What is a mission statement?

- A concise statement about the values and purpose of the program.
- Should include the primary functions or activities of the program, the purpose of the program, and the program stakeholders. (Adapted from: http://assessment.uconn.edu/docs/HowToWriteMission.pdf)
- Structure of a Program Mission Statement: (Adapted from: http://assessment.uconn.edu/docs/HowToWriteMission.pdf)
  - “This mission of (name of your program or unit) is to (your primary purpose) by providing (your primary functions or activities) to (your stakeholders.” (Any additional clarifying statements can be added)

What is a student learning outcome?

- Reflect the knowledge, skills, abilities, or competencies that students are expected to acquire as a result of being in the program.
- Complete the statement: Students will be able to...
- Examples:
  - Students will be able to explain how past events in the area of XYZ impact society now.
  - Students will be able to effectively communicate scientific information in written form.

What is a program outcome?

- Reflects the services the program provides OR gives information on student achievement (ex. retention, graduation rates, licensure rates, etc.)
- Examples:
  - Students in the XYZ program will participate in an undergraduate research project or capstone project.
  - Students enrolled in the XYZ program at the end of their sophomore year will complete the program.

How many outcomes should programs have and how often should they be measures?

- Degree Programs:
  - Every program should have between 5 and 8 student learning outcomes and 2 to 3 program outcomes; strongly suggest no more than 8 unless specified by discipline accreditation.
  - Programs should report on 2 to 3 student learning and 1 to 2 program outcomes each year. All outcomes should be measured at least twice in a 5 year time period
  - Graduate programs should consider having at least one student learning outcome that focuses on research abilities.
- Certificates that are not within or obtained on the way to a degree and Interdisciplinary minors
  - Certificates and Interdisciplinary minors should have 2 to 3 student learning and 1 to 2 program outcomes.
  - They should report on 1 to 2 learning outcomes and 1 program outcome each year. Again, all should be measured twice in 5 years.
What are direct and indirect measures and the guidelines for using each?

- Direct measures are ones in which you can directly observe student learning. It is the demonstration of the student's knowledge, skill, ability, or competency. For program outcomes, direct measures are the actual indicators of a service or activity implemented by the program.
  - Examples for student learning outcomes: student artifacts (capstone projects, presentations, etc.), external reviewed performances or projects, commercially developed test, etc.
    - All of these need to be examined at the learning outcome level not as an overall grade.
  - Examples for program outcomes: numbers of students meeting a specific criteria, projects or activities implemented, etc.

- Indirect measures are subjective and not directly observable. These measures would infer student knowledge or ask about student knowledge without taking a direct measure of the performance.
  - Examples: Surveys, focus groups, interviews, etc.

- For each outcome your program develops, you should have at least one direct measure. For student learning outcomes this would be a direct demonstration of student knowledge. You also can have indirect items for student learning outcomes.

How do you set achievement targets and analyze your data?

- For each of your outcome-measure pairs you should develop an achievement target that defines the program’s achievement expectations. It is usually presented as percentages or numbers expected. You should set a target that is achievable and realistic but yet rigorous.
  - Example: 80% of students will meet or exceed expectations on the rubric items for this outcome.

- Findings for programs should be presented on the same scale as the target and be directly related to the outcome-measure pair. It should be specific enough to examine all components of the learning outcome.
  - Example: 75% of students met or exceeded expectations on the rubric items for this outcome.

What makes a good action plan?

- Action plans should be developed for all outcomes in which your findings did not meet your achieved target. Action plans can entail changes to the curriculum, changes to the assessment plan or methods, changes to pedagogical practices, or the implementation of new technology, assignments, etc.

How do you “close the loop”?

- “Closing the loop” is the practice of following up on an implemented change to see if it had the intended effect. This is done usually a year or two after an action plan was implemented. It shows a “return on investment.”
- This would be completed in the section of the template labeled “Comments Regarding Previous Action Plans Implemented by the Program for this Student Learning Outcome.”

For more detailed information on the different requirements of assessment reporting please see the presentations, “Program Assessment Planning: A Three-Part Series on How to Set Up a Manageable and Effective Assessment Plan” on Office of Assessment and Evaluation website. (www.assessment.vt.edu/)