The Changing Nature of our Work: Viewing Higher Education as a Learning System

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NILOA
NILOA's mission is to discover and disseminate effective use of assessment data to strengthen undergraduate education and support institutions in their assessment efforts.

- Surveys
- Web Scans
- Case Studies
- Focus Groups
- Occasional Papers
- Website
- Resources
- Newsletter
- Presentations
- Transparency Framework
- Featured Websites
- Accreditation Resources
- Assessment Event Calendar
- Assessment News
- Measuring Quality Inventory
- Policy Analysis
- Environmental Scan
- Degree Qualifications Profile
- Tuning

www.learningoutcomesassessment.org
Purpose

Why do we do assessment? What is the value and purpose of engaging in assessing student learning?
Value

Institutions of higher education are increasingly asked to show the value of attending, i.e. impact in relation to cost; employment – what is the value of a degree and what does it represent in terms of learning?

Public and policy makers want assurance of the quality of higher education

Regional and specialized accreditors are asking institutions to show evidence of student learning and instances of use
Principles of Local Practice

Develop specific, actionable learning outcomes statements.

Connect learning outcomes with actual student demonstrations of their learning.

Collaborate with relevant stakeholders, beginning with the faculty.

Design assessment approaches that generate actionable evidence about student learning that key stakeholders can understand and use to improve student and institutional performance.

Focus on improvement and compliance will take care of itself.
Assessment for Student Success

Relevant Findings from NILOA’s Survey of Provosts 2017

2017 NILOA Provost Survey

• Sample: All regionally accredited, undergraduate degree-granting institutions (n=2,781)
• Announced via institutional membership organizations, website, newsletter, mailing
• Online and paper
• 29% response rate (n=811)
Assessment for student success begins with specific, actionable learning outcomes statements

82% of campuses have SLO statements

Concrete, clear proficiencies students are to achieve -- reference points for student performance common to all undergraduates across all majors.

Learning Outcomes are Increasingly Aligned

At 50% of campuses: all programs have PLOs and align those PLOs with ILOs
Findings

1. Assessment is driven by both compliance and improvement, with an emphasis on equity.

2. Institutions are trending towards greater use of authentic measures of student learning, which is consistent with what provosts indicate are most valuable for improving student outcomes.

3. Majority of changes made and uses of evidence of student learning occur at the program- and course-level.

4. While assessment-related technologies hold promise of assisting with alignment and integration of learning across the institution, meaningful implementation remains elusive.

Figure 5. Comparison of use of selected assessment approaches, 2017, 2013, and 2009.
Trends

77% of institutions are currently involved in mapping curriculum
62% facilitating faculty work on the design of assignments
50% are increasing quality of scaling-up HIPs
44% are using VALUE rubrics

Institutional or Program Improvement
Learning Improvement

Assessment as a Process...
Is trying to get us to think intentionally about our learning design
INITIATIVES IN HIGHER EDUCATION
The Learning Systems Paradigm

DEGREES THAT MATTER
Moving Higher Education to a Learning Systems Paradigm

Natasha A. Jankowski and David W. Marshall
Consensus-based

Through faculty-led conversations, reflections, and explorations with employers, alumni, students, and others, a shared understanding and consensus is reached on learning outcomes. This shared understanding serves as the foundation for revising outcomes for enhanced clarity and designing educational experiences.

Alignment

Using the agreed upon learning outcomes, faculty and staff align educational experiences throughout the institution for intentional integration, coherence, and fostering of multiple pathways. Alignment involves curriculum mapping, scaffolding, assignment design, mapping of career pathways, and co-curricular engagement.
Alignment

How do you ensure alignment between our assignments and a given learning outcome for a learning experience?

How do we create assignments and activities that will elicit student demonstration of a specific learning outcome?

How do we know that we have mapped our assignment to rubric criteria?

Learner-Centered

The educational system reorganizes educational experiences around all students and their learning. Taking a student view includes consideration of issues of equity, learning-focused transfer, alternative delivery models, flexibility in offerings, integration of prior-learning assessment, ensuring stackable credentials, and building multiple pathways.
Communication

Communication and collaboration with students and other audiences through transparent discussions around the outcomes and educational system works to make the implicit explicit. Communication involves exploration and integration with advising, alternative transcripts, admissions, and employers.

Communication Finding

Effectively communicating information about student learning remains a target of opportunity for assessment work. Institutions provide limited publicly available information on assessment activities on their websites. Yet, what was more important to provosts was not what to share, but how to share information.
What want to know about students?

What argument do you want to make about your students’ learning?

What type of evidence would be necessary to make the argument?

What questions do you have about student learning?

What questions do you have about programs?

Why do we think that what we are doing, at this institution, for these students, will get us the desired results? How do we know?
Involving students

Assessment is not something we do to students it is something we do with students.

Our approach has been...

Presenting comprehensive findings by item/instrument/measure

Making all information available in the name of “transparency”
NILOA Transparency Framework

Excellence in Assessment Designations

National recognition program for campus assessment leaders at two levels

Evaluation based on the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA) Transparency Framework

Focus on campus-wide assessment – including student affairs & external stakeholders

Joint project of the VSA, NILOA, and the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U)
Vertical and Horizontal Integration

[Diagram showing the integration of various stakeholders in educational settings]

- Faculty & Instructional staff
- Student Affairs staff
- Students & Alumni
- Employers, subsequent institutions
- Accreditors, governing boards
- College-level Assessments
  - Program-level Assessments
    - Degree-level learning outcomes, competencies, etc.
  - College-level Assessment
    - Assessment of college-level learning outcomes, competencies, etc.

[Image of Excellence in Assessment 2017 Designees]

- Southern Connecticut State University
- Rio Salado College
- James Madison University
- Middlesex Community College
- BGSU (Bowling Green State University)
Lessons from EIA Campus Applications

Narrative construction – talk about *why* you do what you do

What’s your story?
Evidence-Based Storytelling

Evidence of student learning is used in support of claims or arguments about improvement and accountability told through stories to persuade a specific audience.
The Why: Argumentation

Toulmin (2003)

Evidence \rightarrow Qualifier \rightarrow Claim

Backings

Reasoning

Refutation

More Resources

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Using EVIDENCE of STUDENT LEARNING to Improve HIGHER EDUCATION
Reformed Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment
Questions and discussion

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