

December 2010

A Note from the NILOA Team

What you do is important to the quality of American Higher Education. If articles and blogs in outlets such as the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and *Inside Higher Education* are good barometers, the past year witnessed an uptick in interest and activity in gathering and using evidence of student learning outcomes to make decisions and strengthen academic programs.

NILOA contributed its share, including the release of five new occasional papers and several reports dealing with the role of regional accreditors, an approach to the challenge of transparency, and the views of campus leaders on the current state of assessment (check the NILOA Website if you want copies). Our team has made presentations at a number of national and regional meetings. We also partnered with the American Council on Education and the Association for Institutional Research to produce [*Measuring Quality for Accountability and Improvement*](#) (Borden & Kernal, April 2010), an interactive compendium of assessment resources. And the NILOA website attracted visitors from 86 different countries in 6 different continents, indicating that documenting student learning and using the results to improve undergraduate education is a growing world-wide phenomenon.

As the calendar year winds down, we want to thank you for your interest in and support of NILOA's mission to advance best practice in student learning outcomes assessment. This newsletter closes our second year of work. It features a new occasional paper focused on the contributions student affairs professionals can make to a campus assessment program as well as some announcements about other resources. We hope you will find it useful.

My NILOA colleagues and I wish you a joyous holiday season and healthy, productive 2011! Please do write or otherwise contact us with your comments and suggestions going forward.

Dr. George Kuh and Dr. Stan Ikenberry, along with the NILOA team

NILOA Updates: Occasional Paper 7 Released, Featured Website: Capella University, Upcoming NILOA work

NILOA has released Occasional Paper 7:

The Role of Student Affairs in Student Learning Assessment

Student affairs professionals are expected to be knowledgeable about the student experience. Thus, it follows that they can and should play an important role in assessing student learning. In this NILOA Occasional Paper, John Schuh, Distinguished Professor of Educational Leadership and Policies Studies Emeritus at Iowa State University and Ann Gansemer-Topf, Associate Director of Research for the Office of Admissions at Iowa State University, describe the contributions student affairs can make to a campus assessment program and examine the challenges student affairs professionals often must overcome to do so effectively.

NILOA Featured Website: Capella University's "Learning & Career Outcomes"

Capella University has multiple locations and sources of information across its website for student learning outcomes assessment. Not only is there an entire section of the website devoted to results of learning outcomes, but Capella includes videos and graphs (as well as accessible transcripts of each) to help multiple audiences and users comprehend current student learning outcomes assessment activities and how it is integrated throughout the institution. For creativity, Capella has developed interactive tools to help multiple audiences understand what student learning outcomes assessment means and entails for the institution

Upcoming Occasional Papers include:

Charles Blaich and Kathleen Wise from the Center of Inquiry at Wabash College on "From Gathering to Using Assessment Results"

News

We collect news items from a variety of sources related to learning outcomes assessment for our website. Listed below are some from the past month:

Measurement of 'Learning Outcomes' Comes to Graduate School

A new Measuring Stick article features the discussions held in Washington DC about learning outcomes at the graduate level.

Student Learning: Measure or Perish

In this commentary, in the Chronicle of Higher Education, Kevin Carey discusses the consequences for not pursuing student learning assessments and the potential future for measuring student learning.

Upcoming Conferences

A number of conferences and workshops on learning outcomes and assessment are listed on our online calendar. Below are some that still have open registration that will take place soon:

January 4-7: **A Dynamic Equilibrium: Essential Missions, Evolving Models**
Council of Independent Colleges' annual Presidents Institute in Indian Wells, CA

January 10: **Fostering A Campus Culture of Assessment**
Middle States Commission on Higher Education in Philadelphia, PA

January 21: **Outcomes-Based Academic Assessment Reporting**
Academic Impressions Online from 1:00-2:30pm EST

January 24-27 : **The Evolving Role and Responsibilities of Accreditation**
Council for Higher Education Accreditation in Washington DC

January 26-29: **Global Positioning: Essential Learning, Student Success, and the Currency of US Degrees**
AAC&U Annual Meeting in San Francisco, CA. NILOA occasional paper authors, Charles Blach, Christine Keller along with NILOA researchers, Peter Ewell, Jillian Kinzie, George Kuh and Staci Provezis will present at two sessions.

November 2010

NILOA Updates: Featured Website: Tunxis Community College ABE video, Two papers released in October, Upcoming NILOA work

NILOA Featured Website: Tunxis Community College's ABE Video

At Tunxis Community College, faculty identified a number of abilities for students to master, so in addition to letter grades students receive an ability score. The details of the "Ability Based Education" are communicated through a creative and informative video. This video is this month's featured website, see it and read more about this website when you click above.

Two new NILOA reports were released last month:

Regional Accreditation and Student Learning Outcomes Assessment: Mapping the Territory

Regional Accreditation in the American higher education system has been challenged in recent years as to its approach to evaluating institutional quality, but too little is known about the criteria and processes they use. In this paper, Staci Provezis from the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment carefully examines how regional accrediting groups make judgments about institutional quality.

Perspectives from Campus Leaders on the Current State of Student Learning Outcomes Assessment: NILOA Focus Group Summary 2009-2010

This paper highlights lessons from four focus group sessions with campus leaders--presidents, provosts, academic deans and directors of institutional research from a variety of two- and four-year institutions--regarding their perspectives on the state of learning assessment practices on their campuses.

Upcoming Occasional Papers include:

Charles Blach and Kathleen Wise from the Center of Inquiry at Wabash College on "From Gathering to Using Assessment Results"

John H. Schuh and Ann M. Gansemer-Topf on "The Role of Student Affairs in Student Learning Assessment"

News

We collect news items from a variety of sources related to learning outcomes assessment for our website. Listed below are some from the past month:

Listening to Students

An insightful article from Change magazine discussing assessment from a student's perspective. View it for free for a limited time on our [website](#) (pdf).

New Leadership Alliance Presidents' Alliance

There have been a number of articles both [describing](#) the new Presidents' Alliance as well as [four reactions](#) to this new group.

Stealth Assessments: Video games playing to measure thinking skills

This article from the Chronicle discusses how researchers are measuring learning outcomes, like problem solving, through game play.

CICs Chief Academic Officers and Chief Financial Officers Institute

In early November, there were several sessions related to assessment-related issues at CIC's institute. "Why Linking Pedagogy to Assessment Makes Sense" was led by Marc Chun, David K. Clark, Susan Kupisch, and Sherry McCarthy. Presenters reflected on the nature of the linkage between teaching and assessment, demonstrated how performance tasks are used, and discussed the impact of these exercises on the assessment of learning outcomes in the classroom.

Graduate Education Leaders Discuss Potential to Collaborate on Preparing Future Faculty to Assess Student Learning

CGS hosted a meeting of assessment experts and graduate deans to explore how universities can prepare graduate students who aspire to faculty positions with the skills they will need to assess student learning. Read the press release (pdf) by clicking above.

Upcoming Conferences

A number of conferences and workshops on learning outcomes and assessment are listed on our online calendar. Below are some that still have open registration that will take place soon:

December 1-3: [Demanding Excellence, Honoring Difference](#)
New England Association of Schools and Colleges in Boston, MA

December 4-7: [The Race for Quality in the 21st Century](#)
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools in Louisville, KY

December 8-10 : [Implementing an Effective Accreditation Process](#)
Middle States Commission in Philadelphia, PA

January 4-7: [A Dynamic Equilibrium: Essential Missions, Evolving Models](#)
Council of Independent Colleges' annual Presidents Institute in Indian Wells, CA

October 2010

NILOA Updates: Sixth Occasional Paper released, New NILOA report, Featured Website: Slippery Rock University

The Sixth Occasional Paper is now available:

Regional Accreditation and Student Learning Outcomes Assessment: Mapping the Territory

Regional Accreditation in the American higher education system has been challenged in recent years as to its approach to evaluating institutional quality, but too little is known about the criteria and processes they use. In this paper, Staci Provezis from the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment carefully examines how regional accrediting groups make judgments about institutional quality.

NILOA has released a new report:

Perspectives from Campus Leaders on the Current State of Student Learning Outcomes Assessment: NILOA Focus Group Summary 2009-2010

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NILOA Featured Website: Slippery Rock University

Slippery Rock University recently unveiled its institutional accountability profile web page. This page is located on the home page and linked throughout the institution's website. Color tabs guide navigation for visitors, regardless of where they start, to different kinds of information illustrated with text, graphs, and tables showing student data over time. Slippery Rock continually updates its website, which illustrates how an institution can integrate multiple types of information in a single place in clear and understandable language. For these and other reasons, Slippery Rock University's Accountability profile is this month's Featured Website.

News

We collect news items from a variety of sources related to learning outcomes assessment for our website. Listed below are some from the past month:

Why are we assessing?

At the Assessment Institute in Indiana earlier this week, Linda Suskie presented on this article, and George Kuh, NILOA director, and Peter Ewell, NILOA Senior Scholar, responded to it.

Without Assessment, Great Teaching Stays a Secret

Kevin Carey, in this Chronicle article, argues that assessment information allows institutions to describe their quality.

Graphic Display of Student Learning Objectives

This article from the Chronicle discusses how to graphically display student learning outcomes (statement, objectives, assessments).

Upcoming Conferences

A number of conferences and workshops on learning outcomes and assessment are listed on our online calendar. Below are some that still have open registration that will take place soon:

November 4: **A day at Alverno College**

Alverno College in Milwaukee, WI

November 7-9: **Oceans of Opportunity: Elevating the Teaching Profession**

South Carolina Formative Assessment Conference in Hilton Head, SC

November 10-13: **Evaluation 2010**

American Evaluation Association in San Antonio, TX

November 13-16: **Fountain of Knowledge: IR Collaboration for Effective Change**

North East Association for Institutional Research in Saratoga Springs, NY

November 17: **Best practices for Using Student, Teacher and Institutional Portfolios**

Academic Impressions (online) 1:00-3:00 EST

Registration is now open for the **AAC&U 2011 Annual Meeting**

January 26-29, 2011 in San Francisco, CA

NILOA researchers will present at two sessions: "Down and In: A National Perspective on Program-Level Assessment" and "Can You See Me Now? Taking the Pulse of Transparency Efforts"

September 2010

NILOA Updates: New report released, Featured Website, BYU, Coming in October Connecting State Policies on Assessment with Institutional Assessment Activity

The coincidence of two national surveys—one at the state level and one at the institutional level—enabled researchers at the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA) to explore the relationships between state policies on student learning outcomes assessment and institutional approaches to assessing student learning and related phenomena. This report shows the findings of that study.

NILOA Featured Website

We have launched a new component to our website: featuring outstanding institutional websites. NILOA will select institutional websites to feature as examples of promising practices in innovative and transparent online communication of student learning outcomes assessment. Criteria for selection of a student learning outcomes assessment featured website may include: communication, navigation, and creativity. Visit the link above to find out more.

NILOA Featured Website: Brigham Young University Website

Brigham Young University clearly communicates student learning outcomes assessment information to students and professors through its Center for Teaching & Learning website, "Expected Learning Outcomes." This site features a video that explains why students should be interested in student learning outcomes, tips for both students and faculty about the importance of student learning outcomes, and an easy to use feature that allows the user to find the expected learning outcomes for each major as well as the ways that these outcomes are measured and evaluated. This website provides a great example of how institutions can organize their assessment information to make it user-friendly to multiple audiences. For these reasons, Brigham Young University's "Expected Learning Outcomes" webpage is a NILOA Featured Website.

Coming in October

Next month we will release two new papers:

Regional Accreditation and Student Learning Outcomes Assessment: Mapping the Territory

This paper focuses on the examination of the policies and procedures at each of the seven regional accreditation organizations, as they relate to student learning outcomes assessment.

Perspectives from Campus Leaders on the Current State of Student Learning Outcomes Assessment: NILOA focus Group Summary 2009-2010

This paper highlights lessons from four focus group sessions with campus leaders--presidents, provosts, academic deans and directors of institutional research from a variety of two- and four-year institutions-- regarding their perspectives on the state of learning assessment practices on their campuses.

News

We collect news items from a variety of sources related to learning outcomes assessment for our website. Listed below are some from the past month:

Measuring Stick: Quality and Assessment of Higher Education

This new series from the *Chronicle of Higher Education* invites experts from the field as guest essay writers. Featured writers include NILOA PI, George Kuh and Senior Scholar, Peter Ewell. NILOA was also listed as one of the 5 Quality-of-Learning Projects new in the past 5 years in this [article](#).

Conditions Supporting a Culture of Assessment in Student Affairs Divisions at Small College Universities

In this article from the *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice* is a qualitative study on the "conditions that support assessment practice" at small colleges.

What do they measure? Comparing three learning outcomes assessments

This article from *Change Magazine* compares the ETS, CAAP and CLA tests and discusses what each of these tests measure and the implications of giving these tests. Login may be required.

Upcoming Conferences

A number of conferences and workshops on learning outcomes and assessment are listed on our online calendar. Below are some that still have open registration that will take place soon:

October 7-9: **2010 AGLS National Conference**

Association for General and Liberal Studies (AGLS), St. Edwards University, and Austin Community College in Austin, TX

October 11-12: **Improving Student Affairs Assessment**

Academic Impressions in San Diego, CA

October 13-15 : **The Kentucky Association for Institutional Research**

KAIR in Louisville, KY

October 24-26: **2010 Assessment Institute in Indianapolis**

Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis in Indianapolis, IN

November 5: **Assessment: Tensions, Opportunities and Outcomes**

New England Educational Assessment Network (NEEAN) in Worcester, MA

Registration is now open for the **AAC&U 2011 Annual Meeting**

January 26-29, 2011 in San Francisco, CA

NILOA researchers will present at two sessions: "Down and In: A National Perspective on Program-Level Assessment" and "Can You See Me Now? Taking the Pulse of Transparency Efforts"

Upcoming Deadline

October 15: **CAS Assessment Research Grant**

Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education

CAS weeks to advance knowledge about the use of standards and self-assessment processes in enhancing programs and services to students and in developing student learning and developmental outcomes. Please consider applying for this research grant. The link will open in a pdf.

July 2010

NILOA Updates: Webscan Report 2010 released, Second National Survey Updates, Case Studies this Fall, Upcoming Occasional Papers Announcement

NILOA has released its 2010 Webscan Report in July 2010

Exploring the Landscape: What institutional websites reveal about student learning outcomes assessment activities

by Natasha Jankowski and Julia Panke Makela

Despite persistent calls for colleges and universities to post student learning outcomes assessment information to their websites, the assessment information that can be found online falls considerably short of the activities reported by chief academic officers. The study finds that institutions are often not taking full advantage of their website to increase transparency regarding student learning outcomes assessment. The researchers share their findings and offer recommendations for institutions.

The Chronicle of Higher Education and **Inside Higher Ed** carried articles about this report.

NILOA Second National Survey Update

The National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment National Survey

The second national survey was launched Spring of 2010 and will close in August 2010. The survey asks questions

about assessment practices of randomly selected department or program chairs at accredited two- and four-year college and university in the U.S. Currently NILOA researchers are calling a number of selected programs to find out more about the programs' learning outcomes assessment initiatives. If your institution has not yet participated in the survey, please consider doing so before it closes.

Case Studies this Fall

NILOA will be conducting a limited number of case studies to look more closely at how institutions are using assessment data to improve student learning and their approaches to public reporting of assessment results. Look for more information in the upcoming months.

NILOA Occasional Papers

This fall (2010) you can look forward to the following titles:

- Jeff Seybert and Peter Ewell. Assessment and accountability in community colleges: Current issues and future prospects
- John Schuh and Ann Gansemer-Topf. Assessment in Student Affairs: Works in Progress
- Charlie Blaich and Kathy Wise. From gathering to using assessment results: Lessons from the Wabash National Study.

News

We collect news items from a variety of sources related to learning outcomes assessment for our website. Listed below are some from the past month:

State Policies on the Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes (pdf)

This new report from NCHEMS highlights the results of an inventory of Fifty-states and the state policies on the assessment of student learning outcomes.

Academic Outcomes of Study Abroad

In this article, the author discusses the academic outcomes of study abroad across the University System of Georgia in a ten year: higher GPAs, increased cultural understanding and higher graduation rates.

Getting it Right the First Time: Creating a culture of assessment from the start

This article from Inside Higher Ed talks about how Community College of the District of Columbia is building assessment into the campus culture.

Upcoming Conferences

A number of conferences and workshops on learning outcomes and assessment are listed on our online calendar. Below are some that still have open registration that will take place soon:

August 4-5: (Webcast) Improve Student Learning with Action Analytics

Academic Impressions online 1:00-2:30 EDT

September 10 and 24 (Webcast): Creating a Culture of Assessment through Professional Development: The Student Service Assessment Institute

Innovative Educators online 2:00-3:30 EDT

September 15: Getting Started with Student Assessment

Middle States Commission on Higher Education in Philadelphia, PA

September 25-28: Southern Association for Institutional Research Annual Conference

Southern Association for Institutional Research in New Orleans, LA

Upcoming Deadline

August 15: Teagle Assessment Scholar Development Program

Center of Inquiry at Wabash College

"Teagle Assessment Scholars are faculty, staff, and administrators with a strong interest in using evidence to improve student learning." Please consider applying for this program to improve your assessment skills.

June 2010

National Updates: Webscan Report released and AIR presentation uploaded

NILOA has released its 2010 Webscan Report

Exploring the Landscape: What institutional websites reveal about student learning outcomes assessment activities

by Natasha Jankowski and Julia Panke Makela

Despite persistent calls for colleges and universities to post student learning outcomes assessment information to their websites, the assessment information that can be found online falls considerably short of the activities reported by chief academic officers. The study finds that institutions are often not taking full advantage of their website to increase transparency regarding student learning outcomes assessment. The researchers share their findings and offer recommendations for institutions.

AIR 50th Annual Forum Presentations

NILOA researchers presented at two sessions at AIR in early June. The electronic slides are now posted on our [website](#). *NILOA Tracking the Status of Outcomes Assessment in the U.S.* was presented by George Kuh and *Learning Outcomes Assessment, Transparency, and the Internet: A Critical Examination of Higher Education Institutions' Web-Based Communication Strategies* was presented by a team of NILOA researchers. Thank you to many of you who came and supported these sessions.

News

We collect news items from a variety of sources related to learning outcomes assessment for our website. Listed below are some from the past month:

For Accreditation, a Narrow Window of Opportunity

Molly Corbett Broad, a member of the NILOA National Advisory Panel and President of American Council on Education, writes this piece on the increased demands from the government on improving institutional performance.

The White Noise of Accountability

In this article from Inside Higher Ed, Clifford Adelman questions the use and assumptions of the word and practice of accountability.

The Faculty Role in Assessment

What is the role of faculty in assessment? This article summarizes some of the debates on this topic, highlighting NILOA's fourth Occasional Paper on this topic written by Pat Hutchins.

Electronic Portfolios and Student Success: Effectiveness, Efficiency, and Learning

This AAC&U publication presents an overview of electronic portfolios and ways individuals and campuses can implement e-portfolios to enhance and assess student learning, recognizing that learning occurs in many places, takes many forms, and is exhibited through many modes of representation.

Pitch Perfect

This new book from William Tyson, *Perfect Pitch: Communicating with traditional and social media for scholars, researchers, and academic leaders* discusses the many ways to share information to a wider public through mediums such as blogs and Twitter. Through case studies, the book will guide you through the essentials of communicating with your audience.

Upcoming Conferences

A number of conferences and workshops on learning outcomes and assessment are listed on our online calendar. Below are some that still have open registration that will take place soon:

July 19-22: **ePortfolios & the Emergent Learning Ecology**
AAEEBL, AAC&U, and The Making Connections Project in Boston, MA

July 25-28: **The 2010 Institute on Quality Enhancement and Accreditation**
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools in Tampa, FL

August 4-5: (Webcast) **Improve Student Learning with Action Analytics**
Academic Impressions online 1:00-2:30 EDT

Website Updates

There is now a RSS feed available for news items and updates from NILOA. Subscribe [here](#)

May 2010

National Updates: Fifth Occasional Paper available, AIR Presentations, Second National Survey In Field

The fifth Occasional Paper is now available:

Valuing assessment: Cost-benefit considerations

by Randy L. Swing and Christopher S. Coogan

Nearly every U.S. accredited college and university allocates resources to support assessment of student learning outcomes, satisfaction, and other measures of institutional effectiveness. But with only limited data about best practices in budgeting for assessment, colleges are left guessing how much they should spend on assessment to achieve the best return on their investment. So how can a campus know when enough spending is really enough? Randy Swing, Executive Director of the Association of Institutional Research (AIR), and Christopher Coogan AIR Chief of Staff and Director of the Data and Decisions® Academy, examine the “what should assessment cost” question. The authors systematically unpack what needs to be taken into account when allocating resources to the assessment of student learning outcomes. Click the link above for the paper.

AIR 50th Annual Forum Presentations

Will you be at AIR in Chicago next week? NILOA will be presenting at two sessions:

NILOA: Tracking the Status of Outcomes Assessment in the U.S. will be presented by George Kuh on Tuesday, June 1st from 2-3pm in the Chicago Ballroom IX.

Learning Outcomes Assessment, Transparency, and the Internet: A Critical Examination of Higher Education Institutions' Web-Based Communication Strategies will be presented by NILOA researchers on Wednesday, June 2nd from 8:30-9:30am in Parlor C.

NILOA's Second National Survey in Field

The National Institute for Learning Outcomes and Assessment National Survey

The second national survey was launched in March. It is asking questions about assessment practices of randomly selected department or program chairs at accredited two- and four-year college and university in the U.S. about their assessment practices. Click the link above for more information.

News

We collect news items from a variety of sources related to learning outcomes assessment for our website. Listed below are some from the past month:

Engaging Departments: Assessing Student Learning

The Winter 2010 issue of Peer Review from AAC&U has a number of articles on how assessment approaches on student learning are being developed at the departmental level.

The Accountability/Improvement Paradox

This article from Inside Higher Ed discusses the tension between accountability and improvement for professionals and policy makers. Victor M.H. Borden, the author, is also the co-creator of **Measuring Quality**, an online inventory of assessment instruments, tools, and resources.

Upcoming Conferences

A number of conferences and workshops on learning outcomes and assessment are listed on our online calendar. Below are some that will take place soon:

June 10-12: **Assessment and Retention Conference**

NASPA Assessment and Retention Conference in Baltimore, MD. NILOA Director, George Kuh is a featured speaker.

June 14-16 or 18: **Connecting Student Learning Outcomes to Teaching, Assessment & Curriculum**

Alverno College is putting on three or five day long summer workshops in Milwaukee, WI.

Upcoming Deadline

June 15: **AGLS Exemplary Program**

Does your institution have a creative program accomplishment for learning outcomes? If so, consider applying for the AGLS award.

April 2010

National Updates: New Occasional Paper, Second National Survey in Field, and Updated Comprehensive Assessment Resource

The fourth Occasional Paper is now available:

Opening Doors to Faculty Involvement in Assessment by Pat Hutchings

Much of what has been done in the name of assessment has failed to induce large numbers of faculty to systematically collect and use evidence of student learning to improve teaching and enhance student performance. Pat Hutchings, a senior associate at The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, examines the dynamics behind this reality, including the mixed origins of assessment, coming both from within and outside academe, and the more formidable obstacles that stem from the culture and organization of higher education itself. Then, she describes six ways to bring the purposes of assessment and the regular work of faculty closer together, which may make faculty involvement more likely and assessment more useful.

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The second national survey was launched last month. It is asking questions about assessment practices of randomly selected department or program chairs at accredited two- and four-year college and university in the U.S. about their assessment practices.

Updated Comprehensive Assessment Resource

Measuring Quality in Higher Education: An Inventory of Instruments, Tools, and Resources by Vic Borden and Brandi Kernel

In partnership with AIR and ACE, we are pleased to announce the launch of Measuring Quality, an compilation of resources designed to assist higher education faculty and staff in the challenging task of assessing academic and support programs as well as institutional effectiveness, more broadly. Four categories of resources are presented. Items in the first category, instruments such as examinations, surveys, questionnaires, and other data collection approaches, are of special interest in resources for student learning outcomes assessment.

News

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Effective Practices (pdf)

CHEA has prepared a statement on *Effective Practices: The Role of Accreditation in Student Achievement* to describe accreditation practices that are especially valuable as institutions and programs address student achievement.

Assessing Outcomes and Improving Achievements: Tips and Tools for Using Rubrics

Terrel Rhodes has edited a volume for AAC&U that provides advice on using rubrics for assessment.

Student Learning as Academic Currency

Peter T. Ewell, NILOA Senior Scholar, co-authored this re-released and updated ACE publication, which suggests a new system for assigning academic credit.

Pedagogy, Assessment and Policy

The current issue of Change Magazine has two articles of interest, *Taking Teaching to (Performance) Task: Linking Pedagogical and Assessment Practices* by Marc Chun and *The Evolution of Assessment Policy: A View from Virginia* by T. Dary Erwin and Joseph G. DeFilippo. Login required.

Upcoming Conferences

A number of conferences and workshops on learning outcomes and assessment are listed on our online calendar. Below are some that will take place soon:

May 17-19: **The Closed Loop: Where is the Evidence**

Assessment Training and Research Institute and Florida A&M are putting on the conference in Tallahassee, FL. Author of Occasional Paper Two and NILOA National Advisory Panelist, Trudy W. Banta is the featured speaker.

May 29-June 2: **Charting Our Future in Higher Education**

The Association for Institutional Research has its 50th Annual Forum in Chicago, IL.

Website Updates

There is now a RSS feed available for news items and updates from NILOA. Subscribe [here](#)

March 2010

NILOA launched its second national survey and to streamline the process, monthly newsletters will continue in April.

February 2010

NILOA Occasional Papers

Connecting the Dots Between Learning and Resources by Jane Wellman

With all the talk about the need for more accountability, surprisingly little is known about what kind of resources an institution needs in order to produce a given level of student attainment. Jane Wellman charts this territory and discovers some surprises, such as how conclusions about cost-effectiveness change when the metric is cost-per-degree rather than the traditional cost-per-enrollment. One result is that, contrary to popular belief, community colleges are not cheap when it comes to cost-per-degree. Another important insight—again against the grain of conventional wisdom—is that simply investing more money does not appear to produce more or better outcomes. As Wellman points out, the key to productivity is intentionally targeted investments.

Three Promising Alternatives for Assessing College Students' Knowledge and Skills by Trudy Banta, Merilee Griffin, Teresa Flateby, and Susan Kahn

Of the various ways to assess student learning outcomes, many faculty members prefer what are called “authentic” approaches that document student performance during or at the end of a course or program of study. In this paper, assessment experts Trudy Banta, Merilee Griffin, Teresa Flateby, and Susan Kahn describe the development of several promising authentic assessment approaches. The contributors draw on their rich assessment experience to illustrate how portfolios, common analytic rubrics, and online assessment communities can more effectively link assessment practices to pedagogy.

Assessment, Accountability, and Improvement: Revisiting the Tension by Peter Ewell

In 1987, Peter Ewell delivered a paper at the AAHE Assessment Forum entitled "Assessment, Accountability, and Improvement: Managing the Contradiction." This NILOA Occasional Paper analyzes what is the same and what has changed over the past two decades, and offers suggestions for how institutions can manage the persistent tension between the twin purposes of assessment in the current higher education environment.

News

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Going Public

Douglas C. Bennett, President of Earlham College, suggests each institution have a public learning audit document and gives the example of what this means for Earlham College as a way for public accountability.

Measuring Student Learning, Globally

This article discusses the possibility of having a world learning outcomes assessment spearheaded by the OECD.

More Transparency

Martha Kanter, from the U.S. Education Department, calls for more transparency in the way higher education does accreditation.

What's Next?

Paul E. Lingenfelter, President of SHEEO, writes an informal and conversational piece of his advice to coping with states' budget meltdowns.

Upcoming Conferences

A number of conferences and retreats on learning outcomes and assessment are listed on our online calendar. Below are some that will take place soon:

- On Feb. 19-20 the Collaboration for the Advancement of College Teaching & Learning is putting on the conference, "Assessment for the Changing Learning Environment," in Bloomington, MN. Please visit their [website](#) for more information.
- On Feb. 21-23 the 10th Annual Texas A&M Assessment Conference, "Seeing 2020: Building on a decade of assessment" will take place at College Station, TX. Visit their [website](#) for more information.
- On March 9th from 3-4:30 EST, Innovative Educators is hosting a webcast given by Terri Flateby entitled, "Designing Meaningful Assessment to Improve Student Affairs Outcomes and Satisfy Accreditation Demands." More can be found at IE's [website](#).
- March 19th is the deadline for proposals to the 2010 Assessment Institute in Indianapolis. More can be found at their [website](#).

Website updates

We are updating a few things on our website and need your help:

- Are you part of a learning outcomes assessment community, either online or local? We would like to include a directory of these communities on our website. Please let us know about your group [here](#).
- Help us make our website better by filling out a short [five question survey](#).

January 2010

Announcements

NILOA has released its third Occasional Paper:

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institution needs in order to produce a given level of student attainment. Jane Wellman charts this territory and discovers some surprises, such as how conclusions about cost-effectiveness change when the metric is cost-per-degree rather than the traditional cost-per-enrollment. One result is that, contrary to popular belief, community colleges are not cheap when it comes to cost-per-degree. Another important insight—again against the grain of conventional wisdom—is that simply investing more money does not appear to produce more or better outcomes. As Wellman points out, the key to productivity is intentionally targeted investments.

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Of the various ways to assess student learning outcomes, many faculty members prefer what are called “authentic” approaches that document student performance during or at the end of a course or program of study. In this paper, assessment experts Trudy Banta, Merilee Griffin, Teresa Flateby, and Susan Kahn describe the development of several promising authentic assessment approaches. The contributors draw on their rich assessment experience to illustrate how portfolios, common analytic rubrics, and online assessment communities can more effectively link assessment practices to pedagogy.

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Assessment, Accountability, and Improvement: Revisiting the Tension by Peter Ewell

In 1987, Peter Ewell delivered a paper at the AAHE Assessment Forum entitled “Assessment, Accountability, and Improvement: Managing the Contradiction.” This NILOA Occasional Paper analyzes what is the same and what has changed over the past two decades, and offers suggestions for how institutions can manage the persistent tension between the twin purposes of assessment in the current higher education environment.

News

We collect news items from a variety of sources related to learning outcomes assessments for our website. Listed below are some items from the past month:

The Assessment Gap

In mid-December, the annual meeting of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education focused on assessments. This Inside Higher Ed article recaps the conversation at the meeting about the need to use assessments and tips on how to do so.

True Costs of Student Success

This Inside Higher Ed article discusses a new report by Student Success, looking at the effects of first-year, low-income student retention programs.

Student Engagement in Law School: Enhancing Student Learning

The 2009 Law School Survey of Student Engagement (LSSSE) report is now available, it can be downloaded [here](#).

Upcoming Conferences

A number of conferences and retreats on learning outcomes and assessments are listed on our online calendar. Below are some that will take place soon:

- AAC&U Annual Meeting is in Washington DC from January 20-23. The title for the meeting is, "The Wit, the Will ... and the Wallet: Supporting Educational Innovation, Shaping Our Global Futures." For more information please click here to view the [meeting website](#). Of note on Thursday, Jan 21 there will be a session given about the work of NILOA (p.12 of the program).
- AAC&U General Education and Assessment annual conference is in Seattle, WA from February 18-20. The title for the conference is, "General Education and Assessment: Maintaining Momentum, Achieving New Priorities." For more information please check out [AAC&U's website](#).
- The 10th Annual Texas A&M Assessment conference is in College Station, TX from February 21-23. The title for the conference is, "Seeing 2020: Building on a Decade of Assessment!" For more information please check out [Texas A&M's website](#).

December 2009

Announcements

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News

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Defining Accountability

In mid-November, American Enterprise Institute hosted a meeting, "Increasing Accountability in American Higher Education." This Inside Higher Ed article covers the conversation with links to presentation papers.

A For-Profit Accountability System

The University of Phoenix has released its second academic annual report sparking conversation about accountability and transparency. This Inside Higher Ed article identifies the complex dynamics of the report from a for-profit school.

Upcoming Conferences

A number of conferences and retreats on learning outcomes and assessments are listed on our online calendar. Below is one that will take place soon:

A Webcast will take place on January 21: "Prior Learning Assessment: Balancing Academic Quality and Enrollment Goals." For more information, please check out Academic Impressions' Web site.

November 2009

Announcements

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Assessment, Accountability, and Improvement: Revisiting the Tension by Peter Ewell

Twenty years ago, Peter Ewell delivered a paper at the AAHE Assessment Forum entitled "Assessment, Accountability, and Improvement: Managing the Contradiction." This NILOA Occasional Paper analyzes what is the same and what has changed over the past two decades, and offers suggestions for how institutions can manage the persistent tension between the twin purposes of assessment in the current higher education environment. Read more [here...](#)

News

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NILOA 2009 report

The national study conducted by NILOA resulted in a report, **More Than You Think, Less Than We Need: Learning Outcomes Assessment in American Higher Education**, was released October 26th. A number of articles were written about the report including pieces from [The Chronicle](#) and [Inside Higher Ed](#).

ePortfolios: Here, There, & Everywhere

The November issue of Campus Technology looks in depth at ePortfolios. This article looks at how electronic portfolios can be useful to students after they graduate.

Assessing the Assessments

The designers of the VSA conducted an analysis of assessment instruments. This interesting Inside Higher Ed article discusses the history and validity of CLA, CAAP, MAAP.

NSSE and CCSSE

The NSSE 2009 Annual Results report, "*Assessment for Improvement: Tracking Student Engagement Over Time*" was released November 9th. The CCSSE 2009 Annual Results report, "Making Connections: Dimensions of Student Engagement" was released November 16th.

Upcoming Conferences

An online webinar will take place on December 8th and 15th: "Learning Outcomes: Developing & Measuring Out of Class Experiences." For more information, please check out Innovative Educators' website, [here](#).

October 2009

Announcements

NILOA has released its 2009 survey report:

More Than You Think, Less Than We Need: Learning Outcomes Assessment in American Higher Education

Contrary to what observers think, findings from a national study released today show that gathering information about what undergraduates learn during their studies is commonplace in most US colleges and universities.

[**Read more...**](#)

News

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Assessment v. Action

This Inside Higher Ed article highlights the work of NILOA and the recently released report on learning outcomes and assessments.

Whose metrics? Community college accountability

Last week's announcement for a universal accountability system for community colleges has been challenged with responses like this one from Inside Higher Ed. How should the new system be measured? Looking at an example for Oregon community college.

High Response Rates Don't Ensure Survey Accuracy

A helpful Chronicle article for those creating and administering surveys that looks at response rates of surveys and common issues with them.

Rand: CLA

Rand foundation has just published a new report: The Collegiate Learning Assessment: Setting Standards for Performance at a College or University.

Upcoming Conferences

The Spring 2010 Association for Institutional Research meeting is in Chicago and proposals are due October 30, 2009. For more information, please check out their website, at <http://forum.airweb.org/>.