments. Public Safety hosted events fostering inclusion and community, helping students view officers as approachable, with surveys confirming increased trust and positive perceptions of campus safety. Physical Plant Services enhanced service request tracking with updated ARCHIBUS modules.

3) Strengthening External Engagement and Resource Development

This theme was prioritized as Advancement, Communications, and External Relations strengthened marketing, fundraising, scholarships, and outreach to alumni, community partners, and grant-seeking faculty. The division enhanced connections with external stakeholders while expanding institutional resources. For example, Alumni Relations increased Run the Bronx participation by 11.4% and hosted an alumni employee breakfast. Communication and Marketing produced eight new videos showcasing key programs and support services including ECL, Athletics, Disability Services, Veterans, Student Success, CARES, Admissions, and Financial Aid, enhancing outreach to both internal and external constituents. Development and Partnerships strengthened donor engagement using iWave and LinkedIn Navigator, while Grants Development supported faculty in submitting key proposals, increasing the college's competitiveness for external funding.

4) Enhancing Financial Operations and Efficiency

The Finance division improved accuracy, efficiency, and transparency across key financial functions. Accounting, for example, enhanced cash control through reconciliations shared with departments, while Accounts Payable processed 4,100 invoices—a 28% increase—often ahead of schedule, strengthening vendor relationships in the process. The Budget Office streamlined reporting with updated templates containing four years of historical data and centralized budget documents via SharePoint. Property Management completed the re-inventory cycle and updated asset records, and the Purchasing Department advanced procurement knowledge by developing campus-specific training resources adapted from CUNY Central materials.

Looking Forward

Our goal is to continue enhancing the AESS assessment processes to effectively meet the College's evolving needs. The 2024–2025 assessment cycle demonstrated BCC's commitment to advancing student success, academic excellence, and institutional effectiveness, fully aligned with our strategic goals. Moreover, with almost 100 % compliance of assessment plan submissions in 2025-2026, this process is becoming firmly embedded in the college's practice of continuous improvement. While departmental participation drove much of this progress, vice presidents played a critical role in clarifying expectations and reinforcing the importance of assessment. Maintaining these coordinated efforts is essential to sustaining the momentum of AESS assessment and strengthening our culture of continuous improvement at BCC.
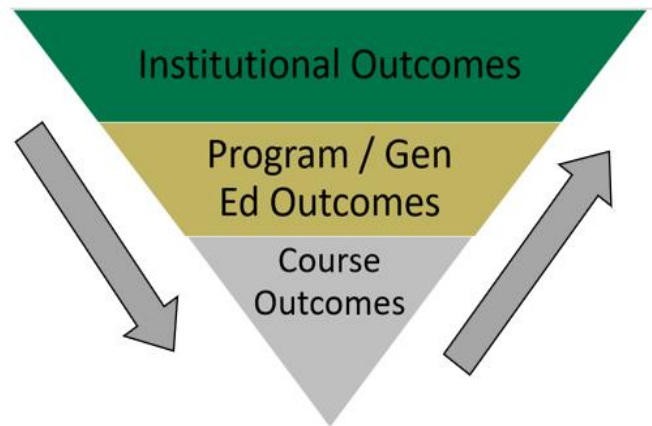
BCC's Academic Assessment Framework
Raymond Galinski, Ph.D., Dean, Office for Institutional Effectiveness

The BCC Academic Assessment Council, in consultation with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, established a framework to help guide academic departments in their assessment efforts. This framework aligns institutional, program, and course level expected outcomes (Figure 1) to ensure that all students, regardless of when they entered the college, have the opportunity acquire the knowledge, skills, abilities, and habits of mind important for transfer to a four-year college and future career success.

Academic Assessment Council

The Academic Assessment Council serves as the cornerstone of the institution's assessment framework, providing guidance and support for the student learning outcomes assessment process. The Council is responsible for recommending policies and procedures that promote effective assessment practices across the college. Its members, referred to as assessment coordinators, represent each of the 14 academic departments and play a key role in organizing and documenting departmental assessment activities, developing college-wide assessment tools, proposing strategies to enhance student learning and success, and fostering interdepartmental collaboration. The Council convenes monthly during the fall and spring semesters to share best practices and organize professional development opportunities for faculty. Additional information about the Council, including a current roster of coordinators, can be accessed HERE.
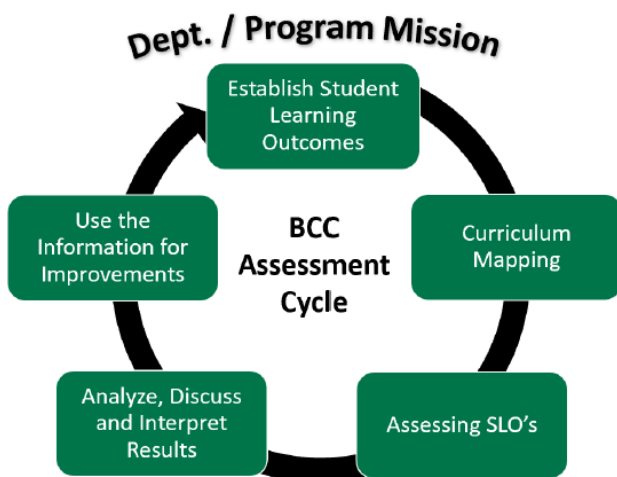
Figure 1. *Outcomes Alignment*

Program Assessment

Figure 2 depicts BCC's five step program assessment cycle. In step one, departments formulate Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs). In certain cases, these outcomes are predetermined by external accrediting bodies. PLOs are published annually in the College Catalog and in some cases, on departmental websites. In step two, faculty members develop curriculum maps that align outcomes with specific courses, ensuring that students have at least one opportunity to achieve the program's learning objectives. These maps are accessible to department chairs and faculty within their respective departments.

Figure 2. *Five Step Assessment Cycle*

In step three, each academic program submits an annual assessment plan to the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) through its designated council coordinator and conducts an assessment of the outcomes selected for review. The plan must include: (1) the PLOs targeted for assessment that academic year, (2) the course(s) where the assessments will be conducted, (3) the methods and tools that will be employed, (4) the benchmarks students are expected to meet, and (5) the projected number of students to be assessed. A standardized template posted to the OIE website outlines the expectations of the plan. While the Council does not prescribe assessment methods or review submissions, coordinators do provide guidance to ensure that sufficient data are collected to support evidence-based judgments regarding student achievement. For example,

departments are encouraged to conduct assessments across multiple courses and sections taught by different faculty members to enhance the validity of findings.

During the fourth step of the cycle, faculty analyze, interpret, and discuss assessment results to determine the extent to which students have achieved the intended learning outcomes. The central question guiding this process should be: *Are students learning what we expect them to learn?* Results should be shared broadly and not confined to the chair or assessment coordinator. Ideally, findings should be reviewed during departmental meetings to encourage collaborative interpretation and informed decision-making.

In the final stage— often referred to the "Closing the Loop" phase— data and insights from the previous step are used to leverage changes designed to enhance students learning, improve teaching, enrich the curriculum, or elevate the overall student experience. If results suggest that an outcome is not being met, targeted improvement actions should be planned, with assessment data collected to evaluate the effectiveness of these changes in boosting student performance. Student learning outcomes should continue to be assessed and improved until the "loop is closed." Conversely, if an outcome is achieved, then future assessments may shift towards monitoring student performance and selecting a different outcome for assessment.

General Education Assessment

BCC's General Education (Pathways) curriculum is a coherent program of courses and learning experiences designed to provide students with the opportunity to acquire a breadth of essential knowledge and skills in a variety of disciplines important for every educated person. These courses not only support intellectual growth but also reflect the college's institutional learning goals. For many students, general education represents more than half of their academic journey at BCC, making the continuous assessment of its learning outcomes critical to ensuring that these objectives are effectively addressed and achieved.

In 2023, the College, in collaboration with the Academic Assessment Council, aligned CUNY's general education learning outcomes with six overarching competencies: Communication (written and oral), Critical Thinking, Quantitative Reasoning, Scientific Reasoning, Digital Literacy, and Information Literacy. These competencies correspond closely with Middle States accreditation standards, which require institutions to demonstrate proficiency in these core skills. Over the past three years, the Assessment Council has developed common rubrics for several competencies, and during the last two years, with contributions from numerous instructors, has assessed four of them. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness maintains a calendar to guide ongoing assessments. This winter, a team of reviewers is assessing critical thinking in First-Year Seminar courses, and in the spring, the College plans to assess oral communication and digital literacy.

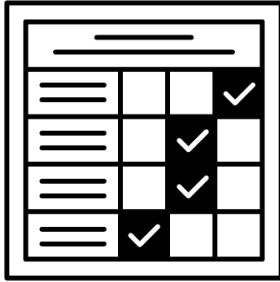## The Role of Rubrics in Enhancing Assessment Practices
Pedro D. Lopez, M.A., R.T. (R) (CT) (ARRT), Associate Professor, Radiologic Technology Program

Rubrics have become an essential assessment tool in education, providing structured guidelines for educators and students to ensure clarity, objectivity, and effectiveness in evaluating student performance. Defined as scoring tools that outline specific criteria for various levels of achievement, rubrics help translate learning objectives into measurable standards (Nawrin & Sadek, 2022). When thoughtfully designed, they enhance both the assessment process and the learning experience by making expectations clear and transparent.

In one of my diagnostic imaging courses, I implemented a rubric to evaluate students' oral presentations on topics such as radiation dose limits, patient protection strategies, and occupational exposure monitoring. Each student delivered a 15-minute presentation, followed by a brief Q&A session. The rubric assessed content accuracy, clarity of explanation, effective use of visuals, and professional communication. Providing the rubric

in advance helped students understand precisely what was expected and how their performance would be assessed. Many students expressed that this structure increased their confidence and organization during presentations.

This anecdotal evidence is consistent with research suggesting that accessible rubrics may offer students a "vision of success," enabling them to plan and evaluate their work more effectively (Reynders et al., 2020). In my experience, students frequently referenced the rubric while preparing, ensuring their presentations addressed both technical and ethical aspects of radiation safety. The rubric also improved grading consistency and reduced ambiguity in feedback, allowing students to pinpoint their strengths and areas for improvement.

For educators, rubrics facilitate the grading process and promote consistency, especially in fields such as radiologic technology where performance standards must align with professional competencies (He et al., 2022; Reynders et al., 2020). Furthermore, using a uniform rubric across course sections has promoted equity and alignment with learning outcomes, particularly in communication and professionalism, which are core competencies in allied health education.

My teaching experience in radiologic technology education has shown me that the principles behind effective rubric design are universal and apply across all educational disciplines. Whether in a humanities class to assess essays, a STEM course evaluating lab performance, or professional programs to measure clinical or project-based skills, rubrics provide a structured way to align learning outcomes, clarify expectations, and ensure fairness in evaluation. Their versatility allows faculty across disciplines to adapt them for both formative and summative assessments.

Another promising area for rubric application in my discipline involves clinical reflection assignments, where students analyze their performance during radiographic procedures. A carefully structured rubric could help guide these reflections, emphasizing clinical reasoning, ethical judgment, and patient safety. Similarly, image critique assignments could benefit from rubrics that assess technical accuracy, diagnostic quality, and justification of exposure factors. These applications would further reinforce critical thinking and professional accountability in student learning.

Although my use of rubrics continues to evolve, their impact on student engagement and assessment transparency has been evident. Moving forward, I plan to expand their use across courses to enhance formative and summative feedback opportunities. Rubrics, when thoughtfully designed and aligned with learning outcomes, serve as more than grading tools; they are powerful instruments that guide learning, foster self-assessment, and strengthen instructional effectiveness.

References:

He, C., Zeng, J., & Chen, J. (2022). Students' motivation for rubric use in the EFL classroom assessment environment. *Frontiers in Psychology, 13*, Article 895952. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.895952

Nawrin, T. & Sadek, A. (2022). Role of rubric in assessment of language learning in higher education. T*eacher's World: Journal of Education and Research, 48* (2), 112–129. https://doi.org/10.3329/twjer.v48i2.67555

Reynders, G., Lantz, J., Ruder, S. M., Stanford, C. L., & Cole, R. S. (2020). Rubrics to assess critical thinking and information processing in undergraduate STEM courses. *International Journal of STEM Education, 7*, Article 9. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40594-020-00208-5