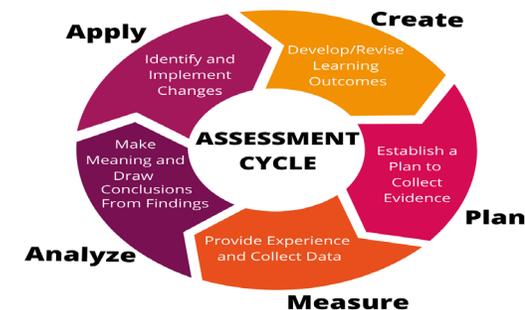# THE ASSESSMENT CYCLE

THE ASSESSMENT CYCLE

- An ongoing, cyclical process

- Used for continuous improvement

- A validated framework to help achieve stated goals [1, 2, 3]

- Results from one step in the process help guide the next step.

- Questions that should be answered through the process: [4]
  - What are we trying to do and why?
  - What is my program supposed to accomplish?
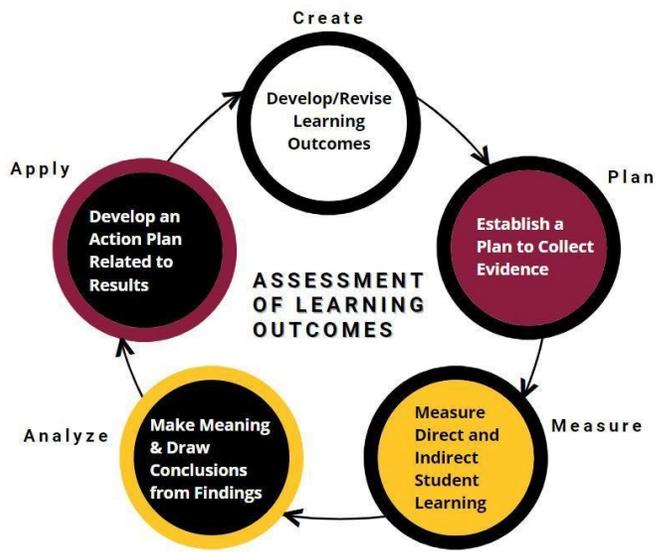 - How well are we doing it?
  - How do we know?
  - How do we use the information to improve or celebrate successes?
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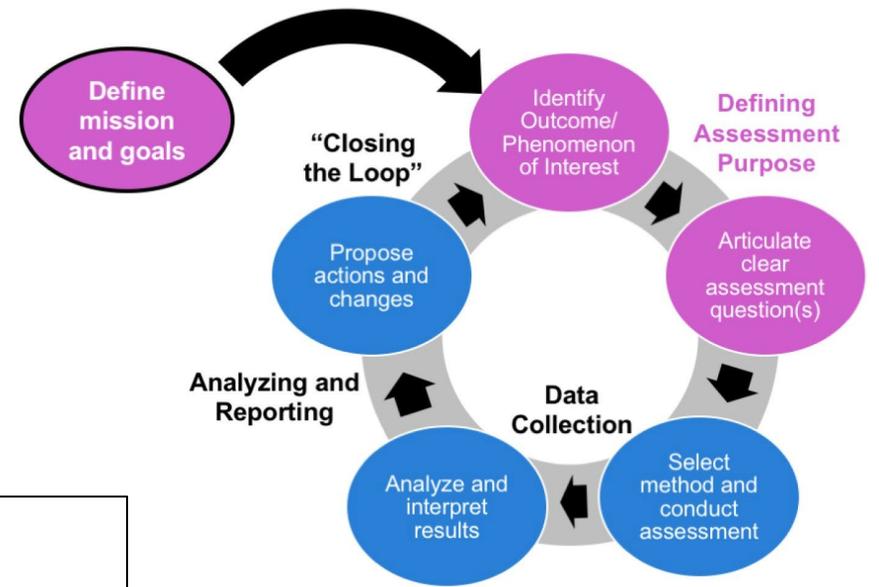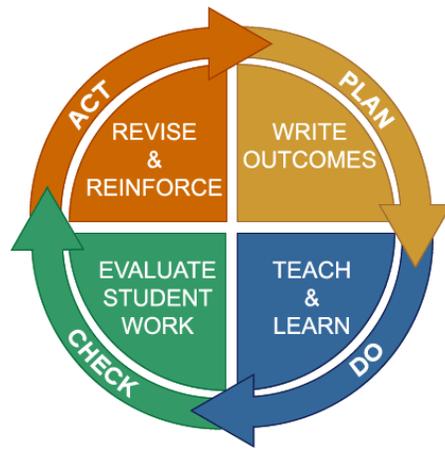
There is no one "right" graphic…. All have common themes.
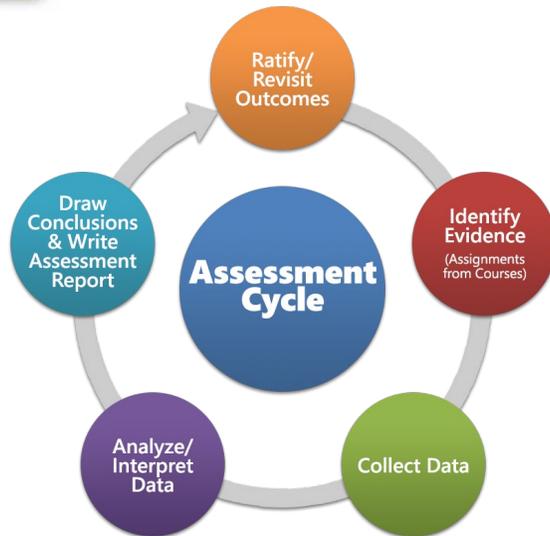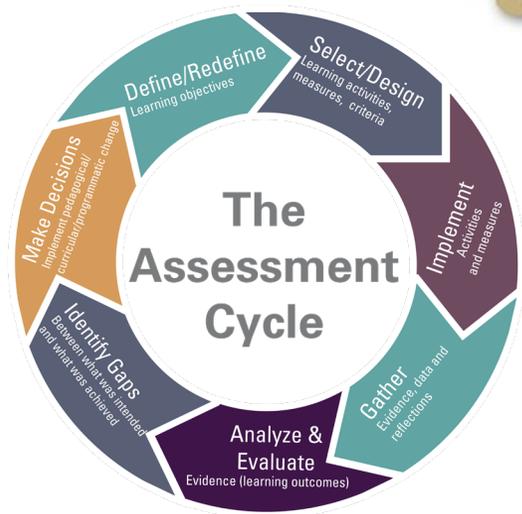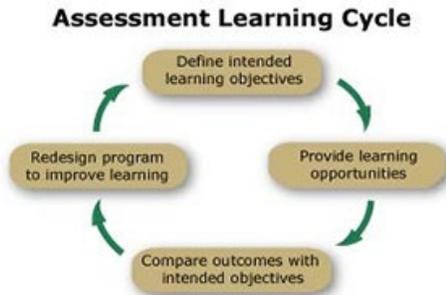
THE ASSESSMENT CYCLE

The foundation of all assessment work.
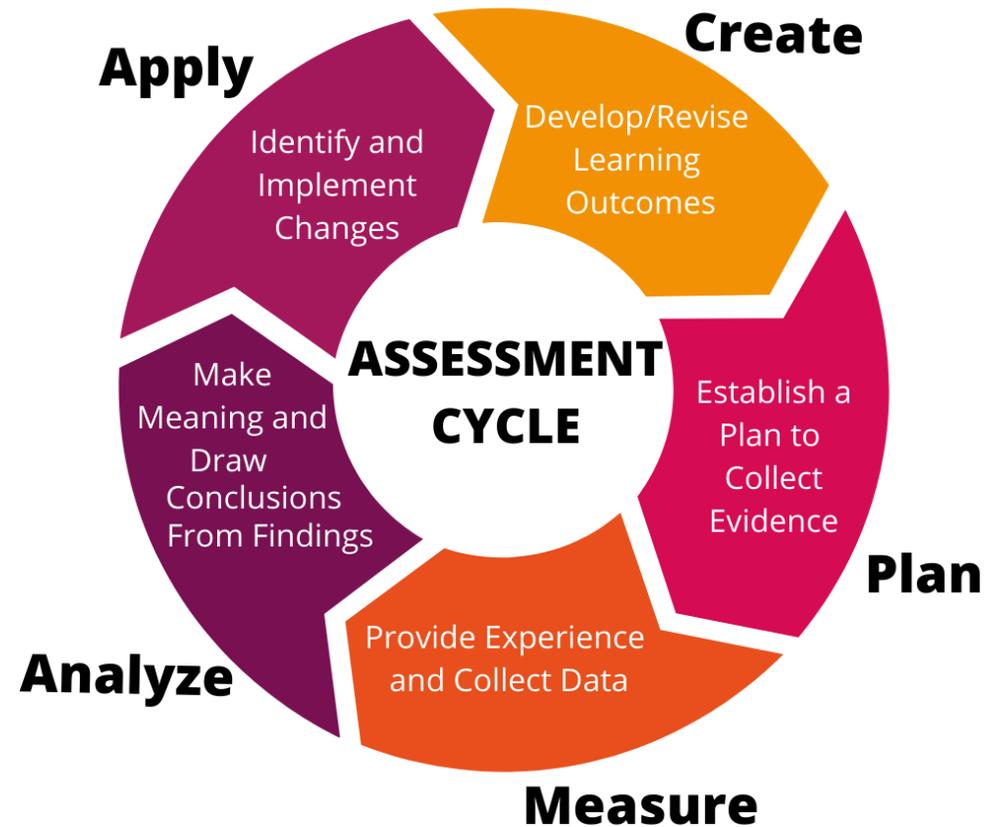
STEP 1: CREATE
DEVELOP/REVISE OUTCOMES

- *What are we trying to do and why? What is the program supposed to accomplish?* [5]
  - **Program outcomes**: describe what the program, process, or service will achieve
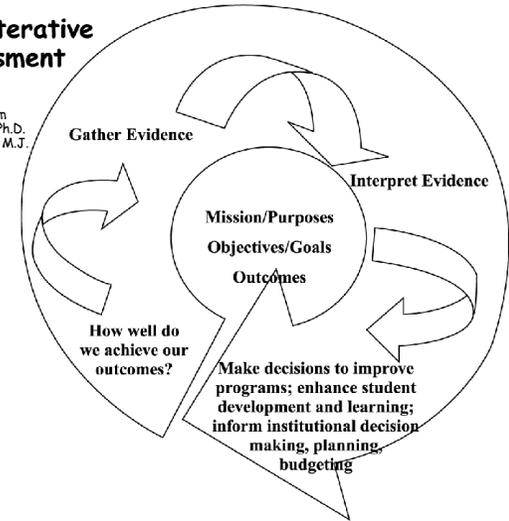 - **Learning outcomes**: describe what the participant will know or be able to do at the end of an intervention [6]
- Intentionally develop goals, outcomes and objectives, each aligned with institutional priorities (mission and goals) and departmental objectives [7]
- Outcomes will define your program and identify how it differs from others on campus

- Identify targeted objectives, indicating why each is important and what specific direct assessment results would lead to the conclusion that needed to be improved [8]
- The established outcomes will guide the methods used to collect data [9]
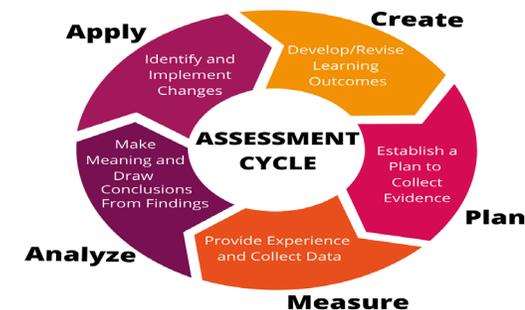
STEP 2: PLAN
ESTABLISH A PLAN TO COLLECT EVIDENCE

- *How will your students demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding for you?* [10]

- Develop the methods needed to collect data that aligns with the established outcomes
  - **Direct Assessment –** measures student learning outcomes directly
    - Examples: portfolio, direct observation, capstone experience, exam, pre/post test, rubric
  - **Indirect Assessment –** measures opinions or thoughts about students' own knowledge, skills, attitudes, learning experiences, etc.
    - Examples: Exit interview, focus group, student perception survey

- Mixed methods are preferred, as are multiple measures for each outcome.

- Determine when each outcome will be evaluated (curriculum/outcomes map)

- Set targets for each assessment method
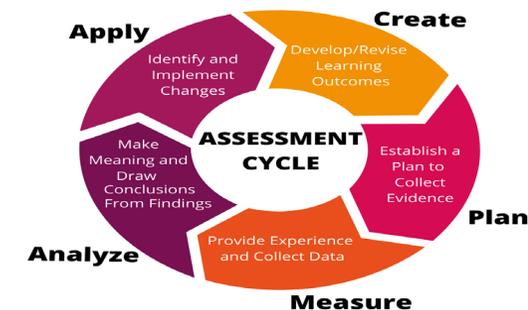
STEP 3: MEASURE
PROVIDE EXPERIENCE AND COLLECT DATA

- *How well are we doing it?*

- Deliver learning or services to achieve the goals, outcomes, etc.
- Ensure that *every student* has the opportunity to participate in the experiences to meet the learning goals [2]

- Gather evidence, collect data to assess goals and outcomes
  - **Quantitative data**: assessment data measured <u>numerically</u> (counts, scores, percentages) are most often summarized using simple charts, graphs, tables and descriptive statistics
  - **Qualitative data**: assessment data that focuses on words and descriptions and produce verbal or narrative data. Usually collected via focus groups, interviews and open-ended questionnaires.

- Collect information about <u>whether</u> and <u>to what degree</u> students are achieving learning outcomes
- Can also use defined evidence sources to help identify success [existing data]
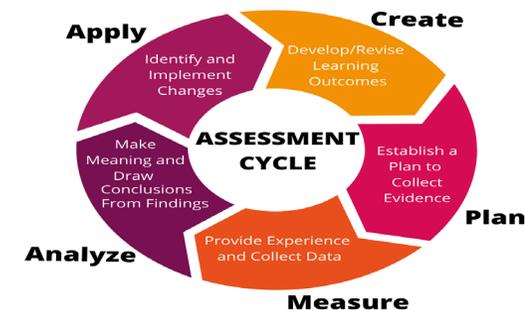
STEP 4: ANALYZE
MAKE MEANING AND DRAW CONCLUSIONS FROM FINDINGS

- *How do we know?*

- Data are analyzed and interpreted in the context of the assessment question [10]
  - What did you learn? What do the results say about student learning and success? [12]
  - Where are students excelling? What areas are they the weakest?

- Communicate the results in an easily digestible format
  - Share with relevant stakeholders

- Transparency is essential
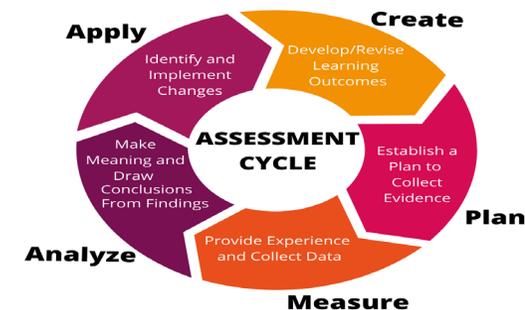
STEP 5: APPLY
IDENTIFY AND IMPLEMENT CHANGES

- *How do we use the information to improve or celebrate successes?*

- Make changes based on evidence – take action
- "Closing the loop"

- Propose learning modifications and interventions [5, 8]
  - Are the outcomes still appropriate?
  - Are we collecting data from the right people/systems/sources?
  - Are we collecting data at the right time(s)?
  - Are we collecting data through the most appropriate method?
  - Are we collecting data that matches the intent of our outcomes?
  - Are we able to conclusively determine the degree to which out outcomes are met with our data?

- Create an improvement timetable [8]

- <u>The most important step in the assessment process</u>
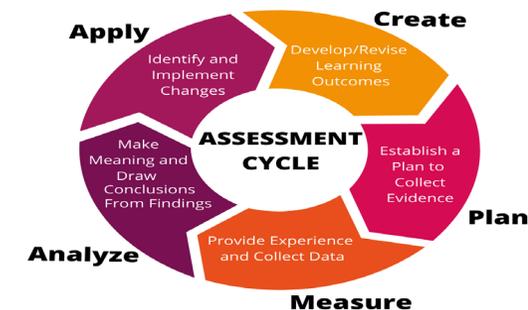
REPEAT!

- *Do the improvements we make work?*

Assessment is *cyclical-* using results ties back to the first step of establishing and revising student learning outcomes.

Questions that should be answered through the process: [4]
- What are we trying to do and why?
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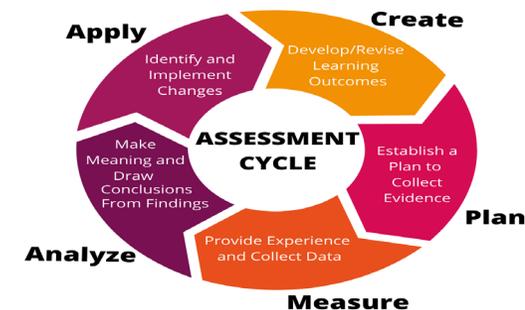
RESOURCES

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2 -- Suskie, L. (2014). Five dimensions of quality: A common sense guide to accreditation and accountability. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

3 -- Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education. (2019). CAS self-assessment guide for Assessment Services. Washington, DC: Author.

4 -- Bresciani, M., Zelna, C., & Anderson, J. (2004). Assessing student development and learning: A handbook for practitioners. Washington, DC: NASPA-Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education.

5 -- The Essential Guide to Assessment Strategy – eBook, Watermark, 2021.

6 -- Henning, G. & Roberts, D. (2016) Student affairs assessment: theory to practice. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

7 -- Bresciani, M. J. (2006). Outcomes-based academic and co-curricular program review: A compilation of institutional good practices. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

8-- Fulcher, K., Good, M., Coleman, C., & Smith, L. (2014). A simple model for learning improvement: Weigh pig, feed pig, weigh pig. (Occasional Paper No. 23). Urbana, IL: University of Illinois and Indiana University, National Institute

9 – Yousey-Elsener, K. (2013). Assessment Fundamentals: The ABCs of Assessment. In D.M. Timm, J.D. Barham, K.McKinney, & A.R. Knerr (Eds), Assessment in practice: A companion guide to the ASK standards (pp. 9-18). Washington, DC: ACPA.

10 – Handbook. Office of Assessment and Accreditation. St. Cloud State University. https://www.stcloudstate.edu/assessment/assessment/handbook.aspx.

11-- Outcomes Assessment Guide 2020: Continuous Improvement and Data Informed Actions. National Louis University. https://nl.edu/assessment-and-accreditation/assessment/assessment-resources/.

ALWAYS HERE TO HELP!

Karina Knutson
Assessment & Accreditation Specialist
karina.knutson@UND.edu
701-777-4085

Additional resources are available on our website:
https://campus.und.edu/assessment-accreditation/