



The American  
University in Cairo



# The Hows, Whys and Whats of Conducting Comprehensive Program Reviews

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# Who is Our Presenter?

**Zeinab Amin** is a Professor of Statistics and Actuarial Science and Associate Provost for Assessment and Accreditation at the American University in Cairo (AUC). Amin holds a PhD in Statistics and is an Associate of the Society of Actuaries (SOA). Amin is the recipient of the 2016 Excellence in Academic Service Award and the 2009 Excellence in Teaching Award from AUC. Amin has designed and led the academic program review process at AUC among other initiatives like developing a process for comprehensive reappointment reviews for school deans and department chairs.



# Learning Outcomes

## After Participating ...

- You will be able to communicate the review process effectively and get the buy-in from all stakeholders
- You will be able to provide useful, accurate, reliable and timely information to empower data-driven decisions
- You will be able to design a process to evaluate the effectiveness of academic programs through a systematic review
- You will become familiar with what to expect during the program review process



# Why Are We Conducting Program Reviews?

- Offerings are expanding in academic institutions over time, but in many instances without thorough examination.
- The competition is fierce, students are looking for value and relevance, the financial pressures are severe, and few institutions have sufficient resources to do everything to the level of quality its stakeholders aspire.
- The information resulting from the review will guide campus leaders in making informed decisions and setting priorities. Without that, the University will be relying on guesswork.
- The review might revitalize or transform a struggling program, it might help make a new program a success, and it might identify strategic areas for growth.
- The review generates in-depth communication between the academic departments and the university administration.



# A Quote To Remember

**Daniel Stufflebeam (1936-2017)**

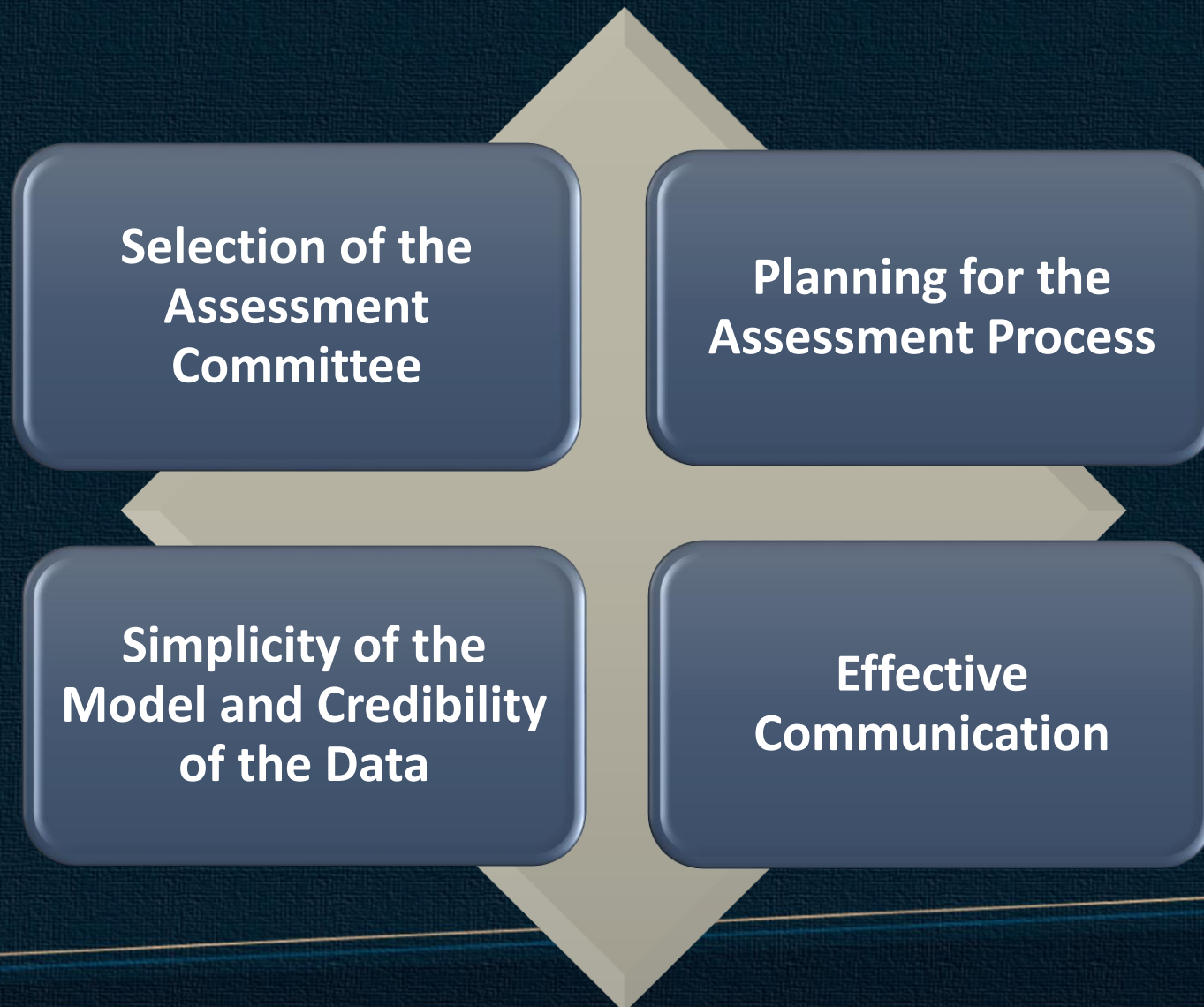
One of the founding fathers of the field of evaluation

“The purpose of evaluation is to **improve**, not **prove**”





# Important Considerations for the Success of the Review



# Planning for The Assessment Process

- Institutionalizing the assessment process
  - Having committed university leadership that embraces the assessment process
  - The assessment process is taken seriously
  - All those involved give their best effort
  - Get adequate support from all University offices
- Selecting respected leaders to champion the assessment process
- Selecting credible participants to conduct the assessment
- Ensuring fairness in identifying the assessment criteria
- Setting a realistic time frame



*Effective communication is the building block for creating the right organizational climate that promotes successful program assessments*

*The more open the process is the more likely it will get good buy in. Communicate throughout the process especially at the beginning*

## THE RIGHT CLIMATE

## TRANSPARENCY

## A CULTURE OF TRUST

# Effective Communication

## MINIMIZING RESISTANCE

*Fostering a culture of trust and collaboration is the key to the success of this assessment. Explain why assessment is conducted, how is it going to be conducted, and what are the expected outcomes*

*Resistance is often brought on by fear and faculty are worried the administration is coming after their programs and their jobs. Solicit input from all stakeholders*





## Simplicity of the Model

## Credibility of the Data


*"Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication" Leonardo da Vinci*

- The more complicated the framework gets the more difficult it is implemented and the more difficult it is accepted by the community
- Make sure to use metrics that are easy to understand and easy to apply
- The results of any model are as credible as the data used in the analysis. A significant amount of time should be spent on collecting and validating the data.
- To ensure high-quality data is collected it is important to clearly define the aim of the assessment and the data needed throughout the process



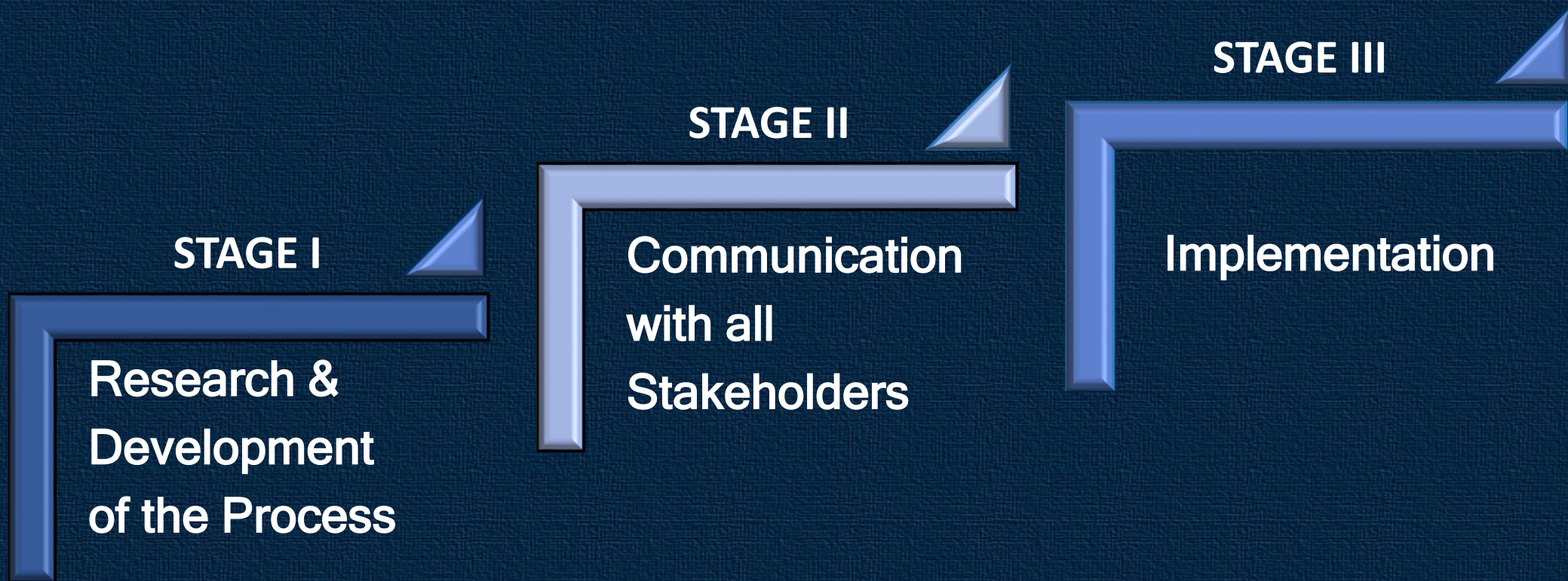
# Who Should be on the Assessment Committee?

- The review process should leverage the advantages of both the top down and bottom up approaches.

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- A close-up photograph of two hands, one on the left and one on the right, holding two white puzzle pieces. The puzzle pieces are interlocking, with the left piece having a tab that fits into the blank of the right piece. The hands are positioned as if about to snap the pieces together. The background is a dark, solid color.
- The leadership team and those administering the program should work together as one team to ensure both control and collaboration.



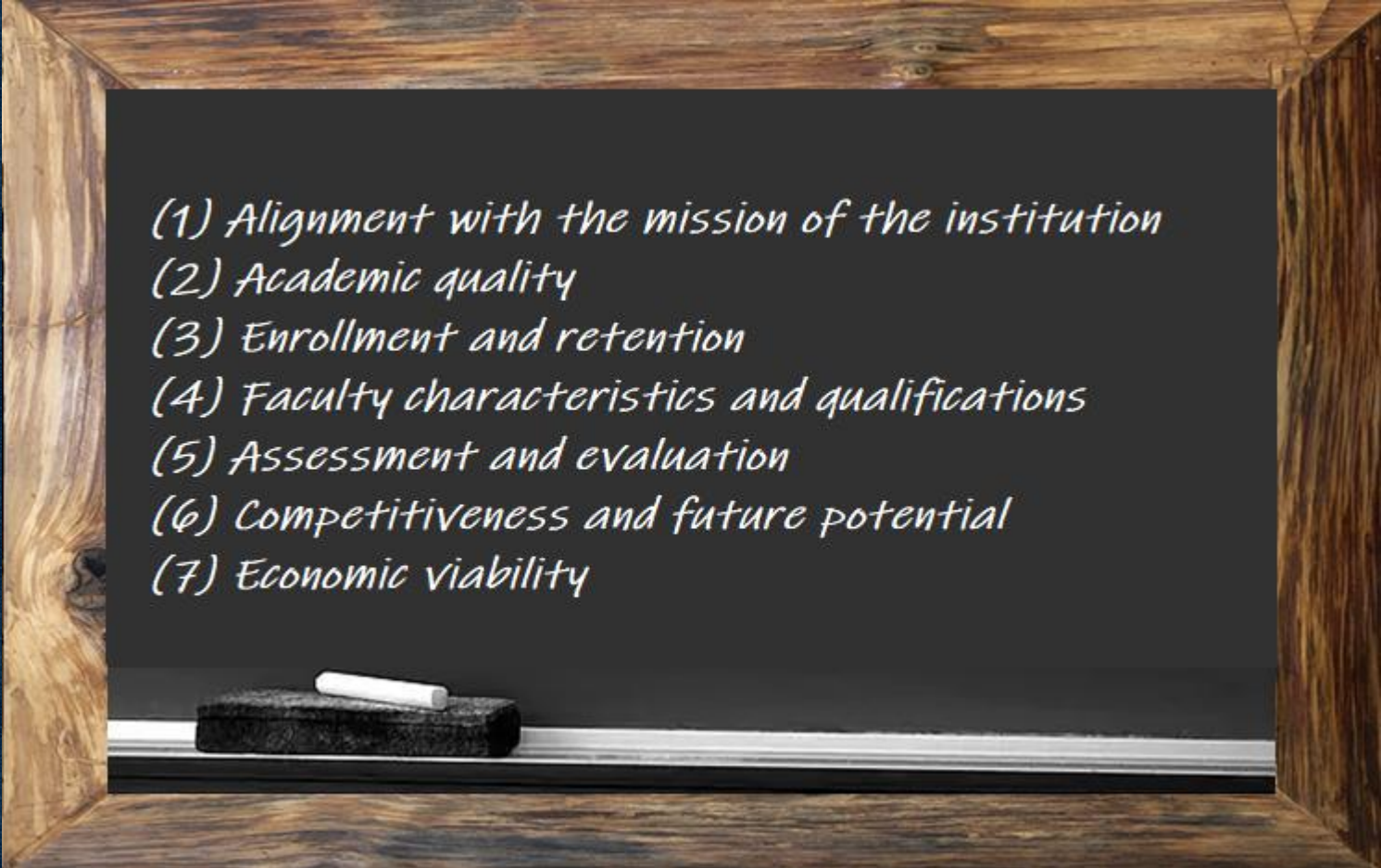
# Developments of the Program Review Process





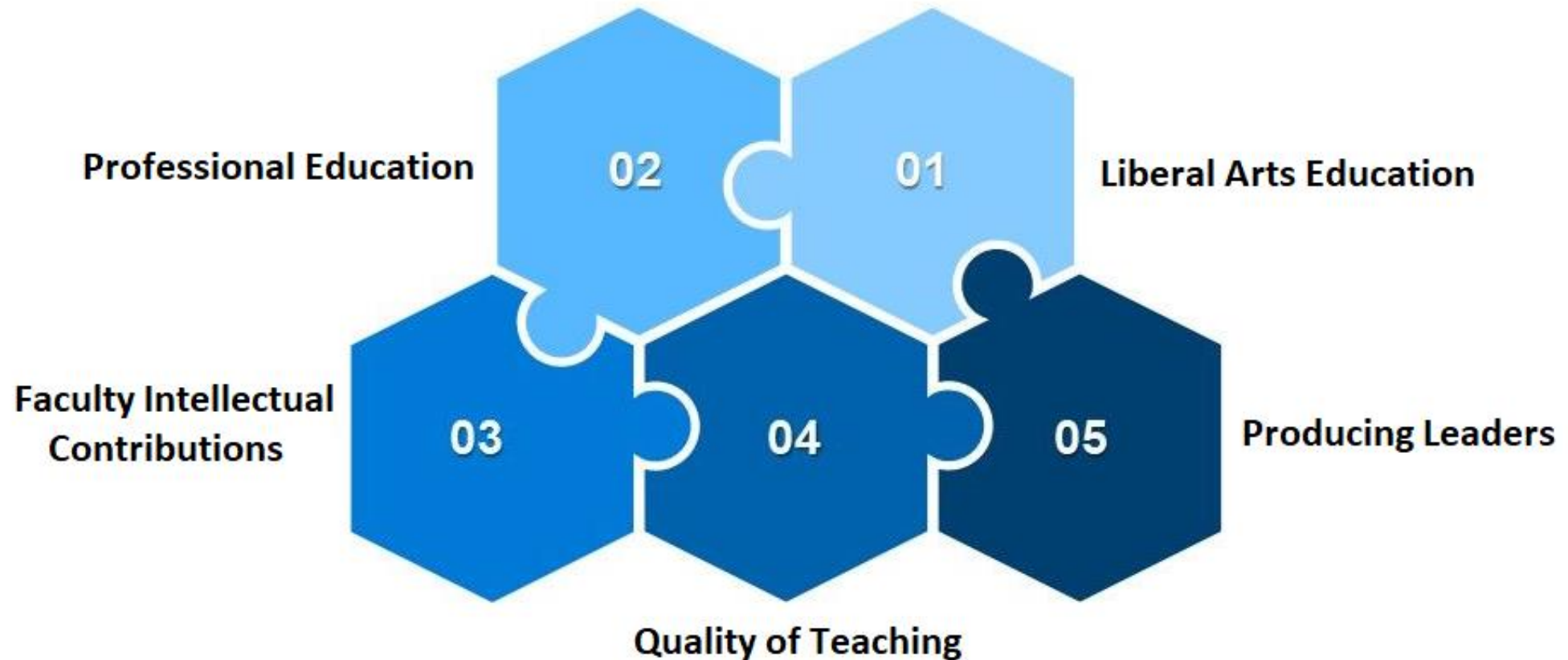
# What Should We Assess in the Review?

Measure what **matters**  
**NOT**  
what is **measurable!**

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- (1) Alignment with the mission of the institution*
  - (2) Academic quality*
  - (3) Enrollment and retention*
  - (4) Faculty characteristics and qualifications*
  - (5) Assessment and evaluation*
  - (6) Competitiveness and future potential*
  - (7) Economic viability*



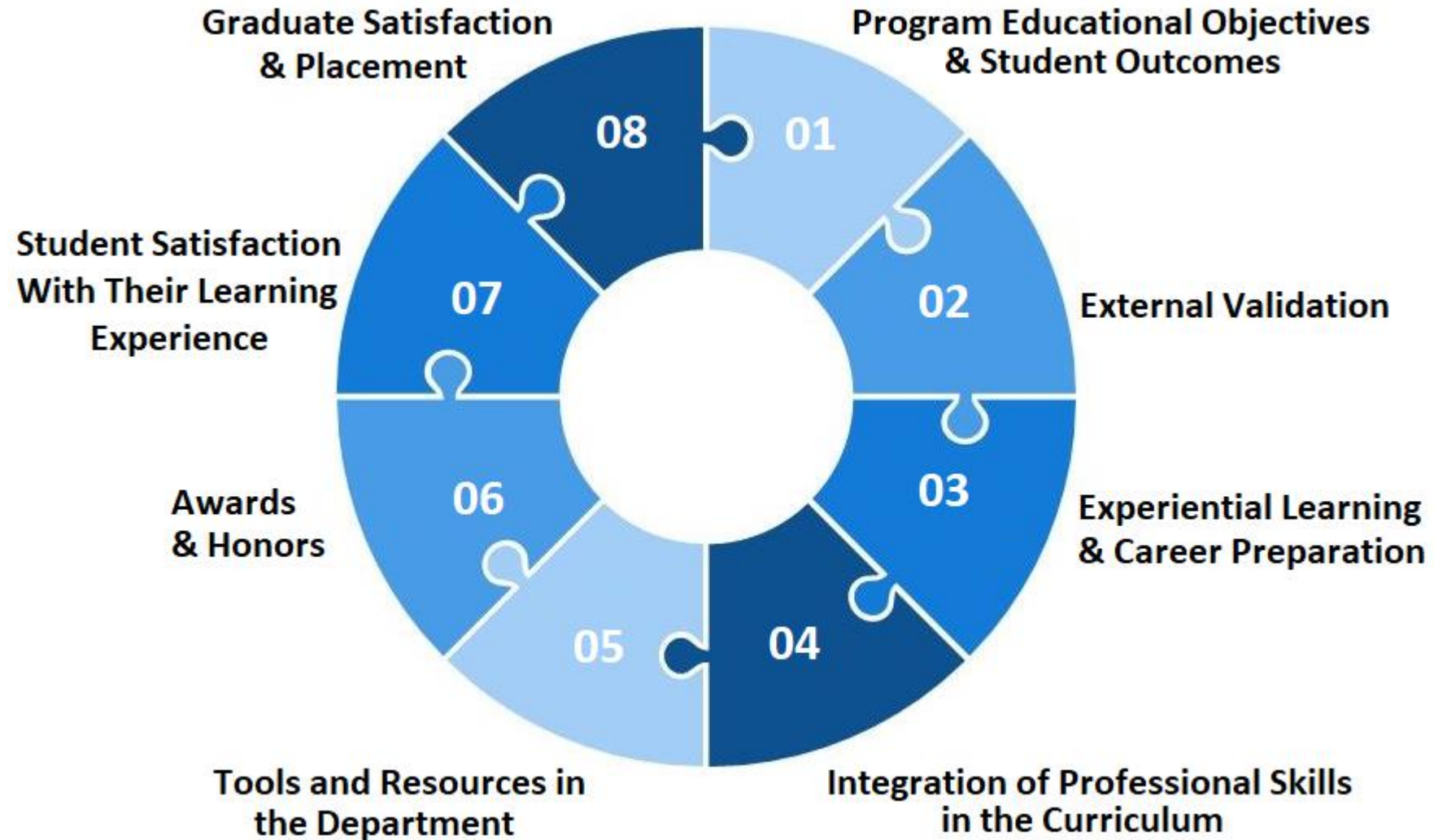
## (1) Alignment With The Mission of The Institution



❖ The mission statement differs from one institution to the other!

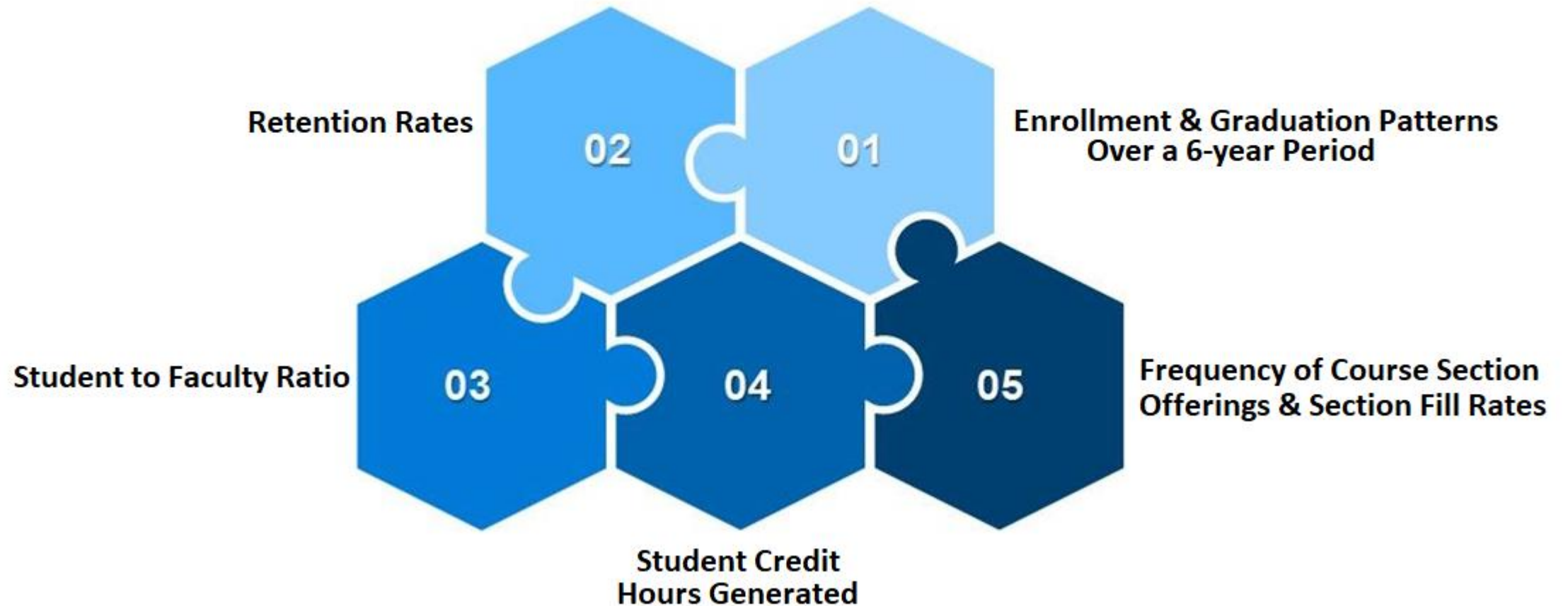


## (2) Academic Quality



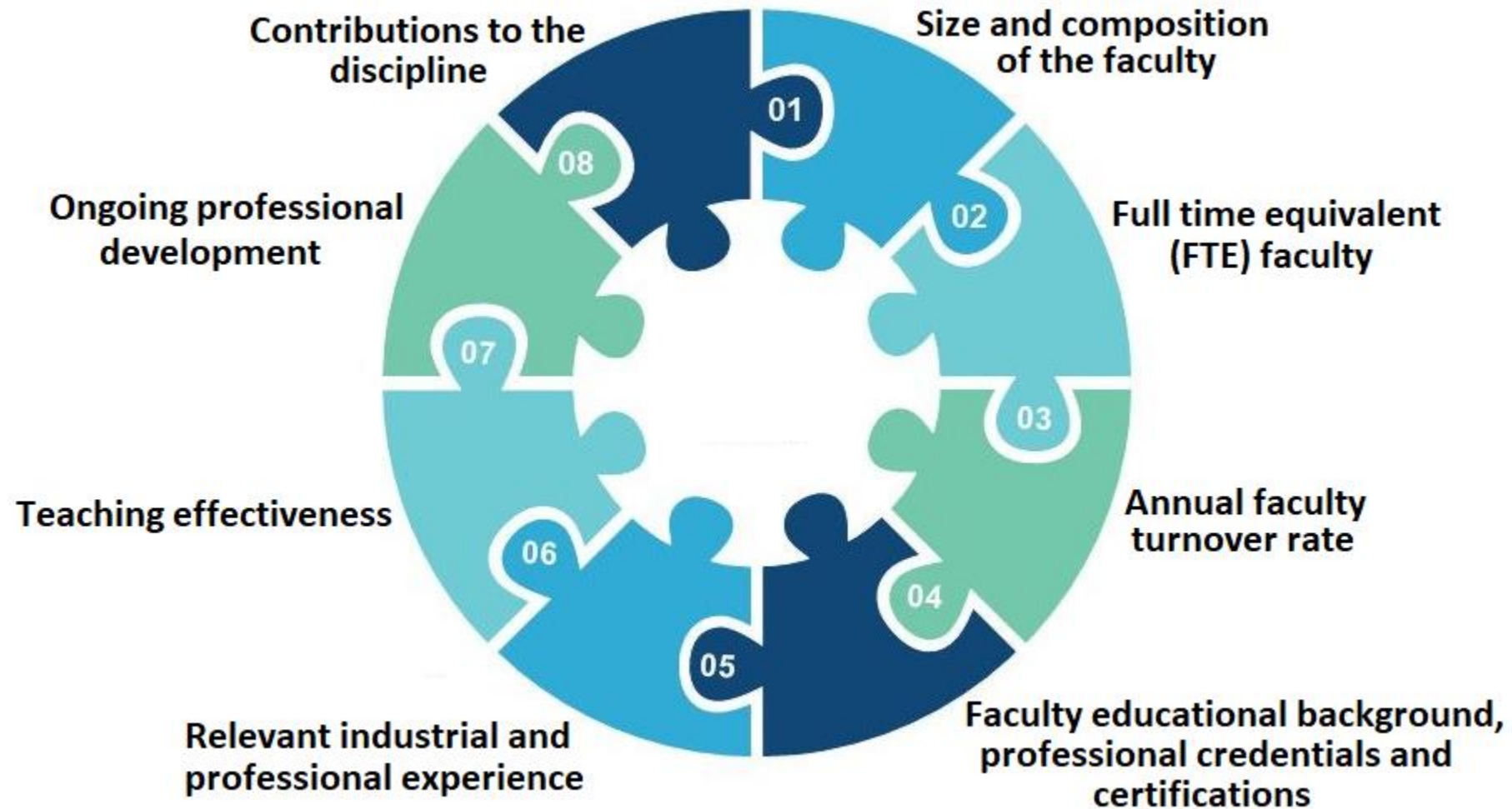


### (3) Enrollment and Retention



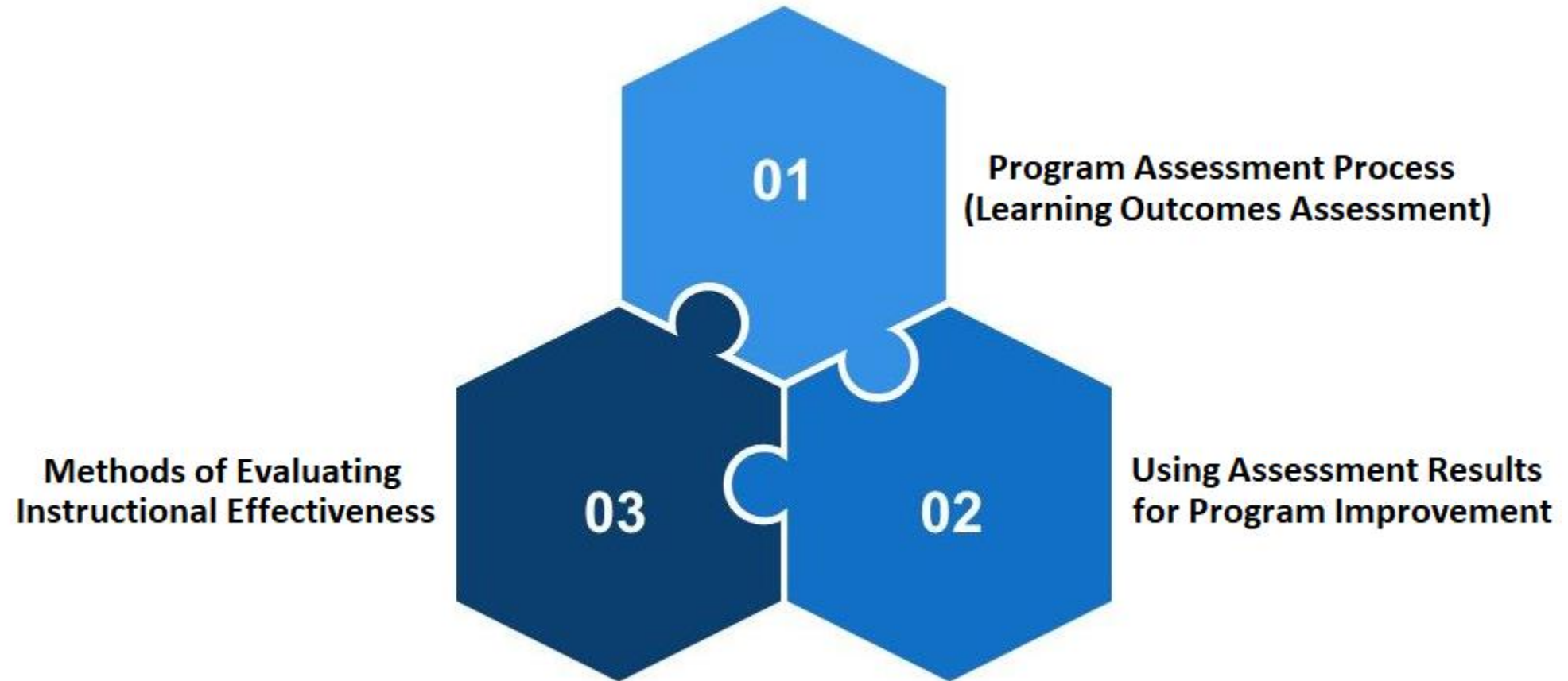


## (4) Faculty Characteristics and Qualifications



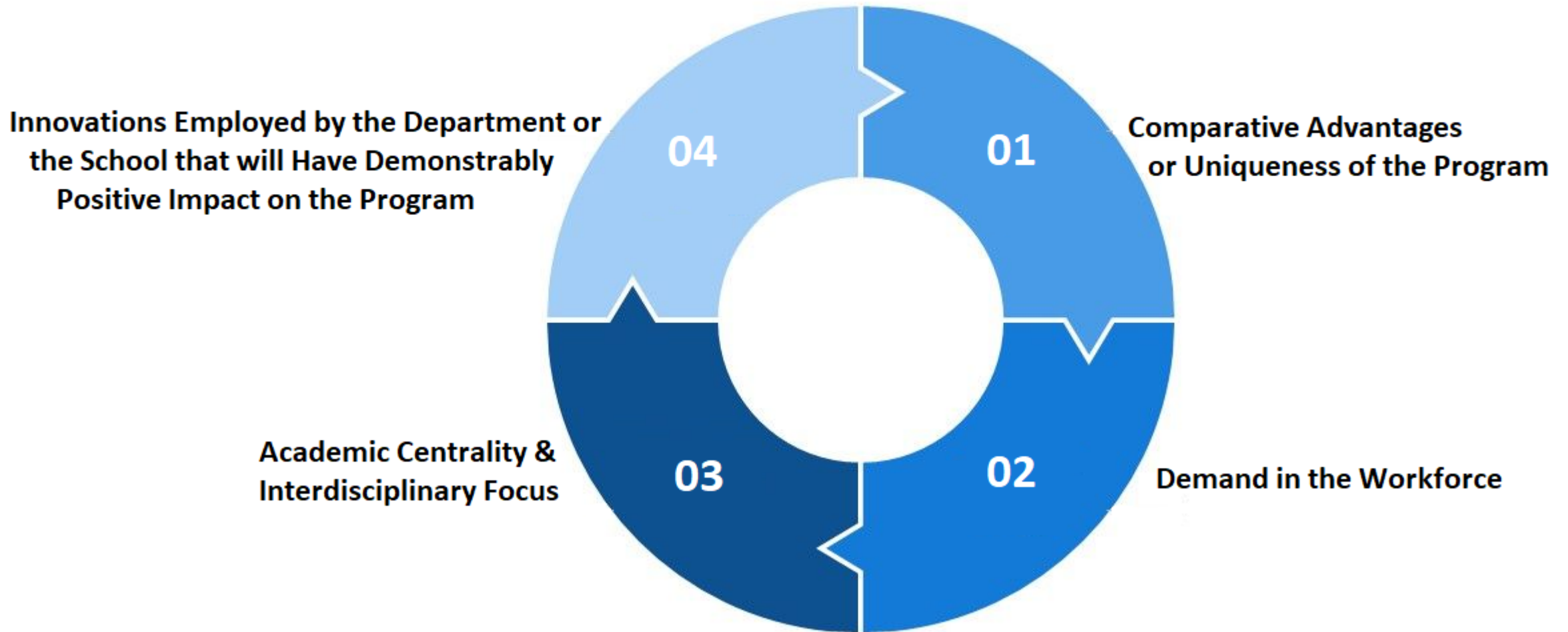


## (5) Assessment and Evaluation



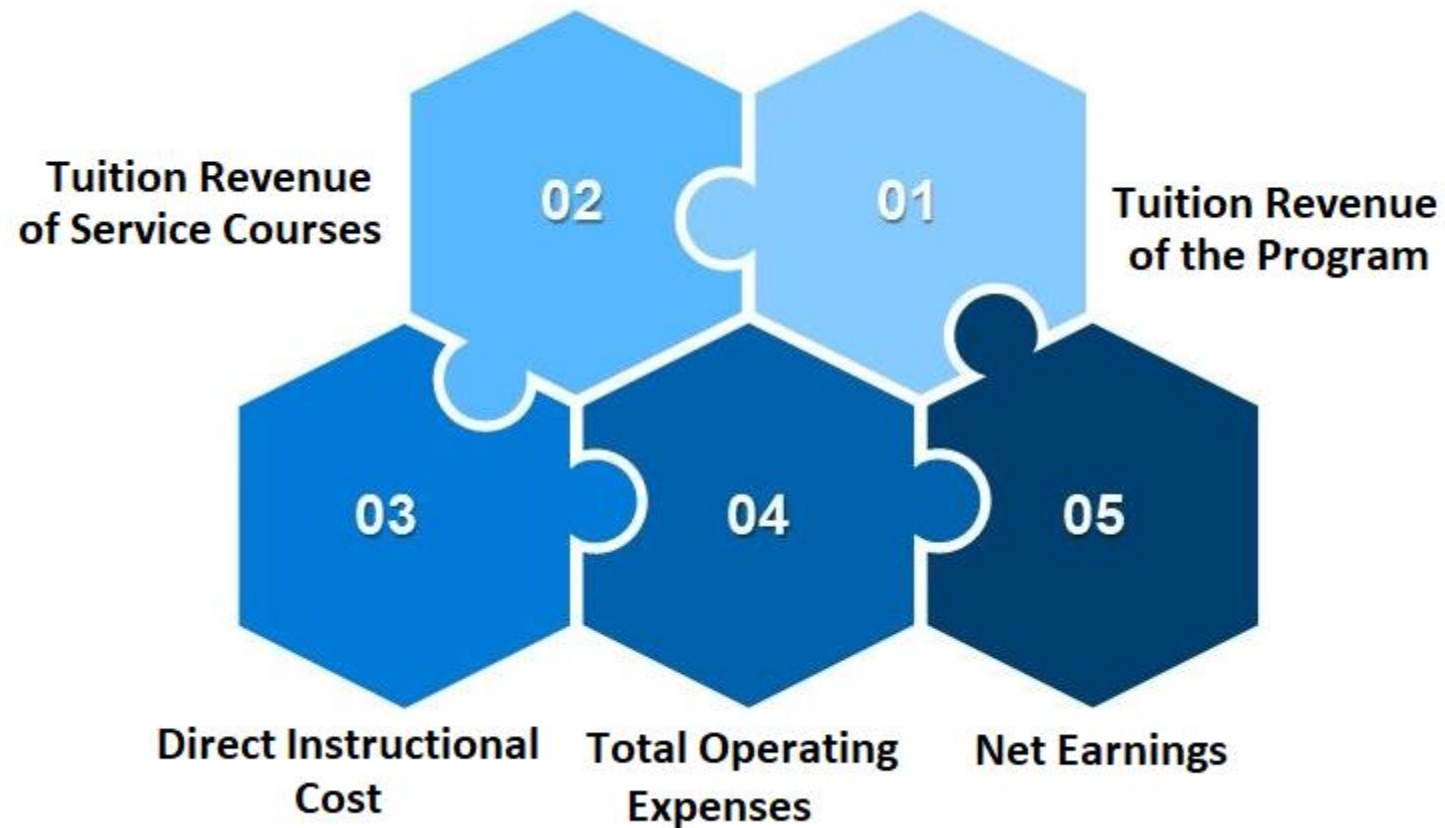


## (6) Competitiveness and Future Potential





## (7) Economic Viability





# Some Recommendations that Arose from Our Reviews (1/3)

- Some programs need better marketing and recruitment
- Some programs need to create partnerships with employers to help integrate career development into the curriculum
- Some programs need to redesign courses to better capitalize on interest and to distinguish itself from similar offerings elsewhere
- Some graduate programs need to explore more funding opportunities for its students and share with potential donors the importance of the programs, the career opportunities and success stories of its alumni
- Some undergraduate programs need to enhance its contribution to the liberal studies core curriculum



# Some Recommendations that Arose from Our Reviews (2/3)

- Some programs need to create and maintain successful alumni relations and engagement
- Some programs need to develop more effective tools for assessing teaching effectiveness and use additional sources of data, specifically peer assessment and reflective self-assessment rather than solely rely on numerical rankings from student evaluations
- Some programs need to follow up more closely with inactive students to understand the reasons behind the relatively high inactivity/dropout rates
- Some programs need to revise its assessment plans, provide complete assessment reports that show analysis of assessment results and how these results are used as input for continuous improvement of the programs



# Some Recommendations that Arose from Our Reviews (3/3)

- Some programs need to collaborate more closely with the University's Career Center to communicate the needs of its students and help them get good career-service experiences
- Some programs need to encourage faculty participation in professional development programs on issues related to curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment, innovations in teaching practice, etc.
- Some programs need to encourage faculty to enhance their research productivity and creative endeavors



# Concluding Remarks

The structure of the framework we developed aims at building a culture where **assessment is the norm** and ensuring **planning is data-driven** and **decision making is evidence-based**. The process **involves all stakeholders** and requires departments to go through a rigorous self-assessment and peer evaluation process to ensure the **change happens from within** the department and people feel more **responsible, accountable and informed** about the decisions they are making.



**Thank you for your attention!**

**Happy to take questions**

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