What’s the difference between evaluation and assessment?

The processes of assessment and evaluation in institutional research began at the end of World War II and are now staples in strategic planning for higher education. At GVSU, we measure performance using both evaluation and assessment. These two methods may seem similar but are very different methods, both of which aid in deliverance of public accountability.

**Evaluation**

Evaluation occurs at one moment in time and involves both quantitative and qualitative analysis of information. At GVSU we use this to determine whether or not established goals have successfully been achieved. Measurement of strengths and weaknesses of given programs, teaching methods, worth, effectiveness and value are all analyzed in this process.

If evaluation is successful it will determine the match between intended outcomes and actual outcomes. Evaluation of a program considers not only student learning but also research activities, community service and cost-effectiveness.

**Assessment**

Assessment is the systematic collection, analysis and interpretation of information related to a particular outcome and is a long-term process. Assessment is used to evaluate the educational progression and guide us in the decision-making routine. There is a great amount of quantitative and qualitative complexity with assessment and the results guide us. Assessment does not dictate decisions to us but aids our professional judgment to make appropriate decisions.

Assessment is an important part of the process of regional accreditation and is done at multiple levels including the classroom, program and institution.

**In Sum**

The scientific developments of measurement for effective decision making have ultimately changed the process in which plans are made in higher education. Since politics and economics can influence the selection of evidence and questions used, it is critical that both evaluation and assessment are performed broadly in the university.

In order for the university to adapt to a changing external environment, it is critical that we implement short-term and long-term planning strategies. Since assessment focuses on goals for student learning, and evaluation addresses all the major goals of a program, in combination they result in the ongoing development of building a strong, resilient and successful institution.

**Sources**


Educational Measurement, by Robert Brennan


http://www.education.uiowa.edu/centers/cea/default.aspx

http://global.cscc.edu/assessment/AssessEval.shtml