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Making it Real: Graduate Program Learning Outcomes

Introduction

San Jose State University (SJSU) participated in the WSCUC Community of Practice project as it related to “Making it Real: Graduate Program Learning Outcomes”. As part of this project, faculty and staff at SJSU participated in a peer review process of graduate program reporting on student learning and program distinctiveness in the form of evidence-based storytelling. Through a personalized approach that began with working “with the willing” upon structured professional development opportunities, San Jose State University was able to reinforce the messaging of the assessment imperative (purposes, methods, benefits, uses) to transform the role of faculty from compliance reporters to designers of the educational experiences they want to create for students in the fields they love.

SJSU has been engaged in proactive efforts to build and nurture a culture of assessment and associated supportive systems for over two decades. Annual assessment reports addressing program learning outcomes and plans to “close the loop”, college-level assessment facilitators, and a WSCUC Community of Practice project focusing on graduate program learning outcomes are among the institutional commitments to a robust, meaningful, and sustainable quality assurance environment.

Through a process of offering targeted professional development on assessment, meaningful measurement of student learning, data visualization, and evidence-based storytelling, SJSU strives to ignite faculty interest, develop program-level skills, and contribute to a culture of continuous learning about the value and rewards of knowing and telling your story.

The audience for this work is any institution, program, or group within an institution that is interested in exploring the narratives they present and more meaningfully communicating their stories to targeted audience(s). To engage with this work, space and time are needed for faculty and staff to come together to collectively and intentionally make meaning from data and map out their stories.

Through a half-day workshop, SJSU faculty and staff came together to listen to a presentation on evidence-based storytelling, then worked in groups to explore, develop, and refine their programmatic story. The handouts included here are modified versions that were utilized in the process. The PowerPoint is included in a separate file.

SJSU Handout on Evidence-Based Storytelling

In an era of accountability and reporting, effectively communicating a coherent narrative of quality assurance is vital for the future of higher education. We have to become better at communicating our work to various audiences by connecting multiple points of evidence. Several efforts are underway to support institutions in this process including the Excellence in Assessment Designation, NILOA's Transparency Framework (2011), evidence-based storytelling, analysis of organizational digital narratives, and data visualization.



The Excellence in Assessment (EIA) program recognizes institutions for their efforts in intentional integration of institution-level learning outcomes assessment. However, in reviewing applications, many institutions struggled with presenting a cohesive and concise narrative regarding their institution-level assessment process. Many applicants defaulted to providing lists of various disconnected activities without connecting or aligning the activities, or describing and explaining the relationships between the various parts. It is not enough to say that an institution is engaged in a particular practice without articulating **why that practice is important within that context**. <http://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/eia/>



The NILOA Transparency Framework (2011) is intended to help institutions evaluate the extent to which they are making evidence of student learning readily accessible and potentially useful and meaningful to various audiences in an online environment. It provides six components, pulled from a review of over 2,000 institutional websites. <http://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/ourwork/transparency-framework/>



Evidence-based storytelling is based on Toulmin's (2003) model of argumentation where evidence offered in support of a claim is bolstered by a warrant. We define evidence-based storytelling as: Evidence of student learning that is used in **support of claims or arguments** about **improvement and accountability** told through **stories to persuade a specific audience** (Jankowski, 2019). It includes explication of why we think that what we are doing at our institution, with the students we serve, will lead to enhanced student learning—why this and not something else?

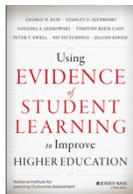


As with all narratives, storytellers can emphasize certain messages to a particular audience in a variety of formats whether oral, written, or visual. With digital narratives, technology assists with the customization of narratives for different audiences. Digital narratives include personal stories created through videos, images, text, and audio, which may be displayed in a variety of media. The themes of the narratives can be intentional, or can emerge from several messages across several webpages. Personal narratives emerge from individuals, but organizations can also create narratives that define and describe the identity of the organization. **Organizational digital narratives** are a special case of “digital narratives” in which the story being told is not of an individual, but of an organization – a presentation of an institution that represents multiple voices. That presentation may be tightly controlled, such that the story portrayed is centralized and unified, or the story may be loosely controlled with many voices and perspectives contributing to the whole. In a review of our stories of student learning, it is important to examine the entirety of the narrative including how various mediums and sources reinforce or counter existing reports and narratives.

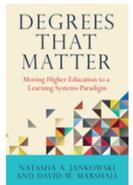
understanding and experience in interacting with and making sense of data to inform practice, support a narrative, or make a compelling argument to target audiences.

Why Storytelling?

In a piece in *Change*, Lee Shulman (2007) posits that accounting is a form of narrative, and argues that counting without narrative is meaningless. The role of an institution is to give an account on the contribution to the education of its students. Storytelling internal to an organization can bolster collective identity and shift organizational culture, create new ways to think about practice, and create space for active learning and organizational memory (Abrahamson, 1998; Butcher, 2006; Feldman, 1990; Whyte & Ralake, 2013). A good story is easy to read, introduces a problem, and shares how the problem was solved, highlighting the role of the institution in addressing the problem. **We need context and a story, because evidence gives stories substance, but stories give evidence meaning.** Our stories can be our context, our histories, our missions, our organizational saga, it is how we see the world and why we do what we do.



For additional information, resources, and approaches related to reporting as communication and narrative, see Chapter 10 by Natasha Jankowski and Timothy Reese Cain on moving “From Compliance Reporting to Effective Communication: Assessment and Transparency” in the book *Using Evidence of Student Learning to Improve Higher Education*.



For additional information on how storytelling relates to accreditation processes, see Chapter 7 by Natasha Jankowski and David Marshall on “Reframing Academic Quality” from the book *Degrees that Matter: Moving Towards a Learning Systems Paradigm*.

What This Means for Programs

The ability of an institution or program to clearly and convincingly communicate the learning outcomes and accomplishments of their graduates is paramount to the success of our students, institutions, and larger national economic and competitive priorities. Policymakers and external stakeholders are increasingly questioning the value of higher education experiences, focusing on labor market outcomes and other metrics of success divorced from teaching and learning. Institutions and postsecondary education as a collective have struggled to respond to these claims, citing the complexity of evaluating student learning across varied and disparate programs in easily comparable ways. We have been reactive as opposed to proactive in our narratives of effectiveness and quality. We can no longer afford to simply report, we need to communicate and communicate effectively to varied audiences. We also need to make the case to show the value of our programs to various stakeholder, our distinctiveness, and our strengths.

To do this requires establishment of shared points of learning—the learning outcomes to which our programs are designed—that are aligned to the institutional mission and throughout the curriculum and educational experience of our learners.

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Narrative Review Process

12:30-1:30 Team Time for Narrative Review

In our time this afternoon, you will work in your team to review a narrative targeted towards a specific audience with a clear communication goal in mind. To begin, we will consider the goals for the story, the audience, and what evidence will be needed to make the story compelling to the target audience. Once you discuss within your team, we will share with the group. (20 min)

Next, we will explore the characters in our story as well as the plot. Consider: are there different story strands? One? What does the target audience need to know about the characters? Does the evidence support your story? (20 min)

Finally, we consider how to disseminate our stories, consider the best medium by which to present it, as well as examine the use of data visualization in the story. (20 min)

1:30-2:30 Share Your Story with Another Team

For the second hour of the workshop, you will share your story with another team and receive feedback. Each team will have a half hour to share their story and receive feedback from the other team before switching storytelling positions.

- Choose which team will go first, share your goals and target audience for the story, then tell your story or show your story to the other team (depending on medium). You have 15 minutes to share your story. *Presenters:* introduce the story and provide background information such as: the purpose of the story, the target audience, any secondary audiences, potential or desired uses of the story, what you find most challenging about the story or prior experiences with similar stories, how they hope to strengthen it, and what kinds of feedback and suggestions they would like from others.
- While the first team is sharing, the other team's role is to listen—don't ask questions or interrupt—listen to the story, take notes...but don't simply wait to speak next.
- Upon completion of the 15 minutes of sharing, you have 15 minutes to provide feedback, ask questions, and provide constructive ideas. The evidence-based storytelling handout you have been using can serve as the basis for any questions or ideas to help enhance their story. The purpose of the review is to help your colleague strengthen the argument, presentation, and narrative of the report—so please be constructive and collegial. Also, mind the time and allow each participant the opportunity to contribute to the discussion.
- *Presenters:* listen carefully and respond to the inquiries. Think about what is feasible and related to crafting a meaningful narrative for target audiences, but also think creatively about possible solutions to identified challenges.
- At the end of the first half hour, switch roles such that the first group assumes the role of listener and the second team shares their story. Please follow the same process of 15 minutes of sharing the story and 15 minutes for providing and feedback.

2:30-3:00 Return to Team Time

Consider the feedback from the team with which you shared your story. What additional ideas do you have? What revisions do you need to make? Are there other groups that you need to have review your story prior to sharing more broadly with the target audience? How might you go about doing that?

3:00-3:30 Next Steps and Feedback Discussion

Building a Narrative via Evidence-Based Storytelling

1. **Audience:** For whom is this narrative written? (i.e., internal/external audiences) Are there other audiences who may be interested in the report? What counts as evidence for the different audiences of the report? In what type of story are the different audiences interested? What are your goal(s) for this story, targeted to this audience?

Primary audience(s):

- a. Evidence:
- b. Type of story:

Secondary audience(s):

- a. Evidence:
- b. Type of story:

2. **What kind of story are you telling?** (i.e., compliance, improvement, loss, struggle, quest, tragedy, fantasy, etc.) What context is needed for readers to understand the story? What is the setting?

- a. What do you want the audience(s) to take away from this story?

- b. The language you choose is important with the type of story you are telling. What is the tone of your story? How familiar is your audience with the back story? Is the language appropriate for your target audience(s)?

3. **Who are the character(s) in your story?** (Is there a protagonist in your story—someone who is driving the action and/or someone with whom your audience is likely to identify? What are the motivations of the characters?)

Note: Characterization is the information that the author gives the reader about the characters themselves. What context do readers need to understand your characters? Are there any preconceived notions about the characters that need to be addressed early in the narrative?

4. **What is the plot?** (The plot is the causal sequence of events and includes setting and conflict.)
 - a. Plot elements include:
 1. **Exposition** is the information needed to understand a story.
 2. **Complication** is the catalyst that begins the major conflict.
 3. **Climax** is the turning point in the story that occurs when characters try to resolve the complication.
 4. **Resolution** is the set of events that bring the story to a close. However, not all stories have a resolution – it could be a cliff hanger.
 - b. Setting: What is the context? Any important circumstances or conditions to include?
 - c. Conflict: What are we trying to address or overcome? (internal/external barriers)
 - d. Potential uses of the data: How might readers use the information provided moving forward?

5. **What evidence do you have to assert your claims?** (i.e., data sources, indirect/direct measures of student learning, etc.). *Remember audience(s)—some audiences are not interested in the methodology but need information in order to trust the data source in part of a larger argument being made depending on focus, different amounts and types of information/evidence are needed.



Evidence-Based Storytelling Workshop

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@njankow



Our time together today

1. Team Time to Review and Refine Narrative
2. Share Story with Another Team
3. Reflect on Feedback
4. Next Steps

Note: Within each of the segments you will likely not have enough time to finish the conversation you start – so in the next steps be thinking about where and how to continue the conversation

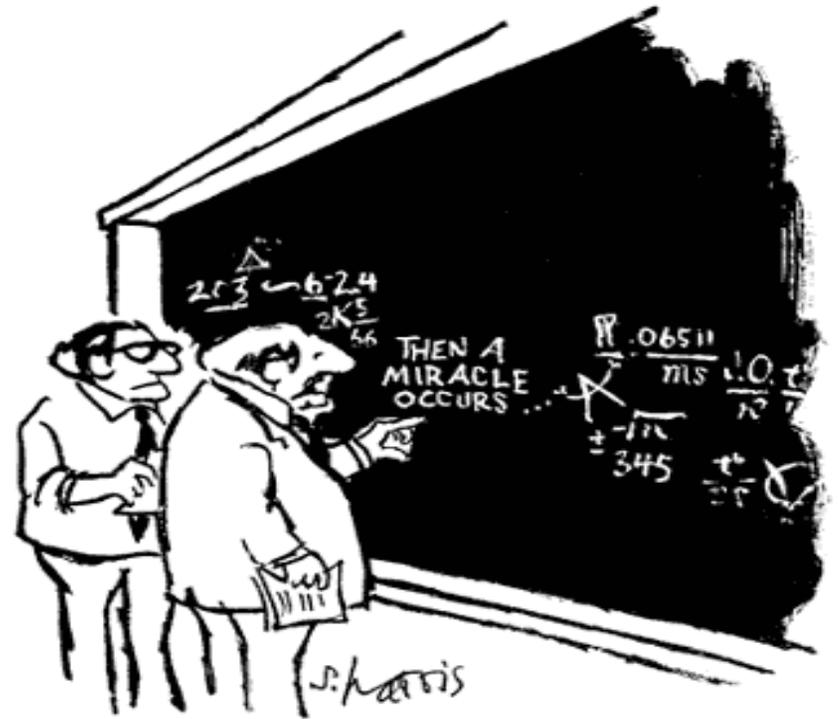


Goals, Audience, Evidence

What is your goal for the story? What kind of story are you telling?

Who are your primary audiences?

What evidence do you need to tell the story, in a compelling manner, to your selected audience(s)?



"I think you should be more explicit here in step two."



Characters, Plot, Story Strands

Who are the characters in your story?

What is the plot?

What story strands do you want to focus in upon? Do you have the evidence needed to support that story?

LEARNING DELIVERY

Exam

With a ch
college e

by Aysha As

Opinion

College May Not Be Worth It Anymore

By Ellen Ruppel Shell

Ms. Ruppel Shell writes about science, social justice and the economy.

May 16, 2018

ng the value of a



Dissemination, User testing, Data visualization

What's the best medium to share your story?

How will you make your audience(s) aware of the story? How will you engage in user testing?

If you are using visuals, do they help or hinder the story?





Share Story with Another Team

Team 1: 15 minutes to share story

As a group: 15 minutes for feedback and discussion

Team 2: 15 minutes to share story

As a group: 15 minutes for feedback and discussion

What's your story?



Return to Teams

In the next 20 minutes – go back to your original team and review your story based on the feedback and conversations you just had:

1. What do you want to change?
2. Where do you need to focus more attention?
3. With whom do you need to partner to get it done?



Next Steps and Feedback Discussion

How did it go?

Any modifications to the process?

Where will you continue these conversations?

List of the types of evidence programs are trying to gather





Thank You!





Evidence-Based Storytelling

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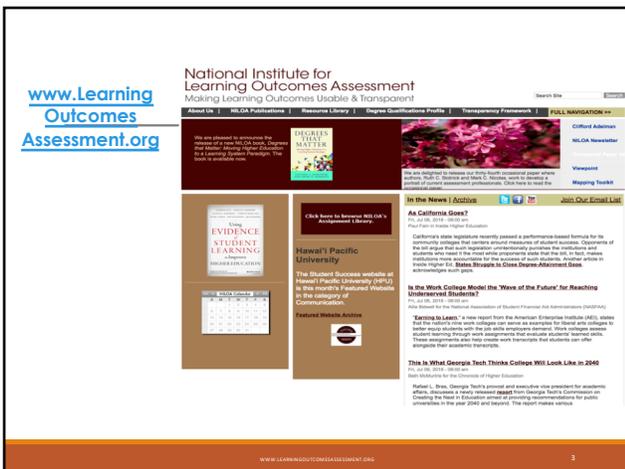
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@NILOA

National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA)

NILOA's mission is to discover and disseminate effective use 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 ● PRESENTATIONS
- TRANSPARENCY FRAMEWORK ● FEATURED WEBSITES ● ACCREDITATION RESOURCES ● ASSESSMENT EVENT CALENDAR ● ASSESSMENT NEWS
- MEASURING QUALITY INVENTORY ● POLICY ANALYSIS ● ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN ● DEGREE QUALIFICATIONS PROFILE/TUNING ● DQP CAMPUS COACHING ● ASSIGNMENT DESIGN AND ONLINE LIBRARY ● EMERGING LEARNING SYSTEM NETWORKING

2



The screenshot shows the NILOA website homepage with the URL www.LearningOutcomesAssessment.org. The page features a navigation menu, a search bar, and several featured articles. One article is titled "Evidence-Based Storytelling" by Natasha Jankowski, Ph.D. Other articles include "An California Done?", "Is the Work College Model the 'Wave of the Future' for Reaching Underrepresented Students?", and "This is What Georgia Tech Thinks College Will Look Like in 2040".

Graduate Programs at SJSU...

Have graduate program learning outcomes that map to university learning goals, and made them available online – but also map to disciplinary and specialized accreditation areas

How does this position your program to tell it's story?

Program learning outcomes provide a means to examine our coherent, intentional design for the elements of our graduate programs. But rarely are the learning outcomes written for learners or employers, or meaningfully communicated to them through orientation, thesis guidelines, graduation booklet, advising sessions, etc.

Where do we have conflicting stories?

Are you lonely?
Tired of working on your own?
Do you hate making decisions?
START A COMMITTEE!

You can –

- See people
- Show charts
- Feel important
- Point with a stick
- Eat donuts
- Impress your colleagues

COMMITTEES
THE PRACTICAL ALTERNATIVE TO WORK

NOT IMPRESSED

Value

Institutions of higher education are increasingly asked to show the value of attending, i.e. impact in relation to cost; employment – what is the value of a degree and what does it represent in terms of learning?

Public and policy makers want assurance of the quality of higher education

Regional and specialized accreditors are asking institutions to show evidence of student learning and instances of use

We have questions about our own practice and want to improve student learning



Something is out there...
coming CLOSER... CLOSER... CLOSER...
Don't be afraid to be afraid...

THEY'RE COMING TO GET YOU!

for Learning Outcome Assessment
November 2018

Sustainability, and Improvement
evaluating the tension

Peter T. Lovell
President, University of Utah

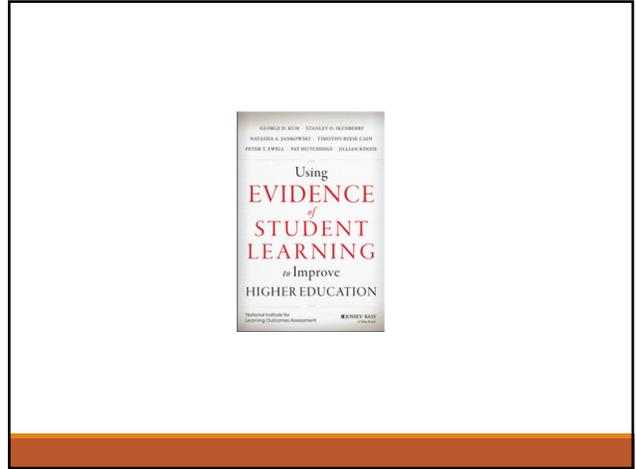
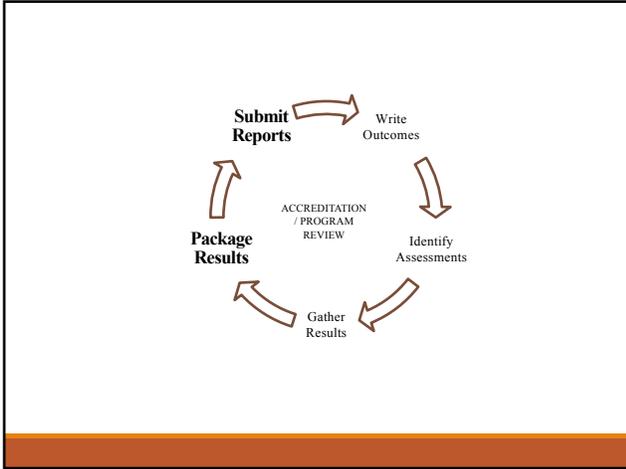
Occasional Paper #1

Compliance

Documenting institutional quality assurance through reporting frameworks
Is assessment destroying the liberal arts? ~Karin Brown

- Bureaucratic
- Laborious
- Time consuming
- Separated from teaching and learning
- Add on
- Accountability and quality assurance
- Reporting and archive
- Lots of data collection, minimal use



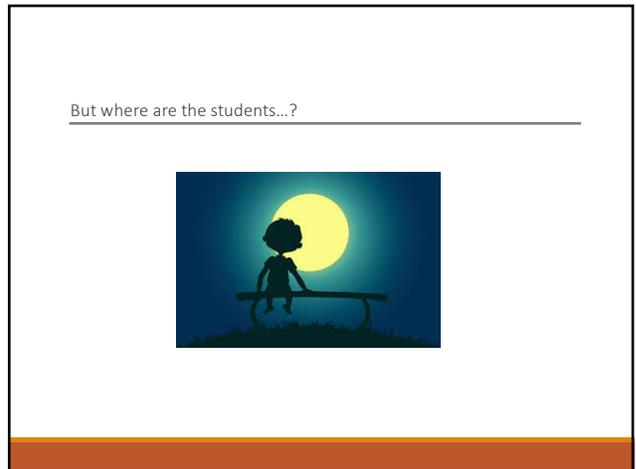


Measurement

Built upon scientific principles or empirical research, objective, rational, validity, and reliability

The Multi-State Collaborative: A Preliminary Examination of Convergent Validation Evidence ~Mark Nicholas, John Hathcoat, & Brittany Brown

- Testing and standardization
- Must be measurable
- Argue narrowing of curriculum
- Goal driven
- Focused on process
- Interventions
- Pre/post
- Comparisons

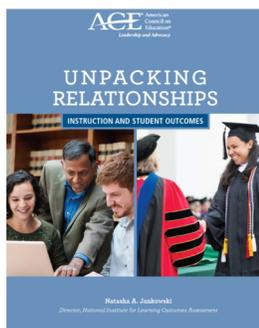


Teaching and Learning

Focus on pedagogy, understanding of student experience, informing program improvement, embedded in curricular design and feedback, builds student agency

Does continuous assessment in higher education support student learning? ~Rosario Hernandez

- Driven by faculty questions regarding their praxis – is what I am doing working for my students?
- Improvement oriented
- Focus on individual students
- Students as active participants – not something done to them
- Formative
- Feedback
- Collaborative
- Assessment for learning
- Adaptive and embedded

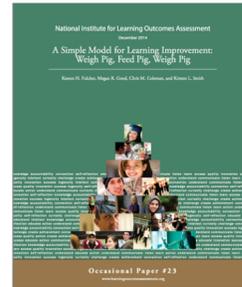


Models

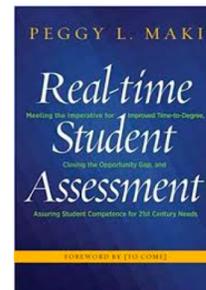
These philosophies of assessment lend themselves to particular types of models for how we go about assessing student learning



Institutional or Program Improvement



Learning Improvement



Mapping Learning



Curriculum Mapping: The Traditional Process

Focused on curriculum and program learning outcomes at expense of learning elsewhere

Two-dimensional matrix representing courses on one axis and outcomes on the other

Faculty identify which courses address which learning outcomes

Curriculum Mapping: The Traditional Process

Email around an excel sheet for faculty to self-identify

Department chairs individually complete a map

Individual faculty send a syllabi to a committee for review

Groups of faculty come together to map courses to learning outcomes

We have a broader discussion around where we can capture demonstrations of learning

Map Level 1

Learning Outcomes	Course 1	Course 2	Course 3	Course 4
Learning Outcome 1	x		x	
Learning Outcome 2		x		
Learning Outcome 3		x	x	x

But.....

Is it an individual process or one of consensus building?
 If two faculty members individually mapped the curriculum would they end up with the same map?
 If students mapped the curriculum, would they have the same map as faculty?
 What is standard of alignment? Is one paper in one class enough?
 Do we have a shared understanding of what we are building towards?

	Introductory Course	Research Methods	Advanced Content Course A	Laboratory / Practicum Course	Advanced Content Course B	Advanced Content Course C	Advanced Content Course D	Capstone Course
Content								
SLO 1: Disciplinary knowledge base (models and theories)	Introduced		Reinforced		Reinforced	Reinforced	Reinforced	Mastery / Assessed
SLO 2: Disciplinary methods		Introduced		Reinforced		Reinforced		Mastery / Assessed
SLO 3: Disciplinary applications	Introduced		Reinforced		Reinforced		Reinforced	Mastery / Assessed
Critical Thinking								
SLO 4: Analysis and use of evidence		Introduced		Reinforced	Reinforced		Reinforced	Mastery / Assessed
SLO 5: Evaluation, selection, and use of sources of information		Introduced	Reinforced	Reinforced		Reinforced		Mastery / Assessed
Communication								
SLO 6: Written communication skills	Introduced	Reinforced		Reinforced		Reinforced		Mastery / Assessed
SLO 7: Oral communication skills		Introduced	Reinforced		Reinforced	Assessed		Mastery / Assessed
Integrity / Values								
SLO 8: Disciplinary ethical standards		Introduced		Reinforced	Reinforced			Mastery / Assessed
SLO 9: Academic integrity	Introduced	Reinforced	Reinforced	Reinforced		Reinforced		Mastery / Assessed
Project Management								
SLO 10: Interpersonal and team skills			Introduced		Reinforced		Reinforced	Mastery / Assessed
SLO 11: Self-regulation and metacognitive skills	Introduced			Reinforced	Reinforced	Reinforced		Mastery / Assessed

Center for University Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Sample Curriculum Map (Level of Skill)
<http://uwf.edu/cutla/>

	Introductory Course	Research Methods	Advanced Content Course A	Laboratory / Practicum Course	Advanced Content Course B	Advanced Content Course C	Advanced Content Course D	Capstone Course
Content								
SLO 1: Disciplinary knowledge base (models and theories)	Exam Questions		Exam Questions		Exam Questions	Exam Questions	Exam Questions	Capstone Portfolio
SLO 2: Disciplinary methods		Exam Questions		Exam Questions		Exam Questions		Capstone Portfolio
SLO 3: Disciplinary applications	Exam Questions		Exam Questions		Class Project		Term Paper	Capstone Portfolio
Critical Thinking								
SLO 4: Analysis and use of evidence		Term Paper		Lab Paper	Class Presentation		Term Paper	Capstone Portfolio
SLO 5: Evaluation, selection, and use of sources of information	Annotated Bibliography	Term Paper		Lab Paper		Term Paper		Capstone Portfolio
Communication								
SLO 6: Written communication skills	Reflection Essays			Lab Paper		Term Paper	Term Paper	Capstone Portfolio
SLO 7: Oral communication skills			Class Presentation	Poster Session	Class Presentation	Class Presentation		Capstone Portfolio
Integrity / Values								
SLO 8: Disciplinary ethical standards		Reflective Paper		IRB/ACUC Proposal	Reflective Paper			Capstone Portfolio
SLO 9: Academic integrity	Class Assignments & Exams	Exams & Term Paper	Class Exams	Class Assignments & Exams	Class Assignments & Exams	Exams & Term Paper	Exams & Term Paper	Capstone Portfolio
Project Management								
SLO 10: Interpersonal and team skills			Peer Review of Team Skills		Project Client Feedback		Peer Review of Team Skills	Capstone Portfolio
SLO 11: Self-regulation and metacognitive skills	Class assignments & Exams			Class Assignments & Exams	Class Assignments & Exams	Exams & Term Paper		Capstone Portfolio

Center for University Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Sample Curriculum Map (Assignments & Embedded Assessments)
<http://uwf.edu/cutla/>

Selective Attention Test



Curriculum Mapping Toolkit

The curriculum mapping toolkit is focused on mapping learning in the variety of classes it occurs including within a program, across general education, throughout the institution, and in the co-curriculum. The mapping toolkit provides resources for identifying classes, certification programs, and learning experiences that may not be deemed a program per se along with tools for four-year institutions, including a framing document and connectors to the assignment library efforts. The toolkit provides a variety of examples on how to approach, frame, and engage in mapping learning as well as templates for different maps.

The toolkit provides tools, materials, and resources that can be borrowed and adapted to local and regional circumstances. We invite you to share with us additional examples, materials, resources, and modifications of the toolkit to add to this resource. If you have examples, please send them to ajones@education.illinois.edu

<p>Mapping Learning: A Toolkit of Resources</p>	<p>Institutional example of general education assessment mapping from the Oregon Institute of Technology and California State University - San Bernardino.</p>
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Learning Outcomes are Increasingly Aligned

At 50% of campuses: all programs have PLOs and align those PLOs with ILOs



Learning Frameworks

What are learning frameworks and what do they allow you to do?

Mapping is one thing, but if we all map to whatever learning we like, how can we talk to each other and our learners across the system?

Learning frameworks allow us to all agree on the learning we are striving and designing towards, not how we will get there, but to align our practices.

Learning frameworks also allows us a means to talk about the quality of the entirety of a degree that is integrated and intentional.

Some learning frameworks

Degree Qualifications Profile: DQP	Common Core State Standards
LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes:	Beta credentials framework
Tuning (History, Communications, etc.)	Your own institutional learning outcomes
Employability Skills Framework	Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS)
Common Employability Skills (NACE)	International frameworks



Recap

If we don't know what we are doing or why or what we will do with it when we have it – we can't define or design meaningful learning outcomes assessment

Once we know what we are going for – we need to understand as a program how all the pieces fit together through mapping

But we also need to understand how we support that development over time in the form of assignments or culminating experiences to prepare students to achieve and demonstrate desired learning

The NILOA Initiative

An **online library** of high-quality peer-endorsed assignments linked to specific learning outcomes.

Designed by faculty, part of the intellectual work they already do, course embedded.

Peer review process based on targeted feedback

Creative Commons License

Assignments as a way in



Transparency in Assignments

Transparency in Learning and Teaching: <https://www.unlv.edu/provost/teachingandlearning>

Purpose

Skills you'll practice by doing this assignment

Content knowledge you'll gain from doing this assignment

How you can use these in your life beyond the context of this course, in and beyond college

Task

What to do

How to do it (Are there recommended steps? What roadblocks/mistakes should you avoid?)

Criteria

(Are you on the right track? How to know you're doing what's expected?)

Annotated examples of successful work

(What's good about these examples? Use the checklist to identify the successful parts.)

Coherence



How assignments connect



Verbs (and I don't mean Bloom's)

Alignment and fitness of method occur in relation to the verbs identified in the learning outcome statement

In your own assignment – what are you asking students to actually *do* or *demonstrate*?



Transference of Knowledge and Skills

We know that students have the hardest time with transferring knowledge - realizing something they learned before can be applied in another context.

We have to teach them to reflect and have them apply over time.

Theories of Change

Why do we think the changes we make will lead to better outcomes?

What is assumed in the changes we select as it relates to how students understand and navigate higher education?



It's a Design Issue

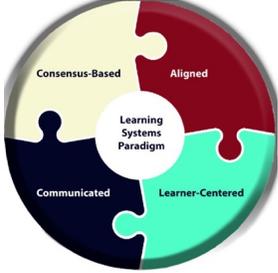
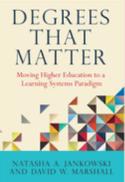
Why do we think that what we are doing, for these students, will lead to enhanced learning, at this time?



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."

The Learning Systems Paradigm



Now that we've seen the system...how do we talk about it??



Storytelling

Our approach has been...



Presenting comprehensive findings by item/instrument/measure

Making all information available in the name of "transparency"

Communication Finding



Communicating effectively about student learning remains a challenge.

Colleges and universities must more clearly and persuasively communicate relevant, timely, and contextualized information on their impact on students and value to society.

Provosts: What's important outcome information to share publically?

- information on accreditation
- retention, persistence, graduation, & completion rates
- licensure & certification exam pass rates
- job placement & salaries
- return on investment
- costs

Presentation and Interpretation Gap

Gap between audience understanding and assessment evidence.

"We are not great as an industry at explaining what we do, how our institutions run, and the great value we provide to students and communities. I think the biggest gap is in outsiders understanding student learning. **We can provide all the assessment results or data we like, but if others cannot interpret them accurately there is no benefit to transparency or accountability.**" ~Provost

Meaning Making Gap

Communicating outputs is not sufficient. Outcome results must be made more meaningful for target audiences.

"This is something we struggle to accomplish. First, there is the need for constituents to become familiar with and understand the student learning outcomes...and why they are important, how they are measured, and what we learn from the results, as well as what improvements were made in response...This is **not easy to share in "sound bites," and communicating outputs such as employment rates and beginning salaries does not serve as a proxy for student learning and quality of programs.** We can, for instance, communicate results of our annual assessment of the general education, but **we need to find ways to help the general public make meaning of the results.**"

~Provost

Current Approaches

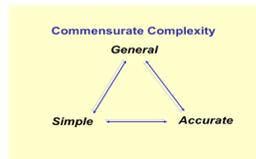
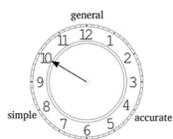
- Overwhelm with access to data without meaning making
- Scatter shot bullet lists of processes attempting to guess what people want
- Archives of reports that document our processes – but provide a history of data collection or changes made
- Individual student stories of success (internships)

Data Visualization

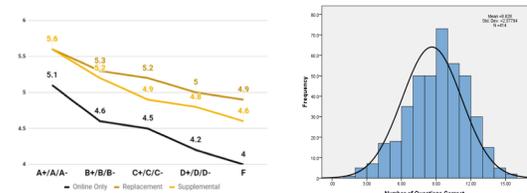
Data Visualization provides a research driven approach to reimagining the presentation of data within a larger narrative through thinking intentionally about the best means through which to convey data as a tool in enhancing communication (Evergreen, 2017). High impact data visualizations can enhance users understanding and experience in interacting with and making sense of data to inform practice, support a narrative, or make a compelling argument to target audiences.

Consider – when is it appropriate to use these tools to enable the narrative goal and when does the visualization detract?

Thorngate’s Commensurate Complexity Postulate



Data Story or Person Story?



WHY STORIES MATTER

WITH 'JACKIE' WONG, MEGAPHONE MAGAZINE

BCGEU Region 2 Activists' Conference 2015

Sam Bradd live graphic recording

THE POWER OF STORY TELLING

ECHO STORIES.COM

Why Storytelling...

Shadiow (2013) presents a process to see stories “as something other than sentimental anecdotes with thinly veiled lessons” but instead as a mechanism by which we may reflect on our practices and teaching (p. viii).

Stories allow us to go “assumption hunting” (Brookfield, 1995)

Our stories tell others about our assumptions about the roles of students, faculty and content. and they “help inform-even alter-the thinking of others” (Shadiow, 2013, p. 16) we seek to “make believers out of our readers” (p. 17).

www.LEARNINGOUTCOMESASSESSMENT.ORG

Power of Stories

Storytelling internal to an organization can bolster collective identity and shift organizational culture, create new ways to think about practice, and create space for active learning and organizational memory (Abrahamson, 1998; Butcher, 2006; Feldman, 1990; Whyte & Ralake, 2013).

A good story is easy to read, introduces a problem, and shares how the problem was solved, highlighting the role of the institution in addressing the problem.

We need context and a story, because evidence gives stories substance, but stories give evidence meaning.

Our stories can be our context, our histories, our missions, our organizational saga, it is how we see the world and why we do what we do.

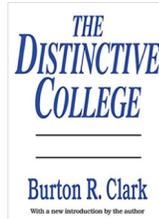
Organizational Saga

Internal and external narratives

Who are we as a program?

Who are we as an institution?

What are the assumptions we make about our students?



Sagas

Boje (1995) people do not just tell stories, they tell stories to enact an account of themselves and their community (p.1001)

Simmons (2006) writes about telling a story to those who are cynical, that doubt your sincerity, competence, or ability to deliver. "In these situations you need to tell a story that gives evidence of sincerity, competence, or your ability to deliver...in conversation a story is as close as you can get to delivering a firsthand experience that will provide enough evidence to overcome cynicism." (167)

Organizational digital narratives

- Digital narratives include personal stories created through videos, images, text, and audio, which may be displayed in a variety of media.
- The themes of the narratives can be intentional, or can emerge from several messages across several webpages.
- **Organizational digital narratives** are a special case of "digital narratives" in which the story being told is not of an individual, but of an organization – a presentation of an institution that represents multiple voices.
- In a review of our stories of student learning, it is important to examine the entirety of the narrative including how various mediums and sources reinforce or counter existing reports and narratives.

Your digital narrative

- What information is currently shared about your program's organizational narrative?
- Is your story public? Discoverable? By whom?
- Who updates it?
- What is the digital narrative your students made about your?

Accounting or Counting

In a piece in *Change*, Lee Shulman (2007) posits that accounting is a form of narrative, and argues that counting without narrative is meaningless. The role of an institution is to give an account on the contribution to the education of its students. But, **we rarely provide info to make a compelling narrative – we tell data and process stories**



Causal Statements

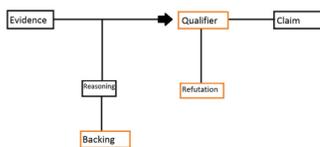
The ability to make causal claims about our impact on students and their learning

Institutional structures and support + student = enhanced learning



The Why: Argumentation

Toulmin (2003)



Toulmin Model

Claim: The conclusion of the argument or the statement the speaker wishes the audience to believe.

Grounds: The foundation or basis for the claim, the support.

Warrant: The reasoning that authorizes the inferential leap from the grounds to the claim.

Backing: The support for the warrant.

Modality: The degree of certainty with which the advocate makes the claim.

Rebuttal: Exceptions that might be offered to the claim.

But...



Assertions

"Within the impressions left by the stories on the storyteller are claims (assertions) about the world, as presented by the people and actions in each. In addition to telling some stories for entertainment, we may tell stories for some prescriptive purpose – to teach a lesson, to illustrate a moral in its narrative arc, or to draw an evaluative contrast. In this, we react, agreeing or disagreeing with the assertions within the stories... Assertions are part of the "understory" in most single incidents. Someone in the story, either through their words or actions, claims something, and in our telling of the story, we judge that claim. Through probing the patterns for assertions embedded within the stories and our tellings of them, we can see how they contribute to bringing current, often unacknowledged, assumptions into view." (Shadiow, 2013, p. 86).

For instance...

"Educational assessment is at heart an exercise in evidentiary reasoning. From a handful of things that students say, do, or make, we want to draw inferences about what they know, can do, or have accomplished more broadly." (Mislevy & Riconscente, 2005, p. iv).

Assessment as part of our story

Makela and Rooney (2012) write of telling a story – that assessment "is essentially a process of telling a story about our people, programs, and services" that are told to many different people, in many different ways, with many different foci. They argue that the "storyline surrounding an assessment ultimately aims to include enough evidence to make well-reasoned assertions..." (p. 2)

Examples

A good story is easy to read, introduces a problem, and shares how the problem was solved, highlighting the role of the institution in addressing the problem.

We need context and a story, because evidence gives stories substance, but stories give evidence meaning. Our stories can be our context, our histories, our missions, our organizational saga, it is how we see the world and why we do what we do.

- Improvement stories
- Accountability stories
- Employer stories – assignments as a way in
- Program marketing stories

Students as Storytellers

#thisiswhatlearninglookslike

Photo or video contest

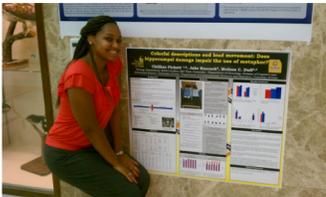
Students as researchers

Students as storytellers – the story of their time in the program

How do our stories signal which types of students we want in our programs and who will be successful here?

Not just stories, but the images and language

One does not simply explore evidence
alone...

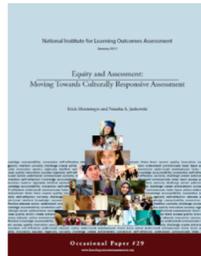


Involving students



Involving students

Assessment is not something we do to students it is something we do with students.



Transparency

Awareness of Learning Outcome Statements



Evidence-Based Storytelling

Evidence of student learning is used in **support of claims or arguments** about **improvement and accountability** told through **stories** to **persuade a specific audience**.



Story Elements

Miller (2011) storytelling relates a series of events where causality is involved in some way in the story

Stories can express values, convey culture, give one a sense of wholeness, or being part of something bigger...for instance...

Legends are stories which are historical, taking place in the distant past with some divine element;

Epics are long stories that tell of the adventures of heroes as they travel from one end of the land to the other serve as compendiums of an entire culture so can be encyclopedic,

Myths are stories about divine characters, creation of the physical world and occur before the human world

Some Tips to Remember

When using digital storytelling – focus on the story first and the medium second. Remember, it's not the power of the technology, but the power of the stories (Ohler, 2006)

Steslow and Gardner (2001): when telling a story it must be understood that stories normally have a specific point of view. The same story can also be told in multiple ways with multiple points of view. We must be careful not to use our stories for purposes of indoctrination of certain viewpoints, but to educate (p. 269)

Toolkits for Reviewing Stories

1. **Audience:** For whom is this narrative written? What counts as evidence for the different audiences of the report?
2. **What kind of story are you telling?** (i.e., compliance, improvement, loss, struggle, quest, tragedy, fantasy, etc.) What context is needed for readers to understand the story? What is the setting?
3. **Who are the character(s) in your story?** (Is there a protagonist in your story—someone who is driving the action and/or someone with whom your audience is likely to identify? What are the motivations of the characters?)

Toolkits for Reviewing Stories

4. What is the plot? (The plot is the causal sequence of events and includes setting and conflict.)
5. What evidence do you have to assert your claims?
6. Based on the story you crafted, what is the best medium through which to share it? Video, written narrative, shorter visual image pieces, a combination, others?
7. If you are using visuals in your narrative – are they appropriate? Do they support the story you are trying to share or detract from them?
8. How will you make your target audience(s) aware of the story?

Questions

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