

Program Review and Assessment Committee
August Meeting 2017: Thursday, August 24, 1:30-3:00 pm, AD 1006
Minutes

Attendance: Attending: K. Alfrey, P. Altenburger, J. Barbee, L. Bozeman, C. Buyarski, D. DeMeester, G. Durham, T. Freeman, S. Graunke, E. Grommon, T. Hahn, M. Hansen, W. Helling, M. Huffman, S. Hundley, C. Kacius, S. Kahn, P. Kinsman, J. Lash, D. LeMay, X. Liu, S. Lowe, S. Lupton, A. Mitchell, P. Morris, H. Mzumara, B. Orme, M. Petrovic, M. Priest, E. Ramos, L. Ruch, S. Scott, K. Sheeler, A. Rao, A. Teemant, M. Urtel, C. Walcott, S. Weeden, J. Williams.

1. Welcome, Review and Approval of May Minutes
 - a. Motion made, seconded to approve minutes. Unanimous approval.
 - b. Weeden called the meeting to order at 1:30 pm and welcomed new members.

2. PRAC Overview and Preview of the Upcoming Year in PRAC
 - a. S. Kahn gave an overview of the PRAC Report Committee.
 - b. Weeden noted the meeting schedule, reviewed chart of PRAC meeting topics, and asked if topics needed to be added.
 - i. S. Kahn suggested a discussion of feedback from the reviewers of the national assessment award IUPUI received.
 - c. S. Hundley welcomed the committee on behalf of the chancellor and chancellor's cabinet, and noted the purpose of the committee as a faculty-led body.
 - d. Brief introductions were conducted

3. Themes and Trends in Assessment—Stephen Hundley, Planning and Institutional Improvement
 - a. Reviewed accomplishments from last year with implications for this year.
 - i. New Institute for Engaged Learning established to house student-facing initiatives and offices, and to integrate work of High Impact Practices (HIPs) throughout the campus.
 - ii. Strategic plan: The plan will be updated this year and include a reaffirming of institutional commitment to student success, life sciences, and contributions to community. PRAC will review plan for implications for assessment.
 - iii. New General Education review process being implemented this year as an appreciative and improvement oriented process.
 - iv. Assurance to Higher Learning Commission: We are developing a Year 4 submission as part of a 10-year comprehensive process. Campus has to produce assurance argument to demonstrate how we are meeting criteria for accreditation. We have received positive feedback on the report and requests for additional information. Hundley recognized several people in the room who contributed to the report.
 - v. Assessment Institute: Noted October dates for next institute on October 22-24, and opportunities to publish in Assessment Update. Major themes

from the Assessment Institute were reviewed including assessing assessment, broadening assessment, new methods in assessment, and improving assessment.

- vi. An environmental scan of peer institutions, national exemplars, and associations has been conducted to provide feedback into our review processes.
4. Overview of IRDS Information Resources—Michele Hansen, Steve Graunke, Howard Mzumara, Anne Mitchell, Institutional Research and Data Support
- a. M. Hansen reviewed organizational chart and structure of IRDS and range of services offered for reporting and analysis.
 - b. A. Mitchell reviewed survey research and evaluation, including the following services provided:
 - i. Survey research initiatives at campus, unit and program levels
 - ii. Faculty/staff surveys (professional development, teaching)
 - iii. Jag Speaks surveys (welcoming campus initiative, library usage, campus safety)
 - iv. Diversity Programming evaluation (campus climate for diversity survey, DEI programs)
 - v. Data extraction for academic program review
 - vi. Administrator reviews
 - vii. Equal Opportunity, hiring practices, affirmative action planning
 - viii. Consulting on surveys and focus groups
 - c. S. Graunke reviewed the following services:
 - i. School requests for data
 - ii. Division of Undergraduate Education assessment of HIPs, programs
 - iii. Division of Enrollment Management: point in cycle reports, admissions, course enrollments
 - d. H. Mzumara reviewed the Testing Center's facilities and services
 - i. There are two Testing Center facilities on campus:
 - 1. BS 3000 (53 seats): State and national exams administered
 - 2. SL 070 (142 seats): Proctored classroom-based tests for schools (plus proctored EAP or math placement tests)
 - ii. Placement testing for students (math, English for Academic Purposes, and world languages—French, German, and Spanish) conducted via remote and unproctored Internet testing
 - iii. Course evaluations (using eXplorance Blue)
 - iv. Test scoring and reporting (including scanning score sheets for objectively scored tests) offered in the SL 064 suite.
5. Announcements
- a. New member orientation to follow this meeting
 - b. K. Alfrey will be associate dean in Engineering
 - c. Writing and Paralegal programs and Philanthropic Studies program will participate in the Lumina-funded Quality Assurance Commons project to address gaps in university learning outcomes and employer needs.
 - d. Motion made and approved to adjourn at 2:29 pm EST.

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN AND EXPECTATIONS OF CHANGE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Summer, 2017

Emerging trends routinely appear prophesying changes in higher education. While we cannot accurately predict such changes, these reports and publications from a variety of higher education organizations can offer thoughtful and informed analyses that can inform planning and investment by colleges and universities. With current expectations of declining revenue streams resulting from decreasing governmental support and, in some locales, the flattening or decline of the high school graduation stream, significant challenges arise for sustainability and achievement in higher education. Both public and private institutions feel the pressure whether from revenue challenges, governmental policy changes, increased competition for scholarship funding or enrollments, or research support funding. As expectations from external stakeholders are growing for accountability in student success and better stewardship of existing funding, universities are facing the cost of new initiatives to improve student success, raise on-time graduation rates, while facing reduced revenues due to fewer credit hours from dual credit programs and advanced placement mandates. Concomitant to these issues is the decline in public confidence in higher education arising from weak communication of the value and impact of our institutional outcomes. Higher education cannot be unprepared from the evolution of the education market place and the rapid growth of alternative competition.

With many dimensions of funding vagaries, higher education policies, and challenges to value of higher education in general, we have examined a wide range of trend reports from national organizations of mission-based associations, including groups representing different institutional types, disciplinary societies, university functions, accreditation bodies both general and specific, honorific academies, communications and news organizations, and scholarly analysis organizations. Our analysis revealed that, using these broad institutional descriptors: academic mission, faculty environment and workplace, external relations, and business and infrastructure, we have identified recurring engagements emerging from many of the reports reviewed. While reports also discuss the assessments and metrics related to the trends, many do not. It is clear that addressing solutions for these engagements and assessing the efficacy of any efforts to address these emerging trends require special attention if demonstrable progress or change can occur. The following tables connect our descriptors to essential engagements that we believe can ensure we are broadly considering the challenges across our initiatives and missions. Many of these themes are already being addressed here, yet our review reinforces the need to ensure substantive outcomes can improve our performance metrics and ensure we are supporting the activities in a holistic way.

Finally, how might we suggest some steps and actions that can catalyze a robust and thorough discussion of the challenges facing higher education? How do we assess these changes and prioritize our own investments to optimize outcomes? Overall, we might require an overarching premise or vision for the future. If we choose student success and educational experience as the driving forces that could be embraced by the largest constituency, we would also recognize the environment that leads to the best modern, educational experience is shaped by many high impact practices in combination with faculty scholarship in their discipline and its pedagogy.

With these objectives in mind, our short list of concepts and perspectives, neither exhaustive nor complete, worth considering could be shaped by the following:

- **Customization of educational outcomes and credentials** essentially ensures a robust and dynamic system to capable of an agile response to changing standards of topical need and strengths. Creating different levels of credentials allows for the addition of new students adjusting their knowledge base from an original goal to the needs of the workplace.
- **Credential completion timelines are anachronistically outdated.** Future students may well be driven by workplace needs and availability for complex scheduling. Campuses that are capable of adjusting timelines and offer alternative pedagogies will be better positioned to meet the needs of students.
- **Collaborative roles between faculty and campus to support the research enterprise** are essential to reinforce progress and advance faculty aspiration. Research products enhance our revenue stream and produce an educated workforce while offering demonstrable economic impact on our state and region.
- **Capacity for developing leadership** and succession planning on the campus are required for anticipating and solving our evolving environment. Champions are necessary to sustain our momentum and identify changing strategies for improvement.
- **Improve communication to all stakeholders**, whether potential students or existing legislative bodies, that the campus responds with a rational approach to making learning available to more students, regardless of their life complexity or economic status. Publicize the successes of students (with their breadth of backgrounds) employing active learning techniques, adaptive learning interventions, and application of learning that prepare students for lifelong learning. We need to more aggressively reinforcing the premiums in synthetic earnings *and* employment over a lifetime.
- **Wide application of continuous quality improvement principles** across the academic and operational landscape. Every innovation, initiative and intervention should reflect a regular revision demonstrating improvement with measurable impact.

Academic Mission	Essential engagements
Teaching and learning pedagogies leading to clearly improved student success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning efficacy: variety of defined metrics and standards assessments • Research-based pedagogies: widespread engagement and financially supported • High impact practices: internalized, outcome metrics, and effective • Active learning strategies: reinforce cultural change from student survival to student engagement with learning • Early warning systems: effective, robust with visible impact while operationally easy to use • Predictive analytics: establish priorities and planning • Diverse modalities of instruction: responsive to breadth of student life or “contemporary student” obligations • Expanded credentialing: addresses multiple student timelines and employment force needs
Operational and support needs reflect efficacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching and learning centers: adequate, diverse expertise and offer robust support • Technical support for escalating training needs: time demands and impact on faculty job complexity, IT consultative with academics • Internal funding opportunities: motivation for pursuit of change, sustainability challenges addressed • Credit-earning timeline options: content needs to be more modular and infrastructure helps
Visibility of academic impact on students to external stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student success across diverse groups and economic strata: results apparent externally • Career planning: documentable impact, data on placements, and relevance • Non-traditional learning modalities in response to changing student demographics: opportunities visible
Student demographics and social comfort are visibly accommodated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well-defined student community opportunities with agile structure for change • Socialization and social comfort strategies for evolving student base • Student educational health and well-being: adequate services and effective referrals • Equity and balance for educational opportunity: embraced throughout academic and support units • Special needs and social accommodation: agile and visible • Co-curricular and athletics opportunities: effective communication to students
Faculty Environment and Workplace	Essential engagements
Enriching faculty roles, cultures and environments strengthen workplace comfort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defining local roles and responsibilities to achieve distinctiveness in programs: ensure campus strengths evident • Recognition and value of contributions by faculty and accommodating aspirations in the academy: faculty impact known • Cultivating expertise and scholarly productivity: university as partner in faculty advancement • Diversity and cultural awareness: faculty observe ideals
Attracting new and retaining faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sufficient early investments to attract quality faculty and establish institutional commitment to success • Mature faculty advancement system: rewards focus on broad quality and accomplishment • Faculty advocacy and external visibility infrastructure: university engaged with advancing external recognitions for faculty
Faculty research and scholarship achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal investment: support scholarly innovative research products that offer economic and strategic impact on society • Partnerships to reduce high cost of research infrastructure: reduce obstacles to collaboration • Secure disciplinary-based technologies: anticipate changes and ensure IT can accommodate needs • Intellectual property, patents, and licensure infrastructure

Business and Infrastructure Support	Essential engagements
Business and administrative operations, efficacy, and productivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous quality improvement in all aspects of business and planning: expertise with academic units can and do contribute • Sustainability of business model: modern and anticipatory enrollment management practices with collaboration across academic and service units • Improvements and flexibility in operations, with efficiencies and agility • Role of opportunity cost: balancing potential with loss • Integrated technologies enterprise and security
Synergistic and overlapping relationships strengthening overall success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of all fee structures: modern, appropriately sized, germane to programs • Programmatic accessibility: financial and academic requirements • Identifying “new revenue streams” more systematic and reflective than the simple “expense reduction” attempts • Selective strengthening through consolidation or specialization

External Relations	Essential engagements
Accreditation and public credibility improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credential quality and continuum of topical content availability • Program and credential availability: review enrollment filtering • Programmatic diversity: customization can be asset in learning options, alternative descriptions and applications • Accessibility in economic terms: optimized cost • Integrity in the academic process and personnel: ensure client comfort in communication and description
Societal expectations and public awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsibility and stewardship: communications • Liberal education and success in lifelong learning: cases visible, • Effective communication of real stories and people with impact on individuals and local economics • Improving world citizenship and the <i>Common Good</i>: communications and visibility of outcomes

Sources

Draft: Summer, 2017

- *2016 E-Expectations Trend Report*, Ruffalo Noel Levitz, 2016.
- *AAC&U: Recent Trends in General Education Design, Learning Outcomes, and Teaching Approaches*, Survey of AAC&U Member Institutions, 2016.
- *AACSB: Collective Vision for Business Education*, AACSB International, 2017.
- *AACSB: Future Trends in Business Education*, Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), 2015.
- Arnett, Autumn, *4 Trends poised to transform the future of higher education*, "Education Dive," 99th American Council on Education National Meeting, 2017.
- Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, *Top Strategic Issues for Boards 2016-2017*, AGB Press, 2016.
- Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, *Top Public Policy Issues for Higher Education: 2017-2018*, AGB Press, 2017.
- Cary, Kevin, *Building a New AAU: The Case for Redefining Higher Education Excellence*, New America Education Policy Program, 2014.
- Coleman, Mary Sue, *After Years of Neglect, Public Higher Education is at a Tipping Point*, Association of American Universities, 2016.
- *Discovery-Exploration-Interaction-Engagement*, Noel Levitz Ruffalo
- *eCampus News, 14 Hot Higher Ed trends for 2017*, eCampus News, 2017.
- Education Advisory Board, *Future Students, Future Revenues: Thriving in a Decade of Demographic Decline*, 2014.
- Hiemstra, G., *The Future of Higher Education*, Parts I and II, 2013.
- IES and NCES, *Income of Young Adults*, National Center for Education Statistics, 2017
- Jaschik, S. and Lederman, D., *2017 Survey of College and University Chief Academic Officers*, Inside Higher Education and Gallup, 2017.
- Kober, Nancy (Ed.), *Reaching Students: What Research Says about Effective Instruction in Undergraduate Science and Engineering*, National Research Council, The National Academies Press, 2014.
- Lapovsky, Lucie, *The Higher Education Business Model: Innovation and Financial Sustainability*, TIAA-CREF Institute, 2013.
- Marketing and Communications in Higher Education, "Addressing the Decline in Higher Ed's Reputation," *Higher Ed News*, 2016.
- Martin, Rebecca, "Taking Student Success to Scale," *Change*, January/February 2017.
- *NMC Horizon Report: 2017 Higher Education Edition*, The New Media Consortium and eDUCAUSE, 2017.
- PennAHEAD and the Pell Institute, *Indicators of Higher Education Equity in the US*, 2016.
- Shaker, G.G. and Plater, W.M., *The Public Good, Productivity and Faculty Work: Individual Effort and Social Value*, TIAA Institute, 2016.
- Shaker, G.G. and Plater, W.M., *The Public Good, Productivity and Purpose: New Economic Models for Higher Education*, TIAA Institute, 2016.
- Shinn, L., *Strategic Thinking and Planning in Higher Education: A Focus on the Future*, AGB Publications, 2017.

- Sledge, L., and Fishman, T.D., *Reimagining Higher Education: How Colleges, Universities, Businesses, and Governments Can Prepare for a New Age of Lifelong Learning*, Deloitte University Press, 2014.
- Society for College and University Planning, *Trends for Higher Education: The Future of Learning*, Fall, 2016.
- Society for College and University Planning, *Trends for Higher Education: Evolution of Higher Education*, Spring, 2017.
- Sullivan, T.A., Mackie, C., Massey, W.F., and Sinha, E., *Improving Measurement of Productivity in Higher Education*, National Academies Press, 2012.
- Tamborini, C., Kim, ChangHwan, and Sakamoto, A., *Education and Lifetime Earnings in the US*, Demography, 1383 (2015).
- Tierney, W.G., Lanford, M., *Cultivating Strategic Innovation in Higher Education*, TIAA Institute, 2016.
- US Census Bureau, *The Big Payoff: Educational Attainment and Synthetic Estimates of Work-Life Earnings*, 2002.
- US Department of Education, *Recalibrating Regulation of Colleges and Universities: Report of the Task Force on Federal Regulation of Higher Education*
- Milder, Max, *COE Forum: 5 Emerging economic forces changing mid-level management*. Education Advisory Board, 2017.

Key Themes and Recent Topics from Assessment Institute and *Assessment Update*

Key themes from Assessment Institute sessions and *Assessment Update* articles

Examples of assessment in various campus contexts: Academic advising; academic disciplines; accredited programs; alumni/graduate outcomes; administrative functions; civic/community engagement; co-curricular learning; experiential learning; faculty development; general education; graduate/professional education; honors learning experiences; high impact practices; institutional programs and services; online courses and programs; personal and professional identity development; student engagement, retention, and persistence initiatives; technology use/integration; undergraduate courses and curricula; and use of data/evidence.

Levels of assessment: Individual student; student groups; course/classroom; discipline; academic and support units; campus, institution, and system; state; regional; national; international, multinational, and global; and virtual/online contexts.

A variety of assessment approaches or methods: Analyses of case studies, artifacts, or other texts; attitude or belief inventories; benchmarking; classroom assessment techniques; competency-based assessment; direct and indirect approaches; individual or group papers, projects, or performances; interviews; focus groups; observations of applied/actual practice or simulated practice; paper and pencil or electronic/computer tests; performance on national tests; portfolios (physical and increasingly electronic); primary trait scoring; prior learning assessment; program review; signature assignments; surveys (locally-developed or national); syllabus analysis; transcript analysis; and use of rubrics to promote student learning.

Integrating and linking assessment to other processes: Curriculum planning and revision; faculty development; promotion and tenure; rewards and recognition; strategic and annual/operational planning; accreditation and institutional improvement/effectiveness; data collection, storage, and analysis; philanthropic endeavors; resource identification, prioritization, and allocation; and technology and facilities planning, renovations, and upgrades.

Stakeholder involvement in assessment activities: Students; faculty; staff; administrators; governing bodies; policymakers; employers; community members; P-12 institutions; consortia partners; institutional influencers; grants-making organizations/foundations; accreditors; national organizations/associations; international partners; and publishers and commercial vendors.

Some uses of assessment findings: To improve student learning at various levels (course, program, institution, experiential, co-curricular, community, etc.); in the design of assignments, learning events/activities, courses, programs; and instructional environments, both physical and virtual); for a review and demonstration of quality; to “close the loop” in the assessment process; as a means of demonstrating accountability or compliance to an external group or standard; for internal improvement and development; as a form of research/scholarly pursuit (Discipline-based Education Research; Scholarship of Teaching and Learning); to inform institutional policies/practices/priorities; and as part of ongoing peer review and feedback processes.

Recent topics from Assessment Institute tracks, including recurring issues/opportunities

Recurring general issues/opportunities in assessment: incubation and pilot testing of ideas and interventions with students, with the ability to evaluate results, scale for larger contexts/audiences/purposes, and adapt for adoption/replication elsewhere; transparency of assessment process and results, including involving important stakeholders in designing assessment, analyzing results, using findings, and making meaningful improvements; expansion and dynamic nature of the federal government's role in advancing outcomes assessment at institutions of higher education, with particular concern about issues and perceptions of quality, affordability, access, and gainful employment; assessment and accreditation, including how to be less burdensome and more value-adding and effective; the need to truly engage external communities and policymakers about the successes and challenges of contemporary higher education; opportunities to promote collaborative, exploratory, and creative accreditation processes and activities while still ensuring accountability and quality; helping students acquire effective learning strategies based on cognitive/neuroscience principles; leveraging data from technology-based assessments, including promoting real-time decisions about what is best for individual students and students in aggregate; continuous improvement across our entire education system (P-16); assessment's 'captivity' to the external web of compliance—and the desire to instead focus on key questions and the evidence needed to make informed decisions about the student experience; promoting authentic, diverse learning environments and student preparation for a pluralistic society; and developing, implementing, using, and refining assessment plans for effective results—at program-, department-, unit-, and campus-levels.

Community Engagement Track: the range of knowledge, skills, values, and action that civic learning now encompasses, as informed by national frameworks such as AAC&U's VALUE rubrics, AASCU's American Democracy Project, and Lumina's Degree Qualifications Framework; and increasing use of comprehensive approaches to measuring civic learning and collective impact.

ePortfolio Track: as a means to capture evidence of the student experience, including measuring and assessing learning outcomes; ePortfolio practice and its opportunities to acknowledge, encourage, and represent human development and accomplishment; individuals can learn more about themselves and the direction of their lives, while institutions can learn about their contributions to humane educational goals; and the value of ePortfolio for advancing student, faculty, staff, and institutional learning, including use in supporting authentic outcomes assessment, deepening student learning and engagement, and advancing retention and progress toward graduation.

Faculty Development Track: facilitating faculty use of assessment data about student learning, including helping programs/departments/institutions systematize the ways in which evidence is used to make decisions about curriculum, course design, and teaching—all to positively impact teaching and learning; using evidence for documenting and guiding faculty members' own professional development; and assessment's tensions between providing accountability for accreditation and improvement for faculty development, including the role of faculty in using assessment as an integral part in the transformative nature of higher education.

Global Learning Track: Global learning's place in the college curriculum, including competencies, integration and application opportunities, and assessment of global learning outcomes; and the changing paradigms in the future of international education assessment.

Graduate/Professional Education Track: Different expectations for evaluation in graduate and professional education; approaches to documenting graduate-level outcomes; and strategies for engaging constituents in the assessment process; including students in the assessment process, preparing graduate students and new faculty to teach and assess learning, and promoting a culture of evidence in graduate and professional education.

High Impact Practices Track: Expansion and assessment of High Impact Practices and wrap-around support for students, including supplemental instruction, intrusive and appreciative advising, and peer mentoring; challenges to the way we explain, organize, and contribute to learning and the need for outcomes assessment to inform the vigorous public expression of educational purpose, quality, and value; how to assess high impact practices using quantitative and qualitative methods to ensure that the strategies are positively affecting students' learning, academic success, and persistence rates; the efficacy, pedagogies, and results of High Impact Practices on the learning experiences of underserved students (e.g., transfer, first-generation, and under-represented minority students), including ways to expand access and opportunities to HIPs for all students.; and teaching practices and student experiences that support the successful implementation of high-impact practices.

NILOA Track: Annual showcasing of NILOA's work in outcomes assessment, including surveys, web scans, case studies, focus groups, and commissioned papers; role of academic and assessment leaders in fostering evidence-informed discussions and decision-making, including approaches to assessment use that are attentive to campus organization and culture and that enrich both faculty work and student learning; and student learning outcomes (SLOs)—statements, type, level of rigor/sophistication, and processes for establishing/revising SLOs; and profiles of various institutions/programs using NILOA resources, including the Transparency Framework.

Student Affairs Programs and Services Track: The importance of systematic data collection across numerous programs and services; demonstrating co-curricular student learning via mapping programs and services to learning outcomes; closing the assessment loop in student affairs by using assessment results to make continuous improvements and ensuring results are being used in a timely, relevant, and impactful manner to improve the overall college student experience; developing a culture of evidence to support the decision-making processes in student affairs divisions which requires commitment, consistency, connections, and communication—all with the goal of demonstrating the impact of co-curricular programs and services on student learning and success; and a stronger emphasis on student learning outcomes, the creation of assessment partnerships across campus, and a commitment to using evidence to improve.

Learning Outcomes Assessment: Trends, Implications, and Opportunities for Higher Education

Zachary J. McDougal, Undergraduate Research Assistant
Office of Planning and Institutional Improvement, IUPUI

Each year, the Office of Planning and Institutional Improvement at IUPUI publishes six editions of *Assessment Update* and hosts the Assessment Institute. *Assessment Update* is a bi-monthly periodical that has been published through Jossey-Bass since 1989. It covers the latest developments in assessment in the higher education community. The Assessment Institute is a conference that has been hosted in Indianapolis every year since 1992 and attracts over 1000 participants. The conference provides opportunities for individuals across the higher education spectrum to broaden their knowledge on outcomes assessment.

Together, these provide an excellent foundation for understanding the latest trends in assessment in higher education. In 2016, articles in *Assessment Update* and presentations at the Assessment Institute revealed four major trends:

- Assessing Assessment
- Broadening Assessment
- New Methods of Assessment
- Improving Assessment Methods

Examining these trends can promote an understanding of recent developments in outcomes assessment and how these developments can be used to enact change in an institution's assessment practices.

Assessing Assessment

The first major trend from *Assessment Update* and the Assessment Institute was Assessing Assessment. Assessment data are only as good as the method used to gather them. That is why making certain that methods being used are of good quality and are gathering useful and accurate data. To ensure that assessment methods are of the right standard, many institutions have been using a wide variety of methods for assessing their procedures. Another key aspect of evaluating assessment is analyzing whether the institution is making good use of gathered data. Many institutions have found data often goes unused, and assessing both the methods of assessment and the methods of using the data can help fix this problem.

Assessing Assessment methods has also received great coverage in broader literature. According to Halpern (2013), assessing the methods used at institutions has grown increasingly important over the last twenty years. As a result, institutions have been developing assessments for both learning outcomes assessment and overall assessment activities, and this trend has continued in more recent years. For example, many institutions have been creating plans to provide insight into their institution-wide assessment performance and have broadly shared their results with the assessment community (Gustafson, Daniels, & Smulski, 2014; Germaine, Barton, & Bustillos, 2013; Powell & Saint-Germain, 2016). Others have provided insight on evaluating individual methods (Atkinson & Lim, 2013). Analyzing how institutions use their assessment data has also been examined (Jonson, Guetterman, & Thompson, 2014).

Gustafson, Daniels, and Smulski (2014) reported on an assessment model that was developed and implemented at one small-sized private institution. The model was designed to measure institutional mission-fulfilment and to facilitate departmental accountability and improvement. It was also designed such that it would be capable of evaluating departmental outcomes assessment both quantitatively and

In addition, Broadening Assessment has been covered a great deal in the literature. In recent years, increased attention has been paid to assessing learning in graduate and professional programs (Foxhoven, 2010), Fine Art (Pollock, Alden, Jones, & Wilkinson, 2015), and the co-curriculum (Tucker, 2014, Finelli, Holsapple, Ra, Bielby, Burt, Carpenter, Harding, & Sutkis, 2012).

Foxhoven (2010) presents a clear example of a need for advancement in assessing student learning in professional institutions, specifically law schools: “Although law schools, including clinical professors, are largely successful in assessing students’ progress in specific courses, few have taken on the task of doing global assessments of each student...” (p. 335). He presents the process the Children’s Rights Clinic at the Drake University Law School developed to assess its students’ overall ability to practice law. Processes like these are crucial to determining whether a student is developing *all* of the skills they need to perform in their future professions. These types of assessments being newly created at law schools, and other graduate institutions, will aide them in improving the education they provide.

Another area in need of advancement is Fine Art. A case study of Newcastle University’s Open Studios feedback and assessment model provides insight into how assessment models in Fine Art can be fine-tuned to suit the unique methodology of this type of program (Pollock, Alden, Jones, & Wilkinson, 2015). The Open Studios model is a feedback-centered assessment method in which students present their work in a studio environment for teacher, peer, and public critique. This type of assessment is much better suited to a Fine Art environment than typical methods, such as rubrics, since student work comes in such a wide variety of forms.

Equally important to a student’s in-class learning experience is their out-of-class learning experience. However, the way in which we assess these two areas is vastly different (Tucker, 2014). For in-class learning, we subject students to a difficult test to directly assess their knowledge of the subject. However, for out-of-class learning, we tend to assess using Likert scale questions, asking students “how much they think they learned”. Tucker (2014) says, “out-of-classroom assessment should not continue to ask students to report whether they learned; it must ask them to demonstrate what they have learned” (p. 29). Assessing out-of-class learning in this manner provides a much clearer measure of the quality of a student’s experience in this area, which is important to assessing the overall quality of their education.

New Methods of Assessment

The third trend in *Assessment Update* and the Assessment Institute was New Methods of Assessment. While there are some colleges and universities that are new to assessment, many have been implementing assessment efforts for quite some time. As these institutions continue trying to improve their efforts, they are realizing that the standard methods being used are not always the best. Many institutions have been implementing new, alternative methods and approaches in outcomes assessment in an attempt to compensate for flaws in traditional methods. Some of these alternative methods and approaches involve using rubrics and ePortfolios in assessment, using models in assessment development, and engaging students and faculty in the assessment process.

In the literature, many authors have provided insight into New Methods of Assessment. The literature shows, institutions are finding new ways to both conduct outcomes assessment and to make use of results. Some of these areas include: using multi-institutional surveys (Finelli, Holsapple, Ra, Bielby, Burt, Carpenter, Harding, & Sutkis, 2012), combining different methods (Foxhoven, 2010, Gustafson, Daniels, & Smulski, 2014, Lundquist, Shogbon, Momary, & Rogers, 2013), using rubrics (Fulcher & Orem, 2010, Reddy & Andrade, 2010), using ePortfolios (O’Keeffe & Donnely, 2013, Roberts, Maor, & Herrington, 2016), and using alternative methods, such as studio feedback in Fine Art and activities designed to encourage and improve faculty and administrator engagement in assessing student learning (Pollock, Alden, Jones, & Wilkinson, 2015, Stitt-Bergh, 2016).

qualitatively. To make these judgements, the model made use of a rubric. Examples of the results of this effort include a shift in resources at the institutional level, use of the model in performance evaluation at the divisional level, and clarification of performance expectations at the departmental level.

The report on program review at National University by Germaine, Barton, and Bustillos (2013) gives useful information about the positive effects associated with program review. Program review is a focused, systematic, in-depth self-study completed by faculty in which data from measures of student learning and various other sources are summarized, analyzed, and used to inform program improvement and innovation (Bok, 2006; Kornuta, 2007). As a result of this program review, National University saw innovative and improvement changes take place in its learning outcomes and faculty assessments.

Powell and Saint-Germain (2016) reviewed assessment strategies used by programs seeking Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA) accreditation. To receive the accreditation, institutions need to integrate NASPAA's five universal required competencies into their programs. These five competencies are 1) to lead and manage in public governance, 2) to participate in and contribute to the policy process, 3) to analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems, and make decisions, 4) to articulate and apply a public service perspective, and 5) to communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry. The report analyzed each institution's performance in completing assessment cycles for each universal required competency and found that every program fell short.

While it is important to examine activities undertaken to encourage assessments of student learning across campus, it is equally useful to develop procedures for evaluating individual learning outcomes assessments. According to Atkinson and Lim (2013), "students and teachers play different roles and thus have different perceptions about the effectiveness of assessment including structure, feedback, consistency, fairness and efficiency" (p. 651). Therefore, receiving feedback from both the student perspective and the teacher perspective is crucial to obtaining a clear picture of the impact of assessment. To this end, a rubric was implemented in an undergraduate Business Information Systems course that evaluated these perspectives (Atkinson & Lim, 2013). After the rubric's implementation, the results provided a large amount of information useful for future improvement. For example, students reported increased clarity and guidance for future assignments and teachers recommended improvements for the implementation of the rubric for the future.

One of the greatest issues facing institutions is making use of data (Astin & Antonio, 2012; Jonson, Guetterman, & Thompson, 2014). Jonson, Guetterman, and Thompson (2014) make the argument that part of this problem stems from the definition of use that most institutions employ. A majority of institutions have the problem of, what Messick (1995) calls, "construct underrepresentation of assessment use". What this means is that these institutions provide a definition of use that is "too narrow and fails to consider important dimensions or facets of the attribute" (Messick, 1995, p. 742). This construct underrepresentation results in data that have been gathered being very narrowly understood, which severely limits use. However, Jonson, Guetterman, and Thompson (2014) suggest a 4-step framework for that might alleviate this problem. The framework's four parts are: the sources of influence, the effects of influence, the results of influence, and the time of influence.

Broadening Assessment

The next major topic from *Assessment Update* and the Assessment Institute was Broadening Assessment. As outcomes assessment efforts continue to expand both across and within institutions, faculty and administrators are beginning to discover new areas in need of assessment. The future of assessment for many institutions lies in adding breadth, to where more subjects both inside and outside of the classroom are being analyzed. Some of the subjects which have come into focus this year are the graduate and professional level, the administration, and the co-curriculum.

Assessment isn't always about how one particular institution is performing, but how an educational program is performing overall, across institutions. In the case of ethical development of engineering students, it is important that all institutions are performing well in this area. The Student Engineering Ethical Development (SEED) survey was distributed to assess this subject at 19 institutions (Finelli, Holsapple, Ra, Bielby, Burt, Carpenter, Harding, & Sutkis, 2012). This survey enabled the institutions to not only see how they were performing themselves, but also how they were performing with respect to their peers. Finley (2011) describes a similar project, Give Students a Compass: A Tri-State LEAP (Liberal Education and America's Promise) Partnership for College Learning, General Education, and Underserved Student Success (known as the Compass project). The Compass project cross-examines assessment data between the national, system, and campus level to improve efforts at each of these levels.

One of the best ways to ensure both comprehensiveness and accuracy in assessing student learning is to use multiple assessments together. These can be used to develop a broader understanding of a student's performance (Foxhoven, 2010, Gustafson, Daniels, & Smulski, 2014)) or to compare the results of two different assessments to evaluate the accuracy of each one (Lundquist, Shogbon, Momary, & Rogers, 2013). Combining multiple assessments to broaden the understanding institutions can glean from the results, thus providing a clearer picture of the overall quality of the education they provide. In turn, using multiple assessments to cross-check one another allows institutions to ensure the assessments they use are successful and provide more accurate data.

Institutions have been using rubrics for a number of years, but they continue to explore the extent and variety of their uses. One advantage that rubrics have is their ability to perform qualitative along with quantitative assessment. Fulcher and Orem (2010) argue for the importance of qualitative assessment, and demonstrate the use of a rubric to conduct assessment. Reddy and Andrade (2010) provide a review of the use of rubrics in higher education by investigating student perception, instructor perception, academic performance, and validity and reliability. Their report provides an excellent review of rubrics in higher education and how well, often, and readily, they are used.

Like with rubrics, institutions have been making use of ePortfolios for some time. However, they also are rapidly discovering new ways to broaden their variety and utility. O'Keeffe and Donnelly (2013) provide a comprehensive review of the use of ePortfolios in dealing with contemporary issues facing institutions, such as adapting to new technology. They examine how they deal with modern challenges, how they add value, and other important topics. Roberts, Maor, and Herrington (2016) explain the expansion of ePortfolios in higher education. They describe how they have transformed from mere "evidence repositories" to actual assessments of advanced learning skills. Kahn (2014) provides an extensive review of ePortfolio use and speculates on their use in the future.

As new areas and challenges are discovered, new, alternative methods for assessing student learning are emerging. For example, traditional methods do very little for assessment in Fine Art (Pollock, Alden, Jones, & Wilkinson, 2015). In response, Fine Art programs have been developing assessments like the Open Studios assessment and feedback model. This model better suits the art environment because it is feedback-oriented and adjusts to the problem of the wide variety in student work. Another example of alternative assessment is the evaluation capacity building (ECB) activities used by a research university in Stitt-Bergh's (2016) report. These ECB activities are used to increase faculty and administrator engagement in assessment and use of findings for program improvement.

Improving Assessment

The last major trend in *Assessment Update* and the Assessment Institute was Improving Assessment. For colleges and universities that are later in their assessment progress, the next step is to improve the methods they already have in place. Ways in which institutions have been doing this include making their assessments broader, more dynamic and more comprehensive; ensuring assessment is used to improve the

educational quality of the institution and not just to meet accreditation standards; and ensuring that data gathered are both useful and being used.

Improving Assessment has also been a major theme in higher education literature. Institutions have begun to develop methods for improving assessment activities and outcomes assessments that are already in place. Some institutions are in the early stages and have just begun investigating the quality of the methods they use (Fulcher & Orem 2010) while others are analyzing how they can improve their use of assessment data.

For evaluating the quality of methods currently in place, James Madison University created a rubric that guides evaluative feedback on assessment (Fulcher & Orem 2010). The rubric was designed to investigate the overall performance of assessment efforts in regards to student learning, data collection, research design integrity, and all other aspects of assessment. Based on the data collected from this rubric, the institution was able to enact program changes to improve their performance.

Another institution to examine performance was National University in California. They conducted a program review to analyze assessment data to improve teaching and learning (Germaine, Barton, & Bustillos 2013). They outline the results of this program review and all of the useful insight it gave into the performance of its programs and their outcomes assessment. Some of these insights include a reexamination of learning outcomes, clear feedback about teacher methodology, and clear feedback about student performance in specific areas.

Assessments are useless to improvement unless the gathered data are useful. Jonson, Guetterman, and Thompson (2014) analyze how institutions define use. They argue that many institutions suffer from what Messick (1995) calls “construct underrepresentation”, which essentially means the institutions are operating under a definition of use that is far too narrow, which limits the usefulness of the data they gather. Institutions fail to see the full potential and applications of the data they gather and, as a result, are not able to perform the kind of program improvements that would otherwise be possible. To correct this, the authors suggest a four-part framework in which sources of influence on student learning and growth are examined. The four parts to this examination are: the sources of influence, the effects of influence, the results of influence, and the time of influence.

Stitt-Bergh (2016) describes a methodology used at University of Hawaii at Manoa in which the university implemented evaluation capacity building (ECB) programs to evaluate and improve assessment activities. Higher education institutions “use program-level learning outcomes assessment to improve programs, enhance student learning, and meet external requirements” (p. 69) and therefore implement programs like ECB programs to make these improvements. The author describes how the institution used these programs to affect positive change at their university.

Finley (2011) describes a project called Give Students a Compass: A Tri-State LEAP (Liberal Education and America’s Promise) Partnership for College Learning, General Education, and Underserved Student Success (known as the Compass project). The compass project analyzes data gathered at the national, system, and campus level, and uses the results at each level to enact improvements at others levels. The author also reports on the progress the project has made so far.

Conclusion

Analyzing and understanding these trends in learning outcomes assessment can reveal implications and opportunities for future efforts in higher education. Keeping these trends in mind will aid those involved in assessment development to enhance outcomes assessment at their institution in the future.

References

- Assessment Institute. (2016). *2016 Assessment Institute in Indianapolis*. Indianapolis, IN: The Office of Planning and Institutional Improvement at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis
- Astin, A. W. & Antonio, A. L. (2012). *Assessment for Excellence: The Philosophy and Practice of Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Atkinson, D. & Siew Leng L. (2013). Improving assessment processes in Higher Education: Student and teacher perceptions of the effectiveness of a rubric embedded in a LMS. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 29(5), 651-666.
- Bok, D. (2006). *Our underachieving colleges*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Finelli, C., Holsapple, M., Eunjong, R., Bielby, R., Burt, B., Carpenter, D., Harding, T., & Sutkus, T. (2012). An Assessment of Engineering Students' Curricular and Co-Curricular Experiences and Their Ethical Development. *Journal of Engineering Education*, 101(3), 469-494.
- Finley, A. (2011). Assessment of High-Impact Practices: Using Findings to Drive Change in the Compass Project. *Peer Review*, 13(2), 1-6.
- Foxhoven, J. R. (2010). Beyond Grading: Assessing Student Readiness to Practice Law. *Clinical Law Review*, 16(2), 335-356.
- Fulcher, K. H., & Orem, C. D. (2010). Evolving from quantity to quality: A new yardstick for assessment. *Research and Practice in Assessment*, 5, 1-10.
- Germaine, R., Barton, G., & Bustillos, T. (2013). Program Review: Opportunity for Innovation and Change. *Journal of Research in Innovative Teaching*, 6(1), 28-34.
- Gustafson, J. N., Daniels, J. R., & Smulski, R. J. (2014). Case Study: One Institution's Application of a Multiple Methods Assessment Framework. *Research and Practice in Assessment*, 9(1), 58-73.
- Halpern, D. F. (2013). A is for assessment: The other scarlet letter. *Teaching of Psychology*, 40, 358-362.
- Jonson, J., Guetterman, T., & Thompson, R. (2014). An Integrated Model of Influence: Use of Assessment Data in Higher Education. *Research & Practice in Assessment*, 9, 18-30.
- Kahn, S. (2014). E-Portfolios: A Look at Where We've Been, Where We Are Now, and Where We're (Possibly) Going. *Peer Review*, 16(1), 1-6.
- Kornuta, H. (2007). *Program review handbook: California Lutheran University*. Retrieved from <http://www.callutheran.edu/assessment/cycle/documents/ProgramReviewHandbook.Jan10.2007.pdf>
- Kuh, G. D. & Ewell, P. T. (2010). The state of learning outcomes assessment in the United States. *Higher Education Management and Policy*, 22(1), 1-20.
- Lundquist, L. M., Shogbon, A. O., Momary, K. M., & Rogers, H. K. (2013). A Comparison of Students' Self-Assessments With Faculty Evaluations of Their Communication Skills. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, 77(4), 1-6.
- Messick, S. (1995). Validity of psychological assessment: Validation of inferences from persons' responses and performance as scientific inquiry into score meaning. *American Psychologist*, 50, 741-749.
- O'Keeffe, M. & Donnelly, R. (2013). Exploration of ePortfolios for Adding Value and Deepening Student Learning in Contemporary Higher Education. *International Journal of ePortfolio*, 3(1), 1-11.
- Pollock, V., Alden, S., Jones, C., & Wilkinson, B. (2015). Open Studios is the beginning of a conversation: Creating critical and reflective learners through innovative feedback and assessment in Fine Art. *Art, Design, & Communication in Higher Education*, 14(1), 39-56.
- Powell, D., & Saint-Germain, M. (2016). Student Learning Outcome Assessment in NASPAA Programs: A Review of Validity and Reliability. *Journal of Public Affairs Education*, 22(4), 507-514.
- Reddy, Y. M. & Andrade, H. (2010). A review of rubric use in higher education. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 35(4), 435-448.
- Roberts, P., Maor, D., & Herrington, J. (2016). ePortfolio-Based Learning Environments: Recommendations for Effective Scaffolding of Reflective Thinking in Higher Education. *Journal of Educational Technology & Society*, 19(4), 22-33.
- Shavelson, R. J. (2007). A Brief History of Student Learning Assessment: How We Got Where We Are and a Proposal for Where to Go Next. *The Academy in Transition*, 10, 1-31
- Stitt-Bergh, M. (2016). Assessment Capacity Building at a Research University. *New Directions for Evaluation*, 2016(151), 69-83.
- Tucker, J. M. (2014). Stop Asking Students to 'Strongly Agree': Let's Directly Measure Cocurricular Learning. *About Campus*, 19(4), 29-32.