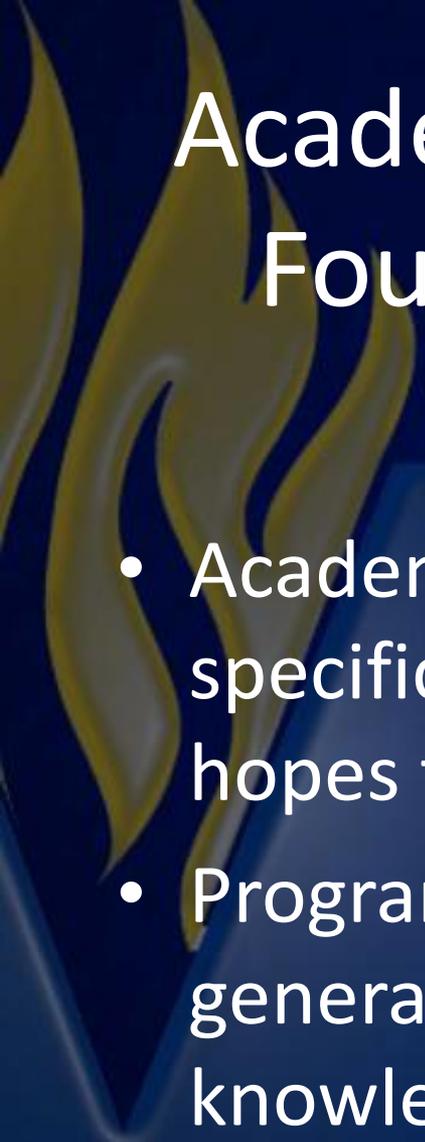




The Improvement Process, Step 1: Writing Program Mission Statements and Program Outcomes

Mike Gress, Interim Director of
Institutional Effectiveness

LRC 119; 4275



Academic Assessment at VU: The Foundation for Improvement Decisions

- Academic Program Mission—Identifies the specific purpose of a program and what it hopes to do for students
- Program Student Learning Outcomes—3 to 5 general statements that identify the knowledge, skills, or values that students should possess after completing the program; these should map to course outcomes



Academic Assessment at VU: The Foundation for Improvement Decisions

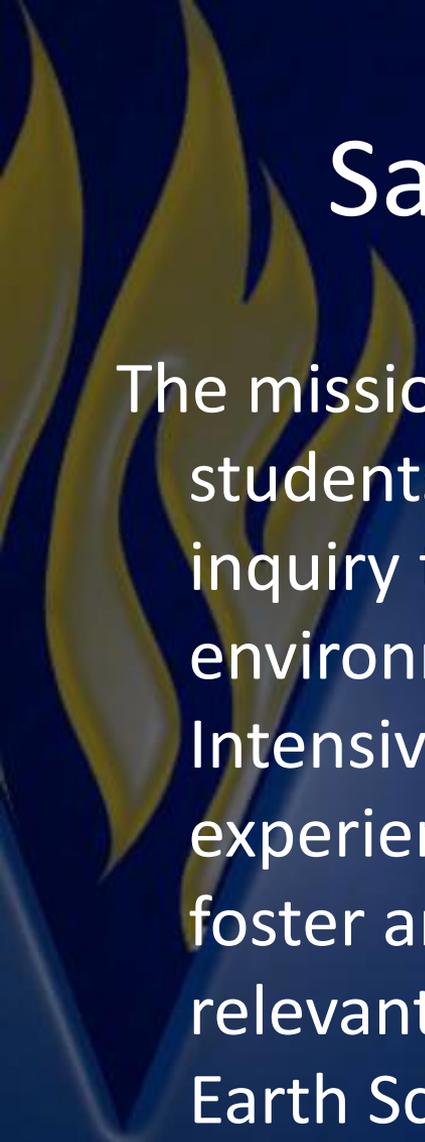
Taken together, the program mission and outcomes identify the special function of the program. The assessment process is intended to measure the effectiveness of the program. Program “effectiveness” is measured in terms of process that produce successful student learning and processes that enable a program to improve student learning when it is below acceptable levels.

Mission Statement Basics: Content

- Should represent the ideals and values of the faculty teaching the courses in the program
- Should state the purpose of the program
- Should identify the who the program will serve (occupational students, transfer students, baccalaureate students, etc)
- Should identify how the unit will function to achieve its purpose
- Should identify what students will be prepared for when they complete the program

Mission Statement Basics: Form

- The final version begins, “The mission of the ___ program is ...”
- The first sentence identifies the students and purpose of the program, reflecting the faculty’s values and goals for students
- The second and possibly third sentence identify how the particular program will function (what learning experiences it will offer, in general but program specific terms), what students will be prepared for as a result, and possibly, other special program features.



Sample Mission Statement

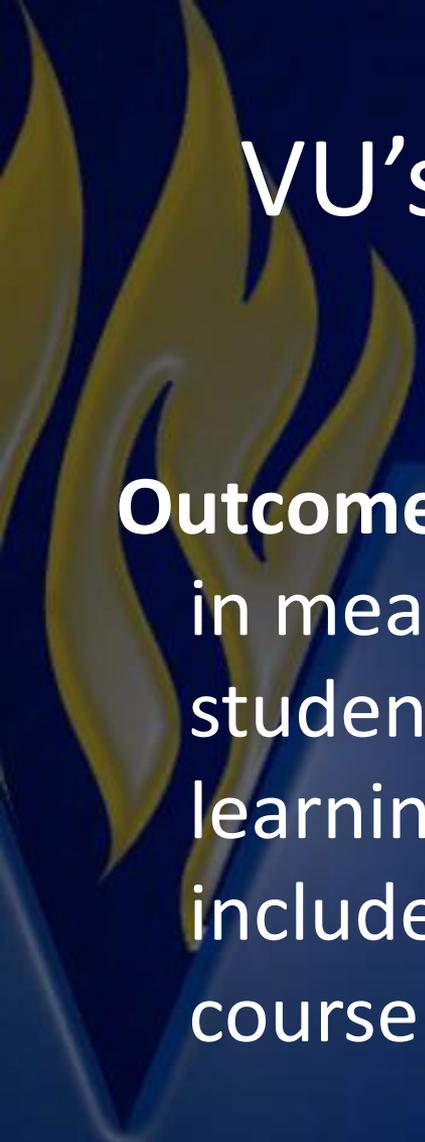
The mission of the Earth Sciences program is to equip students with the knowledge and skills of scientific inquiry that will enable them to address environmental issues both regionally and globally. Intensive earth sciences course work, laboratory experience, research projects, and field experience foster an objective and critical examination of relevant geosciences topics. The broad range of Earth Sciences courses prepares both traditional and non-traditional students for careers in Earth Science fields or for transfer to a baccalaureate program.

Sample Mission Statement

The purpose of the Earth Science program is to teach students to think critically and be good citizens. By asking students to consider their place in the environment, the students will become more thoughtful, concerned stewards of the earth. The program faculty work with people inside and outside the University to foster continuous quality improvement.

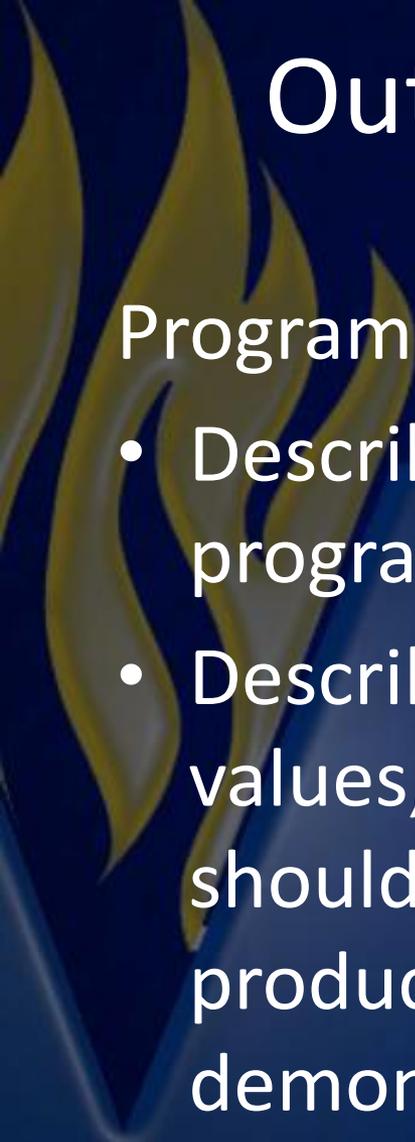
Sample Mission Statement

The mission of the Vincennes University English Department is to cultivate students who conceptualize and communicate complex thoughts in their writing and who appreciate effective rhetoric and literary expression. Through instruction that develops critical reading and writing skills, students, regardless of major, will be able to gather, evaluate, and analyze information and develop independent conclusions concerning social, intellectual, aesthetic, and literary issues. The program develops cognitive skills to prepare individuals to meet the intellectual, civic, professional, and personal challenges inherent to society's diverse culture, and the faculty enriches the campus and community through co-curricular and outreach programs.

The logo of the University of Victoria (VU) is located in the top-left corner. It features a stylized yellow and orange flame or leaf-like shape above a blue shield-like shape.

VU's Definition of an Outcome

Outcomes: Statements of expectation written in measurable terms that express what a student will know, do or value at the end of a learning experience. Outcomes typically include, university, general, liberal, program, course and classroom.



Outcomes Statement Basics-- Content

Program outcomes should:

- Describe students upon completion of the program, not during the program
- Describe students knowledge, skills, and values, expressed in terms of what students should be able to demonstrate, represent, produce or evaluate. Imagine these demonstrations, representations, productions or evaluations as activities measured using exams, rubrics or other tools, such as surveys.



Outcomes Statement Basics-- Content

Program outcomes should:

- Identify the essential, cumulative learning that distinguishes the program and reflects the mission
- Map to course student learning outcomes, which identify specific, measurable tasks that enable students to display learning
- Reflect the core or essential learning collaboratively identified and agreed to by all program faculty

Outcomes Statement Basics--Form

Roughly 3-5 outcomes statements are:

- Listed after the standard opening: “Students who complete _____ program will be able to:”
- Written specifically enough to describe identifiable, measurable learning
- Written in general terms and reflect many possible student activities, not one specific activity

Outcomes Statement Basics--Form

Roughly 3-5 outcomes statements:

- Begin with active verbs from Bloom's taxonomy, verbs that suggest students' demonstrations, representations, productions, or evaluations
- Employ only one verb per outcome
- Present a range of cognitive skill levels
- Employ the verb that reflects the highest level of cognitive skill of multiple possible skill levels

Sample Outcomes

A. Students completing the Earth Science program will be able to solve geoscience problems using scientific techniques and instrumentation.

B. Students completing the Earth Science program will be able to think critically.

Sample Outcomes

A. Students who complete English Department writing courses will be able to analyze literary works using discipline-specific terminology and theories.

B. Students who complete English Department writing courses will demonstrate effective writing skills and apply rhetorical skills in argumentative writing.

Sample Outcomes

A. Students who complete English Department writing courses will be able to evaluate readings for use as sources in argumentation or other essays.

B. Students who complete English Department writing courses will be able to summarize readings for use as sources in argumentation or other essays.

Sample Outcomes

A. Students completing the Earth Science program will be able to construct experiments that can be used to solve environmental issues.

B. Students completing the Earth Science program will be able to apply scientific terminology and methods in lab classes.

Mission and Outcomes Due Date

- Due date is September 1
- Submissions will be considered drafts
- The Assessment Committee will review all drafts and comment on them
- Revised mission and outcomes will be due for return within two weeks after suggestions are made
- Final draft of mission and outcomes should be put on the department website, shared with students and published in other ways