New needs assessment unit goal and learning outcomes: Students plan a needs assessment to understand a social problem in a manner that will provide the basis for developing effective interventions.

In order to demonstrate attainment of this goal, students will be expected to:
1. Define the essential purpose of needs assessment, and identify the place of needs assessment in program development and in the evaluation cycle. That is, students will be able to explain the purpose of doing a needs assessment.
2. Define a social problem.
3. Identify ways of understanding the size and scope of the problem (where it occurs, who is affected, when, and how big of a problem it is).
4. Identify ways of describing potential target populations (who the intervention serves).
5. Identify information needed to understand how the target population experiences the problem in question: From whom would you collect such information, and how would you propose to collect it?

Assignment: Students will demonstrate attainment of this goal (that they can plan a needs assessment to understand a social problem in a manner that will provide the basis for developing effective interventions) and specific learning outcomes through a written assignment that will become part of the course.

Prompt: The University of Kansas has determined that its retention and graduation rates are too low compared to its peer institutions. You have been assigned to serve on a task force to plan interventions to improve either retention or graduation rates. Having taken a course on program evaluation and assessment, you understand that if any intervention is to be successful it must respond to the problem. This means that you have to fully understand the nature of the problem and the needs of individuals at-risk for experiencing the problem (leaving or taking a long time to graduate) before you plan effective interventions.

Description: Write a 3-5 page needs assessment report about either retention or graduation that includes the answers to the following questions:
1. Given the data provided, describe the nature and scope of the problem (how big is it, where does it occur, who has it?).
2. Given what you've learned, how will you define what the problem is?
3. Using the data provided, describe the population to which you would target interventions. What else might you want to know about the target population that you don't know from the data provided? Where would you get that information?
4. How would you go about determining how the problem is experienced in the population in question? Your plans should include not only what kinds of data or information you would collect, but also from whom, where, and how you might collect it.

To help you in this task, use the data found at this website:
www2.ku.edu/~oirp/attendance/index.shtml

You may work in groups to understand and interpret the data, but the individual written product that you turn in is to be your own.