Steps in Program Assessment Planning
“What gets measured gets managed”

The outcomes
What will graduates in your major, or minor be able to do, know, and value? These are the program (or minor) level outcomes that you can assess. For example you may want majors to write in disciplinary style, utilize safe and course-appropriate laboratory techniques, manage patient care technologies and information systems to deliver care, evaluate ethical implications of decisions, communicate about everyday events in Spanish/French/Chinese, prepare a portfolio to show the breadth of their work, etc.

The indicators of these outcomes
What you will assess to determine if students have developed the abilities that you have identified? For example, your assessment could include examination of senior thesis paper for disciplinary style writing, checklist for laboratory safety, simulation of patient care technology task, oral examination in foreign language and a portfolio analysis with rubric.

Curricular and co-curricular mapping
Where do students learn these skills/abilities/attitudes/concepts? What courses, experiences, readings, co-curricular events, or projects address the program outcomes?

What do you already know?
Look for information that is already there about student learning in the program. Chances are there are some assessments that have been done in the past (exit surveys, presentation ratings, etc.) that have not been analyzed and shared.

The instruments
Tests, surveys, checklists, rating scales, rubrics, performance tasks, observations, interviews, writing samples, quiz, focus groups, presentations, are all examples of measurement instruments that can be used in assessment. This is not an exhaustive list by any means.

The Process
Decide on the outcome, the instruments, and then the students who will be assessed. It is not necessary to get information from every student, just a representative sample of students. Collect the work sample, administer the test, distribute the survey, conduct the focus group, etc. to get the data from the students. Analyze the data to see what they show
about student learning relative to the outcome that you are targeting. Program members should all participate in the discussion of the findings.

**Findings**
What did you find out about learning in the context of your program courses and goals? Should you repeat it to ensure that your results are reliable? Were there any surprises? Was your assessment question answered to your satisfaction?

**Program Discussion of Findings**
An important part of the process is talking about the findings with program colleagues. Together you will decide how to respond to what you have found.

**Actions**
Based on the finding, what do you want to do about these results? Do you want to share it outside the program (students, other programs, the dean, etc.)? If the results are satisfactory you may want to share your instructional successes with other programs.
If the results are unsatisfactory, what are your theories about the findings? You could repeat the assessment, collect additional related data, examine the course offerings for adequacy of learning opportunities that are related to that outcome, talk to students about their learning in this area, reach out to faculty in programs that have similar learning outcomes, do anything else that seems reasonable but do something!

Do it all again for another outcome

“All assessment is a perpetual work in progress” Linda Suskie, May 2005