

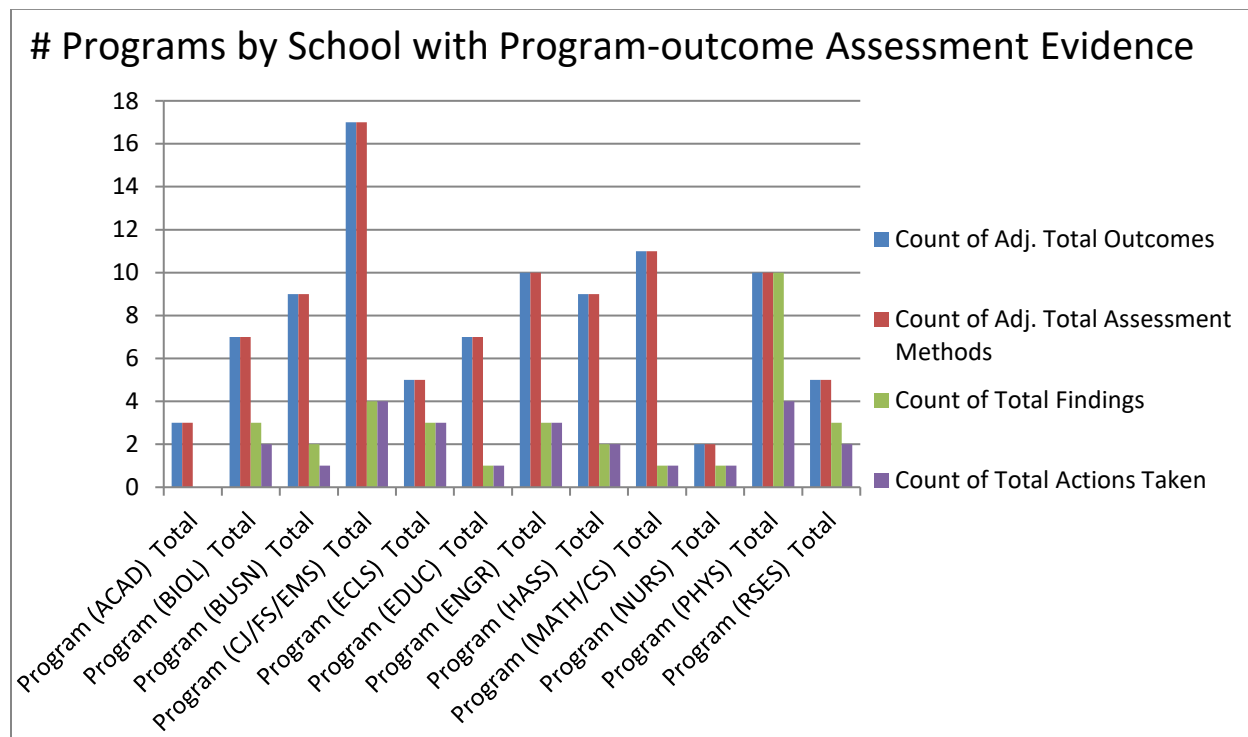
MEMO Subject line: Weighing the Baby – Program Assessment

“You don’t get a baby to grow by weighing it”

Let’s first get a common understanding of some terms:

- 1) Program Assessment – are students achieving the learning outcomes established for the program? Some outcomes may be met in a class, others may be co-curricular or relate to employability, employer reviews, graduate school admission and completion.
- 2) Program Review – is the program effective in meeting student needs, regional or disciplinary needs, is the program accredited, properly staffed, adequately funded and equipped, and able to respond effectively to internal and external challenges. Program assessment is just one component in program review.
- 3) Program Prioritization – does the university have an appropriate collection of academic, co-curricular, and extracurricular programs to effectively fulfill our mission. Are there opportunities for new programs, have some programs become less effective or less important due to innovation and change. Program review is one component of prioritization.

The chart below displays the number of academic programs within each school (y-axis) which have defined each of the following: outcomes (blue), assessment methods (red), documented findings (green), and actions (purple) describing how they will use assessment data to improve student learning. For example, Biology (BIOL) has seven academic programs, all of which have defined assessment methods, but only three programs have defined findings relative to the program outcomes, and two have defined actions based on those findings. Ideally every program would have at documented at least one finding and action for at least one outcome – and all four columns would be of equal height.



HLC Core Component 4.A requires that “the institution maintain a practice of regular program reviews”, and we need program assessment data to do that review. 4.B. requires that “the institution have clearly stated goals for student learning and effective processes for the assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals, [that] the institution assesses achievement of the learning outcomes that it claims...[that it] uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning... [and that] processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members.”

We are making progress in program assessment in many areas and yet there are opportunities for all areas to continue to document their assessment of student learning at the program level. Schools which have program-level assessment data to be documented in Tracdat can contact one of the members of The Assessment Committee for assistance. Information can also be entered directly into Tracdat, or submitted using a template of your own design, or using a form like the Assessment Activity Log to prepare a course assessment report. Reports can be stored on an accessible network drive, emailed to tracdat@lssu.edu or sent by campus mail to D. Myton Admin206.