Best Practices in Assessment:  
Top 10 Task Force Recommendations  

=> Encourage department ownership to drive the process.

Faculty resistance to assessment activity can defeat the best designed assessment practices. Assessment planning should grow out of the fundamental questions the faculty have about how their contributions shape program success. This emphasis may involve addressing differences between an individual faculty member's personal goals (e.g. income, convenience, lifestyle, security, autonomy) and the collective goals of the department.

=> Define your objectives in the context of your institutional mission.

Create a shared mission and goals statement that reflects an emphasis on student learning. The values of the institution should be reflected in your department's plan. Faculty identification with the institution will reinforce assessment activities, particularly if faculty can envision that their results will have a positive impact on how the institution works.

=> Focus on collaboration and teamwork.

Faculty members must agree on assessment goals for planning to be meaningful. They may have to rise to a higher level of collaboration than may have been traditionally practiced in most departments. Collaboration within the department, across departments, and with higher administration will facilitate the best outcomes from assessment planning. All constituents must recognize that assessment skills must be developed and that colleagues can assist each other by sharing practices and strategies.

=> Clarify the purpose of assessment.

Assessment can serve dual purposes: Assessment can promote student learning or provide evidence for accountability requirements through an evaluation of strengths and weaknesses. Wherever possible, students should experience a direct, positive benefit from their participation in assessment activities.

=> Identify clear, measurable, and developmental student learning

Explicit identification of learning expectations facilitates the department's coherence about their goals. Sharing those expectations explicitly with students can provide an effective learning scaffold on which students can build their experiences and render effective performance. Outcomes can be specified in a developmental hierarchy, where possible.