Step 2: Program objectives

What are the objectives of our program? (Some use the terms objectives and objectives interchangeably. They are the same thing.) The place to begin is with the objectives of your program. Objectives are related to your mission statement. A goal could have one or more student learning objectives in which faculty evaluate student evidence. Objectives are higher-level and describe where we want our students to be when they complete our program. Objectives are the measurable outcomes that help students reach the goal of the program. Once you decide on objectives, you will create student learning outcomes for each goal. This is called a direct assessment. A learning goal may also have an indirect assessment, which could include focus groups, placement in internships, or participation in community-based experiential learning.

What documents do you have about assessment? Collect any documents or plans you already created, share them with everyone who will participate in assessment, and set up a meeting to talk about assessment. What you talk about at your meeting will depend on where you are. Units with a well-developed assessment plan would start by revisiting the process they devised to see what is working or what they want to change.

If you don’t have a formal plan, how do you talk about students’ learning? If you don’t have a formal assessment plan, you might have an informal one. If you talk about how students are doing on assignments and activities, but you haven’t written how and when you assess, you are still off to a good start. Assessment just documents what you are already doing.

Who should join the conversation? Meeting and talking with everyone you think is interested in student success, and learning is a starting point. Those who need to be included are faculty who teach in the program. Inclusiveness means finding ways to involve adjunct faculty, graduate teaching assistants, dual enrollment faculty, or anyone who teaches. In non-academic units, the people to include are program directors and staff.