



Embargoed Until:
August 22, 2016, 12:00am EDT

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Ten Colleges & Universities Named in Inaugural Class of Excellence in Assessment Designees

First National Designation of Its Kind Showcases Institutions at the Leading Edge of Integrated Student Learning Outcomes Assessment

Washington, D.C. — Ten exemplary colleges and universities today were named as the inaugural class of *Excellence in Assessment designees*, recognizing the institutions' commitment to the comprehensive assessment of student learning outcomes as a means to drive internal improvement and advance student success. The Excellence in Assessment (EIA) program – the first national designation of its kind – spotlights institutions successfully integrating assessment practices across campus, providing evidence of student learning outcomes, and using assessment results to guide institutional decision-making and improve student performance.

The 10 institutions comprising the inaugural class are: Cameron University; Capella University; the Community College of Baltimore County; Indiana University–Purdue University, Indianapolis; Kansas State University; Mills College; Mount St. Joseph University; the Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology; the University of Wisconsin-Madison; and Zayed University.

The sponsors of the EIA program are the Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA), a public college and university transparency initiative led by the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), in partnership with the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) and the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA).

“The inaugural class of EIA designees have a demonstrated commitment to measuring the impact of their student success efforts and are now working to improve that impact through evidence-based methods,” said APLU President Peter McPherson. “Their work is rightly being recognized with a designation that not only profiles their work, but provides a platform from which other institutions can learn and better track their own progress to drive improvement.”

“Despite the national rhetoric that would have us believe otherwise, accountability and commitment to student learning and success is very much in evidence in higher education as exemplified by these Excellence in Assessment designees,” said AASCU President Muriel Howard. “The value of this designation goes beyond honoring these institutions for their exemplary work. It generates an opportunity for dialogue around best practices in improving student performance and ultimately student success.”

“Each of the colleges and universities being recognized for their excellence is dedicated to championing assessment in student learning in ways that will further the national conversation, foster transparency, and

promote the exchange of best practices around student success at a broad range of institutions,” said AAC&U President Lynn Pasquerella.

“The Excellence in Assessment designation is a chance for institutions to be recognized for their work in assessment and we are delighted to see the variety of institutions that applied for the designation in its inaugural year,” said Natasha Jankowski, Associate Director of NILOA. “We congratulate and applaud the work of the 10 institutions in the inaugural class for aligning their assessment efforts and sharing their narratives of ensuring student success.”

The EIA Designations are directly linked to [NILOA’s Transparency Framework](#), and are the first national program designed to recognize institutions engaging in intentional campus-wide assessment. The evaluation process for the designation included a rigorous and systematic self-study and peer review by faculty members who are assessment experts, and include feedback that enables campuses to improve their effectiveness and sharing of best practices. Accredited, degree-granting institutions working to implement and sustain comprehensive use of assessment of student learning outcomes in written communication and critical thinking are eligible to receive the designations. The application period for the 2017 class of designees will open in October.

Details on the inaugural designees’ assessment work follows:

Cameron University

Cameron University has various processes in place to ensure student learning is the top priority. To meet the needs of students, it continually evaluates the quality of programs to determine whether changes are warranted. Over the last 20 years, Cameron University has documented an extensive commitment to assessment and enjoyed a campus-wide commitment to the assessment process. Positive student learning outcomes, engagement in, monitoring of, and compiling of assessment results at both the program- and campus-level are their signature accomplishments.

Capella University

Since 2002, Capella University has offered degree and certificate programs through an online learning-outcomes and competency-based curriculum, catering to its student population – non-traditional adult learners with an academic experience relevant to their personal and professional goals. Capella’s assessment efforts are hallmarked by an emphasis on continuous improvement that demonstrates an assessment approach across the university community. The university created Competency Map, a custom dashboard for learners and faculty that shows course competency assessment in real time. And in 2009, Capella launched the public website CapellaResults.com to document each program’s expected and demonstrated learning outcomes and to provide transparency of their graduates’ professional accomplishments.

Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC)

The goal of assessment at CCBC is to ensure the best conditions for learning, encourage best practices, and inspire creativity and innovation. CCBC has been lauded for its work in assessment and has been a national leader in assessment of student learning for many years. Nationally recognized as a leader in innovative strategies, CCBC educates more than 65,000 learners yearly, enrolling more than any other two-year college in Maryland.

Indiana University – Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI)

IUPUI was an early adopter of assessment for improvement and accountability and has cultivated a campus ethos of transparency. In the 1990s, IUPUI adopted the Principles of Undergraduate Learning (PULs), which centered on learning, ways of knowing, and habits of mind. IUPUI is currently implementing a new strategic plan, *Our Commitment to Indiana and Beyond*, that reaffirms student learning and success as its highest

institutional priority. Assessment thrives on a campus committed to using evidence-based practice in both undergraduate and graduate/professional education and to building and sustaining assessment capacity through professional development.

Kansas State University

Kansas State University's approach to assessment emphasizes faculty ownership, which is considered the foundation upon which institutional assessment efforts are built. Ownership and broad levels of involvement are the foundation supporting the assessment culture developed at Kansas State. Academic programs use their assessment processes to update curricula and improve student learning and the Office of Assessment supports faculty and fulfills external reporting obligations. Kansas State's university-wide assessment culture is focused on improved learning within disciplines. Kansas State's assessment systems have led to many substantial changes including instructional and curricular adjustments, clarification of expected learning, and deeper analysis of the campus-wide experience.

Mills College

Mills College has been exceptionally active in assessing student learning. The broad representation of the college's Assessment Committee provides the support and guidance that has enabled it to create a cohesive strategy for its learning assessment program. Mills's assessment program uses many lenses through which student learning is assessed — from the level of institution-wide learning, to core programs, to each of their many academic and co-curricular programs. The college purchased a sophisticated software program allowing them to not only centralize all assessment components, but to align the learning goals of each to create a visual means of targeting assessment processes at the institutional level. Mills College is interested in and committed to learning as an institution about the methodology of collecting and analyzing data on learning. It's also focused on designing and implementing a sophisticated and sustainable framework for putting that evidence to use.

Mount St. Joseph University

Mount St. Joseph's has been engaged in formal assessment for over 20 years and has developed a culture of assessment that covers all areas of student learning, both curricular and extra-curricular. Development of this culture has led to demonstrated improvement in curricular design, learning outcomes, and student experiences — supported by institutional leadership with significant investments of time and resources. The university's pathway to excellence in assessment includes appointing a faculty member as Assessment Coordinator, the creation of an Academic Assessment Committee, the initiation of curriculum mapping at the program and baccalaureate levels, and the creation of the Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence. Effects of their work are evidenced in the amount of faculty engaged, with at least one-fourth of their faculty presenting or publishing research on assessment.

Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology

Since 1998, Rose-Hulman has had a well-established set of campus-level student learning outcomes statements and a comprehensive campus-level assessment plan. For the past two decades, assessment experts in the Office of Institutional Research, Planning and Assessment have collaborated with faculty and student affairs staff to collect meaningful assessment data. They continuously engage in meaningful discussions about the state of campus-level outcomes assessment and areas of improvement to further their efforts. Their outcomes align with the institutional mission and describe the knowledge, skills, and attitudes expected of their graduates. Rose-Hulman is currently in the process of revamping their entire campus online infrastructure to further enhance their ability to communicate with both internal and external stakeholders.

University of Wisconsin-Madison

High-impact practices and student engagement are at the core of what UW-Madison refers to as the Wisconsin Experience, where they aspire to provide a learning environment that produces graduates who

think beyond the conventional wisdom; are creative problem-solvers who know how to integrate passion with empirical analysis; know how to seek out, evaluate, and create new knowledge and technologies; adapt to new situations; and are engaged citizens of the world. The University of Wisconsin-Madison has had formal assessment processes in place since 1991. Since then, the institution has worked to integrate assessment into the education experience through a formalized assessment plan, an assessment fund to support specific projects, and an assessment committee of faculty and academic leaders to oversee and advance student learning. In 2008 to keep in pace with the national direction of assessment, UW-Madison adopted the Essential Learning Outcomes promulgated by AAC&U as overarching learning goals for their undergraduate program. Since 2014, they have made documented progress and are currently in the second year of a three-year project to collect learning goals and assessment plans from every academic program, and then establish a reporting and renewal cycle with nearly 100 percent participation by academic programs at all levels.

Zayed University

Zayed University is an international learning outcomes-based institution that has established a set of institutional and major learning outcome statements. They continue to assess student learning in a systematic and sustained manner by constantly working towards effectively closing the loop. Regular professional development activities highlight key aspects of their assessment process. They have also been successful at providing ongoing improvement over the years that has been removing barriers and providing faculty with tools to facilitate effective planning, collection, analysis, and reporting of assessment results. Their commitment to good assessment practices have led them to post all of their annual assessment plans and reports on their website.

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The Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) is a research, policy, and advocacy organization representing 236 public research universities, land-grant institutions, state university systems, and affiliated organizations. Founded in 1887, APLU is North America's oldest higher education association with member institutions in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, four U.S. territories, Canada, and Mexico. Annually, member campuses enroll 4.7 million undergraduates and 1.3 million graduate students, award 1.2 million degrees, employ 1.2 million faculty and staff, and conduct \$42.7 billion in university-based research.

The American Association of State Colleges and Universities<<http://www.aascu.org/>> (AASCU) is a Washington-based higher education association of more than 400 public colleges, universities and systems whose members share a learning- and teaching-centered culture, a historic commitment to underserved student populations and a dedication to research and creativity that advances their regions' economic progress and cultural development.

The Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) is the leading national association concerned with the quality, vitality, and public standing of undergraduate liberal education. Its members are committed to extending the advantages of a liberal education to all students, regardless of academic specialization or intended career. Founded in 1915, AAC&U now comprises more than 1,300 member institutions-including accredited public and private colleges, community colleges, research universities, and comprehensive universities of every type and size.

Established in 2008, the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA) assists institutions and others in discovering and adopting promising practices in the assessment of college student learning outcomes. NILOA's primary objective is to discover and disseminate ways that academic programs and institutions can productively use assessment data internally to inform and strengthen undergraduate education, and externally to communicate with policy makers, families and other stakeholders.