

# INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENT PLAN FOR STUDENT LEARNING



## THE PHILOSOPHY OF EXCELSIOR COLLEGE

What you know is more important than where or how you learned it.®

### ABOUT EXCELSIOR COLLEGE

Excelsior College was founded in 1971 as the external degree program of the New York State Board of Regents. In 1998, the Board of Regents granted the College (then known as Regents College) an absolute charter to operate as a private, nonprofit, independent college. As are all accredited colleges in the state, Excelsior College is a member of The University of the State of New York. The College is governed by a board of trustees composed of individuals from across the United States who are prominent in the fields of business, education, government, and the professions.

A leader in online and distance learning, Excelsior College awards associate, baccalaureate, and master's degrees, as well as offers certificate programs, through its five schools: Business & Technology, Health Sciences, Liberal Arts, Nursing, and Public Service.

Excelsior's student body represents a diverse group of adult learners. Demographic information about students as well as information about graduates, faculty, course activity, student satisfaction, enrollment, and other areas can be found at [www.excelsior.edu/about/fast-facts](http://www.excelsior.edu/about/fast-facts).

The faculty of Excelsior College, both full-time and adjunct, are drawn from many colleges and universities as well as from industry and the professions. They teach our courses, establish and monitor academic policies and standards, determine degree requirements and the means by which credit may be earned, develop the content for all examinations, and recommend degree conferral to the Excelsior College Board of Trustees.

### THE MISSION OF EXCELSIOR COLLEGE

Excelsior College provides educational opportunity to adult learners with an emphasis on those historically underrepresented in higher education. The College meets students where they are—academically and geographically, offering quality instruction and the assessment of learning.

### VISION STATEMENT

Excelsior College aspires to be a model higher education institution for the 21st century.

- Excelsior will be a provider of choice for those who seek to pursue their educational goals in a flexible, individualized manner.
- Excelsior will continue to serve as a cost-effective stimulus for life-long learning and individual achievement by providing robust options for the assessment of learning and aggregation of credit.
- Excelsior will be recognized as an important academic collaborator and as a valuable partner in addressing societal and workforce needs.

## ACCREDITATION

Excelsior College is accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 3624 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104, telephone: 267-284-5000. The Middle States Commission on Higher Education is an institutional accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA).

The associate, bachelor's, and master's degree programs in nursing at Excelsior College are accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN), 3343 Peachtree Road NE, Suite 850, Atlanta, GA 30326, (t: 404-975-5000, email: [info@acenursing.org](mailto:info@acenursing.org), or [www.acenursing.org](http://www.acenursing.org)). The ACEN is a specialized accrediting agency for nursing recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA).

The bachelor's degree programs in electrical engineering technology and nuclear engineering technology are accredited by the Engineering Technology Accreditation Commission of ABET ([www.abet.org](http://www.abet.org)).

ABET is a specialized accrediting agency recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA).

Excelsior College has received specialized accreditation for its business programs through the International Assembly for Collegiate Business Education (IACBE), 11374 Strang Line Rd., Lenexa, KS 66215; (t: 913-631-3009, [www.iacbe.org](http://www.iacbe.org)). The IACBE is a specialized accrediting agency recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). The business programs in the following degrees are accredited by IACBE: Master of Business Administration with concentrations in General Track (no concentration), Cybersecurity Management, Health Care Management, Human Performance Technology, Human Resource Management, Information Security, Leadership, Social Media Management, and Technology Management; Bachelor of Science in Accounting (NYS CPA Track); and Bachelor of Science in Business with concentrations in Finance, General Accounting, General Business, Global Business, Management of Human Resources, Management of Information Systems, Marketing, Operations Management, and Risk Management and Insurance.

All the College's academic programs are registered (i.e., approved) by the New York State Education Department.

### RECOGNITION

The Master of Arts in Liberal Studies program has been accepted into full membership by the Association of Graduate Liberal Studies Programs (AGLSP).

The American Council on Education's College Credit Recommendation Service (ACE CREDIT) has evaluated and made college credit recommendations for UExcel® exams and Excelsior College® Examinations.

The National League for Nursing (NLN) has designated the Excelsior College School of Nursing as a Center of Excellence in Nursing Education, 2011–2016. This distinction has been awarded in recognition of the College's sustained achievements in creating environments that promote student learning and professional development and it is the third consecutive designation the School has received since the NLN began the program in 2005.

### INDIVIDUAL STATE REGISTRATION/AUTHORIZATION DISCLOSURE

For information on disclosures required by various states, visit [www.excelsior.edu/about/transparency](http://www.excelsior.edu/about/transparency).

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## The Institutional Effectiveness Steering Committee

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Stacey Farber, *Director of Assessment and Program Evaluation, School of Nursing*

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George Timmons, *Dean of School of Liberal Arts and  
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Robert Waters, *Dean, School of Public Service*

## Executive Summary

This document describes a strategic and systematic process of improving the quality of student learning at Excelsior College. The College's Institutional Assessment Plan for Student Learning (IAPSL) is a dynamic and fluid plan underpinned by the organization's philosophy, mission, vision, and strategic plan. It is intended for multiple stakeholders with varying perspectives, all of whom share an interest in the needs and outcomes of learners engaged in study at Excelsior College. The IAPSL reflects the fact that Excelsior continues to nurture a culture that values outcomes assessment and makes determinations about student learning and institutional performance based on accurate data collected through various measures. As a private, nonprofit institution of higher education, Excelsior College intends the IAPSL primarily to address the question, "How effectively do we deliver on our mission and make a distinctive impact, relative to our resources?" (Collins, 2005, p. 5). That is, Excelsior's performance relative to its mission is the primary definition of success in regard to student learning (Collins, 2005).

The Institutional Assessment Plan for Student Learning (IAPSL) is designed to complement the college's Institutional Effectiveness Plan (Excelsior College, 2012). While most college and university institutional effectiveness plans tend to focus on student learning and the administrative systems at a college designed to support that learning, Excelsior College documents these processes in two related documents, while recognizing the integrated nature of both learning outcomes and institutional effectiveness. Continuous improvement in the teaching and learning environment and continuous improvement in making the institution effective and fulfilling its mission are two critical, interrelated processes.

The IAPSL is integral to actualizing many opportunities for helping students achieve academic success by providing direction and standards for excellence related to student learning (AAHE, 1998; Huba & Freed, 2000; Association of American Colleges & Universities and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation [AACU & CHEA], 2008). It depicts the relationships among the strategic plan, program learning assessment plans, and general education learning assessment plans. It also explains the theoretically and empirically grounded approach to helping students achieve learning outcomes as well as systematic approach to gathering, evaluating, and using outcome data. The plan is reviewed and updated on an annual basis. The Institutional Effectiveness Steering Committee reviews the plan, provides input, and has responsibility for final approval of the plan.

## Introduction

The purpose of this document is to describe a strategic, systematic, and continuous process of improving the quality of student learning at Excelsior College. The College's Institutional Assessment Plan for Student Learning (IAPSL) is a dynamic and fluid plan underpinned by the organization's philosophy, mission, vision, and strategic plan. It is intended for multiple stakeholders with varying perspectives, all of whom share an interest in the needs and outcomes of learners engaged in study at Excelsior College. Stakeholders in outcomes assessment for student learning at Excelsior include prospective and enrolled students, alumni, faculty, staff, trustees, regulatory bodies, and employers.

The IAPSL reflects the fact that Excelsior continues to nurture a culture that values outcomes assessment and makes determinations about student learning and institutional performance based on data collected through various measures. This reflects recognition by the College's leadership that there is equivalent value to efforts to improve accountability by focusing on both *demonstrating* and *improving* quality (Dugan & Hernon, 2006; Collins, 2005; Light, Singer & Willett, 1990). As such, Excelsior's approach to outcomes assessment is created and implemented with a focus on academic program evaluation, institutional research, and review of academic support units. As a private, not for profit institution of higher education, Excelsior College intends the IAPSL primarily to address the question, **“How effectively do we deliver on our mission and make a distinctive impact, relative to our resources?”** (Collins, 2005, p. 5). That is, Excelsior's performance relative to its mission is the primary definition of success in regard to student learning (Collins, 2005).

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Excelsior's philosophy reflects that prior learning is highly valued. As such, the College has a strong emphasis on assessment which allows students to demonstrate knowledge attained elsewhere for college-level credit. Valuing prior learning is essential when helping adult students achieve academic goals and is a central premise for the theories of adult learning that ground Excelsior's academic policies and curricula (Green, 1998).

## Philosophy

Excelsior's philosophy, "*What you know is more important than where or how you learned it®*," reflects its rich history as an assessment institution and its current status as a provider of a broader range of educational services to adults worldwide.

## Mission

Excelsior College provides educational opportunity to adult learners with an emphasis on those historically underrepresented in higher education. The College meets students where they are — academically and geographically, offering quality instruction and the assessment of learning.

## Vision

Excelsior College aspires to be a model university for the 21st century.

- Excelsior will be a provider of choice for those who pursue their educational goals in a flexible, individualized manner.
- Excelsior will continue to serve as a cost-effective stimulus for lifelong learning and individual achievement, advocating the assessment of learning and aggregation of credit.
- Excelsior will be recognized as an ideal academic collaborator and as a valuable partner in addressing societal and workforce needs.

## Values

Excelsior College contributes to creating and maintaining a diverse, educated society by valuing:

- innovation as a source of improvement
- flexibility as a means of service delivery
- excellence as the path to success
- integrity, caring, and honesty as the basis for lasting relationships

## Guiding Principles for Learning Assessment

The College adheres to the American Association for Higher Education's (AAHE, 1997) "Nine Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning" (Appendix A). These principles are consistent with Excelsior's mission and vision as well as essential characteristics of adult learning environments, i.e., learner centered, knowledge centered, assessment centered and community centered (National Research Council, 2000).

In addition to AAHE's principles, the following have been identified by Excelsior's Institutional Effectiveness Steering Committee to guide assessment processes and practices at the institutional, program, and course levels:

1. *What you know is more important than where or how you learned it*® and prior learning can be effectively measured through valid and reliable assessment methods.
2. Assessment must be focused on the essential learning outcomes determined by the faculty.
3. Since students earn credits in a variety of ways and from a variety of institutions, end-of-program assessments are vital measures of student learning.
4. The extent to which learning outcomes are achieved is the most important measure of institutional performance.
5. Sufficient resources must be devoted to meaningful assessment activities.
6. Stakeholder involvement is essential for cultivating and sustaining a culture that consistently moves beyond reflection to action.
7. Assessment processes must be collaborative and participatory.
8. Assessment results should inform quality improvement initiatives.
9. Clear expectations are necessary for improving accountability.
10. Courses and assessments should be designed using Universal Design for Learning principles and accommodate different learning styles.
11. Multiple perspectives give the most complete picture of institutional performance.
12. Assessment must be conducted in a non-threatening environment, and effective measures are fair and ethical.
13. Learning outcomes must be achievable and measurable within reasonable time lines.
14. Academic program evaluation allows for evidence-based judgments and data-driven decision making.

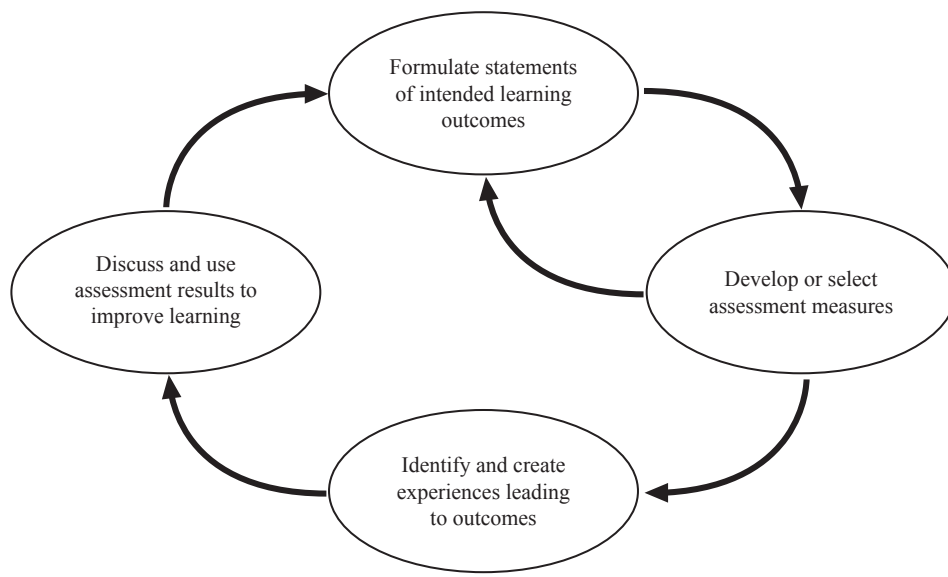
## A Process for Assessing and Achieving Learning Outcomes

Excelsior College faculty and staff do not adhere to one sole theoretical framework in their approach to helping students achieve learning outcomes. Rather, teaching and assessment practices are grounded in a multitude of concepts embedded in adult learning theories as well as current empirical research. For example, Excelsior provides students with tools and opportunities for:

- assessing their own learning, thereby becoming self-regulated learners well-equipped for lifelong learning;
- active engagement in learning, with opportunities for making relevant connections to what they already know and constructing their own meaning;
- deep conceptual learning in ways that facilitate transfer of knowledge in various situations and settings and the opportunity to demonstrate knowledge through performance or portfolio assessments (Sawyer, 2006; National Research Council, 2000; American Association for Higher Education, American College Personnel Association & National Association of Student Personnel Administrators [AAHE, ACPA & NASPA], 1998; Green, 1998).

Outcomes assessment processes are grounded in a constructivist approach to teaching and learning. Learners create their own meaning, integrating new knowledge with past learning and experiences. Students at Excelsior College are adults who bring a wealth and variety of academic and life experiences to the learning environment. Curricula must be relevant and opportunities must be created for students to make connections to prior learning and construct new meaning (AAHE, ACPA & NASPA, 1998). Therefore, assessments of learning are designed to measure deep conceptual knowledge as well as application of information to the selected discipline. In the design of the courses, the College is adopting the Quality Matters (QM) standards to ensure the implementation of high quality curriculum in courses.

Huba and Freed's (2000) process for assessment of student learning mirrors models of quality improvement and reflects Excelsior's approach to assessment (Figure 1). The process requires clearly articulated, measurable learning outcomes, a constructivist and student-centered approach by the faculty, and a culture of evidence-driven decision making (Huba & Freed, 2000).



*Figure 1: The Assessment Process (Huba & Freed, 2000, p. 10)*

Huba, Mary E., Freed, Jann E., *Learner-Centered Assessment on College Campuses: Shifting the Focus from Teaching to Learning*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, ©2000. Electronically reproduced by permission of Pearson Education, Inc., Upper Saddle River, New Jersey.

Strategy and Institutional Effectiveness (SIE) staff use an empowerment evaluation approach when working with representatives from each program to implement the IAPSL. An empowerment evaluation includes a participatory and collaborative process in which the SIE staff serve as a support mechanism to faculty, assessment directors, staff, and students to conduct their own evaluation, to use findings effectively for change, and to have influence in the dissemination and use of the assessment findings (Rossi, Lipsey & Freeman, 2004; Davidson, 2005). This type of approach to evaluation is deemed best for bolstering evaluation accuracy and relevance, identifying priorities, and optimizing use of findings (Davidson, 2005).

## Relationships Among the Strategic Plan, Program Learning Assessment Plans, and General Education Learning Assessment Plans

### *Process for Strategic Planning and Relationship Between Assessment Results and Resource Allocation*

Congruence between the College's strategic plan, program learning outcomes, and general education learning outcomes is assured through participation by deans and faculty in the strategic planning process, as well as their work with faculty teams charged with ongoing evaluation of curricula and programs. The relationship between the use of assessment results and the allocation of budget resources is facilitated through these participatory strategic planning and evaluation processes.

## *Process for Setting and Assessing Program Learning Outcomes*

The faculty for each program establishes the program learning outcomes. Deans or their designees oversee faculty who develop and facilitate courses that include assessments of student learning with acceptable psychometric characteristics. School assessment personnel work with faculty to develop and refine program outcomes, course outcomes and assessments. In addition, SIE is available to assist schools in developing and refining program outcomes. When faculty incorporate competency-based assessments into program curriculum using examinations delivered outside the context of a course, such as is the case in the associate degree nursing program, congruency between examination learning outcomes and program outcomes is assured through faculty development of the test plan, as well as implementation of sound test development practices by Center for Educational Measurement staff. Ultimately the Dean of each school is accountable to assure congruence between sources of credit (e.g., EC-developed courses, UExcel®, CLEP, transfer credits from courses) with program requirements and learning outcomes. End-of-program assessments, such as capstone requirements, are an important means for measuring achievement of program learning outcomes. At the present time, all schools include capstone courses and/or assessments for all associate and baccalaureate students, and the School of Nursing requires associate degree students to pass a capstone assessment, the CPNE®, prior to degree conferral. The master's programs have appropriate exams, thesis, or course-based approaches for assessment of the program outcomes.

In accordance with Excelsior's Program Evaluation Policy, each academic program is formally evaluated collaboratively by the Strategy and Institutional Effectiveness staff and designated program stakeholders once every five years. Programs with professional accreditation must demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes through a process of ongoing program evaluation and self-study. Strategy and Institutional Effectiveness staff work collaboratively with each program's stakeholders to gather, document, and analyze evidence required for program quality improvement and accreditation processes.

Figure 2 depicts the “designing backward and delivering forward” approach used by Excelsior College faculty and administrators when establishing and evaluating learning outcomes (Huba & Freed, 2000, p. 108). This approach allows for a clear connection to the organizational mission when focusing on outcomes related to student learning and institutional performance. Intended learning outcomes of the institution depicted in Figure 2 refers to general education outcomes at the undergraduate level.

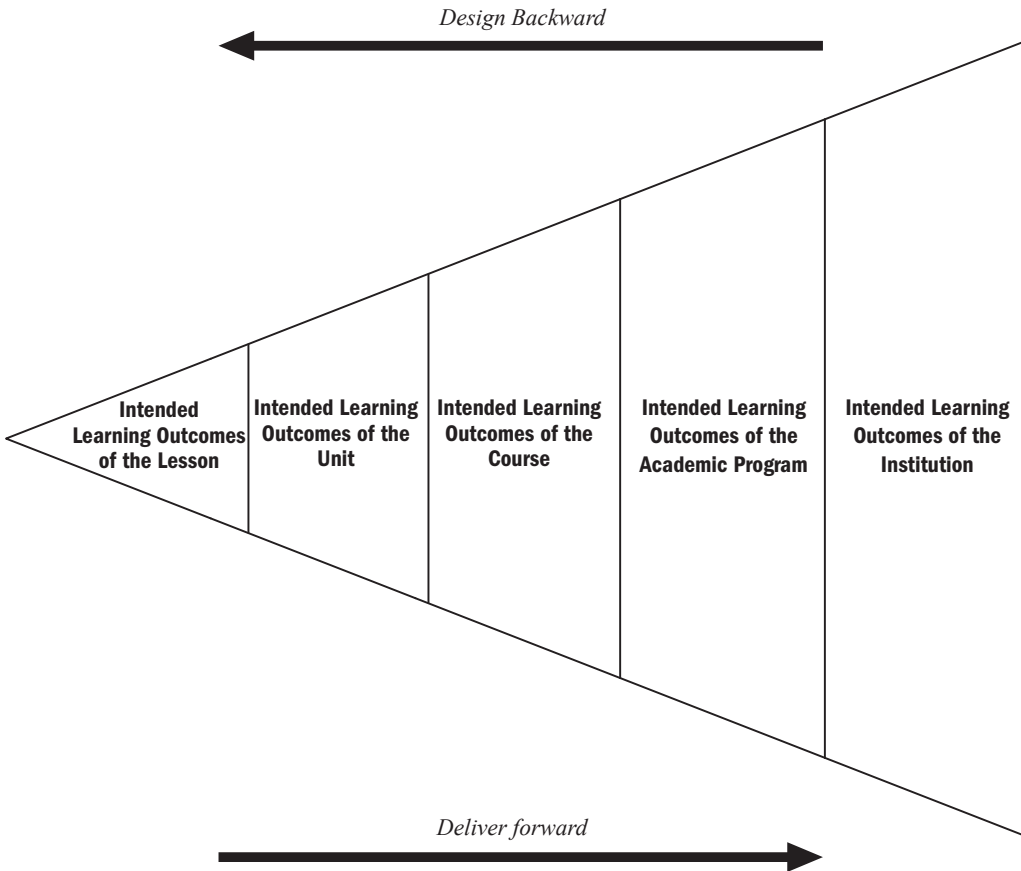


Figure 2: Plan for Designing and Implementing Learning Outcomes (Huba & Freed, 2000, p. 108)

Huba, Mary E., Freed, Jann E., *Learner-Centered Assessment on College Campuses: Shifting the Focus from Teaching to Learning*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, ©2000. Electronically reproduced by permission of Pearson Education, Inc., Upper Saddle River, New Jersey.

## Relationships Among Outcomes at the Institutional, Program, and Course Levels

As a component of Excelsior’s overall assessment activities, documented assessment of student achievement is conducted in each course and at the end of all associate, baccalaureate, and master’s programs, by comparing student performance to the intended learning outcomes (Middle States Commission on Higher Education [MSCHE], 2011; AACU & CHEA, 2008). Improving the quality of student learning at Excelsior College requires integration of end-of-program assessments, such as capstones or portfolios, as a requirement for all programs (Banta, 2007). Excelsior College monitors and tracks student achievement of outcomes using TracDat™, an assessment management tool that allows for efficient storage and retrieval of assessment activities at all levels of an organization: institutional assessment (general education), department/program assessment, and course-level assessment. Sample TracDat reports are presented in the Appendices.

## Assessment at the Course Level

Mechanisms to assure congruence between program outcomes and required courses can be documented in *Course Related to Unit (Program) Outcomes Report* (Appendix B). In addition, the *Curriculum Map Report* (Appendix C) allows for documentation of courses where program outcomes are assessed, introduced, or reinforced. Course-based assessment methods, frequency of assessment, and criteria may be established using the *Course/Program Assessment Plan* (Appendix D); the corresponding results from these assessments are documented in Appendix E. Reviews from the course assessments and corresponding action and follow-up plans may be reviewed in a variety of reporting formats. A *Sample Four Column Reporting* format is presented in Appendix F. In addition, several reports for viewing various aspects of student learning at the course assessment level along with its relationship with the program and institutional goals can be generated. A complete list of reports that can be generated from the course level may be found in Appendix G.

## Assessment Using Credit-by-Exam Offerings

Mechanisms to assure congruence between program outcomes and examination content use a variant of the *Course Related to Unit (Program) Outcomes Report* (Appendix B). Programs with specialized accreditation may demonstrate comparable assessment by providing necessary data through similar formats.

## Assessment at the Program Level

Assessment plans are completed by the faculty and staff of each School using the *Course/Program Assessment Plan* (Appendix D). Results from program-level assessments are entered in the results template that records outcomes and assessment methods with corresponding results, along with any action plan that may be necessary (Appendix E). A sample reporting template such as the program-level four column report (Appendix F) provides a complete overview of the entire assessment cycle for each program level outcome.

Another quality assurance mechanism is the TracDat™ audit, which supports regular updating of program results and action plans. A rubric is applied and feedback is provided to the individual programs. As part of this process, SIE reviews program data annually. On a biannual basis IESC members will be presented with the status of learning outcomes assessment results for the degree programs at the College, identifying best practices across the programs and recommendations for change to further enhance the culture of continuous quality improvement.

In addition, several reports for viewing additional perspectives related to assessments and corresponding results of student learning may be generated. A complete list of reports that can be generated at the program level may be found in Appendix H.

As previously noted, programs undergo a program evaluation once in five years, intended to guide and support a culture of continuous quality improvement. Programs undergoing a review need to address several aspects of the program, such as congruence with the College and School missions, demonstration of a current and rigorous curriculum, learning outcomes assessments, financial profile of the program, faculty qualification, and societal and environmental factors influencing the program.

As part of the continuous quality assessment cycle, if changes need to be made, the program improvement plans may include modifications to the following areas or aspects:

- Description of congruence between course learning outcomes and assessments of learning outcomes.
- Description of congruence between program learning outcomes, curriculum, and end-of-program assessment(s) (e.g., capstones, portfolios, performance on licensure or certification examinations, other standardized assessments), as well as how validity and reliability of measures were ascertained.
- Measures of student achievement of learning and program outcomes over time (e.g., exit and post-graduation surveys).
- Information about program enrollments, persistence rates, graduation rates, and average time to program completion.
- Plan for improved pedagogical and assessment practices, based on self-evaluation.

### *Assessment at the Institutional Level*

Excelsior College's strategic plan (FY 2016 – FY 2020) has goals and annual objectives in five key strategic areas. The five strategic areas are:

1. Student Success
2. Teaching, Learning and Assessment
3. Brand
4. Exceptional Learner Experience
5. Sustainable Growth and Revenue Diversification

Initiatives and activities associated with the annual objectives in the strategic areas are assessed and reviewed on a periodic basis at the institutional level. Sample measurement activities in these strategic areas that are related to the achievement of learning outcomes are depicted in Table 1.

*Table 1: Sample Institutional Measurement Activities Related to Student Learning*

Strategic Areas	Measurement Activity
Student Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Retention rates</li> <li>■ Credit accumulation rates</li> <li>■ Course completion rates</li> <li>■ Degree completion rates</li> </ul>
Teaching, Learning, & Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Scores on capstones or performance assessments</li> <li>■ Alumni perception of program</li> <li>■ Graduate, employer, and professional learner surveys</li> <li>■ Curriculum reviews</li> <li>■ Program reviews</li> <li>■ Student end-of-course surveys</li> <li>■ Faculty evaluation of courses</li> <li>■ General education assessments</li> </ul>
Brand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Transparency at Excelsior. Refer to <a href="http://www.excelsior.edu/about/transparency">http://www.excelsior.edu/about/transparency</a>.</li> </ul>
Exceptional Learner Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Student satisfaction with services (first year, alumni)</li> <li>■ Priorities Survey of Online Learners (PSOL)</li> </ul>
Sustainable Growth and Revenue Diversification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Enrollments</li> </ul>

# Outcomes for Student Learning at the Institutional Level

## *General Education Goals and Outcomes*

The current general education program was implemented in the fall of 2011. The College Curriculum Committee (CCC) is the oversight and policy-making body for the efficient and academically sound implementation of the general education program. The CCC facilitates communication among the schools and the Academic Affairs Council (AAC) by assisting with the addressing of broad strategic issues related to developing curriculum, emphasizing cross-school and cross-unit collaboration, avoiding duplication, and integrating course- and assessment-based approaches to address general education requirements.

The following are the five current general education goals and their corresponding outcomes (the CCC is in the process of discussing a sixth area on Critical Thinking):

**Goal 1—Communication: Oral and Written Expression:** Upon completion of their degree programs, Excelsior students will be able to express themselves effectively in English, both orally and in writing, and with clarity, persuasiveness, and coherence using standard conventions of communication.

**Outcomes:** Upon completion of this goal, students will be able to:

- Deliver clear oral and written communication that informs, persuades, and/or engages the audience.
- Deliver communication that expresses awareness of audience, purpose, and context with appropriate content, organization, and writing mechanics.
- Applies credible sources and/or evidence appropriately for the communication task and context.

**Goal 2—Mathematical and Scientific Reasoning:** Upon completion of their degree programs, Excelsior students will use scientific reasoning and basic mathematical calculations in problem solving in their daily lives.

**Outcomes:** Upon completion of this goal, students will be able to:

- Apply scientific processes and knowledge of the natural world to make evidence-based decisions.
- Demonstrate the ability to complete basic mathematical calculations.
- Draw accurate inferences from numeric and graphic representations of quantitative information to inform problem solving.

**Goal 3—Information Literacy:** Upon completion of the program, students will have learned to evaluate information critically. They will have learned to identify the amount and type of information needed, to locate and effectively access information, to evaluate the source of information, and to use it as per legal and ethical considerations.

**Outcomes:** Upon completion of this goal, students will be able to:

- Locate, evaluate, and utilize information in an effective, ethical and legal manner.

**Goal 4—Diversity and Global Understanding:** Upon completion of their degree programs, Excelsior students will gain an understanding of a global society and appreciation for the complexities of diversity so they will be able to interact effectively with people from backgrounds and cultures different from their own. They will challenge their own sense of “self” vis-à-vis an understanding of those with different thoughts, beliefs and traditional behaviors.

**Outcomes:** Upon completion of this goal, students will be able to:

- Explain concepts of diversity and inclusion in the context of a global society.
- Interpret and evaluate individual and group differences and similarities and explain how they may be influenced by factors such as race, gender, national origin sexual orientation, age, class, religion and/or disabilities.

**Global Society Definition:** Global society is defined as a diverse and interdependent social environment, of persons or institutions at the global, regional, national and or local levels. Persons or institutions are potentially active participants in the world’s ever deepening cultural, economic, and or political relationships which bind human communities to similar fates and obligations.

**Goal 5—Ethics:** Upon completion of the program, the students will recognize the importance of ethical behaviors and decision-making.

**Outcomes:** Upon completion of this goal, students will be able to:

- Identify ethical problems faced by individuals or communities and propose reasonable solutions.

### *Assessment of General Education Outcomes*

Since the majority of Excelsior College students transfer in some or all of their general education credits from other accredited institutions, it is challenging for the College to assess achievement of general education outcomes. Nevertheless, it is extremely important to continuously review and revise general education learning outcomes to ensure alignment with the College’s mission and to assess them to the extent practical. Processes for review include an analysis of student performance and, when available, benchmarking results with similar institutions. The College Curriculum Committee (CCC) in FY 2015 reviewed each of the general education areas for currency and applicability and revised the outcomes when necessary.

Responsibility for college-wide assessment and reporting of general education outcomes lies with the individual schools and their faculty, Institutional Effectiveness Steering Committee (IESC), and the office of Strategy and Institutional Effectiveness (SIE). The CCC works collaboratively with SIE on general education program assessment and with faculty and IESC to compile and evaluate data from these assessments. Assessments and results pertaining to general education outcomes are recorded in the institution's TracDat™ system by SIE and school faculty and staff.

Suskie (2009) writes, “Good assessments are not once-and-done affairs. They are part of an ongoing, organized, and systematized effort to understand and improve teaching and learning. When assessment is truly systematized, some assessment activity is happening every year” (p. 50). Therefore, while students will be advised to seek opportunities to have exposure to all of the general education outcomes via courses and exams offered at the College, specific assessments pertaining to selected general education outcomes are conducted in a cyclical manner (p. 89).

The following timetable (Figure 3) depicts the (a) assessment of the General Education Plan by Strategy and Institutional Effectiveness and (b) expected school efforts to close the loop by using data for the improvement of teaching and learning.

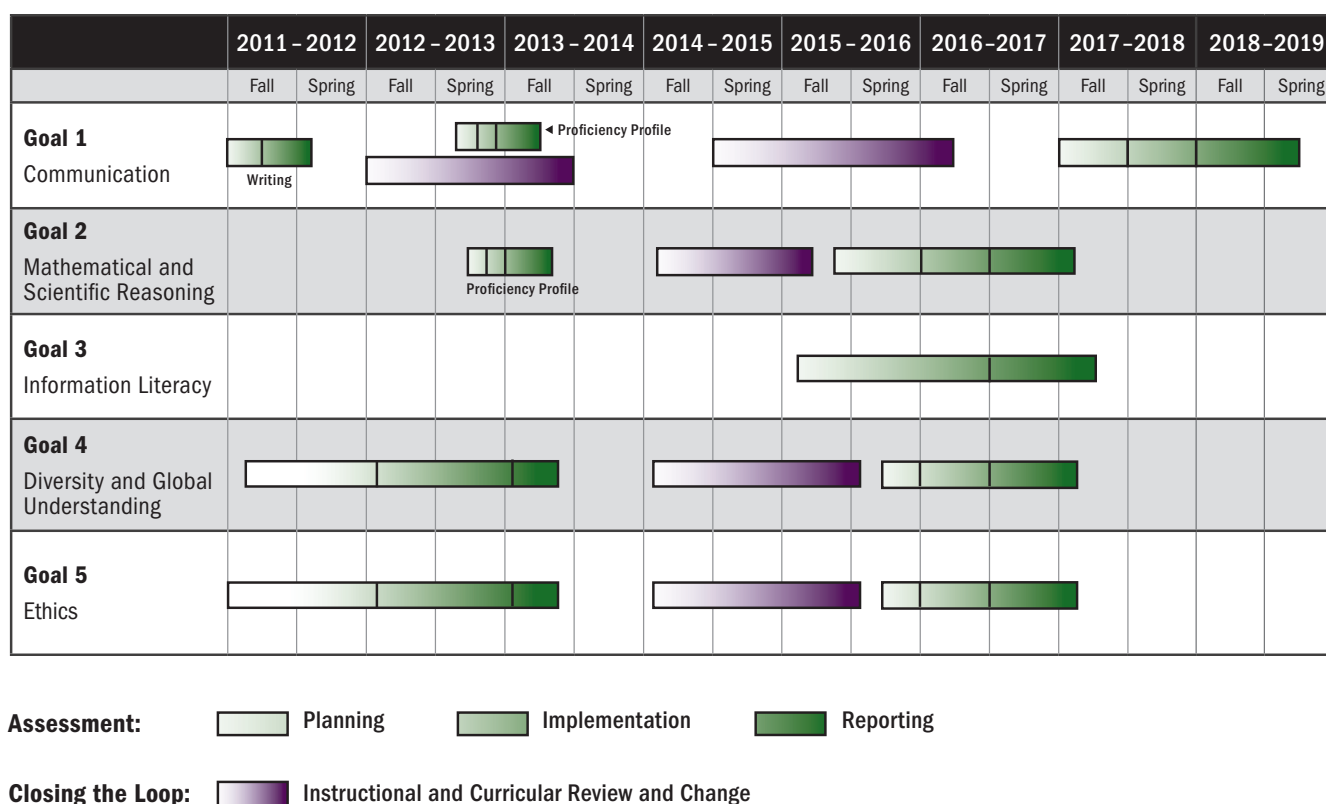


Figure 3: Timetable for General Education Plan Assessment and Change

Assessment in the five general education areas follows the cycle of: assessing the outcomes, evaluating the results, and taking actions in the form of instructional and/or curricular review and change. In the area of Goal 1: Communication, outcomes were assessed by applying the VALUE (Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education) Written Communication rubric, developed by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), to a sample of bachelor's degree student work from each of the schools. While the results indicated that students had achieved milestone performance levels, the assessment showed some opportunities for improvement. Following review of the results, the schools made instructional changes in select individual courses to enhance students' writing skills. In addition, a writing across the curriculum (WAC) initiative has been undertaken. This initiative includes working closely with Excelsior faculty and administrators to extend the College's current writing practices and resources, and establishing a set of college-wide writing standards that guide development, instruction, and assessment of writing-rich courses in all five schools. Following these activities, a reassessment will be conducted using the VALUE writing rubric in FY 2018 – 2019.

In the area of Goal 3: Information Literacy, the College has a one-credit information literacy requirement. The College developed an information literacy course (INL 102) that is aligned with the general education outcome and is taken by almost all students at the College. Students can complete this requirement also in one of the two College Success courses CCS 112 or CCS 120.

Achievement of some of Excelsior's general education outcomes for associate and baccalaureate students has been measured by the ETS® Proficiency Profile, which provides norm-referenced and criterion-referenced data across multiple general education areas, including mathematics, writing, reading, and critical thinking. The ETS Proficiency Profile provides benchmarks against comparable institutions and assists with identifying strengths and weaknesses of curricula. While there are advantages to the administration of standardized assessments that allow the College to have norm referenced scores, the results have at times been less useful than expected for making instructional and curricular changes. Therefore, the College will focus on developing and conducting authentic home-grown assessments for some of the general education outcomes during FY 2016 and 2017.

Specifically, a general education assessment is being developed in FY 2016 to address Goal 2: Mathematics and Scientific Method, Goal 4: Diversity and Global Understanding, and Goal 5: Ethics. Once developed, this assessment will be taken by all undergraduate students as part of their capstone. This approach will provide a more comprehensive and consistent assessment of student learning for all undergraduate students, while at the same time providing authentic results to help the College enhance teaching and learning. Prior to development of this general education assessment, assessments of Goal 4: Diversity and Global Understanding and Goal 5: Ethics were conducted using Excelsior-specific rubrics that were developed, with faculty input, to ensure alignment of the measurement approach with the College's unique general education goals. As in the writing assessment, the rubrics were applied to a sample of

student work collected from relevant courses within each school. Based on findings from these assessments, schools have improved the alignment of select courses and assessments related to these general education outcomes.

### *Additional Assessments Related to Student Learning*

Several additional measures that are conducted regularly support the assessment of student performance and inform curriculum development and improvement. Measures related to student satisfaction and learning include:

- Measures of student satisfaction, i.e., student responses to end-of-course evaluations, post-graduation surveys at exit and one year following graduation, and the Priorities Surveys for Online Learners (PSOL). In addition, the First Year Student Survey is distributed after 9 months of enrollment at Excelsior and includes a series of satisfaction items.
- Measures of employer satisfaction, i.e., employer surveys
- Results on licensing exams (ex. CPA in Business)

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education (2011) has established hallmarks of quality for electronically delivered degree and certificate programs, which apply to the majority of the academic offerings at Excelsior College. In accordance with these best practices, program effectiveness for Excelsior College degree programs are also determined by the following measures:

- Retention rates and variations over time
- Faculty satisfaction as measured by regular surveys and by formal and informal peer review processes
- The number of students served from traditionally underserved populations
- Student use of library and learning resources

## Institutional Effectiveness Steering Committee

The Institutional Effectiveness Steering Committee (IESC) collaboratively sets a relevant and strategic agenda for assessment of institutional performance. It establishes mechanisms for accountability among academic and functional units at the College. The IESC advances a culture of continuous quality improvement where assessment and research findings are used to plan program needs, demonstrate student learning, enhance innovative teaching, and strengthen programs and services at the College. The committee is charged with the responsibility to make recommendations to Executive Staff for systematic integration of evaluation and planning supporting a culture of data-informed decision-making. The committee is chaired by the Vice President for Strategy and Institutional Effectiveness, reporting to the President.

### *Responsibilities of the IESC Include:*

- Serve as a vehicle for communication and discussion of research and assessment findings and foster a culture of continuous quality improvement.
- Inform the ongoing development and use of assessment for both learning and administrative (functional units) outcomes assessment, research and evaluation, promoting a culture of data informed decision-making.
- Monitor institutional effectiveness at all levels (including assessment of learning and administrative functions) and recommend actions as needed.
- Provide appropriate and adequate tools to unit heads to assist with assessment practices, including methods to assess unit effectiveness.
- Participate in the College's strategic planning process as it relates to assessment on select strategic objectives.
- Collaborate with the various functional areas to select a variety of performance measures to develop and maintain an institutional quality and effectiveness dashboard as a measure of institutional performance.
- Understand and recommend actions on the requirements of external audiences such as Middle States Commission on Higher Education on standards related to:
  - Educational Effectiveness Assessment
  - Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement
- Provide feedback and guidance to the office of Strategy and Institutional Effectiveness (SIE). The IESC will periodically review the College's Institutional Effectiveness Plan (IEP) and the Institutional Assessment Plan for Student Learning (IAPSL).

## Assessment Resources:

### Office of Strategy and Institutional Effectiveness

The office of Strategy and Institutional Effectiveness recognizes the importance for stakeholder involvement to build commitment and improve education and therefore maximizes student and faculty participation in decision making. Excelsior does not view outcomes and institutional assessment efforts as the sole responsibility of the office of SIE. Rather, the office provides leadership, orchestration, and facilitation of the work of various stakeholders in decisions of quality at Excelsior (Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions, 2003). Excelsior College uses both a centralized and a distributed approach toward outcomes assessment. Apart from the centralized office of SIE, there is at least one person in each of the schools designated to work with the faculty on assessment of student learning. An Assessment Working Group (AWG) comprised of personnel responsible for assessments within their schools meet regularly. This group is a channel for implementing the guidelines from the IESC. The working group discusses challenges in implementing assessment processes, considers possible solutions, and shares best practices related to assessment of student learning.

Focusing on accurate and varied measures of student learning is a complex undertaking for an institution where many students transfer in the majority of the credits for their degree and meet program requirements in varied ways, that is, through a combination of course work and examinations. Clearly defining the vision, mission, and goals of the office of SIE is an integral step in helping Excelsior mature its assessment efforts. Its overriding responsibility is to assure institutional accountability and congruence between the College's strategic plan, the institutional assessment plan for student learning, and the learning assessment plan for each program.

### *SIE Mission*

The Office of Strategy and Institutional Effectiveness (SIE) supports the College in achieving its mission with an emphasis on evidence-based decision making, efficiency, and continuous quality improvement in academic and business units.

### *SIE Functions and Activities*

The following are functions of SIE to ensure the office accomplishes its mission.

1. **Strategic Planning.** SIE provides the central leadership and coordination for effective strategic planning across the College.
2. **Process Improvement & Project Management.** SIE strives to increase the efficiency and scalability of internal processes by applying continuous improvement techniques. As part of this role, SIE improves successful execution of projects by providing project management resources.

3. **Promote Academic & Business Excellence.** SIE fosters a culture of data-driven decision making, assessment, and continuous quality improvement among academic and business units across the College. As part of this process, SIE assesses institutional characteristics, quality, and outcomes, and translates the results into meaningful, actionable data.
4. **Research, Evaluation and Assessment.** SIE conducts research and evaluation on student success projects and major academic and administrative initiatives across the College to promote effectiveness.
5. **Reporting and Regulatory Compliance.** SIE promotes the visibility of Excelsior College through sharing information to develop public understanding of the College, its effectiveness, and its excellence.

## Closing the Loop to Improve Learning

Data from measures of organizational strategic goals related to outcomes assessment and institutional research are used as a basis for program and policy revisions. Evaluation data from aforementioned multiple and varied sources are systematically reviewed by the leadership of the office of Strategy and Institutional Effectiveness. Recommendations for program improvement are made when AAHE's and Excelsior's principles for assessment are not adhered to and when learning outcomes are not adequately measured or achieved. Data are shared with the Institutional Effectiveness Steering Committee (IESC) for the purpose of collaborative planning aimed at continuous quality improvement of student learning. Plans for improvement and follow-up evaluation in targeted areas are established collaboratively with the deans and faculty. Deans or their designees report periodically to the IESC to explain quality improvement endeavors and seek committee feedback. As previously noted, another method of quality improvement is the TracDat audit, conducted biannually by the office of Strategy and Institutional Effectiveness.

Clear policies and structures for addressing outcomes assessment are vitally important to Excelsior College and are facilitated through full integration of the IAPSL in all schools and units.

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## Appendices

**Appendix A:** 9 Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning

**Appendix B:** Course Related to Unit (Program) Outcomes Report

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## Appendix A

### *9 Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning*

#### *American Association for Higher Education (AAHE)*

1. **The assessment of student learning begins with educational values.** Assessment is not an end in itself but a vehicle for educational improvement. Its effective practice, then, begins with and enacts a vision of the kinds of learning we most value for students and strive to help them achieve. Educational values should drive not only what we choose to assess but also how we do so. Where questions about educational mission and values are skipped over, assessment threatens to be an exercise in measuring what's easy, rather than a process of improving what we really care about.
2. **Assessment is most effective when it reflects an understanding of learning as multidimensional, integrated, and revealed in performance over time.** Learning is a complex process. It entails not only what students know but what they can do with what they know; it involves not only knowledge and abilities but also values, attitudes, and habits of mind that affect both academic success and performance beyond the classroom. Assessment should reflect these understandings by employing a diverse array of methods, including those that call for actual performance, using them over time so as to reveal change, growth, and increasing degrees of integration. Such an approach aims for a more complete and accurate picture of learning, and therefore firmer bases for improving our students' educational experience.
3. **Assessment works best when the programs it seeks to improve have clear, explicitly stated purposes.** Assessment is a goal-oriented process. It entails comparing educational performance with educational purposes and expectations—those derived from the institution's mission, from faculty intentions in program and course design, and from knowledge of students' own goals. Where program purposes lack specificity or agreement, assessment as a process pushes a campus toward clarity about where to aim and what standards to apply; assessment also prompts attention to where and how program goals will be taught and learned. Clear, shared, implementable goals are the cornerstone for assessment that is focused and useful.
4. **Assessment requires attention to outcomes but also and equally to the experiences that lead to those outcomes.** Information about outcomes is of high importance; where students "end up" matters greatly. But to improve outcomes, we need to know about student experience along the way about the curricula, teaching, and kind of student effort that

lead to particular outcomes. Assessment can help us understand which students learn best under what conditions; with such knowledge comes the capacity to improve the whole of their learning.

5. **Assessment works best when it is ongoing not episodic.** Assessment is a process whose power is cumulative. Though isolated, “one-shot” assessment can be better than none, improvement is best fostered when assessment entails a linked series of activities undertaken over time. This may mean tracking the process of individual students, or of cohorts of students; it may mean collecting the same examples of student performance or using the same instrument semester after semester. The point is to monitor progress toward intended goals in a spirit of continuous improvement. Along the way, the assessment process itself should be evaluated and refined in light of emerging insights.
6. **Assessment fosters wider improvement when representatives from across the educational community are involved.** Student learning is a campus-wide responsibility, and assessment is a way of enacting that responsibility. Thus, while assessment efforts may start small, the aim over time is to involve people from across the educational community. Faculty play an especially important role, but assessment’s questions can’t be fully addressed without participation by student-affairs educators, librarians, administrators, and students. Assessment may also involve individuals from beyond the campus (alumni/ae, trustees, employers) whose experience can enrich the sense of appropriate aims and standards for learning. Thus understood, assessment is not a task for small groups of experts but a collaborative activity; its aim is wider, better-informed attention to student learning by all parties with a stake in its improvement.
7. **Assessment makes a difference when it begins with issues of use and illuminates questions that people really care about.** Assessment recognizes the value of information in the process of improvement. But to be useful, information must be connected to issues or questions that people really care about. This implies assessment approaches that produce evidence that relevant parties will find credible, suggestive, and applicable to decisions that need to be made. It means thinking in advance about how the information will be used, and by whom. The point of assessment is not to gather data and return results; it is a process that starts with the questions of decision-makers, that involves them in the gathering and interpreting of data, and that informs and helps guide continuous improvement.
8. **Assessment is most likely to lead to improvement when it is part of a larger set of conditions that promote change.** Assessment alone changes little. Its greatest contribution comes on campuses where the quality of teaching and learning is visibly valued and worked at. On such campuses, the push to improve educational performance is a visible and primary

goal of leadership; improving the quality of education is central to the institution's planning, budgeting, and personnel decisions. On such campuses, information about learning outcomes is seen as an integral part of decision making and avidly sought.

9. **Through assessment, educators meet responsibilities to students and to the public.** There is compelling public stake in education. As educators, we have a responsibility to the publics that support or depend on us to provide information about the ways in which our students meet goals and expectations. But that responsibility goes beyond the reporting of such information; our deeper obligation—to ourselves, our students, and society—is to improve. Those to whom educators are accountable have a corresponding obligation to support such attempts at improvement.

## Appendix B

### *Course Related to Unit (Program) Outcomes Report*

ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT (XXX)
<b>Outcome 1</b> <i>Program outcome statement</i>           
Course title – ABC*123
Course title – DEF*456
Exam title – GHIX*789

## Appendix C

### *Curriculum Mapping Report*

ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT (XXX)			
OUTCOMES	COURSE NUMBER: ABC*123	COURSE NUMBER: DEF*123	COURSE NUMBER: XYZ*123
Outcome 1	A	A, I, R	A, I, R
Outcome 2	A	I	I
Outcome 3	A	A, I, R	A, I, R
Outcome 4	A		

#### Legend

A = Assessed; I = Introduced; R = Reinforced

## Appendix D

### Course/Program Assessment Plan

The screenshot shows the 'Program' form in the Tracdat system. The left sidebar contains navigation links: Home, Assessing Unit, Assessing Unit .., Plan, Results, Course Planning, Mapping, Reports, Documents, and Settings. The main form area has a 'Program' dropdown at the top. Below it is a 'Program' text field. The form contains several required fields marked with an asterisk: 'Outcome Name', 'Outcome', 'Outcome Status' (a dropdown menu), 'Outcome Types', 'Start Date', and 'End Date'. A legend at the bottom right indicates that an asterisk denotes a 'Required field'.

This screenshot shows the 'Program' form in the Tracdat system, specifically the assessment method section. The left sidebar is identical to the previous screenshot. The main form area has a 'Program' dropdown at the top. Below it is a 'Program' text field. The form contains several required fields marked with an asterisk: 'Outcome' (a text field), 'Active' (a checkbox), 'Assessment Method Category' (a dropdown menu), 'Assessment Method' (a text field), 'Criterion' (a large text area), and 'Schedule/Frequency' (a text field). A legend at the bottom right indicates that an asterisk denotes a 'Required field'.

## Appendix E

### *Results – Course Level or Program Level*

The screenshot displays the Tracdat web application interface. On the left is a vertical navigation menu with icons and labels for Home, Assessing Unit, Plan, Results (highlighted), Course Planning, Mapping, Reports, Documents, and Settings. The main content area is titled 'Program' and contains the following fields:

- Outcome:** A single-line text input field.
- Assessment Method:** A large, empty rectangular text area.
- \* Result Date:** A date input field, marked as required.
- \* Result:** A long text input field, marked as required.
- \* Action Status:** A dropdown menu, marked as required.
- \* Result Type:** A dropdown menu, marked as required.
- Discussion:** A long text input field.

At the bottom right of the form area, there is a legend: **\* Required field**.

## Appendix F

### *Sample Reporting Format: Course or Program Level*

#### Unit (Course) Assessment Report – Four Column Report Excelsior College Academic Department (XXX)

Outcomes	Means of Assessment and Criteria	Results	Action and Follow-up
Outcome 1			
Outcome 2			
Outcome 3			
Outcome 4			
Outcome 5			

*This report shows each assessment unit's outcomes along with the results and any action plans in a four column report. This report is useful for showing the results for a specific unit.*

## Appendix G

### *List of Reports That Can be Generated in TracDat™ at the Course Level*

ASSESSMENT IMPACT BY COURSE OUTCOMES	This report displays each course assessment plan along with the assessment results and action plans. This report is useful for presenting the impact of doing assessment on a particular course.
UNIT COURSE ASSESSMENT REPORT—FOUR COLUMN	This report shows each unit's course outcomes along with the results and any action plans in a four column report. This report is useful for showing the results for a specific unit.
COURSE ASSESSMENT IMPACT BY GOALS	This report displays each of the selected unit's goals along with the unit's course plan and results that support the goals. This report is useful for showing alignment between the goals and unit's course plan and assessment results.
COURSE ASSESSMENT IMPACT BY UNIT OUTCOMES	This report displays each of the selected unit's outcomes along with the unit's course plan and results that support the unit outcomes. This report is useful for showing alignment between the unit outcomes and unit's course plan and assessment results.
COURSE ASSESSMENT PLAN	This report shows each course's assessment plan. This report is useful for showing how a particular course is being assessed.
COURSE ASSESSMENT REPORT	This report shows how each course outcome supports the goals of the institution, a reporting unit or a unit. This report is presented in a five column model.
COURSE LIST BY UNIT	This report shows the courses per unit.
COURSE OUTCOMES RELATED TO GOALS	This report shows the links between course level outcomes and the goals of the selected unit. This report is useful to show which course outcomes support unit goals.
COURSE RELATED TO UNIT OUTCOMES	This report lists all the courses which support the outcomes of the selected unit. This report is useful to show courses are used to support a unit's outcomes.

## Appendix H

### *List of Reports That Can Be Generated in TracDat™ at the Program Level*

ASSESSMENT IMPACT BY ASSESSMENT METHODS	This report shows each unit's results and action plans sorted by the various Assessment Methods. This report is useful for showing results for a unit or across multiple units that use similar assessment methods. (Example: Standardized Test)
ASSESSMENT IMPACT BY UNIT OUTCOMES	This report shows each unit's assessment plan along with the results and action plans. This report is useful for showing the impact doing assessment has had on a unit.
ASSESSMENT PLAN	This report shows each unit's assessment plan. It does not show the results of each assessment. This report is useful for showing each unit's plan.
UNIT ASSESSMENT REPORT—FOUR COLUMN	This report shows each unit's outcomes along with the results and any action plans in a four column report. This report is useful for showing the results for a specific unit.
CURRICULUM MAP	This report shows how each course is related to an outcome using curriculum mapping.
ASSESSMENT IMPACT BY TASKS	This report shows each unit's results and action plans sorted by the unit tasks. This report is useful for showing results for a unit or across multiple units that use similar tasks.
DOCUMENTS LIST	This report list all documents (files) stored in each folder for each unit.

## Appendix I

### *Glossary of Terms*

**AACU:** An acronym for Association of American Colleges & Universities, the organization that is the leading national association concerned with the quality, vitality, and public standing of undergraduate liberal education.

**AAHE:** An acronym for American Association for Higher Education. Recently known as AAHEA (American Association of Higher Education Accreditation), AAHE promotes research, collaboration, scholarship, best practices, and evidence-based research.

**ABET:** An acronym for the Accreditation Board for Engineering Technology, Inc., the organization that has accredited the Excelsior College baccalaureate degree programs in electronics engineering technology and nuclear engineering technology.

**Academic Affairs Council (AAC):** One of the two councils responsible for academic decision making and policy development at Excelsior College. AAC oversees academic program/curriculum development, revision, and elimination process; sets strategic direction for the management and evolution of online courses and Excelsior College Examinations through the creation of standards and guidelines for course/exam development and revision; sets college-wide standards for faculty roles, titles, expectations, development, and recruitment; and makes determinations about student conduct that falls beyond the purview of the deans.

**Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing, Inc. (ACEN) (formerly the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission (NLNAC):** The entity that reviews and accredits degree programs in the Excelsior College School of Nursing.

**ACE:** An acronym for the American Council on Education.

**ACPA:** An acronym for American College Personnel Association. The association is the leading comprehensive student affairs association that advances students affairs and engages students for a lifetime of learning and discovery.

**AGLSP:** An acronym for the Association of Graduate Liberal Studies Programs. It is the professional organization of academic programs providing graduate interdisciplinary education in the liberal arts and sciences for working adults.

**Assessment of Prior Learning:** Refers to several methods, including standardized tests, course challenges, and portfolio assessment, through which adults gain college credit as a result of their learning outside the classroom—also known as prior learning assessment.

**Assessment Working Group (AWG):** An Excelsior College work group comprised of personnel responsible for assessments within their schools and outcomes assessment staff. The AWG is charged with addressing assessment needs within school and across the institution.

**Capstone:** An end-of-program experience that focuses on synthesizing theories, principles, models, and skills learned throughout the curriculum.

**Center for Educational Measurement (CEM):** The unit of the College primarily known for development of the College's ACE-recognized credit-by-examination programs, UExcel® exams and Excelsior College® Examinations (ECEs). UExcel® includes more than 40 undergraduate-level exams in arts & sciences, business, education, and nursing. ECEs include exams specific to the associate- and baccalaureate-level nursing programs.

**CHEA:** An acronym for Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

**CPNE®:** An acronym for Excelsior's Clinical Performance in Nursing Examination.

**Faculty Program Director:** The faculty program directors provide academic leadership for the development and management of school curricula and courses, management and development of faculty and staff, and facilitation of student learning and student support. The faculty program directors work closely within their respective schools and across the College to support the strategic plan of the College and its schools. The faculty program directors work within their respective schools' committee structures and processes and with College-wide committees and initiatives.

**IE Steering Committee (IESC):** The Institutional Effectiveness Steering Committee sets a strategic agenda for assessment of student learning and institutional performance. It also establishes mechanisms for accountability.

**Institutional Effectiveness Plan (IEP):** A companion document to the Institutional Assessment Plan for Student Learning intended to provide a framework for institutional effectiveness at the College that links assessment across administrative units to strategic planning and resource allocation.

**International Assembly for Collegiate Business Education (IACBE):** The leading outcomes-based professional accrediting organization for business programs in student-centered colleges and universities. The IACBE promotes, develops, and recognizes excellence in business education. Excelsior's bachelor's degree programs in accounting (NYS CPA Track) and business are accredited by the IACBE.

**Middle States Accreditation (MSCHE):** Excelsior College is accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, an institutional accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

**NASPA:** An acronym for National Association of Student Personnel Administrators. NASPA is the leading association for the advancement, health, and sustainability of the student affairs profession.

**NCLEX-RN:** An abbreviation for the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses.

**Portfolio:** A collection of materials that document learning from personal and professional experience. It may include support letters from supervisors, work samples, or other items that demonstrate college-level learning. Faculty members review a portfolio to determine whether to award college credit for experience.

**Portfolio-Based Assessment:** Excelsior College offers portfolio assessment as a means of documenting learning for enrolled students for whom there are no available standardized options.

**Priorities Survey for Online Learners (PSOL):** The PSOL evaluates what students believe is important about their education experiences as well as how satisfied they are with their experiences. Unlike other satisfaction surveys, the PSOL is specifically designed for students enrolled in online institutions.

**TracDat™:** This is a flexible, easy-to-use, Web-based system that provides frameworks for institutional assessment, strategic planning, accreditation, and quality improvement processes at the College.

**Transparency @ Excelsior:** A Web-based resource providing an overview of student and alumni data and efforts related to institutional effectiveness, assessment of learning, and compliance with the Higher Education Opportunity Act, as well as other initiatives at Excelsior College. It is located on Excelsior's website, at <http://www.excelsior.edu/about/transparency>.

**UExcel®:** The brand name under which most of Excelsior College's credit-bearing examinations are marketed. The name initially was used for eight exams offered through a joint program with Pearson VUE. When the joint program ended in 2013, the UExcel brand fell under the sole control of Excelsior College and began to be used for all exams available to the general public. Examinations specific to the Excelsior College nursing degree programs remain under the Excelsior College Examinations brand.

**Universal Design for Learning:** A set of principles for curriculum development that give all individuals equal opportunities to learn. (For more information, refer to [www.udlcenter.org](http://www.udlcenter.org))

**Valid Assessments of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE):** The VALUE rubrics are meta-rubrics developed by the Association of American Colleges and University with teams of faculty and other academic professionals across the country to measure 15 essential undergraduate learning outcomes.

