Workshop Objectives

Increase your understanding of:

1. How assessment is strengthened by viewing organizations as interdependent, open social systems.
2. How assessment can be structured around seven areas of organizational performance linked to system elements.

Workshop Outline

A. Systems thinking and its impact on assessment
B. Organizational system elements that inform assessment
C. Structuring assessment around seven areas of organizational performance (brief overview)

Systems Thinking

Systems thinking strengthens our ability to understand an organization’s:

1. Purpose
2. Operations
3. Interdependence
Organizational System Elements

Every organizational system is comprised of interdependent system elements. Figure 1 illustrates the relationships among internal and external system elements.

Internal System Elements. There are five types of internal system elements: 1) leadership system; 2) inputs; 3) key work processes; 4) outputs; and 5) outcomes.

Leadership Systems
Systems within organizations that are responsible for providing direction and support by: a) building and maintaining positive external relations with people and organizations in their external environments, 2) clarifying and building consensus on organizational mission, vision, guiding principles, strategic goals, organizational structure, and 3) acquiring and allocating necessary resources.

Inputs
In systems thinking, organizations require a variety of resources called "inputs" to perform work so they can create products, services, and information for those they serve. There are six types of inputs required: human resources, financial resources, equipment and supplies, physical space, energy, and information.

Key Work Processes
Key work processes describe how work is performance in an organizational system. People and machines perform tasks and activities called "work" to create products, services, and information. Work in most organizations is organized into four to eight major processes called key work processes. Tasks and activities that make up key work processes transform inputs into outputs so that the organization can achieve its purpose.

Outputs
Outputs, in the form of products, services, and information, are created from tasks and activities embedded in key work processes, and received or experienced by customers. Products are tangibles that customers receive; services are intangibles customers experience. Outputs are designed specifically for the purpose of meeting or exceeding the needs and requirements of customers, stakeholders, faculty, and staff.
Outcomes
Outcomes are the intended or desired results an organization seeks to achieve as a consequence of customers receiving or experiencing its outputs. Outcomes are mission-specific, and their achievement is generally critical to organizational survival.

Table 1
Examples of System Elements for an Academic Department

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Work Processes (A)</th>
<th>Outputs (B)</th>
<th>Outcomes (C)</th>
<th>Customers (D)</th>
<th>Stakeholders (E)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>Curriculum &amp; learning opportunities (classes, research)</td>
<td>Student learning, Personal growth, Job placement</td>
<td>Internal: Enrolled students, External: Patrons</td>
<td>Internal: English Dept., External: Employers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Research dollars, Intellectual property</td>
<td>More revenue, More jobs, Reputation, Advances in discipline</td>
<td>Research sponsor</td>
<td>Colleagues, General public, University community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>Outreach programs, Edited journals</td>
<td>Community development, More revenue, jobs</td>
<td>Service contractors, Journal editors</td>
<td>Business and industry, Professional colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mgmt.</td>
<td>Plans, Budgets, Course schedules</td>
<td>Well-managed, fully-staffed dept.</td>
<td>Faculty, staff, Provost/Dean, Registrar’s Office</td>
<td>University, community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

External System Elements. There are three types of external system elements: 1) customers; 2) stakeholders, and 3) upstream systems.

Customers
Customers are the reasons why an organization exists. In assessment, customers are defined as those who directly receive or experience the organization’s outputs. It is the customers’ preferences and requirements, along with input from stakeholders and senior leaders, faculty, and staff, that define what and how the organization creates and delivers its products and services. It is the experiences of customers as they interact with an organization's outputs that determine the degree to which the organization achieves its intended outcomes.

Stakeholders
Stakeholders are broadly defined as individuals and groups who have a stake in, depend on, and benefit from organizational effectiveness—the achievement of intended outcomes. At the institutional level, stakeholders refer to the general public, and local, state, national and internal governments, organizations, and businesses that benefit from an educated public, skilled workforce, and creation and transfer of new knowledge. At the academic and/or administrative department level, stakeholders are specific groups who directly benefit from departmental goal achievement.

Upstream Systems
Upstream systems are organizations or systems outside the organization proper that influence the organization’s capacity to perform and achieve results. Upstream systems provide the organization with its necessary resources (see inputs definition above). There are three types of upstream systems important to assessment: 1) suppliers (such as vendors), 2) constraining systems (state boards of regents), and 3) service partners (tutors, counselors).

Students as Inputs, Customers, and Stakeholders. Potential, current, and past students represent three types of system elements: inputs, customers, and stakeholders as illustrated in Figure 2.
Seven Areas of Organizational Performance

Assessment can be structured around seven areas of organizational performance, each of which is linked to specific system elements as illustrated in Figure 3: effectiveness, productivity, quality, customer/stakeholder satisfaction, efficiency, innovation, and financial durability. Each area is defined below with several examples of performance indicators for an academic department.
1. **Effectiveness** is a measure of the extent to which the organization achieves its intended outcomes, such as "student placement rates," or "percentage of graduates who pass licensure exams."

2. **Productivity** is a ratio of outputs created to inputs consumed, such as "course credit hours generated per teaching faculty FTE," or "average instructional cost per departmental major."

3. **Quality** is a complex area of organizational performance measured in six dimensions:
   - **Q1: Quality of Upstream System** is a measure of the impact that critical upstream systems have on organizational capacity, such as "percentage of classrooms lacking adequate equipment," or "quality of new students entering from major feeder schools."
   - **Q2: Quality of Inputs** is a measure of the qualifications, cost, quantity, reliability, safety, and suitability of the organization's inputs, including human and financial resources, equipment and supplies, physical space (buildings and grounds), energy, and information, such as "percentage of faculty with terminal degrees," or "endowment ranking."
   - **Q3: Quality of Key Work Processes** is a measure of the cost, cycle time, rework, waste, and scrap in the design and delivery of work performed in the organization to create system outputs, such as "average cycle time and cost to complete a program review," or "average cycle time and cost to search for a new faculty member."
   - **Q4: Quality of Outputs** is a measure of the completeness, timeliness, price, accuracy, convenience, academic rigor, and appropriateness of system outputs created through work performed in key work processes, such as "alignment of courses and teaching methods with established learning objectives," or "average class size."
   - **Q5: Quality of Leadership Systems** is a measure of the quality and effectiveness of direction and support provided by the leadership system to the organization, such as the "local public image of the organization," or "alignment between organizational culture and guiding principles."
   - **Q6: Quality of Worklife** is a measure of employees' perceptions and attitudes about the quality of their organization, work experiences, and workplace, such as "employee turnover and absenteeism rates," or "number of formal grievances and lawsuits."

4. **Customer/Stakeholder Satisfaction** is a measure of the level of satisfaction of internal and external customers and stakeholders, such as "student evaluation of faculty survey results," or "employer follow-up survey results."

5. **Efficiency** is a measure of resource utilization and costs/benefits of quality management, such as "percentage of unfilled seats," or "classroom/lab usage rates."

6. **Innovation** is a measure of creative changes put into place to improve organizational performance, such as "new programs and services to improve effectiveness, customer satisfaction, and financial durability," or new technology to increase productivity and effectiveness.

7. **Financial Durability** is a measure of the organization's overall financial health and well-being, such as "tuition and fees generated by the department as a percentage of total departmental expenditures," or "total dollars generated from sponsored research as a percentage of total department expenditures."
Presenters

Barbara A. Miller, Ph.D. (formerly Lembcke) is currently a guest scholar at DePauw University in Greencastle, IN. She is an experienced administrator in higher education serving as director of institutional planning and research, senior planning and policy analyst, and internal management/OD/CQI consultant. She is also an experienced faculty member teaching courses in Management, Leadership Theory, Organizational Development, Small Group Dynamics, and Business Communication. Her expertise in the area of assessment results from 30 years of administrative and teaching experience in large, public research institutions, large and medium-size two-year, comprehensive community colleges, and small liberal arts universities. She also served three years as an examiner for the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award Program where documentation of performance results is critical. Dr. Miller can be reached at (765) 653-8735 or (605) 484-8350 (cell) or by e-mail at miller.assessment@yahoo.com.

Suzanne Swope, Ed.D. began her career in higher education at Emerson College, Boston, as a faculty member in Communication Disorders. Spending over a decade in this field, she was inspired by her classroom and clinical experiences to develop new models and approaches to the assessment and treatment of language disorders in children.

Dr. Swope has served in a variety of academic and administrative roles at both Emerson College and George Mason University and has over three decades of experience overseeing almost every administrative department in a higher education setting including admission and enrollment; financial aid/registrar; student life; counseling; physical plant; housing and residence life; and institutional research to name just a few.

In her administrative positions she has used the assessment model presented today as a tool for strengthening operations within and among individual departments by demonstrating the interconnectedness of processes and developing and implementing system improvements. Dr. Swope has used assessment modeling in situations such as coordinating the self-study process for reaccreditation and restructuring curriculums with faculty and Academic Affairs administrators.

Dr. Swope has presented several workshops on assessment and total quality management at regional and national association meetings. She is currently on sabbatical and taking time to research, write, and consult before returning to the Emerson faculty as Professor of Communication in the spring of 2007. She can be reached at (617) 824-3402 or by e-mail at Suzanne_Swope@emerson.edu.