Think logically: Using logic models in a faculty-staff collaboration to develop first-year learning outcomes

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Objectives for this session

- Understand the importance of learning outcomes in curricular and co-curricular program development.
- Learn about the process of outcome development and implementation for first-year students at Wheelock College, a small (< 1,000 students) liberal arts and professional college in Boston.
- Create a logic model you can use to articulate the need and process for learning outcome development on your home campus.
- Edit, refine and improve upon your first draft through pair work with one another.
- Leave with a list of references and further reading on learning outcomes, logic models, and high impact practices.
“Accreditation… is largely focused on inputs, more on how many books are in a college library, than whether students can actually understand them. Institutions are asked, ‘Are you measuring student learning?’ And they check yes or no. That must change. Whether students are learning is not a yes-or-no question. It’s how? How much? And to what effect?” (Bollag, 2006, p.A1)

- Margaret Spellings, former U.S. Secretary of Education
Importance of Learning Outcomes

- Stakeholder expectations
  - Students, parents, faculty, administrators, trustees

- Accountability for student learning
  - Accrediting bodies, government, media

"If [higher education] can't prove the worth of a program, then it needs to examine itself. Wherever taxpayer dollars are being spent, there has to be accountability." (Field & Quizon, 2011)

Rep. Virginia Foxx (R-NC), chair of the House education committee’s subcommittee on higher education
Stakes could not be higher

- No significant gains in critical thinking, complex reasoning, or writing skills in 45 percent of sample in a recent study.
- Higher education appears to reproduce inequality and solidify class location.
- Graduation rates “stagnant or decreasing,” and time to degree “on the rise.”
- Peer influence places higher value on social instead of academic learning.

How to create learning outcomes

- Undertake a collaborative and systematic process to develop and articulate outcomes

1) Begin with the end in mind
   - Use mission, vision, and other guiding principles
   - Ground your work in current theory and practice
     - CAS & Learning Reconsidered
     - AAC&U “Essential Learning Outcomes”
     - Compare with other institutions

2) Identify high-impact practices that lead to growth in key learning outcomes (Kuh, 2008)

3) Identify resources
Logic Models

- A narrative for our programs… “A picture of how you believe your program will work.”

- “The purpose … is to provide stakeholders with a road map describing the sequence of related events connecting the need for a planned program with the program’s desired results.”

(W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2004, pp.1-3)
Logic model for Program Planning (a.k.a. Theory of Change)

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CLARIFYING PROGRAM THEORY:

1. **PROBLEM OR ISSUE STATEMENT**: Describe the problem(s) your program is attempting to solve or the issue(s) your program will address.

2. **COMMUNITY NEEDS/ASSETS**: Specify the needs and/or assets of your community that led your organization to design a program that addresses the problem.

3. **DESIRED RESULTS (OUTPUTS, OUTCOMES AND IMPACTS)**: Identify desired results, or vision of the future, by describing what you expect to achieve near- and long-term.

4. **INFLUENTIAL FACTORS**: List the factors you believe will influence change in your community.

5. **STRATEGIES**: List general successful strategies or “best practices” that have helped communities like yours achieve the kinds of results your program promises.

6. **ASSUMPTIONS**: State the assumptions behind how and why the change strategies will work in your community.
Wheelock logic model

Strategies
- Engage key colleagues across the college in refining and editing learning outcomes
- Build learning communities organically through natural overlap in course or program mission, focus, content, process, activities, and deliverables
- Communicate high expectations for learning to all stakeholders—students, faculty, staff, parents—at every opportunity, and describe relevant support structures
- Integrate learning outcomes measurement within current assessment structure

Assumptions
- The working group settles on a list of outcomes agreeable to key stakeholders
- Individual instructors and staff utilize these outcomes as one foundational component when creating or revising course content and programming
- Faculty and administrators alter current assessment measures to include data collection with respect to these outcomes
- First-year students at Wheelock are motivated to do their part to learn and develop
- This project will be compatible with Gen Ed principles, Wheelock mission, etc.

Influential Factors
- Institutional Priority 4 and senior-level administrative support exists through Enrollment Management & Student Success division
- Program coordinators for FYS, ENG, and HGD communicate course-wide and first-year academic program-wide expectations to individual instructors and to the faculty at large
- Student Success staff design and deliver programs for students and parents that support the outcomes established in this project
- Growing imperative within higher education to describe, frame, communicate, and measure student learning outcomes, to demonstrate the added value of a bachelor's degree in light of its high costs

Problem or Issue
- The First Year program at Wheelock lacks coherence
- Our “Learning Communities”—a high-impact practice for colleges—exist in name only for first-year students
- First Year academic expectations/outcomes are too diversified and therefore lack coherent programmatic structure

Community Needs/Assets
- In the 2010-2011 academic year, Institutional Priority 4 calls for "defin[ing] a vision for the undergraduate and graduate student experience" and "develop[ing] clear expectations, core competences, and awareness of supports to enhance students’ pathways for success"
- A unified group of faculty and staff leaders who instruct and support first-year students through FYS, ENG, HGD, and the co-curriculum are motivated to strengthen the first-year program and related learning communities

Desired Results (outputs, outcomes, and impact)
- Establish robust academic and developmental outcomes which adhere to a coherent first year academic program
- Identify and label key curricular and co-curricular activities and experiences with which all first-year students must engage
- Articulate a compelling narrative to the broader community that describes a coherent developmental program for first-year students
- Activate and enhance learning community relationships within and between FYS, ENG, HGD, and the co-curriculum
Practice

- Work individually (or in pairs or small groups with others from your college) to create a logic model for learning outcome development on your home campus
- Work in pairs (from different colleges) to review and edit language in your logic model, and to clarify your rationale
- Group discussion and reflection
# First-Year Learning Outcome Development at Wheelock College

Successful First-Year students at Wheelock will:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Competencies for FYA ENG 100</th>
<th>First Year Seminar</th>
<th>Human Growth &amp; Development</th>
<th>Collaborative and Life Skills</th>
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<td>Understand the value of a general education in the arts and sciences, and how required coursework in the arts and sciences contributes to the education and development of the student.</td>
<td>Use critical thinking and inquiry to recognize, investigate, analyze, and solve problems and to value the process of that discovery.</td>
<td>Challenge conceptions of &quot;development&quot; to include personal growth and change through the life span.</td>
<td>Demonstrate the ability to self-direct by setting out independently to make academic and professional resources. Including professors, librarians, advisors, peer resources, and learning resources.</td>
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<td>Effectively express logically supported arguments and interconnections in both written and oral communication.</td>
<td>Read and analyze texts and other media broadly and critically for main ideas, supporting ideas, details, meanings, and assumptions.</td>
<td>Demonstrate understanding of major theories and research findings about human development through the life span.</td>
<td>Participate fully in the first-year advising process. Including regular check-ins, activities, and instructional planning.</td>
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<td>Respect and explore diverse cultures and life experiences through the course materials, discussions with peers, and community engagements.</td>
<td>Engage in academic behaviors that support academic success, including attendance, promptness, focus, preparation, and participation in the discourse of the class.</td>
<td>Critically reflect on behavior, expectations, and observations about human behavior and human development.</td>
<td>Using the Undergraduate Career and Professional Development Framework as a guide, thoroughly explore potential majors, career interests, and employment opportunities.</td>
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<td>Tailor writing to meet the expectations of specific audiences with the goal to inform and persuade.</td>
<td>Understand, evaluate and analyze evidence and/or data in one or more fields of academic inquiry.</td>
<td>Understand how historical and socio-cultural contexts influence human development and people's ideas about it.</td>
<td>Design a personalized time management schedule that matches individual needs and personality.</td>
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<td>Revise drafts to improve linguistic accuracy, clarity, reasoning, argument strength, and logical organization.</td>
<td>Develop the ability to read and evaluate qualitative information presented in a variety of media.</td>
<td>Gain skills in data collection and analysis techniques central to developmental research, with particular emphasis on naturalistic observation and interview methodology.</td>
<td>Compose effectively appropriate AtariCon for professors, administrators, and professionals in the field.</td>
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<td>Distinguish between various types of assertions, including facts, theories, and opinions.</td>
<td>Demonstrate research (and information literacy) skills by locating, evaluating, and synthesizing information.</td>
<td>Complete field placements and use developmental research to analyze observations of human behavior and explore multiple settings in which development takes place.</td>
<td>Utilize time at college to expand experiential horizons by taking advantage of living in a major American city.</td>
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<td>Strengthen reading comprehension skills in order to accurately synthesize information and arguments.</td>
<td>Engage in the Wheelock community through active participation in organizations and events.</td>
<td>Create and deliver engaging oral presentations for a variety of audiences.</td>
<td>Form healthy relationships with peers.</td>
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<td>Contribute meaningfully to class discussion by listening respectfully to the opinions of others and remaining open to new ways of thought.</td>
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<td>Consistently take intellectual notes in class that allow for effective review and study.</td>
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<td>Create or validate knowledge through thoughtful questioning, meaningful debate, and healthy skepticism.</td>
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<td>Develop professionalism and utilize professional skills in the classroom and while in the field.</td>
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*Draft as of 8-Aug-11*
Did we accomplish our outcomes?

- Establish academic and developmental outcomes
- Identify key curricular and co-curricular activities with which all FY students engage
- Articulate a compelling narrative that describes a coherent FYE
- Activate and enhance learning community relationships

Completed and published in syllabi

Getting there! 9 of 11 co-curricular programs this Fall

Redoubling our efforts with faculty

Faculty planned at least one LC activity this Fall
References & Questions


Thank you!

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