Procedures for Setting and Reviewing Area Benchmarks: Determining Agreed-Upon Levels of Student Performance

Guiding Principle
In general, the responsibility for selecting assessment tools and setting benchmarks/agreed upon levels of performance should take place at the lowest administrative level for which it is feasible (e.g., department-level faculty who design the curriculum and the accompanying assessment plans). These choices are reviewed at the institutional level by the Program Review Committee who will verify that the choices are appropriate for a nationally-ranked, Christian Liberal Arts college.

Academic Departments
In consultation with the Director of Assessment, academic departments establish their own Student Learning Outcomes, devise the means by which they will be assessed, and establish acceptable levels of performance for each outcome. As part of this process, the department provides a short, written explanation of the reasoning behind the choice of benchmarks. This rationale is forwarded to the Program Review Committee and is archived for subsequent reference. As the Program Review Committee reviews departmental plans for feasibility, the committee also evaluates the choices of assessment instrument and benchmark to verify that they are consistent with the institutional mission and are set at an appropriate level for a nationally-ranked institution. The Program Review Committee may either affirm a department’s choices or ask for changes.

Appeals of Program Review Committee decisions regarding whether departmental assessment instruments and benchmarks are appropriate for a nationally-ranked, Christian Liberal Arts college may be made to the Provost whose ruling holds the final authority in this area.

General Education (GE)
Faculty teaching courses in any one of the GE areas collaborate on developing and modifying Student Learning Outcomes for the area. The outcomes are reviewed by the General Education Committee which provides feedback to the area faculty and approves the outcomes.

Rubrics and benchmarks for area assessment are developed by the area faculty in consultation with the General Education Committee and given final approval by the Program Review Committee using the criteria of consistency with the institutional mission and appropriateness of level for a nationally-ranked institution. Area faculty may elect to develop a common instrument to be used by all area instructors or they may set guidelines to aid individual faculty members in eliciting student work to which the rubrics can be applied. In the latter case, the area faculty as a whole will review the student work to verify that it is appropriate for the proposed assessment and to insure that rubrics are being applied in a consistent manner.

Other Programs such as Student Life and Intercultural Programs
Programs which fall outside the authority of the Academic Senate develop their own outcomes, assessment instruments and benchmarks in consultation with the Program
Review Committee whose task it is to ensure alignment between individual program goals and institutional priorities. Program administrators approve assessment instruments and benchmarks in consultation with the Program Review Committee.

Flowchart for Developing and Approving Benchmarks