



# What Is Program Level Assessment and Why Does It Matter To Me?

Spring 2020

Peter Lee & Roger Bryan



# Overview

## Program Level Assessment

- Defining Our Terms
- Benefits of Program Level Assessment

## How Program Level Assessment Relates to Faculty

- Importance of Faculty Ownership & Collaboration
- Barriers to Assessment
- Possible Solutions for Engagement
- Specific Ways Faculty Can Help



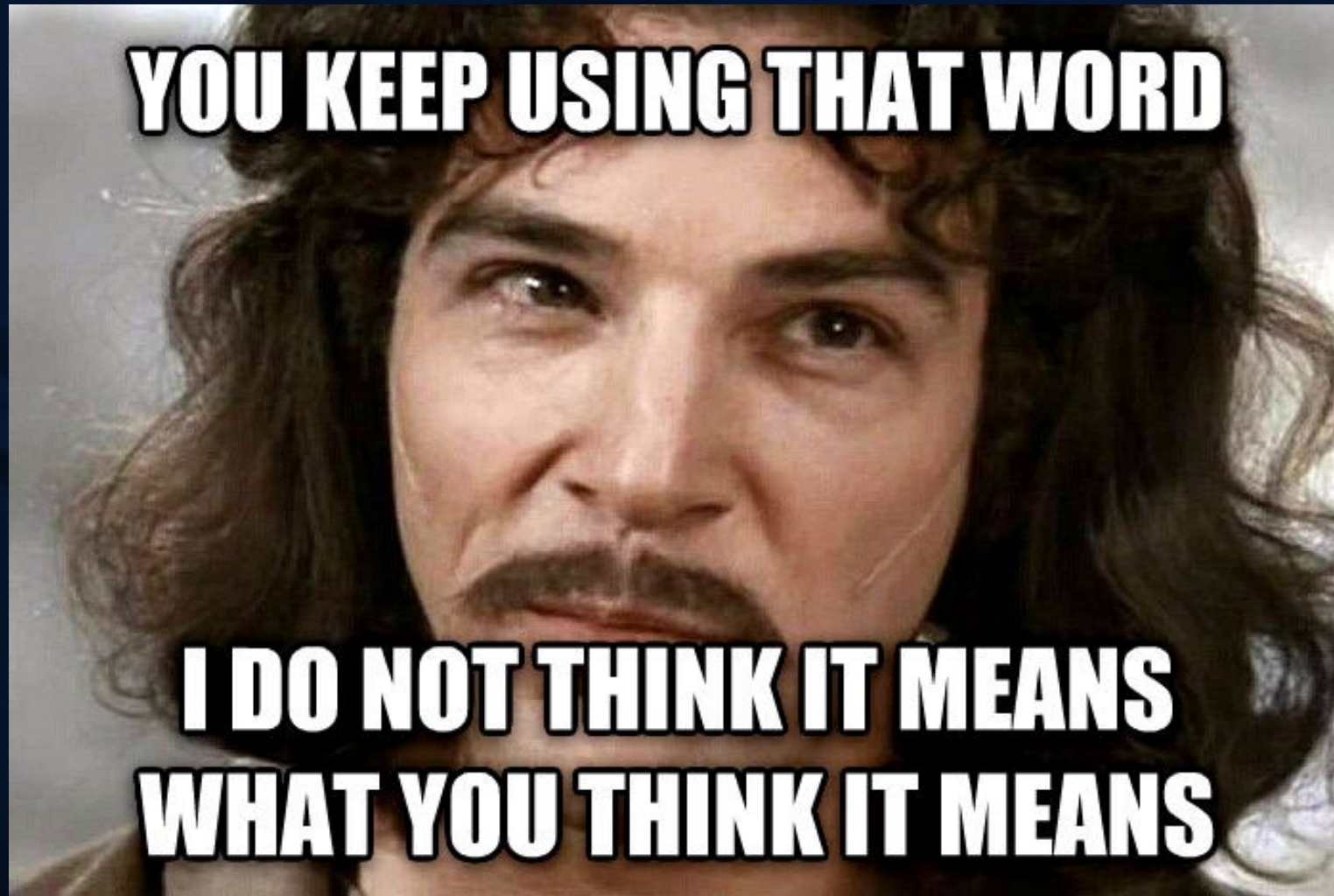
# Discussion

- 1. Why are you here at Liberty?**
- 2. What is most important to you in regards to teaching and/or student goals?**



# Program Level Assessment

# Defining Our Terms



# Defining Our Terms

**Assessment is the ongoing process of:**

**Establishing clear, measurable expected outcomes of student learning**

**Ensuring that students have sufficient opportunities to achieve those outcomes**

**Systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well student learning matches our expectations**

**Using the resulting information to understand and improve student learning**

Table 1.1. from "Assessing Student Learning", Suskie (2009), p. 4

# Defining Our Terms



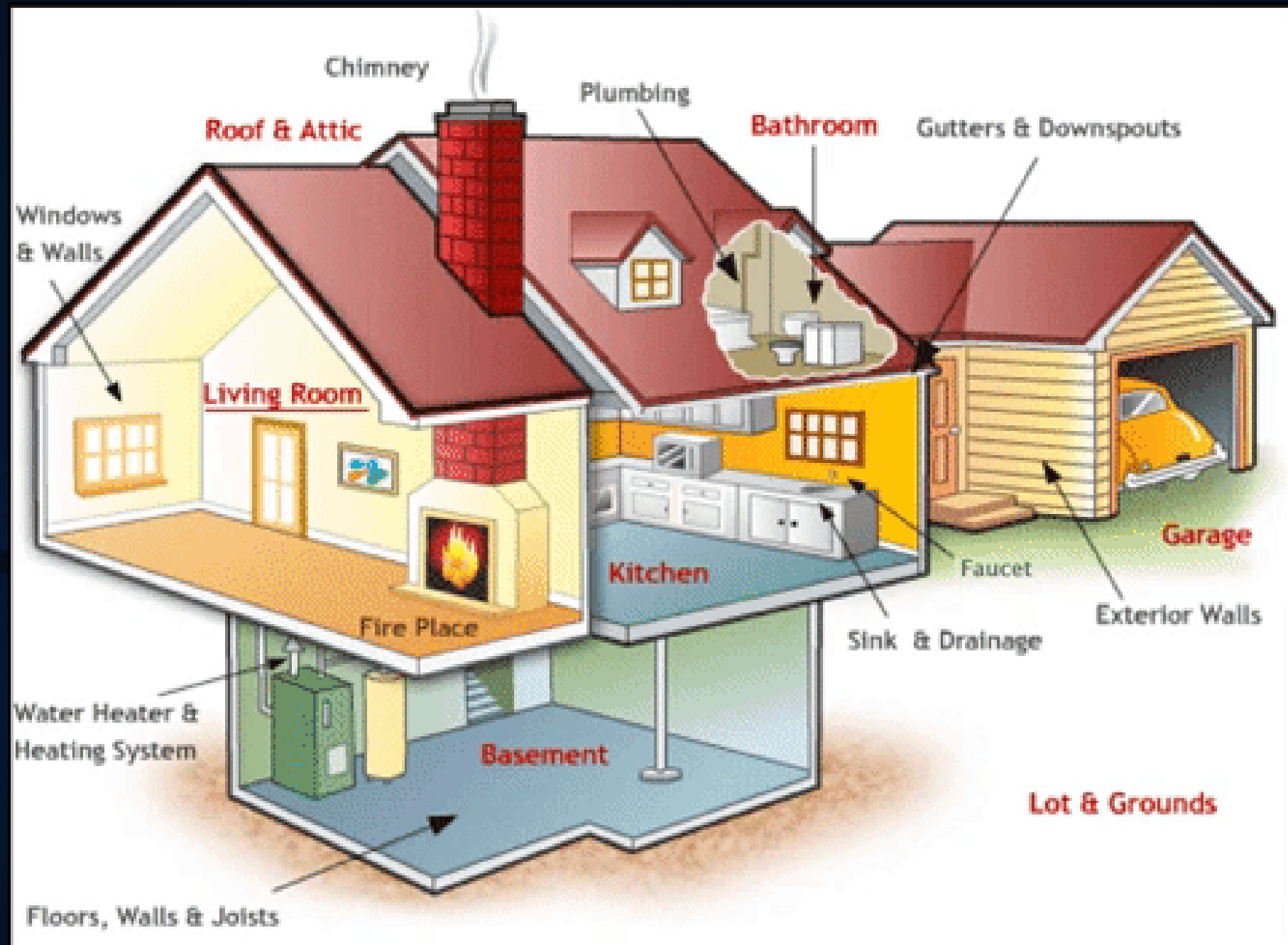
## Purpose of

### Program Level Assessment:

Evaluate and ensure the effectiveness and quality of individual student learning and program curriculum as a whole

Figure 1.1. from "Assessing Student Learning", Suskie (2009), p. 4







# Defining Our Terms

## What do we NOT mean by Program Level Assessment?

- Federal or state-mandated standardized tests
- Tests, quizzes and grades (quantitative measures) alone
- Course level assignments and learning outcomes only, disconnected from the bigger picture
- Pass/Fail, Graduation and Retention Rates alone
- Averages of student learning – for a student or groups of students

# Defining Our Terms

“Because an academic program should be integrated and greater than the sum of its parts – that is, more than a collection of courses – it may have goals and assessments that are broader than those of its courses. A course assessment might examine whether students can solve a specific kind of problem, for example, while a program assessment might examine whether students can design appropriate approaches to solving a variety of problems in the discipline.”

“Assessing Student Learning”, Suskie (2009), p.7

# Benefits of Program Level Assessment

## Benefits of Program-level assessment when owned by an entire University and by faculty:

- Measures essential skills and actual learning
- Allows faculty to speak into curriculum
- Identifies strengths and weaknesses
- Provides *meaningful* information and opportunities to inform both curriculum judgments and budget/resource requests
- Satisfies accreditor expectations

# Benefits of Program Level Assessment

## Nursing Example:

During the 2013-2014 academic year, an assessment was conducted relating to online Nursing students and their ability to integrate their Christian worldview into patient care.

Students did not meet the target of the assessment, and some adjustments were made to the instruction within a particular course. The reassessment indicated that students were better able to demonstrate competency in this area.



# How Program Level Assessment Relates to Faculty



# Importance of Faculty Ownership

The willingness of faculty to take ownership and collaborate, not only on action plans, but on every aspect of the assessment process, contributes to the overall success of graduates in a significant way.

# Importance of Faculty Ownership



## **Faculty are on the front lines:**

- Interact directly with the students
- Responsible for the development of curriculum and student learning



# Importance of Faculty Ownership

“The faculty’s central place in assessment is deeply embedded in its responsibility for college curriculum...As the *Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities* (1966)...claimed: ‘When an educational goal has been established, **it becomes the responsibility primarily of the faculty** to determine the appropriate curriculum and procedures of student instruction’...

“Using Evidence of Student Learning to Improve Higher Education”, Kuh, Ikenberry, Jankowski, Cain, Ewell, Hutchings & Kinzie (2017), p. 2.

# Importance of Faculty Ownership

“...even where this faculty authority has been challenged in recent years, **the primary place of faculty in curricular discussions and decision making** has remained a necessity. It is, indeed, a core academic value at the heart of American colleges and universities. As such, **assessment** for the improvement of learning outcomes is inherently **a faculty-centric process** that relies on their expertise, values their professional disciplinary judgment, and supports their efforts to focus on student learning on both small and large scales.”

“Using Evidence of Student Learning to Improve Higher Education”, Kuh, Ikenberry, Jankowski, Cain, Ewell, Hutchings & Kinzie (2017), pp. 97-98.

# Importance of Faculty Ownership

**Faculty engagement in assessment is essential because it:**

- Ties assessment to classroom practice
- Underscores faculty's central role in ensuring the quality of the educational experience, and
- Has the potential to shift campus culture so that it supports and values the collection and use of evidence of learning

*"Using Evidence of Student Learning to Improve Higher Education", Kuh, Ikenberry, Jankowski, Cain, Ewell, Hutchings & Kinzie (2017), p. 95)*

# Benefits of Faculty Ownership

“Faculty and staff instincts about the program are validated with solid information” – Suskie, Pg. 73

Reduces “fear that assessment means that someone else will decide that much of what they have been doing their whole lives – what they teach, how they teach it, and how they assess it – is wrong.” – Suskie, Pg. 75

# Importance of Collaboration



## What would happen if faculty were not involved?

- May feel administratively-driven
- Assessments could become disconnected from actual student experiences
- Actions made as a result of assessments may not address important areas
- The whole process loses meaningfulness

Figure 1.1. from "Assessing Student Learning", Suskie (2009), p. 4



# Barriers to Faculty Engagement in Assessment

- Time Demands (HUGE!)
- Misunderstanding of purpose and value of assessment
- Different definitions and experiences of assessment
- Fear of consequences for not meeting assessments
- Fear of loss of academic freedom



# Barriers to Faculty Engagement in Assessment

- Lack of buy in from leadership – faculty will reflect their immediate leadership to an extent
- Disorganization of assessment efforts within a college/school
- Disconnection between courses they teach and the overall curriculum, which leads to poor curricular assessment structures

# Possible Solutions for Faculty Engagement

Gain shared understanding of assessment & why it's important

- Help foster increased buy-in among key leaders within colleges & schools
- Give reassurance of how assessment results are used. Communicate the positives.
- Communicate that the purpose is to ensure curriculum as a whole, not just individual courses - is preparing students with necessary skills
- Explain accrediting body expectations - a culture of improvement. They are not looking to dictate every skill taught.
- Explain that it supports academic freedom by allowing professors to uniquely approach their courses, but helps keep the end goal in mind.





# Possible Solutions for Faculty Engagement

Deal with logistical barriers - ease of access, limited time

- Easy to access/read/understand training materials
- Collaboration & evenly distributed assessment workload
- Collaborative curriculum mapping
- Strategic training sessions
- Focus groups with faculty in a department to identify and troubleshoot issues
- Dean Support
- Program Director/Chair Support

# Areas for Faculty Collaboration

## General areas where collaboration is helpful:

- Program Reviews
- Program Learning Outcome Assessments
- Syllabi Review
- Other discussions around curricular structure & development



# Specific Ways Faculty Can Help

- Recommendations for Assignments & Rubrics
- Availability to Participate as Raters
- Collaboration for action plans
- **Be available.**
- **Be involved in the conversations.**



Q & A