

**Integrating
Performance Indicators
and Assessment Details**

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**The usual view:
two purposes, two processes**

- ◆ **Assessment details:** Information for planning and improving programs
 - ◆ Focus: Department or program
 - ◆ Wanted: Rich, raw details
 - ◆ Serving: Internal audience
 - ◆ Stressed by: Assessment professionals & accreditors

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**The usual view:
two purposes, two processes**

- ◆ **Performance indicators:** Tools for high-level planning and accountability
 - ◆ Focus: Overview
 - ◆ Wanted: Small sets of comparable measures
 - ◆ Serving: External audiences
 - ◆ Stressed by: "Top dogs," broad comparisons

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**The usual view:
two purposes, two processes**

- ◆ **The problem:**
 - ◆ Performance indicators don't give enough details for action
 - ◆ Assessment details don't permit quick summaries, benchmarks, or comparisons
- ◆ **The usual solution:** Independent processes
 - ◆ Doubles the work
 - ◆ Interferes with clear communication

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Alternative: an integrated process

- ◆ **The assessor and the planner:**
Different perspectives, common goals
- ◆ **Reduce duplicated effort**
- ◆ **Measure the right thing:** Stay focused on what matters/what works
- ◆ **Effective communication**

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How do you do it?

- ◆ Plan/think in terms of **both** purposes
- ◆ Keep the process **rooted in program assessment**
- ◆ Use some measures that serve **both purposes**
- ◆ Push information in **both** directions

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Push information in both directions

- ◆ **Push down:** Institutional-level summaries inform program issues
 - ◆ As **dashboard indicators**
 - ◆ To **identify best practices**
 - ◆ To help **set performance targets**
 - ◆ But watch out for **oversimplification**

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Push information in both directions

- ◆ **Push up:** Roll assessment details up into institutional/collective performance indicators
 - ◆ Simple roll up may not be possible or appropriate
 - ◆ Harder but more useful:
summarize unit-level information

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Summarize unit-level information

- ◆ That is **relevant** to the program
- ◆ That provides **interpretive context** for better understanding
- ◆ General strategy: **Transform the data** to increase comparability without losing context

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Transform the data

- ◆ **Rough guides:** Combining different kinds of data on a common scale
 - ◆ Same principle as using papers from senior seminars to evaluate programs
 - ◆ Regardless of topic, you can apply
 - ◆ **Explicit outcomes** areas
 - ◆ **Performance criteria** for each outcomes area

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Transform the data

- ◆ **Rough guides:** Examples
 - ◆ Do students meet program's standards in at least X% of the program's outcomes areas?
 - ◆ "Contribution to education"
 - ◆ Is an assessment process in place with results used for program planning?

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Transform the data

- ◆ **Weighted indices:** Composite measures with components weighted differently to reflect unit contexts

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Advantages of transformation

- ◆ **Reduces risk** of inappropriate comparisons
- ◆ Permits rolling up **different kinds of data**
- ◆ **Provides context** for benchmarking

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Takeaways

- ◆ Keep **both purposes** in mind
- ◆ Keep the process **rooted in program assessment**
- ◆ **Transform and combine**
- ◆ **Tailor communications**, not content
- ◆ **Performance indicators are pointers**, not "the" measures

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Finishing up

The handout is online at

http://higheredassessment.com/presentations/ncsu08_integrating.pdf

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