

## Bloom's Taxonomy Background

Dr. Bloom and his colleagues developed the taxonomy of educational objectives in 1956. When it was developed, they theorized that the taxonomy could be used with any learner and in any content area. Because of its broad applicability, this taxonomy has been frequently used as a guide for designing instruction and aligning curriculum.

Ultimately, three domains of taxonomies were developed: a cognitive taxonomy describing intellectual abilities, an affective taxonomy describing values and attitudes (Krathwohl, Bloom and Masia, 1964), and a psychomotor taxonomy describing muscular movements and the manipulation of objects (Simpson, 1972; Harrow, 1972). Each of the three domains requires different instructional and assessment strategies.

While the taxonomies have been widely used in public education, they have also been criticized for use in post-secondary settings. The main criticism is the idea that the taxonomy is too analytic: that it attempts to break down the complexity of collegiate learning that is dynamically interdependent rather than sequential. (See Huba and Freed in Learning Centered Assessment on College Campuses, chapter 4, p. 112). However it still remains an effective way to organize learning outcomes for post-secondary institutions because of the required curricular alignment of outcomes with instruction and assessment.

When the curriculum is aligned as such, two important learning enhancing strategies will emerge: (1) the learning activities will support the intended course level outcomes and (2) the methods used to assess students' performance in a course will be based on expectations stated as clear outcomes at the beginning of the course.