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## Interpreting Audit Data in Program Assessment

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1. **Presentation Title:** Interpreting Audit Data in Program Assessment

2. **Presenter Information-Primary presenter short biographical sketch:**

Dr. Jackie Kress, Professor of Education at Georgian Court University (NJ), holds a doctorate from Rutgers University (NJ) and teaches in the University's School of Education. She is the author of several teachers' resource books. Dr. Kress provides faculty development on instructional strategies, curriculum development, performance assessment, accreditation, and faculty evaluation in the US and abroad. She also served in deanships in education, professional services, and quality assurance and as a senior state higher education administrator and policymaker.

3. **Disciplines:** Higher education administration; outcomes assessment; program improvement; evidence-based decision-making; student satisfaction

4. **Presentation theme:** This presentation addresses the conference theme: Assessment

5. **Presentation Type:** Best practice presentation.

6. **Abstract:** Academic programs are multidimensional and operate in a distributed decision-making environment. Assessment that focuses solely on student learning outcomes may overlook context factors contributing to or detracting from program success. This session introduces program audits and guides participants' practice interpreting sample audit data and relating them to program outcomes.

7. **Keywords:** Assessment, program improvement, data-based decisions, evaluation, program audits

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9. **Presentation Documents:** Description of the Session (300-500 words)

Academic assessment is generally focused on gauging the extent to which students meet expectations for developing specific knowledge and/or skills (Miller & Miller 2015). A variety of quantitative and qualitative indicators are used to describe these accomplishments including, but not limited to, rubrics, course grades, test scores, student satisfaction surveys, and completion rates. While this approach is understandable given the purposes of education and the requirements of some accreditors, it is limited because it does not provide insight about other factors that contribute to or detract from program outcomes and effectiveness. In a way, it assumes that all other elements in the learning context are operating effectively and efficiently. But this may not be the case.

Colleges and universities are on a quest for continuous quality improvement. Consequently, academic programs are often the object of a series of data-based interventions or changes. At the same time, non-academic functions (e.g., admissions, registrar, student affairs, and information technology services) are also moving forward with changes spurred by their metrics of interest. For all of these changes to meld into highly effective programs requires a well-articulated shared central design.

Excellent academic programs are more than collections of excellent courses taught by notable faculty. Early in the education reform movement, Fullan and Park called attention to the fact that program or innovation implementation is a multidimensional process (Gundy & Berger 2016). Over the last three decades researchers have studied and isolated key ideas about what makes programs and innovations work. The shared understanding of these ideas, referred to as *implementation science*, recognizes that in a distributed decision-making environment, such as an educational institution, many players and functions affect outcomes (Ford 2014; Nordstrum, LeMahiew &

Berrena 2017. It is time to augment student learning outcomes data with process review and to consider how levels of fidelity to design affect learner achievement and program success (Foster 2011; Oliver 2011; Harn, Parisi, & Stoolmiller 2013).

This session will introduce participants to the valuable mechanism of program auditing. After a brief overview of program auditing procedures, participants will work in small groups with sample audit data and with guidance develop their skills interpreting the data and linking the data to program outcomes. They will also identify elements in their own program context to use in their exploratory efforts using audit techniques at their home campus.

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