Improving the Quality of Student Learning: Student Learning Outcomes Assessment

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Setting the Context
- Policies and Reports
- Accreditation
- Growing Interest

"I think you should be more explicit here in step two."

Overview of NILOA
NILOA’s mission is to document student learning outcomes assessment work, identify and disseminate best practices, and support institutions in their assessment efforts.
What is assessment?

What is the national picture of student learning outcomes assessment for colleges and universities?

What strategies can institutions employ to improve assessment practices and institutional quality?

What is Student Learning Outcomes Assessment?

• Definition

• Performance Indicators

• Assessment Tools
Definition

Assess: (v.): to examine carefully

Assessment is the systematic collection, review, and use of information about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning and development (Palomba & Banta, 1999, p. 4)

Definition (cont.)

Performance Indicators

✓ learning outcomes
✓ educational attainment (persistence, graduation)
✓ course retention
✓ transfer student success
✓ success in subsequent courses
✓ degree/certificate completion
✓ graduate school
✓ employment/employer evaluations
✓ capacity for lifelong learning
Assessment Tools

- **Direct (outcomes) measures**
  -- Evidence of what students have learned or can do
- **Indirect (process) measures**
  -- Evidence of effective educational activity by students and institutions

Measuring Quality in Higher Education

(Vic Borden & Brandi Kernel, 2010)

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

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

http://applications.airweb.org/surveys/Default.aspx

Assessment Purposes

Occasional Paper #1
Assessment, Accountability, and Improvement
Peter T. Ewell

Assessments of what students learn during college are typically used for either improvement or accountability, and occasionally both. Yet, since the early days of the “assessment movement” in the US, these two purposes of outcomes assessment have not rested comfortably together.

www.learningoutcomeassessment.org/OccasionalPapers.htm
Two Paradigms of Assessment

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<th>Strategic dimensions</th>
<th>Continuous Improvement</th>
<th>Accountability</th>
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<td>Purpose</td>
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<td>Orientation</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Instrumentation</th>
<th>Nature of evidence</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Multiple/triangulation</td>
<td>Quantitative and qualitative</td>
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| Reference points     | Over time, comparative, established goal | Comparative or fixed standard |
| Communication of results | Multiple internal channels | Public communication, media |
| Use of results       | Multiple feedback loops | Reporting |


What is the national picture of student learning outcomes assessment for colleges and universities?

- Survey Report
- Focus Groups
- Accreditation Study
- Web Scan Study
- Occasional Papers
- Case Studies

Survey Report
- Survey asked chief academic officers at all accredited 2 & 4 year colleges and universities about their assessment practices.
- Survey report “More Than You Think, Less Than We Need” released October, 2009

http://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/NILOAsurveyresults09.htm
Report Summary

1. Perhaps more assessment underway than some acknowledge or wish to believe
2. More attention needed to using and reporting assessment results
3. Involving faculty is a major challenge
4. More investment likely needed to move from data to improvement

Assessment driven more by accreditation and commitment to improve than external pressures from government or employers

Accreditation tops the list for uses of assessment data.
Perspectives from Campus Leaders on the Current State of Student Learning Outcomes Assessment

Jillian Kinzie

This paper highlights lessons from four focus group sessions with campus leaders—presidents, provosts, academic deans, and directors of institutional research from a variety of two- and four-year institutions—regarding their perspectives on the state of learning assessment practices on their campuses.

http://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/Perspectives.htm

Regional Accreditation and Student Learning Outcomes Assessment: Mapping the Territory

Staci Provezis

This paper examines the policies and procedures at each of the seven regional accreditation organizations, as they relate to student learning outcomes assessment.

http://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/OccasionalPapers.htm

Connecting State Policies on Assessment with Institutional Assessment Activity

Peter Ewell, Natasha Jankowski & Staci Provezis

Two national surveys—one at the state level and one at the institutional level—show that state policies matter to student learning outcome assessment activities at both public and private institutions.

http://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/NILOAstatestudy2010.htm
Eight “assessment active” states:
- Georgia
- Rhode Island
- Kentucky
- South Dakota
- Minnesota
- Tennessee
- Oklahoma
- West Virginia

Institutions in Assessment-Active States:
- Use general knowledge/skills measures (CLA, CAAP, MAPP) 58% vs 38%.
- Use valid samples with national surveys (83% vs 58%).
- Use employer surveys (76% vs 62%) and employer interviews (57% vs 47%).
- Have common set of student learning outcomes (83% vs 76%).
- No differences between public and privates, transparency.

Exploring the Landscape:
What Institutions Post on Their Websites About Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Activities
Natasha Jankowski & Julia Makela
Campuses report doing more assessment than they make accessible on their institutional websites. The typical institution shows only an average of two assessment activities. When information is posted, it is more often intended for internal institutional audiences.

http://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/NILOAwebscanresults2010.htm
Say vs. Show
• More assessment activity was reported by chief academic officers than was available on institution websites

What strategies can institutions employ to improve assessment practices and institutional quality?

Improving Quality with Assessment
• Institutional Commitment
• Evidenced Based Decision Making
• Faculty Commitment
• Improved Transparency
• Less about Compliance, more about Quality