



# Building Faculty Support for Outcomes Assessment

Through the implementation of an  
online assessment management  
system



# Introductions

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Office of Undergraduate Studies

## Presenters

- Jeremy Penn, Assessment Associate for PEARL (Office of Undergraduate Studies)
- Linda Young, Faculty Member (Nutrition and Health Sciences)
- Elizabeth Walter-Shea, Faculty Member (School of Natural Resources)

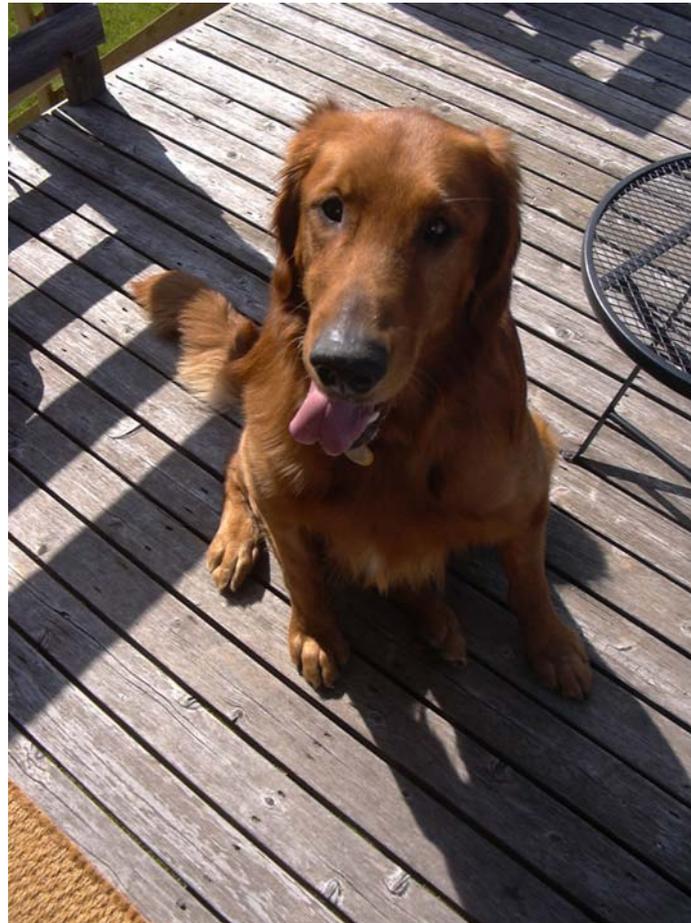
## Project Leadership

- Dr. Jessica Jonson, Director of Institutional Assessment (Office of Undergraduate Studies)



# Teaching vs. Learning

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# Faculty support for assessment

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"Most faculty accept the necessity of program review and outcomes assessment, but don't generally see these as processes that will affect their own professional practice, at least not in a positive way." (Wergin & Swingen, 2000, p. 7)



# Why is there not more support?

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- Resistance to changing something that seems successful
- Don't feel they know enough about assessment and don't have time to learn
- Don't have time in their overloaded schedules
- Time spent on assessment is not recognized by peers or rewarded (Banta, 2002)



# Session Overview

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1. Overview of PEARL
2. Achieving shared criteria (rubric) for evaluating and improving program assessment
3. Developing faculty leaders for assessment
4. Growing and training the faculty Peer Review team



# University of Nebraska-Lincoln

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- 8 undergraduate colleges
  - Colleges have strong autonomy
- 22,973 students
- Professional colleges of Architecture, Law, and Audiology
- Graduate degrees from the M.A. to the Ph.D.
- 1,497 faculty members
- Carnegie basic classification: Research University / Very High Research



# Building faculty support

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Program Excellence through Assessment, Research and Learning (PEARL)

- Colorado State University and UNL partnered together to bring PEARL to UNL
- Initial pilot was initiated by 2 colleges (Education and Human Sciences and Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources)
- Office of Undergraduate Studies now coordinates involvement 4 academic colleges and division of student affairs



# PEARL Key Features

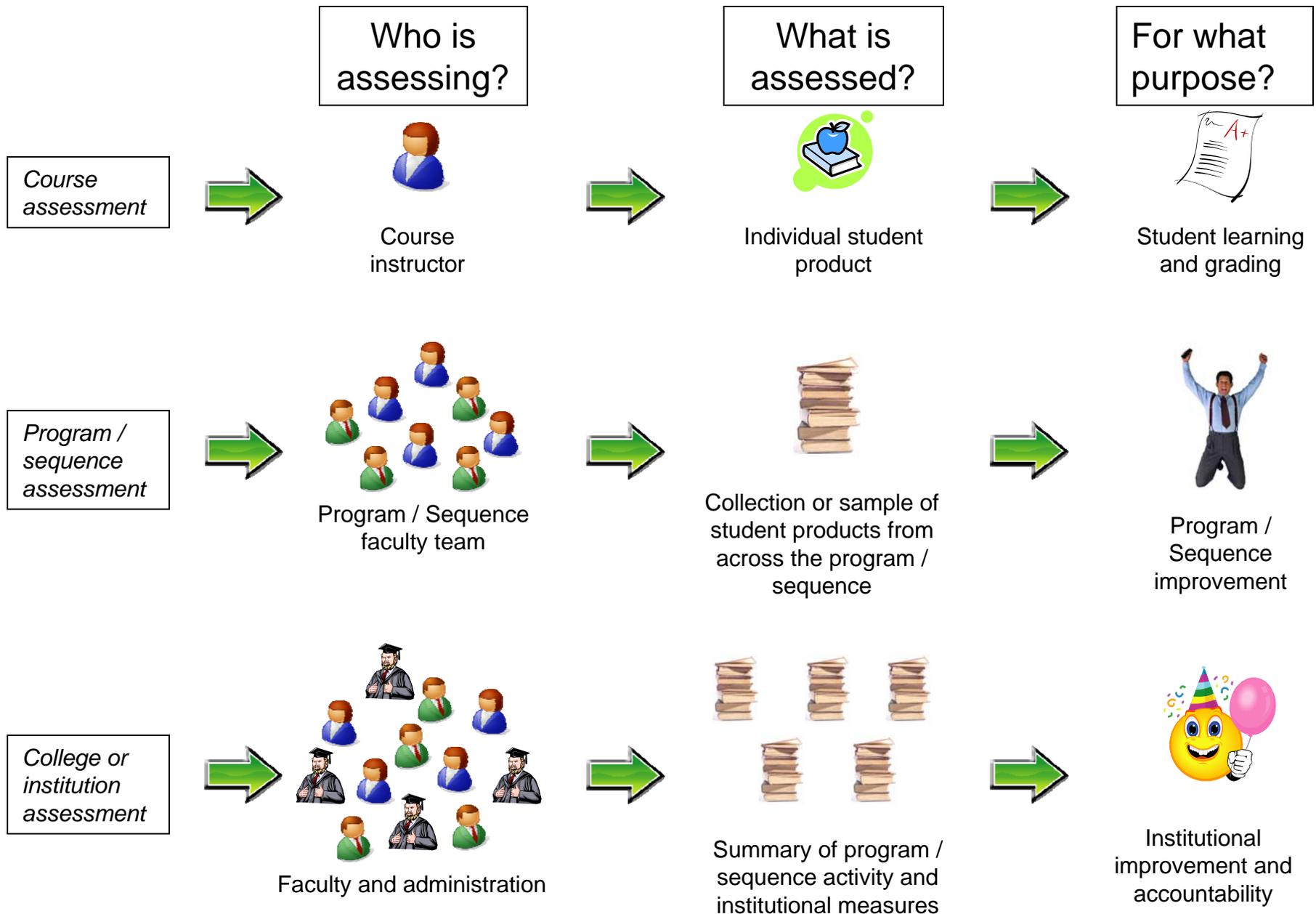
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- Academic program-level assessment
  - Includes ability to create institution-wide summary of activity
- Gradual, "bottom-up" implementation with faculty development
- Continuous (not episodic) assessment process
- Online database provides structure, access to archive of activity, and collaboration across colleges
- Faculty peer review of assessment practices using shared criteria (rubric)
- PEARL Rubric:  
<http://pearl.unl.edu/assessment/Supplementals/PEARL%20Rubric%202007.pdf>
- PEARL Guidebook:  
<http://pearl.unl.edu/assessment/Supplementals/PEARLGuidebook2007.pdf>
- Informational PEARL site:  
<http://www.unl.edu/ous/pearl/pearl.shtml>



Course vs. Program / Sequence vs. Institution Assessment Levels  
Developed by: Jonson and Penn



# PEARL Participants

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Communicate, Advise, Share, Assist



Communicate, Coach, Lead, Organize, Assist



Steering  
Committee

Peer  
Reviewers  
(Faculty)

Program  
Leaders  
(Faculty)

Program  
Faculty

Students



# Activity 1: The PEARL Model

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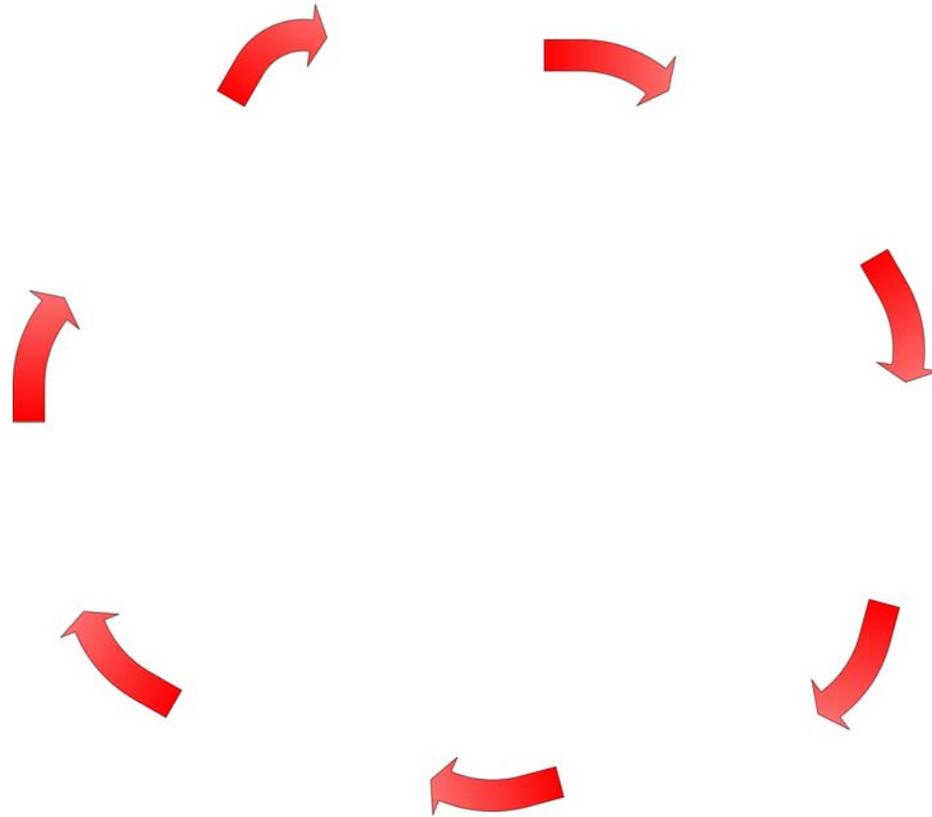
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- Arrange the following steps in the appropriate place in the PEARL model (previous slide)
  - Analyze and use results
  - Use feedback to make revisions and restart PEARL cycle
  - Develop assessment measures
  - Identify student learning outcomes
  - Receive feedback on program assessment plan (and implement plan)
  - Receive feedback on results and use of results
  - Revise program based on results



# Activity 1: The PEARL model

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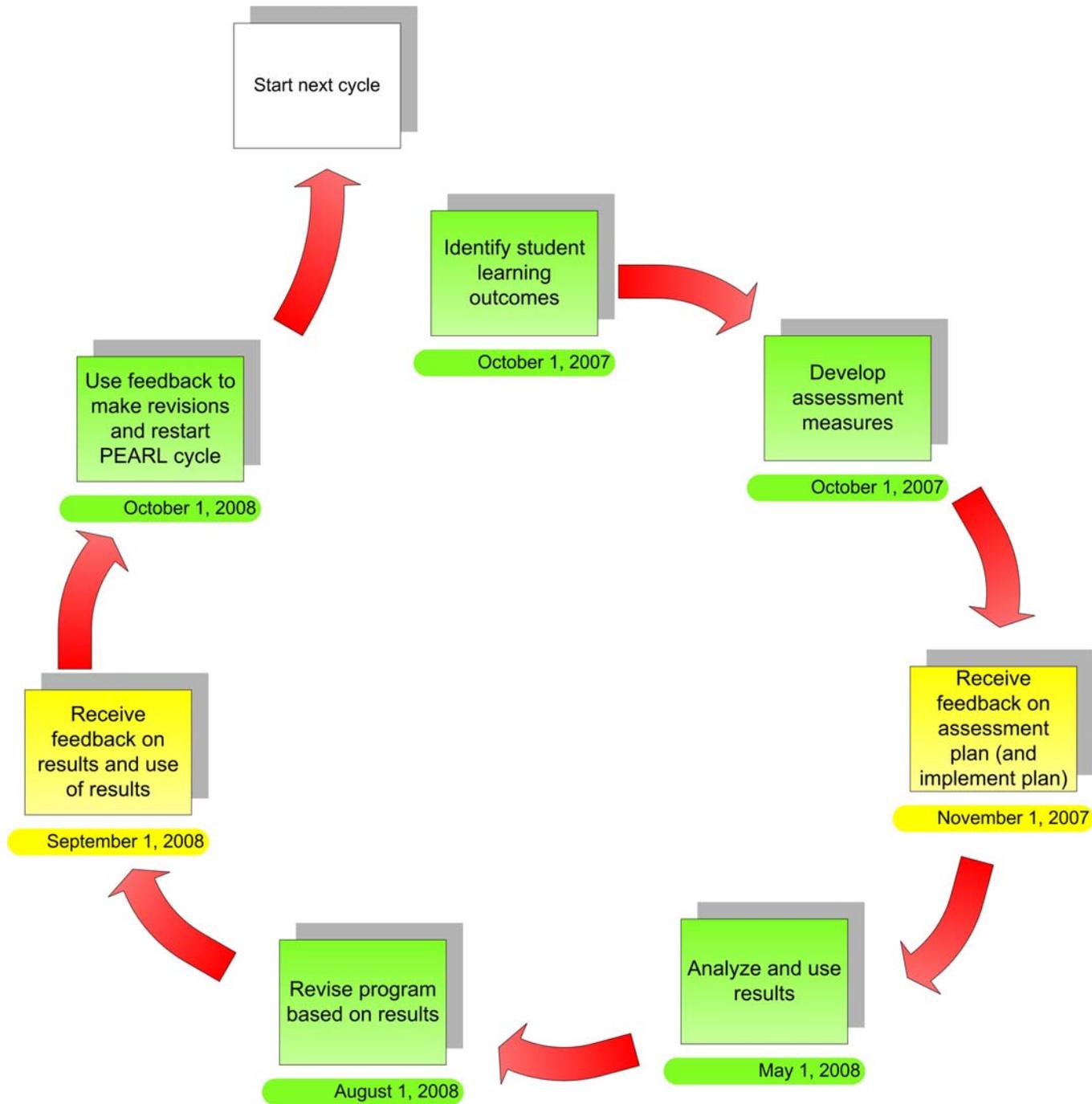
# Activity 1: Discussion

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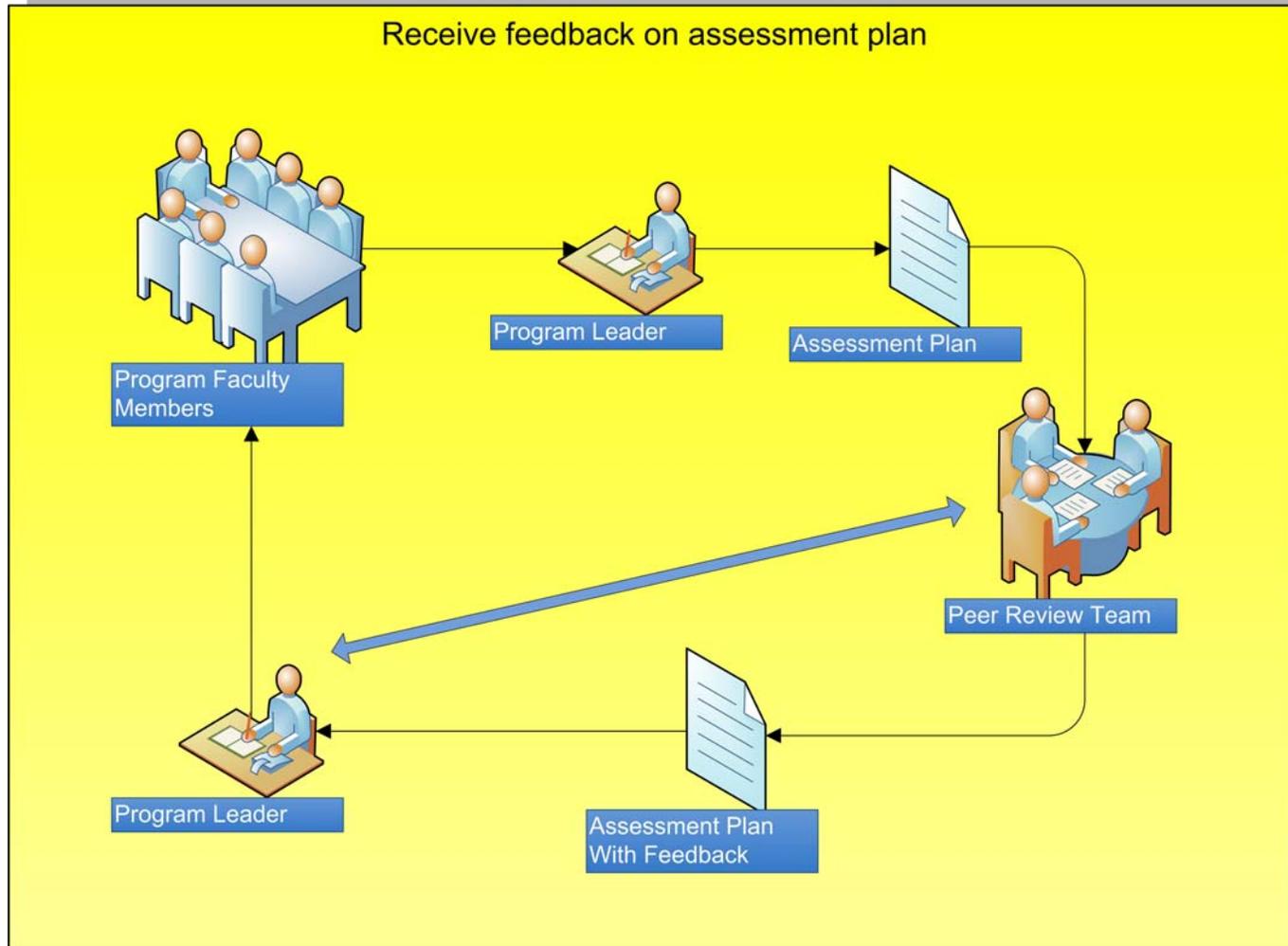
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- In what order did you place these steps?
- Which step is "first?"
- Are there any steps missing?
- Where is your program / college in the assessment cycle right now?
- Which steps are the most difficult or create the most questions?
- How does the PEARL assessment cycle compare to the research cycle you use?





# PEARL Peer Review process



# Achieving shared criteria (what is this?)

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- Common understanding of *quality* program-level assessment
  - What does good program assessment look like?
- Expressed in a variety of ways
  - PEARL philosophy (readings, training materials, website, etc.)



# Achieving shared criteria (why is this important?)

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- Clearly defines the expectations for program-level assessment activity
  - Common language and terminology
- The process of reaching shared criteria is a valuable faculty development activity in itself



# Our Process

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1. Started with the literature
2. Created a draft rubric that expressed the ideas from the literature
3. Shared the draft with the Peer Reviewers (in-training) for feedback
4. Used the feedback to revise the rubric
5. Repeat



# Activity 2: Achieving shared criteria

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1. Read the (very early) rubric draft.
2. Write 1-2 sentences for item 'a' (we would normally do this for a - h) in the "Well Developed" section that describes what an outcome would look like that contained that quality.
3. Compare your responses to those sitting around you.



# Early draft: Rubric for "outcome"

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## Well Developed

The program assessment plan outcome is:

- a. Learning focused
- b. Student focused
- c. Reflective of institutional mission
- d. Aligned to program goals
- e. Representative of non-trivial learning
- f. Central to the discipline
- g. General, clear and specific
- h. Represents enduring understanding



# Activity 2: Discussion

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- Did your description of the rubric component match with your neighbor's?
- How can the rubric be changed so that it is more effective in communicating the concepts?
- How can the rubric be changed to be more valuable to you when you begin using it to review PEARL program assessment plans?
- What changes would make the rubric a better teaching tool?





# Developing Program Leaders

Linda Young  
Department of Nutrition and Health  
Sciences



# Developing Program Leaders (Faculty)

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- Any assessment strategy is only going to be successful with dedication from Program Leaders
- In the Department of Nutrition and Health Sciences, program was defined based on each of the six majors available in the department
- Faculty members already designated as coordinators for each of the majors were identified as Program Leaders for PEARL



# Developing Program Leaders

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- Leader for the Dietetics Major
- Dietetics programs must be approved/accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Dietetics Education (CADE)-American Dietetic Association accrediting agency for education programs
- Assessment of student learning outcomes is inherent in the Accreditation Standards



# Developing Program Leaders

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- Challenging for Program Leaders not previously involved in assessment of student learning outcomes
- Confusion between assessment of learning which occurs in a class session/over time in a course and assessment of student learning outcomes
- Seen as “burdensome”, “complicated”, “just one more thing I have to do”.





# Program assessment plan components

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- A PEARL outcome consists of:
  - Student learning outcome
  - Opportunities to learn
  - Question of interest
  - Assessment method
  - Summary of assessment evidence / results
  - Use of assessment evidence / results



# PEARL Resources for Program Leaders

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- PEARL Guidebook
- PEARL Rubric
- PEARL Best Practices
- PEARL Instruments
- PEARL workshops and consulting



# Identifying Learning Outcomes: Questions

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- What should every graduate of our program know? What skills should they possess?
- We are confident that our students when they graduate from our program are able to \_\_\_\_\_.
- We suspect that students when they graduate from our program are unable to \_\_\_\_\_ to the degree we expect.
- What program experiences make contributions to their attainment?
- Why are these learning outcomes important to our students?



# Challenges in identifying learning outcomes

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- Program faculty involvement
- The number of outcomes
- The scale / scope of these outcomes
- Once outcomes are identified, selecting or creating assessment methods



# Identification and development of assessment method

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- One of the most difficult challenges for Program Leaders is identification and development of an effective assessment method
- Program Leaders often select indirect measures of student learning outcomes (for example, post-graduate surveys, employer surveys) which often provide limited assessment feedback
  - Program Leaders then feel even more frustrated with the assessment process and see little value and return for the time spent on the process



# Activity 3: Identifying assessment methods

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1. Assume your program faculty identified the following learning outcome: "Students can write an essay in which they select and defend a position on a debatable issue [in our content area], support their position with evidence, and address counterarguments." [This activity would normally be done with an actual outcome identified by the program.]
2. In a small group, identify a program assessment method by talking through the questions on the next slide.



# Activity 3: Questions

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- What are some situations (e.g., courses or activities in courses) that prompt students to demonstrate this learning outcome?
- How can we collect / sample these materials across our program in a way that will help us make sense of our students' achievement of this outcome?



# Activity 3: Discussion

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- What information would you hope the assessment method would provide?
- Are there shortcomings to this particular assessment method?
  - Is the assessment method direct or indirect?
- Can't we just do a survey of the students after they graduate?
- Can't we just make everyone take a standardized test?
- Ultimately, will it provide useful information that can be utilized to enhance student learning? Why or why not?



# An Effective and appropriate assessment method

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- An assessment method that is already occurring (e.g., portfolios, capstone project)
- Leads to meaningful assessment data and feedback
- Supports the value and importance of assessment of student learning outcomes
- Provides information that can be utilized to improve future student learning



# Important note: Developing Program Leaders

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- Time?
- Do Program Leaders have to be “assessment experts”?
- Rely upon the Peer Review process to improve and grow quality of assessment over time





# Growing Faculty Reviewers

Elizabeth Walter-Shea  
School of Natural Resources



# Growing a Peer Review Team

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- Teaching experience/administration
  - Initial role as advisor in PEARL development
  - Leaders for assessment process in the college
  - Reviewer of program assessment plans
- Research in "education" vs Research in "science"
  - Terminology: "rubric", "program"



# Growing a Peer Review Team (continued)

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- Readings
  - Huba and Freed (2000)
    - Experiencing a Paradigm Shift Through Assessment
    - Applying Principles of Good Practice in Learner-Centered Assessment
  - Maki (2004)
    - Making Claims about Student Learning with Contexts for Learning
    - Identifying or Designing Tasks to Assess the Dimensions of Learning
    - Designing a Cycle of Inquiry



# Growing a Peer Review Team (continued)

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- Rubric formulation
  - Shared ideas
  - Collaboration of review
- Ownership of PEARL
  - Presentation of PEARL to College
- Reviewer calibration (i.e., practice)
  - Sample program assessment plans
  - Review
  - Discuss
  - Develop sense of reviewer: confidence and familiarity



# Role of Peer Reviewers

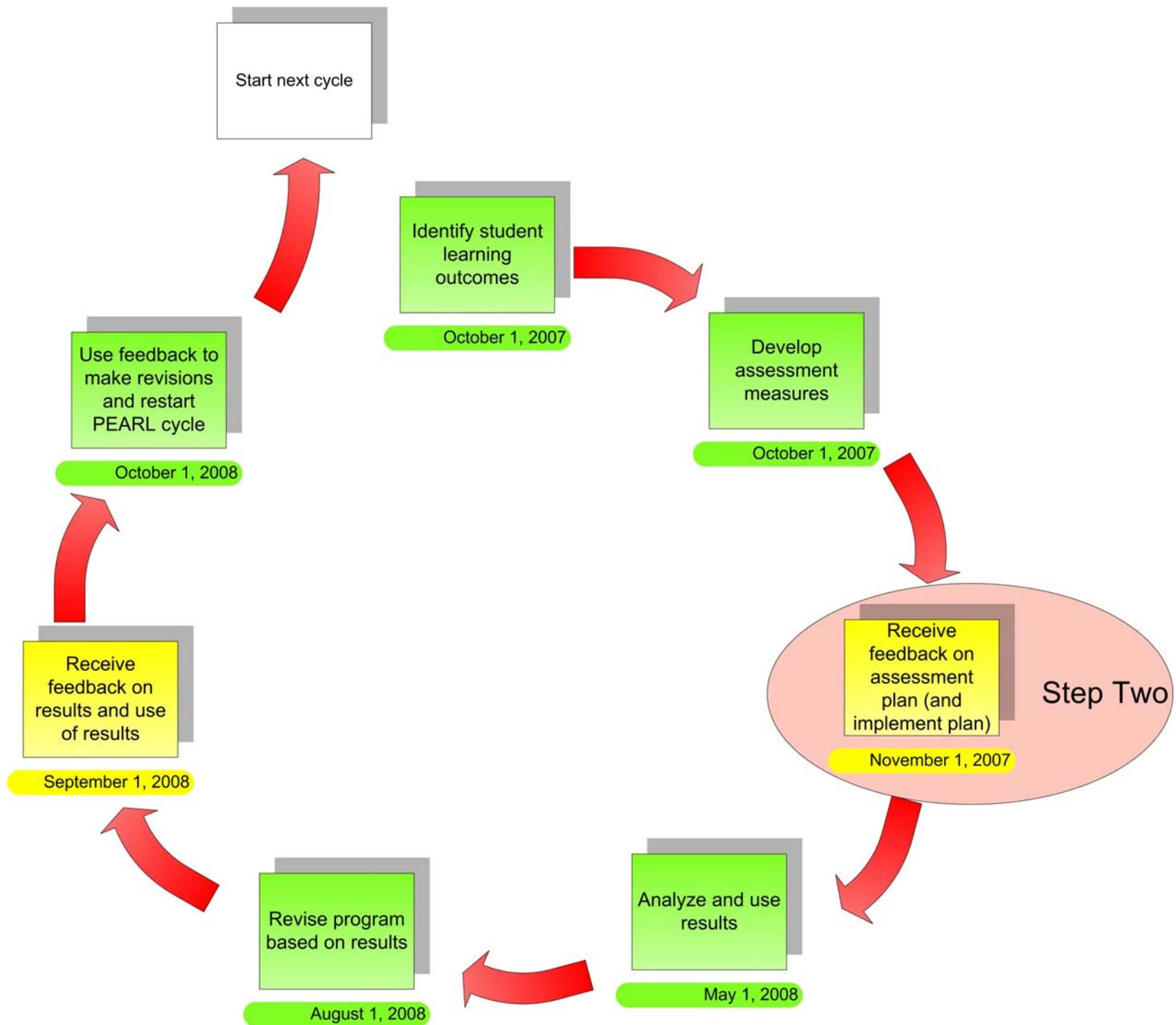
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## Coaching and/or advising

- Positive
- Learning experience outside own discipline
- Rubric as guide in building and reviewing
- Explore relationship between outcome statement, question of interest and assessment method
- PEARL Guidebook as a tool





# Peer Review Team

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- Review teams
  - Lead reviewer
  - Two secondary reviewers
- Process
  - Lead reviewer developed initial comments
  - Secondary reviewers input



# Value and challenges of Peer Review

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- What worked
  - An understanding of assessment
  - Calibration or practice sessions, i.e., get to know the Rubric
  - PEARL Guidebook as reference/tool
  - Individuals knowledgeable about statistical measures
  - Review entire program assessment plan before focusing on components
  - Lead reviewer develop initial comments
  - Review team approach/meetings
- What didn't work
  - E-mail submission and review
  - No incentives to get 'er done



# Activity 4: Learning to review

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1. Read through Dietetics Outcome #2 (attached to the handout).
2. Focus on the Assessment Method section (we would normally do this for each of the sections).
3. In a small group, determine whether or not the Assessment Method of Outcome #2 adequately answers the questions in the following slide (i.e., the PEARL Rubric).



# Activity 4: Questions to ask about the Assessment method

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1. Does the method clearly state what evidence will be gathered (i.e. existing course assessments), who it will be gathered from, and how that evidence will be gathered?
2. Does the method clearly state how evidence will be documented and summarized across students for program reflection?
3. Does the method provide results that will be easy to understand and interpret?
4. Does the method provide an appropriate and thorough representation of student learning for the question being asked?
5. Does the method appropriately sample participants and/or participant products?
6. Does the method motivate participants to perform well and provide a thoughtful reflection?



# Activity 4: Discussion

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Office of Undergraduate Studies

- What would you say to the program leader for this program to help them improve their assessment method for the next cycle?
- What difficulties did you have in focusing on the assessment process and not getting too focused on the content-specific items?
- How comfortable are you reviewing outside your discipline area?
- What changes or modifications to the PEARL Rubric would you suggest?
- What did you learn about assessment from this activity? About dietetics?



# Activity 4: Feedback sample

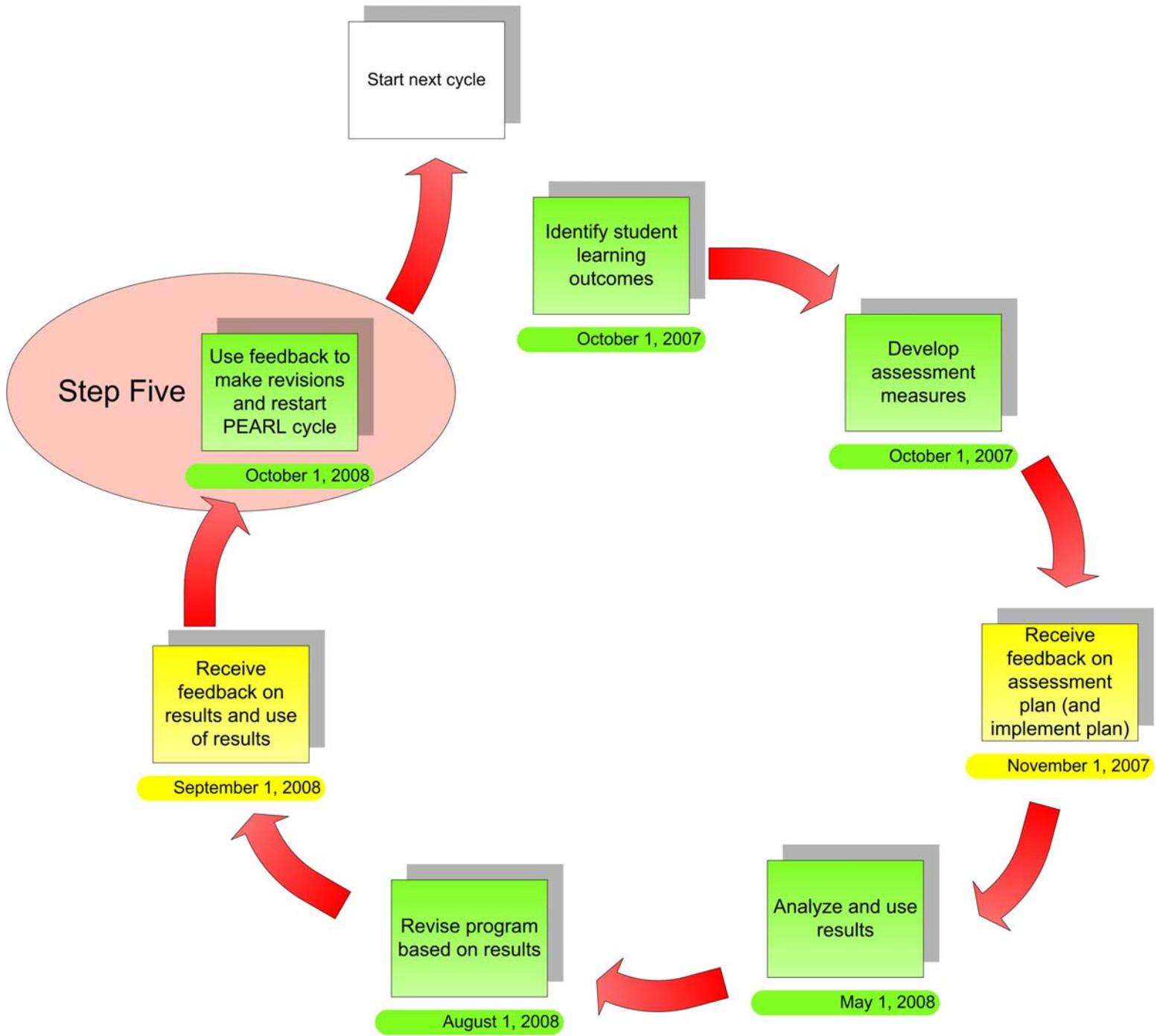
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## Developing

- While the method appropriately samples the students (all students in two required courses) which will also motivate students to perform well, there are some questions regarding the assessment:
  - Will the four assessment techniques be utilized as well in the case study?
  - How will the information be summarized across students to determine changes needed in the program?
  - How will the results be interpreted?





## Modifications in Assessment Method as a result of Peer Review and the PEARL process

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- Original assessment methods were redesigned
- An additional learning activity/assessment method was incorporated
- Students worked with the Nutrition Care Process throughout the semester rather than just the last few weeks
- Feedback was provided throughout the semester



# Summary

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- Inclusion of faculty members at every stage in assessment is critical
- Faculty development activities (a.k.a. "orientation") can build faculty buy-in and support for assessment and improve your assessment process
- Focus on growing and improving the quality of assessment over time
- Assessment management software (like PEARL) is only a tool



# References

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Office of Undergraduate Studies

- Banta, T. W. (2002). A call for transformation. In T. W. Banta and Associates, *Building a scholarship of assessment*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 284 - 292.
- Huba, M. E., & Freed, J. E. (2000). *Learner-centered assessment on college campuses: Shifting the focus from teaching to learning*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Maki, P. (2004). *Assessing for learning: Building a sustainable commitment across the institution*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- Wergin, J. F., & Swingen, J. N. (2000). *Departmental assessment: How some campuses are effectively evaluating the collective work of faculty*. Washington DC: American Association for Higher Education.



# Contact information

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[www.unl.edu/ous/pearl/pearl.shtml](http://www.unl.edu/ous/pearl/pearl.shtml)





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Lincoln

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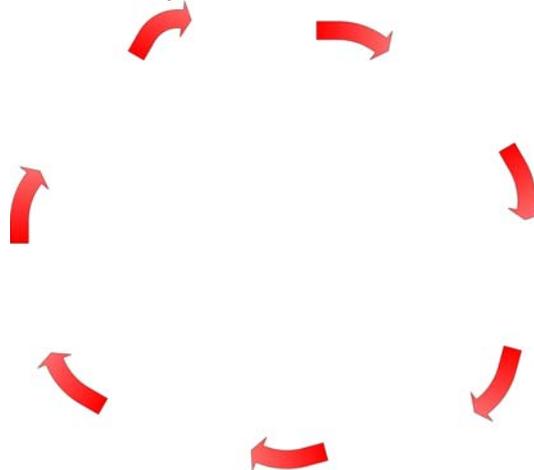
Activity 1

*Instructions*

Arrange the following steps in the appropriate place in the PEARL model (circle diagram):

- Analyze and use results
- Use feedback to make revisions and restart PEARL cycle
- Develop assessment measures
- Identify student learning outcomes
- Receive feedback on assessment plan (and implement plan)
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- Revise program based on results

Activity 1: The PEARL model



*Discussion Questions*

- In what order did you place these steps?
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## Activity 2

### *Instructions*

1. Read the (very early) rubric draft.
2. Write 1-2 sentences for item 'a' (we would normally do this for a - h) in the "Well Developed" section that describes what an outcome would look like that contained that quality.
3. Compare your responses to those sitting around you.

### *Categories*

The program assessment plan outcome is:

- |   |                                      |
|---|--------------------------------------|
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| c. Reflective of institutional mission    | d. Aligned to program goals          |
| e. Representative of non-trivial learning | f. Central to the discipline         |
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### *Questions*

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## Activity 4

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### *Questions to Ask About the Assessment Method*

(From the PEARL Rubric:

<http://pearl.unl.edu/assessment/Supplementals/PEARL%20Rubric%202007.pdf>)

1. Does the method clearly state what evidence will be gathered (i.e. existing course assessments), who it will be gathered from, and how that evidence will be gathered?
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- What difficulties did you have in focusing on the assessment process and not getting too focused on the content-specific items?
- How comfortable are you reviewing outside your discipline area?
- What changes or modifications to the PEARL Rubric would you suggest?
- What did you learn about assessment from this activity? About dietetics?

## Dietetics Program: Outcome 2

### **Outcome**

During their senior year, dietetic majors can demonstrate the ability to utilize a systematic problem-solving method to critically think and make decisions to address nutrition related problems and provide appropriate medical nutrition therapy.

The delivery of medical nutrition therapy services to patients/clients requires high level critical thinking, problem solving, and decision making skills. Students enrolled in the dietetics program at UNL must complete an accredited dietetic internship program after graduation in order to sit for the registration exam and earn the credential of a Registered Dietitian (RD). The dietetic internship provides them with supervised practice experiences and the opportunity to apply their undergraduate course work to dietetic practice.

The Nutrition Care Process is a model for a systematic problem-solving method to critically think and make decisions to address nutrition related problems and provide appropriate medical nutrition therapy. Although it is probably an unrealistic expectation that students would be able to totally develop the critical thinking, problem solving, and decision making skills to totally understand the delivery of medical nutrition therapy services to patients, there are activities that could be incorporated into the classroom that would begin to build a foundation that would facilitate these skills as they complete their dietetic internship program.

### **Opportunities to Learn**

The skill identified in the question of interest is an example of a culminating skill that builds on knowledge and skills attained by students throughout their dietetics undergraduate studies. Implementation of the Nutrition Care Process requires knowledge and skills gained from previous nutrition courses and science courses. Course content taught in NUTR 450 Medical Nutrition Therapy I provides the foundation for students to understand and implement the four steps of the Nutrition Care Process and NUTR 452 Medical Nutrition Therapy II provides the foundational knowledge related to specific diseases/conditions. The assessment activities will occur in NUTR 452 Medical Nutrition Therapy II lab.

### **Question of Interest**

By employing techniques which require dietetic students to perform a series of activities placing greater demands on students' analytical and critical thinking skills throughout the semester, will students understand how the six steps of the standardized Nutrition Care Process are interrelated and connected and consequently, be able to apply the Nutrition Care Process in its entirety at graduation?



**Methods for assessing outcomes should:**

- gather evidence that will provide the best representation of the learning of interest
- detail what evidence will be gathered, how that evidence will be gathered, and who is responsible for gathering that evidence
- record and analyze data so there can be reflection on learning across all students instead of the learning of individual students
- take advantage of existing sources of information about student learning from courses
- represent problems and contexts that graduates are likely to experience after graduation
- reflect the methods used for assessing learning in the curriculum and research approaches used in the discipline
- be aligned with content of the curriculum
- provide evidence of the extent to which learning was successful across students

**Direct Measures of Student Learning**

- The capstone experience
- Portfolio assessment
- Standardized tests (e.g., Major Field Achievement Test [MFAT]; the Test of Critical Thinking Ability; the Academic Profile)
- Performance on national licensure, certification, or professional exams (e.g., Professional Assessment Examination for Beginning Teachers [PRAXIS]; Federal Aviation Administration exam]
- Locally developed tests
- Essay questions blind scored by faculty across the department, division, school, or college
- Qualitative internal and external juried review comprehensive senior projects
- Externally reviewed exhibitions and performance in the arts
- External evaluation of performance during internships based on stated program objectives

**Indirect Measures of Student Learning**

- Alumni, employer, and graduate surveys
- Exit interviews of graduates and focus groups
- Interviews of instructors, program coordinators, residence hall leaders, and others who have direct contact with students
- Graduate follow-up studies
- Retention and transfer studies
- Length of time to degree
- SAT/ACT scores
- Graduation rates and transfer rates
- Job placement data
- Satisfaction surveys
- Self-report measures assessing students' perceptions of what they've learned
- Observing and recording students' behaviors