Part I: What is assessment?

**Student learning assessment** at a basic level involves determining if learning has occurred and what could be done to improve the teaching and learning process. The process begins with aligning learning goals and objectives to those that should appear in the program description or individual course outlines. Assessment occurs when faculty measure student learning outcomes.

**Learning goals** are general statements about what a course or program intends to accomplish. These answer the question “What impact should this program of study have on students?” For example, “Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to explain the basic functions of the court systems within the United States.”

**Learning objectives** are statements regarding activities through which students demonstrate course mastery and instructors measure transfer of knowledge. For instance, “Describe how the courts are related to the other components of the criminal justice system.”

**Learning outcomes** measure whether learning objectives have been met. For example, “Final exam results show that 85% of the students were able to describe how the courts are related to the other components of the criminal justice system.”

**Classroom Assessment** occurs when an instructor measures student learning outcomes in his or her own class in order to improve instructional methods.

**Course Assessment** occurs when learning outcomes of all sections of a particular course are measured in order to make necessary changes for course improvement.

**Program Assessment** occurs when either learning goals or outcomes in all of the courses in a particular program are measured in order to make necessary changes for program effectiveness.

**What does not constitute assessment?**

Setting some ground rules before beginning the engagement of classroom teaching/learning assessment is critical to the success of the assessment program. Some of these rules include:

- Assessment is not the administration of placement exams to determine where students are academically at the time of entrance.
- Student grades do not measure assessment of classroom teaching/learning.
- Assessment is not the critique of a faculty member.
- A meaningful assessment occurs only if it is planned, directed, and performed by the college’s faculty.