Idaho State University · Lumina FOUNDATION

National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment

ASSESSMENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY:
CLARIFYING THE LEARNING
IN OUR MAJORS AND DEGREES

Dan McInerney: Session 1 8:30 –9:15 Oct 22

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Idaho State University

~~ *the work already underway* ~~

course & program assessment
evaluative rubrics
Gen Ed outcomes (ISU & state-wide)
Taskstream technology
committees on assessment & review

What do we want our students to learn?

How do we build courses (and curricula) to serve these goals?

How do we know students are learning?

How can students build their own, persuasive narrative of the knowledge and skills their education has developed?

WHY FOCUS ON THESE QUESTIONS?

It's our job
to reflect thoughtfully & collectively
on our teaching

It makes us more student-centered
**(framing our work around their needs, their expectations, their "time-line")**

It builds a better, stronger community
(in educational, economic, and civic terms)

"BEGIN WHERE PEOPLE ARE, NOT WHERE YOU WANT THEM TO BE."

Public Agenda, a NYC mediating agency

faculty passionate about their courses

passionate about student success

passionate about their disciplines

WHERE *ARE* MANY COLLEAGUES?
DEALING WITH BAD MEMORIES OF PAST ASSESSMENTS
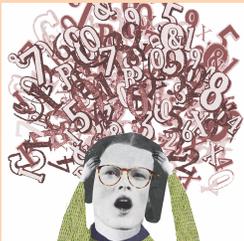
Thinking back on assessments that were . . .

top-down
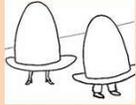
one size fits all

isolated from the rest of the world

relied on standardized tests (over course work)

focused on collecting (but not using) data

disconnected from faculty;
(Shhh -- maybe assessment will just go away)

ASSESSMENT NOW

Natasha Jankowski

George Kuh

"**Mired in a culture of compliance**, student learning outcomes assessment has had an embarrassingly modest impact on student and institutional performance.

Assessment needs to be embedded in the ongoing work of teaching and learning,

using evidence to improve the educational experience of students

Pat Hutchings

"**returns assessment to the faculty**

relying on work done in the regular contexts of teaching and learning

rather than turning to 'add on' instruments and approaches that are externally developed and administered."
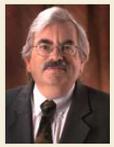
Peter Ewell

"assessment is ongoing and decentralized.

It occurs every time a faculty member examines a particular student response to an exam, demonstration, or assignment."

Carol Geary Schneider

Standardized testing is antithetical to assessing adaptive and inventive competencies . . . . [S]tandardized tests often disguise rather than illuminate what students can actually do with nonstandard problems.

Yet nonstandard problems are the ultimate test of students' competence—at work, at life, and in the community.

Preparing students to tackle nonstandard, unscripted problems and questions. . .where "right answers" are not known and where the nature of the problem itself is likely uncertain at best, and often actively contested.

College must prepare learners to deal with the complex and uncertain, not just with the rote and routine.

WHAT'S AT THE CENTER OF ASSESSMENT TODAY?

The work of actual students
with actual instructors
in actual classes
on actual assignments

Where high stakes learning takes place

WHAT'S AT THE CENTER OF ASSESSMENT TODAY?

-student learning

-guidance of faculty disciplinary experts

-clear (& repeated) statements of purpose

-assignments clearly tied to stated goals

-scaffolded, sequential coursework

-attention to students' NEXT steps

Many forms of assessment

| lab demonstrations | capstones | rubrics |
| journals | student presenta./performance |
| essays exhibits group projs. licensure results |
| pre-test / post test   NSSE (nat'l student survey) |
| student self-evaluation   peer evaluation |
| e-portfolios   alumni /employer /intern surveys |

Table 3. NILOA Survey: To what extent does your institution use the following approaches to assess undergraduate student learning outcomes?

	Percentage used by individual departments or units but not to represent the whole institution	Percentage used with valid samples to represent the whole institution	Percentage not used
Performance assessments other than grades (simulations, lab and other demonstrations, field experiences, portfolios, critiques, recitals, capstone projects)	80%	19%	2%
Rubrics (published or locally developed) to assess student work	81%	23%	2%
Specialized or programmatic knowledge and skills measures (licensure exams, MCAT, Major Field Tests, etc.)	83%	8%	9%
Student portfolios (a purposeful collection of student work showcasing achievement of learning objectives)	83%	7%	10%
Locally developed student surveys	48%	45%	11%
Employer surveys	61%	30%	12%
National student surveys (NSSE, CCSSE, CSEQ, SSI, CIRP FS, CSS, YFCY, FYI, etc.)	8%	69%	22%
External expert judgments of student performance (simulations, lab and other demonstrations, field experiences, portfolios, critiques, recitals, capstone projects)	69%	8%	23%
Alumni surveys	49%	11%	40%
Student interviews or focus groups	55%	16%	31%
Employer interviews or focus groups	61%	30%	12%
General knowledge and skills measures (CLA, CAAP, MAPP, WorkKeys, etc.)	28%	31%	42%
Alumni interviews or focus groups	29%	15%	57%

Direct and Indirect Measures in Assessment

	Direct Measures	Indirect Measures	Institutional Level	Performance on tests of writing, critical thinking, or general knowledge	Locally-developed, commercial, or national surveys of student perceptions or self-report of activities (e.g., National Survey of Student Engagement)
Course Level	Course and homework assignments	Course evaluations		Rubric (criterion-based rating scale) scores for class assignments in General Education, interdisciplinary core courses, or other courses required of all students	Transcript studies that examine patterns and trends of course selection and grading
	Examinations and quizzes	Test blueprints (outlines of the concepts and skills covered on tests)			
	Standardized tests	Percent of class time spent in active learning		Performance on achievement tests	Annual reports including institutional benchmarks, such as graduation and retention rates, grade point averages of graduates, etc.
	Term papers and reports	Number of student hours spent on service learning		Explicit self-reflections on what students have learned related to institutional programs such as service learning (e.g., asking students to name the three most important things they have learned in a program).	
	Observations of field work, internship performance, service learning, or clinical experiences	Number of student hours spent on homework			
	Research projects	Number of student hours spent at intellectual or cultural activities related to the course			
	Class discussion participation				
	Case study analysis	Grades that are not based on explicit criteria related to clear learning goals			
	Rubric scores for writing, presentations, and performances				
	Artistic performances and products				
Program Level	Capstone projects, senior theses, exhibits, or performances	Focus group interviews with students, faculty members, or employers			
	Pass rates or scores on licensure, certification, or subject area tests	Registration or course enrollment information			
	Student publications or conference presentations	Department or program review data			
		Job placement			
	Employer and internship supervisor ratings of students' performance	Employer or alumni surveys			
		Student perception surveys			
		Proportion of upper-level courses compared to the same program at other institutions			
		Graduate school placement rates			

https://www.bmcc.cuny.edu/iresearch/upload/IEA_July2017_AssessmentHandbookRevisions06072017.pdf

KEYS WITH ACCREDITORS:

➤ clear purpose
➤ consistent effort to assess
➤ varied measures
➤ faculty engagement
➤ campus workshops
➤ *integrate* assessment w/other campus review projects (for continuous work)
➤ *using* assessment data to improve teaching
➤ *this visit*

WHAT'S HAPPENING ON OTHER CAMPUSES?:

National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA): third nationwide survey of provosts, 2017

➤ institutional learning outcomes
➤ focus of assessment: compliance, improvement
➤ using a variety of data collection approaches
(exs: rubrics, classroom-based performance assessments, capstones)
➤ supporting faculty use of assessment results and wider stakeholder involvement
➤ reliance on institutional research offices + faculty-led assessment committees
➤ majority of changes occur at the program- and course-level (esp. at the assignment, course, and program-level)

WHAT'S HAPPENING ON OTHER CAMPUSES?:

➤ many organizational features support assessment; but policies on promotion and tenure lag behind

➤ little assessment of co-curricular improvement, resource allocation, trustee and governing board deliberations, and equity goals

➤ institutions' websites do not provide much publicly-available information on assessment activities

➤ limited use of assessment-related technologies

➤ the greater an institution's size and selectivity, the less likely it is to employ a variety of assessment activities

SOME USEFUL REMINDERS

1

"Professors Share: The Moment That Changed the Way I Teach,"
Chronicle of Higher Education (December 5, 2018),
https://www.chronicle.com/article/Professors-Share-The-Moment/245266

Cathy Davidson
The Graduate Center
CUNY

Like many college professors, I find the rhetoric of "outputs" and "outcomes" artificial, a fake metric that feeds the bureaucratic machine. Six or seven years ago, I mentioned this to an undergraduate class at Duke University.

I said: "You will not find any trite and clichéd 'outcomes' on my syllabus."

One student responded: "Will I find serious and meaningful ones?"

1

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https://www.chronicle.com/article/Professors-Share-The-Moment/245266

Cathy Davidson
The Graduate Center
CUNY

I realized that most students have no idea what they are supposed to be learning in a classroom beyond the "content" level –

nor do they know why the content is valid in and of itself nor what use or application or purpose it will have beyond the final exam.

I now frequently ask my students to collaboratively think about what outcomes they would like from a particular class and compose their own learning outcomes.

2

**Anne Hyde
University of Oklahoma**

Imagine a first meeting of the academic year where no one talked about budgets, assessment, course assignments, or parking.

What if we all started the year discussing what disciplinary ideals link us in our fields -- and how we might best introduce those goals to our students?

3

WHAT DOES A MAJOR, PROGRAM, OR DEGREE REPRESENT?

seat time?
Carnegie credit hours?
grade point averages?
required courses?

All of these suggest what majors or degrees represent in terms of numbers.

What do majors, programs, or degrees represent in terms of learning?

-How clearly do we define the learning that our majors, programs, and degrees develop?

-How well do our students (and parents, employers, and policymakers) understand these goals?

-*When* do students understand these issues?
 -when they *complete* program of study?
 -when they *enter* program of study?

-How well do we clarify these objectives and expectations to secondary schools & other post-secondary institutions?

What do we want our students to learn?

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How do we know students are learning?

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