NILOA Occasional Papers

NILOA publishes Occasional Papers from leading scholars in the field of assessment who are commissioned to examine contemporary issues and to inform the academic community of the current state-of-the art of assessing learning outcomes in U.S. higher education. The papers are written for a general audience in order to provide comprehensive, accurate information about how institutions and organizations can become more meaningfully engaged with assessing and reporting student learning outcomes. As of this year, we have disseminated pertinent assessment knowledge through the publication of 25 Occasional Papers. We invite you to read our Occasional Papers and use them as resources to inform your work.

1. Ewell, P. T. (2009, November). Assessment, Accountability, and Improvement: Revisiting the Tension. This paper re-examines the issues between assessment for accountability and assessment for improvement.

2. Banta, T. W., Griffin, M., Flateby, T. L., & Kahn, S. (2009, December). Three Promising Alternatives for Assessing College Students' Knowledge and Skills. This paper discusses three promising alternatives that afford the kinds of authentic, information-rich, meaningful assessments that are essential for improving student learning, and at the same time provide data for public reporting.

3. Wellman, J. V. (2010, January). Connecting the Dots Between Learning and Resources. To get a better handle on what is known and the much that remains to be discovered, this paper presents a conceptual approach for analyzing the relation of spending to student success, followed by an examination of what the existing research says about the topic.

4. Hutchings, P. (2010, April). Opening Doors to Faculty Involvement in Assessment. This paper examines the dynamics behind faculty involvement, including the mixed origins of assessment, coming both from within and outside academe, and a number of obstacles that stem from the culture and organization of higher education itself.

5. Swing, R. L., & Coogan, C. S. (2010, May). Valuing Assessment: Cost-Benefit Considerations. This paper analyzes how the application of basic cost accounting principles, good practices such as intentional design of assessment initiatives, and application of cost-saving approaches can inform decisions about resource allocations in support of assessment.

6. Provezis, S. (2010, October). Regional Accreditation and Student Learning Outcomes: Mapping the Territory. This paper examines the policies and procedures of the seven regional accreditors as they relate to student learning outcomes assessment.
7. Schuh, J. H., & Gansemer-Topf, A. M. (2010, December). *The Role of Student Affairs in Student Learning Assessment*. This paper examines the role that student affairs plays in learning outcomes assessment.

8. Blaich, C. F., & Wise, K. S. (2011, January). *From Gathering to Using Assessment Results: Lessons from the Wabash National Study*. This paper reviews faulty assumptions we made about assessment in creating the Wabash Study, including initial thoughts about the primary obstacles to good assessment, the importance of assessment reports, and the benefit of connecting assessment with faculty habits of disciplinary inquiry.


10. Nunley, C., Bers, T., & Manning, T. (2011, July). *Learning Outcomes Assessment in Community Colleges*. This paper analyzes the findings from two recent surveys, one of institutional researchers and one of chief academic officers from community colleges, to better understand the state of student learning outcomes assessment in this increasingly important sector.


12. Prineas, M., & Cini, M. (2011, October). *Assessing Learning in Online Education: The Role of Technology in Improving Student Outcomes*. This paper considers how emerging techniques, such as data mining and learning analytics, allow the use of performance and behavioral data to improve student learning not just for future iterations of a program but in real time for current students.

13. Miller, M. A. (2012, January). *From Denial to Acceptance: The Stages of Assessment*. This paper analyzes the various stages that assessment faculty and staff go through while conducting assessment.

14. Gilchrist, D., & Oakleaf, M. (2012, April). *An Essential Partner: The Librarian’s Role in Student Learning Assessment*. This paper describes the various ways that librarians can be an asset to/in assessment efforts.


16. Ewell, P. (2013, January). *The Lumina Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP): Implications for Assessment*. This paper explores some of what needs to be done to develop consistent and systematic ways to gather evidence of the proficiencies that the DQP describes, and provides a few tools and techniques (some of which are already in widespread use) that may help us move forward.

17. Hersh, R.H. & Keeling, R.P. (2013, February). *Changing Institutional Culture to Promote Assessment of Higher Learning*. This paper helps realign the assessment conversation by
arguing for institutional culture change that puts higher learning first and simultaneously embraces systemic assessment as a prerequisite of and central condition for a culture in which learning is the priority.

18. Cooper, T. & Terrell, T. (2013, August). What Are Institutions Spending on Assessment? Is it Worth the Cost? This paper discusses a research project aimed at determining how much institutions are spending annually on assessment and whether the perceived benefit is worth the cost.

19. Richman, W.A., & Ariovich, L. (2013, October). All-in-one: Combining Grading, Course, Program, and General Education Outcomes Assessment. This paper describes the system developed and implemented by one institution, to integrate assessment of course, program, and general education and to connect outcomes assessment with grading.

20. Klein-Collins, R. (2013, November). Sharpening Our Focus on Learning: The Rise of Competency-Based Approaches to Degree Completion. This paper defines unifying concepts shared by different competency-based education programs, describes current competency-based models using the direct assessment approach, and examines the national policy context that could determine the extent to which these programs are able to go to scale.

21. Kezar, A., & Maxey, D. (2014, July). Student Outcomes Assessment Among the New Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Majority. This paper explores the potential for non-tenure-track faculty to meaningfully contribute to student learning outcomes assessment and outlines policies and practices that can facilitate such contributions.


23. Fulcher, K. H., Good, M. R., Coleman, C. M., & Smith, K. L. (2014, December). A Simple Model for Learning Improvement: Weigh Pig, Feed Pig, Weigh Pig. This paper clarifies how assessment results are related to improved learning – assess, effectively intervene, re-assess – and contrasts this process with mere changes in assessment methodology and changes to pedagogy and curriculum.


25. Eubanks, D., & Gliem, D. (2015, May). Improving Teaching, Learning, and Assessment by Making Evidence of Achievement Transparent. Authentic student achievements that are addressed to a real world audience can lead to richly detailed Resume 2.0 portfolios of work that add value to degrees and the granting institutions. A guide is provided for implementation of new high-impact practices, including structured assignment creation.