

# Assessing the Core Objectives: Some Preliminary Findings



PROCESS > Product

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*College of the Mainland*

# General Education Core Curriculum Core Objectives

(Mandatory in State of Texas as of Fall 2014)

- Critical Thinking
- Communication Skills
- Empirical and Quantitative Skills
- Teamwork
- Social Responsibility
- Personal Responsibility



# Relationship of the Gen Ed Core Curriculum and the Core Objectives

## Gen Ed Curriculum

### Component Areas (TOTAL 42 SCH)

Communication (6 SCH)

Mathematics (3 SCH)

Life & Physical Sciences (6 SCH)

Language, Philosophy & Culture (3 SCH)

Creative Arts (3 SCH)

American History (6 SCH)

Government/Political Science (6 SCH)

Social & Behavioral Sciences (3 SCH)

Component Area Option (6 SCH)



## Core Objectives

- Critical Thinking
- Communication Skills
- Empirical & Quantitative Skills
- Teamwork
- Social Responsibility
- Personal Responsibility

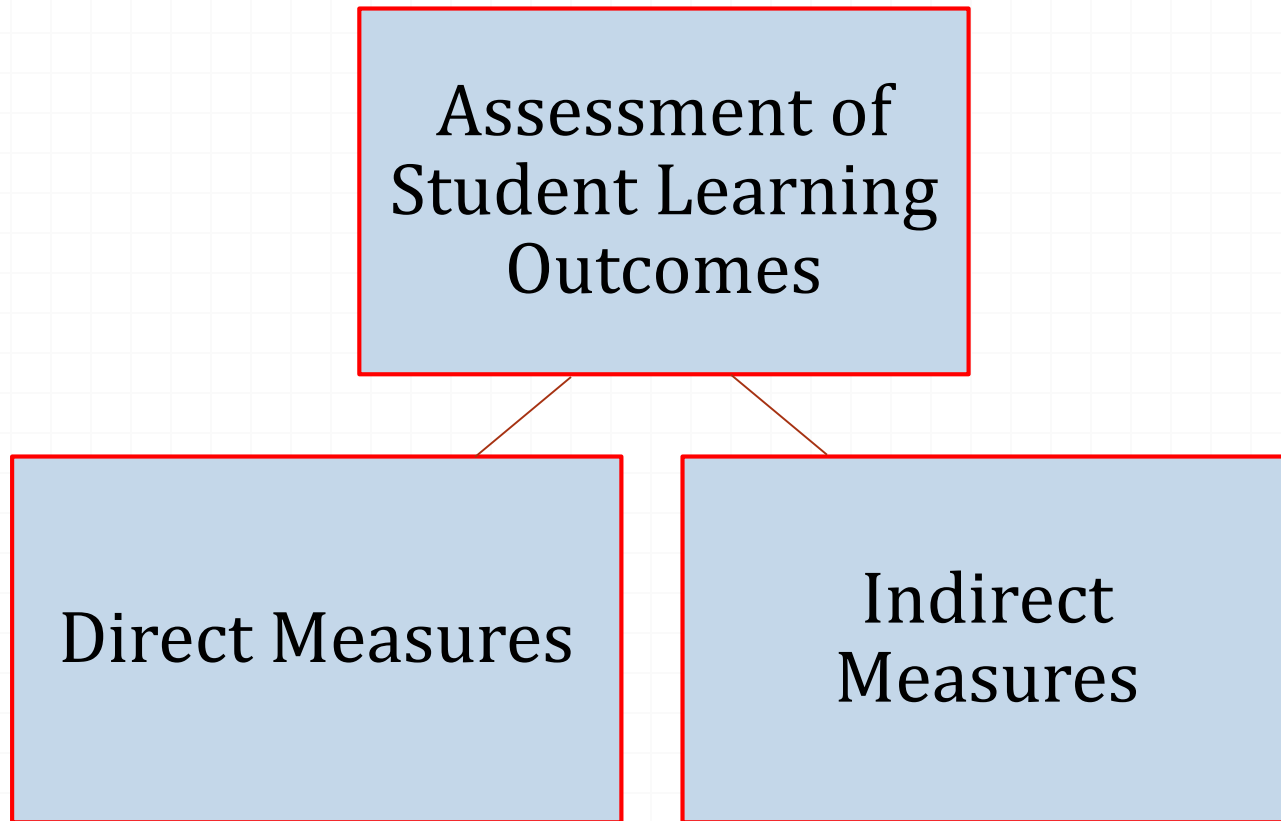
# Foundational Component Areas: How they Relate to the Core Objectives

| Foundational Component Area   | SCH | ● Required Core Objectives |     |     | ○ Optional Core Objectives |    |    |
|---|-----|----------------------------|-----|-----|----------------------------|----|----|
|   |     | CT                         | COM | EQS | TW                         | SR | PR |
| <b>Communication</b>  | 6   | ●                          | ●   | ○   | ●                          | ○  | ●  |
| Courses in this category focus on developing ideas and expressing them clearly, considering the effect of the message, fostering understanding, and building the skills needed to communicate persuasively.<br>Courses involve the command of oral, aural, written, and visual literacy skills that enable people to exchange messages appropriate to the subject, occasion, and audience.                          |     |                            |     |     |                            |    |    |
| <b>Mathematics</b>  | 3   | ●                          | ●   | ●   | ○                          | ○  | ○  |
| Courses in this category focus on quantitative literacy in logic, patterns, and relationships.<br>Courses involve the understanding of key mathematical concepts and the application of appropriate quantitative tools to everyday experience.  |     |                            |     |     |                            |    |    |
| <b>Life and Physical Sciences</b>   | 6   | ●                          | ●   | ●   | ●                          | ○  | ○  |
| Courses in this category focus on describing, explaining, and predicting natural phenomena using the scientific method.<br>Courses involve the understanding of interactions among natural phenomena and the implications of scientific principles on the physical world and on human experiences.  |     |                            |     |     |                            |    |    |
| <b>Language, Philosophy &amp; Culture</b>   | 3   | ●                          | ●   | ○   | ○                          | ●  | ●  |
| Courses in this category focus on how ideas, values, beliefs, and other aspects of culture express and affect human experience.<br>Courses involve the exploration of ideas that foster aesthetic and intellectual creation in order to understand the human condition across cultures.   |     |                            |     |     |                            |    |    |
| <b>Creative Arts</b>  | 3   | ●                          | ●   | ○   | ●                          | ●  | ○  |
| Courses in this category focus on the appreciation and analysis of creative artifacts and works of the human imagination.<br>Courses involve the synthesis and interpretation of artistic expression and enable critical, creative, and innovative communication about works of art.  |     |                            |     |     |                            |    |    |
| <b>American History</b>   | 6   | ●                          | ●   | ○   | ○                          | ●  | ●  |
| Courses in this category focus on the consideration of past events and ideas relative to the United States, with the option of including Texas History for a portion of this component area.<br>Courses involve the interaction among individuals, communities, states, the nation, and the world, considering how these interactions have contributed to the development of the United States and its global role. |     |                            |     |     |                            |    |    |
| <b>Government/Political Science</b>   | 6   | ●                          | ●   | ○   | ○                          | ●  | ●  |
| Courses in this category focus on consideration of the Constitution of the United States and the constitutions of the states, with special emphasis on that of Texas.<br>Courses involve the analysis of governmental institutions, political behavior, civic engagement, and their political and philosophical foundations.  |     |                            |     |     |                            |    |    |
| <b>Social and Behavioral Sciences</b>   | 3   | ●                          | ●   | ●   | ○                          | ●  | ○  |
| Courses in this category focus on the application of empirical and scientific methods that contribute to the understanding of what makes us human.<br>Courses involve the exploration of behavior and interactions among individuals, groups, institutions, and events, examining their impact on the individual, society, and culture.   |     |                            |     |     |                            |    |    |

# A Brief History of the COM Core Objectives Assessment Plan



# Intentional Use of Both Direct and Indirect Measures



# Direct and Indirect Measures

## Direct Measures

**Actual samples of student work**

Pre/post test

Standardized exams

Course-embedded  
exams

Course-embedded  
assignments

Direct observation of  
skill demonstration

Portfolio evaluation



# Direct and Indirect Measures

## Indirect Measures

**Expression of attitudes and perceptions**

Course  
evaluation  
questions

Locally created  
student surveys

Employer surveys  
regarding quality of  
graduates' skills

Standardized student  
surveys, e.g., CCSSE,  
SENSE, etc.

Retention rates

Honors and awards  
received by students





# Faculty Meetings

- We met with Faculty on a discipline by discipline basis.
- Faculty identified which course-level student learning outcomes mapped to each Core Objective.
- Mapping data entered into a gigantic matrix.
- Once this process was complete for all courses in the Core Curriculum, mapping data was entered into Strategic Planning Online (SPOL).
- Process was labor intensive on the front end.
- Result was mountains of aggregated assessment data.



# Faculty Development-

## A Key Element of a Successful Assessment Plan

- One faculty member per academic area identified to serve as an “**early adopter**,” drafting prototypical assignments/assessments of the Core Objectives linked to courses in their disciplines. These faculty became known as “**the Gang of Nine**.”
- Core Objective Summit Meetings were facilitated by the “**Gang of Nine**” so that faculty could exchange ideas about how best to teach and assess each Core Objective.



# COM's Core Objectives

## Assessment Plan

The heart of our plan was

course-embedded assessment (direct measures).



- Mapped course-level outcomes to Core Objectives.
- Aggregated data across all course outcomes that have been identified as measures of each Core Objective.

# Examples from the Matrix

**History 1301**



**English 1302**



**Math 2413**



# An Example of the Matrix: Linking the Core Objectives to Student Learning Outcomes in HISTORY 1301

| Foundational Component Area - American History  |                          |                      |                       |                         |
|---|--------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Course/SLO's  | Required Core Objectives |                      |                       |                         |
| History 1301  | Critical Thinking        | Communication Skills | Social Responsibility | Personal Responsibility |
| 1. Create an argument through the use of historical evidence.   | <b>X</b>                 |                      |                       |                         |
| 2. Analyze and interpret primary and secondary sources.   | <b>X</b>                 |                      |                       |                         |
| 3. Analyze the effects of historical, social, political, economic, cultural, and global forces on this period of United States history.   | <b>X</b>                 |                      |                       |                         |
| 4. (CS1) Develop, interpret, and express ideas through written communication.   |                          | <b>X (CS1)</b>       |                       |                         |
| 5. (CS2) Develop, interpret, and express ideas through oral communication.  |                          | <b>X (CS2)</b>       |                       |                         |
| 6. (CS3) Develop, interpret, and express ideas through visual communication.  |                          | <b>X (CS3)</b>       |                       |                         |
| 7. (SR) Students will demonstrate intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities. |                          |                      | <b>X</b>              |                         |
| 8. (PR) Evaluate choices and actions of others or one's own, and relate consequences to decision-making.  |                          |                      |                       | <b>X</b>                |

Critical Thinking

**HISTORY 1301: Syllabus Excerpt**

| <b>Student Learner Outcome</b>  | <b>Maps to Core Objective</b>        | <b>Assessed via this Assignment</b> |
|---|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>1. Create an argument through the use of historical evidence.</b>  | <b>Critical Thinking Skills (CT)</b> | <b>Paper</b>                        |
| <b>2. Analyze and interpret primary and secondary sources.</b>  | <b>Critical Thinking Skills (CT)</b> | <b>Paper</b>                        |
| <b>3. Analyze the effects of historical, social, political, economic, cultural, and global forces on this period of United States history.</b>  | <b>Critical Thinking Skills (CT)</b> | <b>Exams</b>                        |
| <b>4. Develop, interpret, and express ideas on a History 1301-related topic through written communication.</b>  | <b>Communication Skills (CS1)</b>    | <b>Paper</b>                        |
| <b>5. Develop, interpret, and express ideas on a History 1301-related topic through oral communication.</b>   | <b>Communication Skills (CS2)</b>    | <b>Oral Presentation Assignment</b> |
| <b>6. Develop, interpret, and express ideas on a History 1301-related topic through visual communication.</b>   | <b>Communication Skills (CS3)</b>    | <b>Oral Presentation Assignment</b> |
| <b>7. Students will demonstrate intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities.</b> | <b>Social Responsibility (SR)</b>    | <b>Paper</b>                        |
| <b>8. Evaluate choices and actions of others or one's own, and relate consequences to decision-making.</b>  | <b>Personal Responsibility (PR)</b>  | <b>Paper</b>                        |



# History 1301: Example of Core Objective Assignment

***Paper Assignment:*** *In the paper assignment the student will analyze and interpret primary and secondary sources and then create an argument through the use of historical evidence. **The Paper Assignment will also address the following Core Objectives: Critical Thinking Skills, Communication Skills (CS1), Social Responsibility, and Personal Responsibility.***

***The Paper Assignment topic:*** *Discuss the Early 19th Century Reform Movements, including the most successful of all, the abolitionist movement. Include details and reach conclusions.*

*Students will be provided with primary and secondary sources associated with the Early 19th Century Reform Movements. Students will then analyze and interpret the all the primary and secondary sources and then construct an argument through the use of historical evidence in a 3-5 page paper (double-spaced, 12 point font).*

*In addition to analyzing and interpreting primary and secondary sources and constructing an argument through the use of historical evidence, **the student MUST include a section in their paper discussing the social and personal responsibility (using the definition on page two of the syllabus) of the individuals involved in the Early 19th Century Reform Movements. Students must discuss these individuals and the issues they were involved in using critical thinking and effectively communicate their views on these topics in their papers.***

# An Example of the Matrix: Linking the Core Objectives to Student Learning Outcomes in MATH 2413

## Foundational Component Area - Mathematics

| Course/SLO's  | Required Core Objectives |                      |                                   |
|---|--------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
|   | Critical Thinking        | Communication Skills | Empirical and Quantitative Skills |
| <b>MATH 2413</b>  |                          |                      |                                   |
| 1. Develop solutions for tangent and area problems using the concepts of limits, derivatives, and integrals.  |                          |                      | <b>X</b>                          |
| 2. Draw graphs of algebraic and transcendental functions considering limits, continuity, and differentiability at a point.                                    |                          | <b>X (CS-3)</b>      |                                   |
| 3. Determine whether a function is continuous and/or differentiable at a point using limits.  | <b>X</b>                 |                      |                                   |
| 4. Use differentiation rules to differentiate algebraic and transcendental functions.   | <b>X</b>                 |                      |                                   |
| 5. Identify appropriate calculus concepts and techniques to provide mathematical models of real world situations and determine solutions to applied problems. | <b>X</b>                 |                      |                                   |
| 6. Evaluate definite integrals using the Fundamental Theorem of Calculus.   | <b>X</b>                 |                      |                                   |
| 7. Articulate the relationship between derivatives and integrals using the Fundamental Theorem of Calculus.   |                          |                      |                                   |

Empirical and Quantitative Skills



# An Example of the Matrix: Linking the Core Objectives to Student Learning Outcomes in ENGL 1302

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## Foundational Component Area - Communication Skills

| Course/SLO's  | Required Core Objectives |                      |          |                         |
|---|--------------------------|----------------------|----------|-------------------------|
| ENGL 1302   | Critical Thinking        | Communication Skills | Teamwork | Personal Responsibility |
| 1. Demonstrate knowledge of individual and collaborative research processes.  |                          |                      | <b>X</b> |                         |
| 2. Develop ideas and synthesize primary and secondary sources within focused academic arguments, including one or more research-based essays. | <b>X</b>                 |                      |          |                         |
| 3. Analyze, interpret, and evaluate a variety of texts for the ethical and logical uses of evidence.  |                          |                      |          | <b>X</b>                |
| 4. Write in a style that clearly communicates meaning, builds credibility, and inspires belief or action.                                     |                          | <b>X (CS1)</b>       |          |                         |
| 5. Apply the conventions of style manuals for specific academic disciplines (e.g., APA, CMS.MLA.etc.)   |                          |                      |          |                         |

Teamwork

# Additional Direct Measures

- Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP) Tests – Writing Exam (Written Communication), Math Exam (for EQS), and Critical Thinking Exam (Critical Thinking)
- Common rubric across QEP-enhanced courses addressing Communication Skills

# QEP (Oral Communication) Rubric

| CATEGORY   | 4                        | 3                        | 2                     | 1                     | 0                                     |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <b>Verbal Communication</b><br>The speaker demonstrates the ability to express their ideas verbally using expressive, accurate and appropriate language  | At least 90% of the time | At least 75% of the time | About 50% of the time | About 25% of the time | No effort<br><input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Nonverbal Communication</b><br>The speaker uses appropriate presentation techniques (i.e. maintains eye contact, modulates voice, demonstrates appropriate pacing, uses appropriate gestures, etc.) | At least 90% of the time | At least 75% of the time | About 50% of the time | About 25% of the time | No effort<br><input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Content</b><br>The speaker demonstrates understanding of the topic by utilizing properly cited facts, examples, and other forms of support  | At least 90% of the time | At least 75% of the time | About 50% of the time | About 25% of the time | No effort<br><input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Organization</b><br>The speaker plans, prepares, and delivers a well-organized, logical oral presentation   | At least 90% of the time | At least 75% of the time | About 50% of the time | About 25% of the time | No effort<br><input type="checkbox"/> |



# Indirect Measures (Measures of COM Student Perceptions)

- Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE)
- Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE)
- Global Perspective Inventory (GPI)



# College of the Mainland Five-Column Core Objective Assessment Plan



## Core Objective Assessment Chart

| 1.<br>Student Learner<br>Outcome (SLO) | 2.<br>Criteria<br>For Success | 3.<br>Means of Assessment | 4.<br>Summary of Data<br>Collected | 5.<br>Use of Results |
|--|-------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------|
|  |                               |                           |                                    |                      |

## Core Objectives Assessment Chart

| 1.<br>Core Objective                      | 2.<br>Means of Assessment   | 3.<br>Criteria<br>For Success   | 4.<br>Summary<br>of Data<br>Collected | 5.<br>Use of<br>Results |
|---|---|---|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS (CT)</b>      | <p>Aggregated Course-Level Assessment Data</p> <p>Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP) Test</p> <p>Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) questions 5b – e, 12e</p>         | <p>75% of students will score 70% or higher on coursework assignments related to the Core Objective, Critical Thinking.</p> <p>60% of students taking the CAAP test for critical thinking will score at or above the national mean for community college students.</p> <p>Students will score on the identified CCSSE questions at or above the national average for comparable institutions in our region.</p>   |                                       |                         |
| <b>COMMUNICATION SKILLS (CS): Written</b> | <p>Aggregated Course-Level Assessment Data</p> <p>Written: CAAP Test (Scheduled for Spring 2014)</p> <p>CCSSE questions 4c-d, 6c, 12c</p> <p>Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE) question 19b</p> | <p>75% of students will score 70% or higher on coursework assignments related to the Core Objective, Written Communication.</p> <p>Written: 60% of students taking the CAAP test for writing will score at or above the national mean for community college students.</p> <p>Students will score on the identified CCSSE questions at or above the national average for comparable institutions in our region.</p> <p>Students will score on the identified SENSE questions at or above the national average for comparable institutions in our region.</p> |                                       |                         |

## Core Objectives Assessment Chart

| <b>COMMUNICATION SKILLS (CS): Oral</b>         | Aggregated Course-Level Assessment Data               | 75% of students will score 70% or higher on coursework assignments related to the Core Objective, Oral Communication.                         |  |  |
|--|---|---|--|--|
|  | QEP Oral Communication Rubric Data                    | 75% of students in QEP-enhanced courses will score 3 or higher on all QEP Rubric elements, a measure of Core Objective, Oral Communication.   |  |  |
|  | CCSSE questions 4a-b, 12d                             | Students will score on the identified CCSSE questions at or above the national average for comparable institutions in our region.             |  |  |
|  | SENSE question 19a                                    | Students will score on the identified SENSE questions at or above the national average for comparable institutions in our region.             |  |  |
| <b>COMMUNICATION SKILLS (CS): Visual</b>       | Aggregated Course-Level Assessment Data               | 75% of students will score 70% or higher on coursework assignments related to the Core Objective, Visual Communication.                       |  |  |
|  | QEP Oral Communication Rubric Data (visual component) | 75% of students in QEP-enhanced courses will score 3 or higher on all QEP Rubric elements, a measure of Core Objective, Visual Communication. |  |  |
| <b>EMPIRICAL AND QUANTITATIVE SKILLS (EQS)</b> | Aggregated Course-Level Assessment Data               | 75% of students will score 70% or higher on coursework assignments related to the Core Objective, Empirical and Quantitative Skills.          |  |  |
|  | CAAP Test (Scheduled for Spring 2014)                 | 60% of students taking the CAAP test for math will score at or above the national mean for community college students.                        |  |  |
|  | CCSSE question 12f                                    | Students will score on the identified CCSSE questions at or above the national average for comparable institutions in our region.             |  |  |

## Core Objectives Assessment Chart

| <b>TEAMWORK (TW)</b>                | <p>Aggregated Course-Level Assessment Data</p> <p>CCSSE questions 4f-g, 11a, 12h</p> <p>SENSE questions 19g-h</p>                | <p>75% of students will score 70% or higher on coursework assignments related to the Core Objective, Teamwork.</p> <p>Students will score on the identified CCSSE questions at or above the national average for comparable institutions in our region.</p> <p>Students will score on the identified SENSE questions at or above the national average for comparable institutions in our region.</p>                |  |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|--|--|
| <b>SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (SR)</b>   | <p>Aggregated Course-Level Assessment Data</p> <p>Global Perspective Inventory</p> <p>CCSSE questions 4i, 4s-t, 9c, 12k, 12m</p> | <p>75% of students will score 70% or higher on coursework assignments related to the Core Objective, Social Responsibility.</p> <p>COM will score at or above the national mean for 2-Year Colleges on the Interpersonal Social Responsibility subscale of the GPI.</p> <p>Students will score on the identified CCSSE questions at or above the national average for comparable institutions in our region.</p>    |  |  |
| <b>PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY (PR)</b> | <p>Aggregated Course-Level Assessment Data</p> <p>CCSSE questions 4e, 4u, 10a, 12l</p> <p>SENSE questions 19c-d, 19f</p>         | <p>75% of students will score 70% or higher on coursework assignments related to the Core Objective, Personal Responsibility.</p> <p>Students will score on the identified CCSSE questions at or above the national average for comparable institutions in our region.</p> <p>Students will score on the identified SENSE questions at or above the national average for comparable institutions in our region.</p> |  |  |



# Core Objectives Assessment Plan

## Use of Data

- Instructional Assessment Committee (IAC) regularly reviews results of assessments.
- Regular feedback to faculty and discussed at annual summits focused on Core Objectives.





# 2015-2016 Changes

- Elimination of assessment of the SCANS in workforce programs.
- Replaced with the Core Objectives.
- Core Objectives were similar to the SCANS, so transition wasn't difficult for workforce faculty.
- Academic Faculty met with Workforce Faculty in January 2015 workshops and discussed what worked and what didn't in regard to assignments related to the Core Objectives.
- This process greatly increased the amount of assessment data collected related to the Core Objectives.

# Initial Findings (2014-2016)

- Aggregated course-level data indicated that the criteria for success were met on each of the six Core Objectives.
- CAAP Exams – Mixed results. Criterion for success met on EQS core objective, not met on others.
- Indirect measures: CCSSE, SENSE, and GPI – Most targets met, but not all.



# Initial “Use of Results” based on 2014-16 assessment data:

- Preliminary discussions have begun on why different measures yielded different results (sampling procedures, lack of standardized assignments, etc.).
- Considering adoption of common assignments and common rubrics.
- Faculty discussions on how to improve pedagogy and assessment strategies.
- Faculty met to discuss and complete “Column Five” strategies to improve student attainment of the Core Objectives. Faculty were required to incorporate in at least one improvement strategy for each Core Objective their courses addressed.

# Final Thoughts

- Lots of planning on the front end yielded results. Process went fairly smoothly.
- Initial assessment findings are generally positive.
- Positive impact of our QEP has been documented.
- Potential QEP topic for next SACSCOC visit identified.
- There was fairly broad faculty buy-in on the Core Objectives based on the faculty-driven process used to develop the Core Objective assessment plan.



*That's all Folks!*



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# Questions?



# Assessing the Core Objectives: Some Preliminary Findings



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**Contact Information:**  
**Steve Sewell, Ph.D.**  
Dean of Academic Programs  
College of the Mainland  
[ssewell@com.edu](mailto:ssewell@com.edu)