

## CHAPTER 11: DECIDING ON REASONABLE EXPECTATIONS

*Imagine that Michael, one of your students, scored a 55 on a particular test.  
Did he do well or not?  
Or imagine that all students in your college averaged 55 on a published test.  
Did they do well or not in terms of this performance standard?  
Answering these questions is crucial to figuring out how to use the results.  
If we decide our students did well, we can celebrate;  
but if we decide they didn't do well, we have some work to do.*

(Suskie, 2009, p. 233)

### **Topics Presented in Chapter 11**

- ◇ Deciding on benchmarks or standards for interpreting assessment results

### **Deciding on Benchmarks or Standards for Interpreting Assessment Results**

Suskie (2009) identifies the following types of benchmarks or standards for framing expectations:

<b>Types of Benchmarks or Standards</b>	
Local Standards	Are students meeting our own standards?
External Standards	Are students meeting standards set by someone else?
Internal Peer Benchmark	How do our students compare to others within Ball State?
External Peer Benchmark	How do our students compare with those of other universities that are similar to Ball State?
Best Practices Benchmark	How do our students compare to the best of their peers?
Value-Added Benchmark	Are our students improving?
Historical Trends Benchmark	Is our program improving?
Strengths and Weaknesses Perspective	What are our students' areas of strengths and weaknesses?
Capability Benchmark	Are our students doing as well as they can?
Productivity Benchmark	Are we getting the most for our investment?

Which standard or benchmark we should use depends on the purpose of the assessment. For example, in examining the performance of a group of students on a certification exam, you might compare against national norms, against the performance of students in the best programs in the country, or against students at peer institutions if the assessment is being conducted for purposes of accountability or accreditation; but you might compare against your own students at another point in time or within groups of students if your purpose is self-analysis and improvement.

Suskie offers the following suggestions for setting specific, appropriate standards:

- Do some research, perhaps with peer institutions or professional associations.
- Involve others in the discussion such as students, employers, and faculty members teaching in other programs.
- Use samples of student work to inform the discussion of setting expectations.

Suskie also offers the following tips for setting targets for collective performance:

- Express targets as percentages rather than means to improve understanding.
- Vary targets depending on the circumstances.
- Consider multiple targets (e.g., at least 90% of students score above the adequate level, and at least 30% score above the exemplary level).