Promising Approaches to Assuring Quality in Student Accomplishment

George D. Kuh

Western Academic Leadership Forum

Boise, Idaho
April 23, 2015
Quit school? Quit school? You wanna end up like your father? A career lab rat?
Hard Truths

- Despite decades of assessment work, we have little to show in terms of improved student or institutional performance.
- The potential of outcomes assessment to improve teaching and learning continues to be compromised by a culture of compliance that grips most institutions.
“These new regulations will fundamentally change the way we get around them.”
Making Assessment Matter
What Is Required to Make Evidence Meaningful and Consequential?

1. To be relevant and actionable, evidence of student accomplishment must have a *meaningful anticipated use*. Use of evidence must shape the methodology and set the stage for the eventual consequential impact of results. Anticipated uses of assessment work should be made explicit at the outset of an assessment effort; it may or may not materialize after the fact.
What Is Required to Make Evidence Meaningful and Consequential?

2. Presidents, provosts, and assessment professionals must identify and engage key end users and partners – the consumers of assessment results. For both end users and partners, the animating impulse is whether the results of outcomes assessment are of interest, meaningful, and useful to them.
Overview

- A word about NILOA
- Quality assurance: A national perspective
- The needed sea change in collecting and using student learning outcomes data
- Principles for the consequential use of evidence
Advance Organizers

What kind of information about student learning is compelling and useful for:

(a) guiding improvement efforts?
(b) responding to accountability demands?

What must be done to collect and effectively use evidence of student accomplishment to enhance student and institutional performance?
Spellings Commission

“We are disturbed by evidence that the quality of student learning at U.S. colleges and universities is inadequate and, in some cases, declining... Colleges and universities must become more transparent about cost, price, and student success outcomes, and must willingly share this information with students and families...”

“Postsecondary education institutions should measure and report meaningful student learning outcomes.”

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

SURVEYS ● WEB SCANS ● CASE STUDIES ● FOCUS GROUPS ● OCCASIONAL PAPERS ● WEBSITE ● RESOURCES ● NEWSLETTER ● LISTSERV ● PRESENTATIONS ● TRANSPARENCY FRAMEWORK ● FEATURED WEBSITES ● ACCREDITATION RESOURCES ● ASSESSMENT EVENT CALENDAR ● ASSESSMENT NEWS ● MEASURING QUALITY INVENTORY ● POLICY ANALYSIS ● ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN ● DEGREE QUALIFICATIONS PROFILE/TUNING ● ASSIGNMENT LIBRARY

www.learningoutcomesassessment.org
In the News | Archive

College Attainment Rate Inches Up, but Not Fast Enough for Lumina

Wed, Apr 15, 2015 - 03:00 am
Madeline Will in the Chronicle of Higher Education

Over the past six years, the attainment rate of Americans with a college degree or credential has only increased by 2.1%. This moderate increase poses a challenge for Lumina Foundation and their goal of having at least a 60% college attainment-rate by the year 2025. In order to help reach their goal, Lumina will increase their focus on underrepresented students, on Americans who have attended college but did not attain a degree, and will include nondegree postsecondary certificates and credentials. Another article on this topic can be found here.

Driving Education Accountability: I'm Sorry Officer, the Gas Gauge Shows I wasn't Speeding.

Wed, Apr 15, 2015 - 03:00 am
Brad C. Phillips in the Huffington Post

At Odessa College, accountability is tailored so that faculty are in the driver's seat. A couple of the key takeaways from Odessa College include using metrics that help predict what students need to succeed and creating a sense of urgency within the institution.

AGRL Releases "Not Just Where to Click: Teaching Students How to Think about Information"

Tue, Apr 14, 2015 - 08:00 am
American Library Association

A new report, Not Just Where to Click: Teaching Students How to Think about Information by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), explores various ways to teach students about the nature of expertise, authority, and credibility, and provides practical ways to help students reflect on their beliefs, biases, and interpretations.
Quality Assurance 2015

☑ Greater emphasis on student learning outcomes and evidence that student performance measures up
Public Skepticism

The University Has No Clothes

The notion that a college degree is essentially worthless has become one of the year's most fashionable ideas, with two prominent venture capitalists (Cornell '89 and Stanford '89, by the way) leading the charge.

By Daniel B. Smith    Published May 1, 2011    Share This

THE NEW YORKER

MAY 28, 2012

Price $5.99

NEWSWEEK

Who Needs College?
Quality Assurance 2015

✓ Greater emphasis on student learning outcomes and evidence that student performance measures up

✓ Demands for comparative measures and transparency internally and externally
Which is a better athletic team, the Dodgers, the Patriots, the Redwings, or the Lakers?
(post on Chronicle of Higher Education, September 16, 2010)
Relevant Indicators

✓ learning outcomes
✓ educational attainment (persistence, graduation disaggregated by such groups as transfers, etc.)
✓ course retention
✓ success in subsequent courses
✓ degree/certificate completion
✓ graduate school enrollment
✓ employment/employer evaluations
✓ capacity for continuous learning
Quality Assurance 2015

✓ Greater emphasis on student learning outcomes and evidence that student performance measures up

✓ Demands for comparative measures and transparency

✓ Assessment “technology” has improved markedly, but still is insufficient to document all the learning outcomes most institutions claim
Measuring Quality in Higher Education
(Vic Borden & Brandi Kernel, 2010)

Web-based inventory hosted by AIR of assessment resources. Key words can be used to search the four categories:

- instruments (examinations, surveys, questionnaires, etc.);
- software tools and platforms;
- benchmarking systems and data resources;
- projects, initiatives and services.

http://applications.airweb.org/surveys/Default.aspx
Do we measure what we value?

or

Do we value what we measure?

Wise decisions are needed about what and how to measure the proficiencies demanded by the 21st century.
General Agreement on Desired Outcomes
Liberal Education & America’s Promise

Excellence for Everyone as a Nation Goes to College

“A COLLABORATION AMONG EDUCATORS, STUDENTS, POLICYMAKERS, AND BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS”
Narrow Learning is Not Enough!
The LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes

• **Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World**
  ➔ **Focused** on engagement with big questions, enduring and contemporary

• **Intellectual and Practical Skills**
  ➔ **Practiced** extensively across the curriculum, in the context of progressively more challenging problems, projects, and standards for performance

• **Personal and Social Responsibility**
  ➔ **Anchored** through active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges

• **Integrative Learning**
  ➔ **Demonstrated** through the application of knowledge, skills, and responsibilities to new settings and complex problems
Degree Qualifications Profile

✓ A learning outcomes profile consistent with LEAP outcomes favored by accreditors and employers

✓ Proficiency demonstrated through performance

✓ At 3 degree levels aligned with expectations for the respective degree

✓ For 5 key “consensus” learning areas
Degree Qualifications Profile

• **Knowledge – both integrated and applied**
  → using Broad/Integrative knowledge
  → demonstrating Specialized knowledge

• **Intellectual Skills**
  → honed and integrated across the curriculum, applied to challenging problems

• **Civic Learning**
  → demonstrated ability to integrate the work of responsible citizenship

• **Applied Learning**
  → demonstrated through assignments involving research, projects, creativity
We are on the cusp of a needed “sea change” in what counts as meaningful evidence of student progress and accomplishment.
It’s Time for a Narrative About What Happens in College Based on Authentic Student Learning

We need a campaign led by presidents, provosts, senior faculty, accreditors, and policy makers calling for evidence that all students meet established proficiencies in response to faculty-designed assignments that require students to show they can use and apply what they are learning to concrete situations on and off the campus.
To Get the Right Kind of Evidence...

- We need assessment approaches sensitive to a wide variety of knowledge, abilities, proficiencies, and dispositions
Most Valuable Tools (according to provosts)

The top three…

- Classroom-based assessment
- National student surveys
- Rubrics
Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE) Rubrics

- Inquiry and analysis
- Critical thinking
- Creative thinking
- Written communication
- Oral communication
- Reading
- Quantitative literacy
- Information literacy
- Teamwork
- Problem solving
- Civic knowledge and engagement
- Intercultural knowledge and competence
- Ethical reasoning and action
- Foundations and skills for lifelong learning
- Integrative learning
How Can We Make Evidence of Student Learning Meaningful and Consequential?

“I think you should be more explicit here in step two.”
Principles for Consequential Use of Evidence

1. *Connect assessment work to related current national initiatives and projects.*

Membership associations, disciplinary societies, national organizations, foundations, and other initiatives provide a broader context in which to embed assessment work, to learn from the work of other institutions, and to increase the impact, legitimacy, and value of assessment results.
Examples

Institutions have used the *DQP* . . .

- To redefine and revitalize the core (general ed) curriculum
- To strengthen the academic program review process
- To revise the first-year seminar
- To certify transfers, align and “streamline” systems
- To map student behaviors against academic priorities
- To improve academic advising
Lessons Learned

- DQP is a conversation starter: offers a common vocabulary for talking about outcomes
- Curricular mapping is almost always a needed step: Where are students mastering these competencies? Where are the gaps?
- Doing assessment right is a continuing perennial challenge
- Faculty engagement and ownership are essential and take time to cultivate
According to one provost…

The DQP helped faculty to “think collectively about the course sequence and program as well as degree in ways we never had before.”
DQP/Tuning Coaches

➢ To advance and accelerate campus initiatives to enhance student learning, DQP/Tuning Coaches are available to help colleges and universities with their improvement efforts.

➢ DQP/Tuning Coaches make a one-day campus visit at no cost to the host institution. A coach is paired with the requesting institution based on a match of interests, intended outcomes and expertise.

▪ Go to www.degreeprofile.org for more information.
Principles for Consequential Use of Evidence

2. *Make assessment work actionable by focusing on the needs and interests of end users.*

Favor backward design assessment approaches. What questions are of greatest interest to potential internal end users — faculty, administrators, staff -- and external groups? How might they use the results? What do partners and end users expect to find?
Evidence That Matters Speaks to Consequential Questions

- Are there disparities in academic performance among students from various backgrounds?
- Can our students transfer knowledge learned in one course to another in the same discipline and/or in allied disciplines?
- How does student-faculty interaction influence our students’ success and learning outcomes?
Principles for Consequential Use of Evidence


- What assignments are used in introductory, advanced, and capstone courses, and what can be learned from them in terms of student performance and pedagogical effectiveness?
- Does the evidence of student learning outcomes align with and confirm our institution’s stated learning goals?
Design assignments that elicit the student behaviors that demonstrate the desired outcomes.
3. Find $x$.

Here it is.
To advance efforts to strengthen undergraduate education, NILOA is helping develop an online library of high-quality, peer-reviewed assignments linked to DQP outcomes.

The interactive library will build on and further stimulate institutional efforts already underway,

40+ assignments available so far from faculty participating in three charrettes.

Go to [www.assignmentlibrary.org](http://www.assignmentlibrary.org) for more information
What’s a “charrette”? 

"Charrette" (Fr.) means a small cart. Because architecture students once deposited their assignments in it as the cart was rolled through the studio, architects now use the word to refer to an intense creative effort in a limited time period.
DQP Assignment Library

ASSIGNMENTS

PERFORMANCE TASKS

PROBLEMS

GROUP PRESENTATIONS

RESEARCH PAPERS

PROJECTS

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

REFLECTIVE WRITING

EXAM QUESTIONS
The purpose of this website is to provide a searchable online library of collegiate-level course assignments in a wide variety of academic disciplines that link to one or more proficiencies in the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP).

The National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA) has been working with groups of faculty from various institutions to revise and strengthen assignment alignment to specific proficiencies. The assignments and commentaries here are works in progress, generously shared by faculty members from a wide range of fields and institutional types committed to advancing and documenting student learning. To learn more about the assignment library initiative click here. To see a list of advisors to the project click here.

This library allows you to:

- Browse assignments
- Borrow and adapt an assignment to fit your needs
- Submit an assignment to the library -- coming soon!
- Consult a resource
- Comment on and ask questions about assignments
- Start a conversation on your own campus
- Give us feedback!

**Announcements**

- Announcement! Currently accepting faculty applications for the Assignment Charrette to take place on March 9, 2015 in Boulder, Co. To learn more about the application process click here.
National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment
November 2014

Catalyzing Assignment Design Activity on Your Campus: Lessons from NILOA’s Assignment Library Initiative

Pat Hutchings, Natasha A. Jankowski, & Peter T. Ewell

www.learningoutcomesassessment.org
Principles for Consequential Use of Evidence

4. Make assessment results available in understandable forms to those who have a need to know and act on them.

Which campus functions require evidence of student learning -- e.g., program review, center for teaching & learning, career center, first year program office? What does the governing board need to know about student accomplishment and how such information is being used?
Principles for Consequential Use of Evidence

5. **Insure the student learning outcomes assessment program is a continuous process.**

Action and improvement are more likely if (a) assessment work is sustained, not episodic: (b) campus structures and processes are in place to report results, discuss implications, and plan needed action, and (c) the impact of evidence-guided change is routinely evaluated and reported.
Principles for Consequential Use of Evidence

6. Leverage the accreditation function for meaningful campus action targeted to improving student learning.

Ensure that the campus benefits from all the time and energy that accreditation requires by framing this work not as an act of compliance but as an integral process to move the campus toward improved learning, teaching, and overall institutional performance.
Principles for Consequential Use of Evidence

7. Executive leadership is required for assessment work to be consequential.

In addition to using data for decision making, academic leaders must help shape external expectations for accountability through working with higher education associations, accreditors, policymakers, business leaders, philanthropic foundations, and others to align expectations with meaningful institutional assessment and quality assurance efforts.
The things we have to learn before we do them, we learn by doing them.

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*
May the Force be with us
Discussion Questions

- What kind of information about student learning is compelling and useful for:
  - (a) guiding improvement efforts?
  - (b) responding to accountability demands?
- What must be done to collect and effectively use evidence of student accomplishment to enhance student and institutional performance?