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## **Five Colleges & Universities Named as 2017 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.— Five exemplary colleges and universities today were named *Excellence in Assessment* designees, recognizing their 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 five institutions comprising the Class of 2017 Excellence in Assessment designees are: Bowling Green State University; James Madison University; Middlesex Community College; Rio Salado College; and Southern Connecticut State University. One institution, James Madison University, received the designation of Sustained Excellence in Assessment. They now join the 10 designees inducted into the inaugural class of 2016.

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 (AAC&U), in partnership with the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) and the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA).

The designation was created to acknowledge on a national level the important work colleges and universities are doing through comprehensive assessment activities and to highlight those practices so other institutions can draw upon them for their own efforts. As part of the application process, colleges and universities were asked not just to detail the specific assessment activities they've undertaken, but also the reason why such efforts are a priority for them. The designees needed to demonstrate how aligned processes, building from classroom-based assessment, foster a coherent, collaborative approach to assessing student learning.

*“The Excellence in Assessment Designation is the first national, jointly sponsored designation to recognize institutions moving assessment of student learning from a compliance exercise to one of meaningful engagement. It highlights the use of evidence of student learning across the entirety of the university setting, involving a variety of stakeholders. Institutions receiving the designation have proved themselves to be truly excellent in their efforts to advance campus processes and use of evidence, serving as exemplars to others for engaging in comprehensive assessment leading to advanced student success,”* said Natasha Jankowski, NILOA Director.

*“Congratulations to each of the award recipients. By integrating assessment into the fabric of their institutions, they have demonstrated an on-going commitment to fostering student success both inside and outside of the classroom,”* said AAC&U President Lynn Pasquerella.



*“The EIA designees have a demonstrated commitment to measuring the impact of their student success efforts and are working to improve that impact through evidence-based methods,”* said APLU President Peter McPherson. *“Their work is rightly being nationally 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.”*

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 and staff 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 are eligible to receive the designations. The application period for the 2018 class of designees will open in November. More information on the [EIA Designation web page](#).

Details on the inaugural designees’ assessment work follows:

#### **James Madison University – Sustained Excellence**

Faculty and staff at James Madison University have worked hard for the past two decades to develop an intentional, student learning informed, embedded approach to assessment. James Madison University has been nationally recognized for its assessment practices, most recently the “weigh pig, feed pig, weigh pig” approach to improvement. Not only has James Madison University evidenced student growth in each of its five learning clusters, it continues to see efficacy of its redesigned general education program over the last 20 years. Formal recognition of faculty and staff commitment to excellence in assessment is – for many departments – a part of the promotion and tenure process that continues to advance learning improvement on its campus. Additionally, James Madison University provides assessment support college-wide through 11 assessment professionals, over 100 faculty and 40 staff coordinators, and 15+ graduate students who serve as assessment professionals in training.

#### **Bowling Green State University**

Bowling Green State University’s strength in its assessment process lies in its innovative engagement of internal and external stakeholders. Particularly, the development of “Student Learning Analysts” on campus serves as a creative model of student engagement others may replicate. Bowling Green State University’s thoughtful approach to assessment emphasizes the need for cross-campus committee membership, providing space for reviewing data with a multiple stakeholders, and sharing and communicating data with a variety of groups. Educating nearly 20,000 students annually, Bowling Green State University continues to strategically use evidence to guide decision-making.

#### **Middlesex Community College**

Middlesex Community College’s culture of assessment includes a well-scaffolded assessment infrastructure of shared expectations and alignment of student learning at its institutional, program, and course levels. Campus-wide commitment to assessment is found in Middlesex Community College’s shared governance structure in developing and assessing its six institutional learning outcomes. Documenting the impact of curricular changes, intentional engagement of faculty, key stakeholders, and students throughout its assessment process, integrating co-curricular learning, and availability of campus assessment resources provide evidence of Middlesex Community College’s commitment to excellence in assessment.

#### **Rio Salado College**

Over the past two decades, Rio Salado College has worked hard to refine, align and integrate its Total Quality Management Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle campus-wide. Serving over 55,000 students annually and more than 27,000 students online, Rio Salado College continues to foster a culture of assessment on its campus with a commitment to meaningful assessment. Rio Salado College has developed a model that facilitates intentional



collaboration between full-time and adjunct faculty in relation to assessment of student learning on campus. For students, Rio Salado College offers the Student Learning Outcomes Work Lab (OWL), which helps facilitate mastery of its five college-level learning outcomes. Integrating assessment data into its strategic plan and the recent development of its home-grown Assessment Data Display supports efforts in making evidence of campus-level learning transparent.

### **Southern Connecticut State University**

Southern Connecticut State University's use of evidence of student learning from a variety of assessment methods provides a big picture of learning on its campus. Wide stakeholder engagement, use of data analytics, student involvement in survey development, and robust examples of rubric development support its inquiry-driven assessment and institutional effectiveness work. Integration of various programs and activities, including participating in several national and even international initiatives, creates innovative assessment practice and better supports student learning on Southern Connecticut State University's campus.

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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 4.9 million undergraduates and 1.3 million graduate students, award 1.2 million degrees, employ 1.2 million faculty and staff, and conduct \$43.9 billion in university-based research.*

*The American Association of State Colleges and Universities (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 1,400 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 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.*