Using Assessment Results to Improve Student Learning: A View from the Field

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Overview

- NILOA – who we are and what we do
- 2013 Provost Survey Findings relevant to assessment use
- Emerging principles of assessment use to improve student learning
- Questions
Since 2008, NILOA’s mission has been to discover and disseminate effective uses 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**
- **Listserv**
- **Presentations**
- **Transparency Framework**
- **Featured Websites**
- **Accreditation Resources**
- **Assessment Event Calendar**
- **Assessment News**
- **Measuring Quality Inventory**
- **Policy Analysis**
- **Environmental Scans**
- **Degree Qualifications Profile**

[www.learningoutcomesassessment.org](http://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org)
Welcome to NILOA

Sinclair Community College in Ohio

Sinclair Community College's Assessment of Student Learning website is NILOA's Featured Website for its Centralized Assessment Repository.

NILOA Calendar

In the News | Archive

Biden Announces $450 Million Worth of Grants for Higher Ed
Tue, Oct 14, 2014 - 08:00 am
Catherine Morris in Diverse: Issues In Higher Education

The $450 million grant aims to help approximately 270 community colleges and other higher education institutions offer better job training for students. In addition, it will motivate the formation of partnerships with businesses in the IT, healthcare, energy, and manufacturing industries.

MOOC U: The Revolution Isn't Over
Tue, Oct 14, 2014 - 06:00 am
Jeffrey Selingo in the Chronicle of Higher Education

After the early hype surrounding MOOCs, it is now time to think critically about the position of MOOCs in the academic environment. Selingo raises three salient questions to guide the conversation: (1) What role should MOOCs play at traditional colleges and universities? (2) How do colleges make open online courses actually open?, and (3) How can the quality and success of MOOCs be measured? Another article in the Chronicle of Higher Education discusses additional challenges facing MOOCs.

New Issue of Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning
Mon, Oct 13, 2014 - 06:00 am

The latest issue of Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning (Volume 46, Issue 5) is
Far too little is known about assessment practices on campuses around the country.
Findings: Institutional Examples & Practice
Provost's view: Full and abridged reports

National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment
January 2014

Knowing What Students Know and Can Do
The Current State of Student Learning Outcomes Assessment in U.S. Colleges and Universities

George D. Kuh, Natasha Jankowski, Stanley O. Ikenberry, & Jillian Kinzie

http://www.learningoutcomeassessment.org/knowingwhatstudentsknowandcando.html
2013 National Provost Survey

- Sample: All regionally accredited, undergraduate degree-granting institutions (n=2,732)
- Announced via institutional membership organizations, website, newsletter, mailing
- Online and paper
- 43% response rate (n=1,202)
- 725 schools participated in both 2009 and 2013
Encouraging Findings about Using Assessment Results to Improve Student Learning

1. Persistent appetite in higher education for information about using assessment to improve student learning
2. Stated learning outcomes are the norm.

What % of institutions “have adopted or developed an explicit set of student learning outcomes common to all undergraduates, across all majors?”

84%
Have departments adopted learning outcomes for all students and aligned those with institutional learning outcomes?

- **42%** All/Align
- **27%** Some/Align
- **9%** All/Not align
- **21%** Some/Not align
- **1%** Not specified
Findings Most Relevant to Using Assessment Results

3. The range of tools and measures to assess student learning has expanded.
How many different assessment approaches are used at institutions?

• In 2009, Provosts reported: 3

• In 2013, Provosts reported: 5

More assessment activity!
Let’s share

• At your institution, and thinking about the various ways student learning is assessed – has there been a shift in approaches in the last four years?

• What measures does your institution use?
Most Valuable Assessment Approaches

The top three...

✓ Classroom-based assessment
✓ National Student Surveys
✓ Rubrics

What approaches to assess student learning are most valued on your campus?
Findings Most Relevant to Using Assessment Results

4. Substantially more student learning outcomes assessment is underway now than a few years ago

And, Meeting accreditation expectations heads the list for how assessment evidence is used, but internal use by campuses is growing and is considered far more important than external use.
Uses of assessment results - 2009 vs. 2013
Are the results of assessment included in the review of programs?

- Yes, ALL: 62%
- Yes, some: 29%
- No: 6%
- Not require program review: 3%
Let’s Share

• Do you have an example of when assessment results were used on your campus to enhance student learning that you would like to share?
Principles of Effective Use of Assessment Results

Actually using assessment results to make informed decisions that enhance educational quality is an unmet promise on most campuses.

*What principles influence use?*
Assessment to Improve Student Learning

• Distinguishing “Doing” Assessment vs. “Using” Results – *What’s the difference?*

• “Harnessing evidence to inform educational improvements”

• Gathering data is less risky and complicated than acting on the evidence in the data
Principles of Effective Use of Assessment Results

• Distinct levels of use – assessment at the institution level is different than program, and curricular and course level
Distinct Levels of Use

• **Institution-level** – structured framework, aligns strategic planning, assessment, resources...

• **Program-level** – more connected to faculty, the curriculum, and student learning needs
  - Focuses on specific problems or questions regarding student learning, emphasizing what is of most interest to faculty

*Clarify the intended level of use for assessment at the outset helps connect assessment activity more directly to use!*
Begin with Use in Mind

• Influences:
  • Utilization focused evaluation (UF-E) model – what will effect and ensure usefulness?
  • Backward design from classroom instruction – identify intended learning outcomes and then align instruction, practice, assignments that support them and the evidence to demonstrate

• Assessment results are a means to an end, rather than an end in themselves
Leveraging External Processes

• Provost survey and focus groups identified most common use of assessment data is related to accreditation
• Taking full advantage of quality improvement aspects of accreditation processes
• External influences – grants, AAC&U LEAP ELOs, DQP,
Let’s Share

What are some leverage points or opportunities of initiatives that assessment data might be connected with on your campus?

Where have you struggled with making connections?
Linking Assessment to Internal Processes

• Need to “normalize” assessment processes
• Make assessment a part of routine, reinforcing processes
The Quest to Close the Assessment Loop

• Take time to reflect on assessment results, document changes made, examine whether implemented changes have been successful
• Weave reflection on evidence into assessment processes
The Brian Barton Story

A faculty chair in business examined the results of program outcomes for learners who completed the program capstone course and found that on one of the outcomes, learners were performing below what he regarded as the minimum threshold. Through the curriculum maps and alignments linking learning activities in individual courses to program outcomes in the capstone, he was able to identify across the entire program which courses had the strongest alignment to the outcome in question. From there, he was able to delve deeper into individual learning activities, to combine that information with additional data including course evaluations, and from the combined data to make detailed changes in specific courses and specific learning activities or assignments within courses. By the time participants in the revised courses and learning activities completed the capstone course, there was a measurable improvement in the particular outcome in question. The faculty chair involved in the process stated, “The concept of having an outcomes-based approach and having a strong theory of alignment all the way down to individual learning activities helps facilitate the use of assessment data.”
Veterinary technology students did not score as well as needed in quantitative reasoning, for example, so veterinary technology faculty redesigned several key assignments to build and document that competency in students. Whereas previously students only read an article to learn about monitoring glucose levels in felines, the new assignment asked them to read the article, to take a reading of a cat’s glucose level, and then to use both sources to write an analytical report. This curriculum redesign created a more robust and discipline-specific quantitative reasoning experience for students and a richer set of documents to be collected and examined through ePortfolio. Addressing general education requirements throughout the program, according to the veterinary technology program director, means that “programs need to decide where they are addressing general education within the curriculum,” and using student artifacts collected through the ePortfolio “brings assessment to the forefront of the classroom.”
The religion department wanted to know if their students were writing at a desired level, and so the faculty developed a writing rubric, gathered a random collection of student essays, and had a faculty panel rate them. A report was generated from the rating that outlined where students demonstrated or fell short on the outcomes in question. Areas where students fell short were used to refocus teaching and also to rethink the sequence of courses and assignments within courses so as to better reinforce the desired outcomes and help students improve. A faculty member involved in this effort remarked, “It seems so modest to state it now – we identified an intended learning outcome, made rubrics, looked at essays, and altered teaching – but that fairly modest process generated a holistic view of what students were doing well and what they were not doing so well, which allowed for minor adjustments. In a year or two these adjustments showed that students are doing better on a given outcome.”
Discussion and comments

❖ What else do you want to know about institutional assessment practices?
❖ What is the most positive outcome of your student learning assessment activity?

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