

# Beyond the Looking Glass: Tenets of Meaningful Transparency

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# WELCOME

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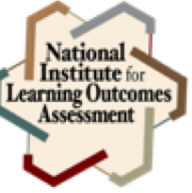
What's the series about?

How will our time together today flow?

In case you are wondering:

- Slides will be shared
- This is being recorded and will be shared
- You can keep the convo going on twitter with #NILOAwebinar
- Google doc of updated resource on the NILOA website and all prior webinars as well:

<https://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org>



# Community Check-in Recap

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This is not a test of online education. Remember: It's not about learning online; it's about learning in a global pandemic crisis.

Compassion not compliance should drive decisions at this time.

Listen to students and be flexible.

Do not require a higher-level of proof in an online class then you would in face-to-face.



# More Community Check-in Recap

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Don't start from a point of negativity in perceptions of students to create policy. [A policy should not be about blocking cheating but enabling learning.](#)

Modify end of course/faculty evaluations and use them as a formative planning tool.

Assessment of student learning is ongoing this semester, the reporting of those efforts is a lower priority that can be postponed or altered.



# Assignment Design Conversations



## Assignment Charrettes in a Time of COVID-19

Assignment charrettes, or structured peer review of assignment design, provide an opportunity for faculty members to come together and discuss, through a structured peer review process, the design of their assignments in relation to learning outcomes, evaluative criteria, and the means by which students are prepared to complete the assignment (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Elements of an Assignment Design Conversation

In the current global pandemic of coronavirus, faculty have taken courses online for the remainder of the Spring semester or term, and are planning now to continue online for the summer and possibly fall. As such, conversations on modifying assignments are now timelier than ever. Assignment discussion provides a means to:

1. Focus attention on the key learning outcomes of interest within a course and the assignments that allow students to practice or demonstrate their learning – what is it that we really want students to do;
2. Bring faculty together remotely to help with physical distance, but also to problem solve collectively ideas on how to focus and refine assignments for the near term; and
3. Provide professional development and support through community in a time of crisis.

While the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) conducted a [virtual assignment design charrette](#) for several institutions of higher education within Virginia, and made their materials available for others to learn from, such an approach may not work given current faculty and staff constraints including home schooling, access to internet and time, and other situations related to coronavirus circumstances. As such, we offer a few considerations for modifying an assignment design conversation for the near term.

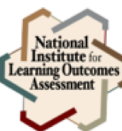
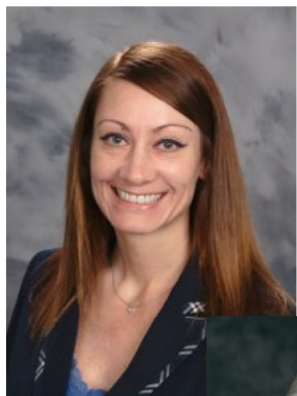


Assignment: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments From: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What learning outcomes will students demonstrate with this assignment? How does it need to be modified to better align with the learning outcomes of interest?
2. How does the assignment align with the evaluative criteria? Are there mixed signals sent to students?
3. Thinking about the assignment from the point of view of students, what questions or suggestions do you have regarding clarity in instructions, prompt, or purpose?
4. How does this assignment allow for flexible options, alternative demonstrations, and/or culturally responsive demonstrations of learning?
5. How does this assignment need to be modified or adjusted to reflect current faculty and student circumstances and situations in light of COVID-19?
6. What unnecessary constraints, if any, may need to be removed to accommodate learning during a global pandemic crisis?

# Planning with Curriculum Maps



## Program Planning in a Time of COVID-19

Students had already completed a fall term and part of the spring when campuses switched to remote instruction in response to coronavirus, or COVID-19. For those students graduating, they had been refining and practicing various institutional and programmatic courses over the entirety of their degree path. For those still on the leading edge of their educational journey, one principle of learning rings very true: that the learning we most desire for our students cannot be acquired in a single class or single experience. Students must run into it over and over again, in different classes, in different ways. Thus, as we look to planning a possibly virtual Fall learning experience for students, faculty and staff need to come together and explore curriculum plans in relation to learning outcomes and assignments. In other words, it is a great time to dust off curriculum maps and use them to engage in future planning for students.

These conversations are not about updating a curriculum map document or starting into a rigorous process of mapping curriculum. Instead, assessment professionals can offer several questions to guide faculty discussions in planning for the summer and fall.

- When our campus made the shift to remote instruction, what learning outcomes had we addressed, and which were left to cover? Basically, what learning outcomes will students need additional application or review in follow-on courses?
- Are the courses planned for next term already addressing those outcomes, or do they need to be modified? How might I rethink my course(s) and assignment(s)?
- How is my course setting students up for learning success in future courses?

Now's the time to return to the basics of assessment and instructional design. Consider discussing the following questions:

- Why does this course even exist?
- What are the learning outcomes that students need from this course that they will apply elsewhere?
- How can we think about learning from a program perspective? Where does this fit into overall curriculum?
- Can we consider this a flipped semester or a flipped summer – where students learn about a concept over the summer and then apply and practice it when they return?

Feel free to pull from this list of questions to assist in conversations on learning in the upcoming sessions/semesters/terms. In addition, ask the students what learning outcomes they think they have acquired and/or where they think they need additional work. This is also an opportunity to



actively involved your students in planning discussions as well as assessment conversations as they have interesting ideas to bring to the table.

## Virtual Discussions for Future Planning

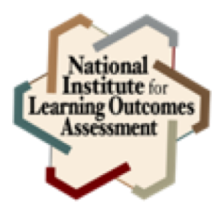
When undertaking programmatic planning conversations based on mapped and aligned curriculum, please consider current virtual constraints. Questions to consider include whether the discussion should be conducted synchronously or asynchronously? What technology should be used?

Given the differences in the lived experience of faculty and staff as well as differences in current ability to offer chunks of undistributed time to a task, virtual discussions of mapping learning may need to be flexible in different ways. For instance, one model may be that faculty come together in a Zoom meeting and discuss learning in specific courses at the same time. However, synchronous sessions may limit faculty involvement due to timing, internet requirements, and ability to focus. Another model might entail a mapping exercise that is shared in a Google doc, grouped by courses, programs, etc., and made available to faculty over the span of a week or other set amount of time, with questions to guide their engagement with materials. Faculty are then able to add their course/program learning outcomes information and comment as they have time. A further option is a modified course evaluation or survey to faculty, staff, and students to capture what learning students think they have met thus far and what learning they think they need to continue to work on in future terms. It might even be that the best path forward is a combination of various approaches mentioned.

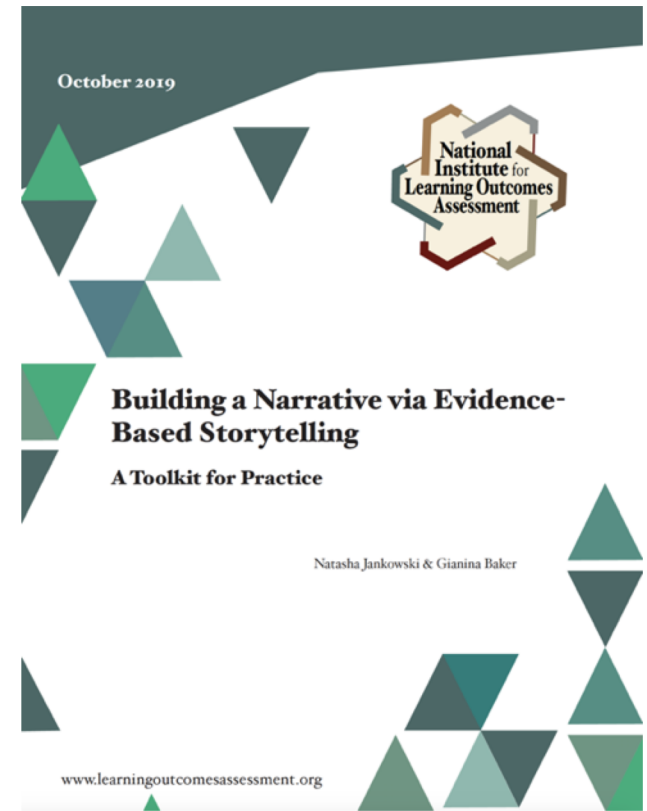
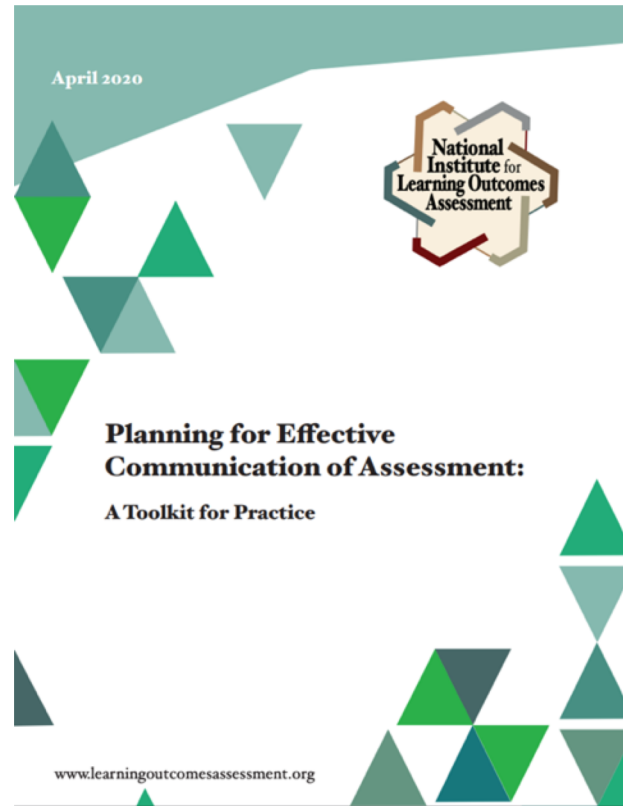
## Resources

For additional mapping considerations and ideas, you can access the [NILOA Mapping webinar recording](#) which is part of the [NILOA webinar series in response to COVID-19](#) (coronavirus) situations. You can also access the [Mapping Learning toolkit](#) for information on what curriculum mapping entails, how to go about doing it, sample maps, and examples from other institutions.

**Please cite as:** National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment. (2020, April). *Program planning in a time of COVID-19*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois and Indiana University, Author.



# Telling our Stories and Effective Communication



<https://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Communication-Toolkit.pdf>

# DEGREES THAT MATTER

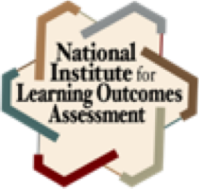
Moving Higher Education to a  
Learning Systems Paradigm



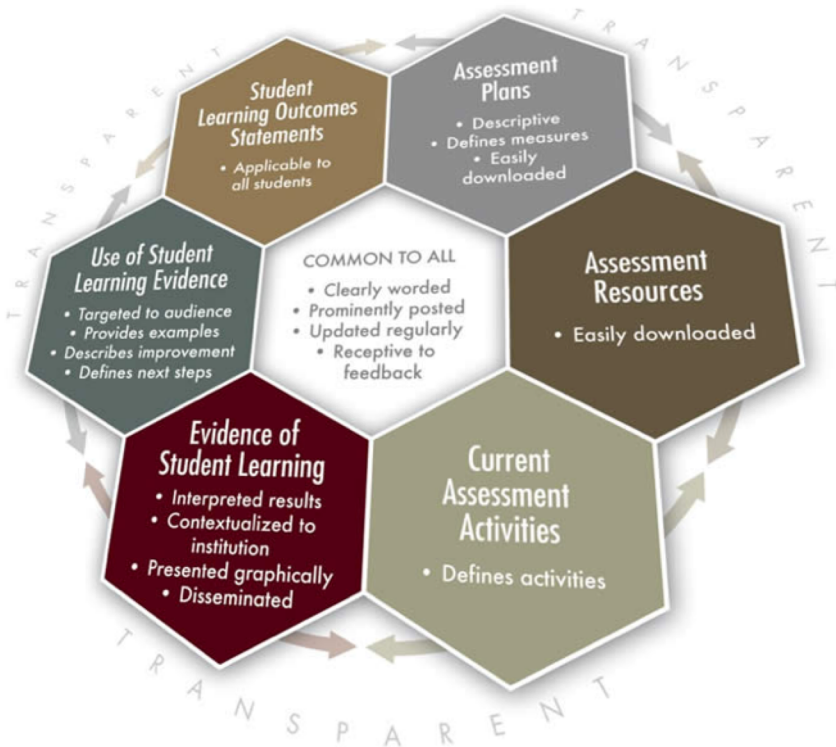
NATASHA A. JANKOWSKI  
AND DAVID W. MARSHALL

A Comm transparency





# Transparency Online: Communication or Posting?



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## Bowling Green State University

Criteria: [Centralized Assessment Repository](#), [Current Assessment Activities](#).

**BGSU** Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

**Office of Academic Assessment**

*Building Green State University - Present - Institutional Effectiveness* (Office of Academic Assessment)

*an "Institutional Effectiveness" - all of the systematic ways in which information is collected about student learning in order to improve that learning (Dixie & Dettmer, 2004)*

The Office of Academic Assessment (OAA) was created to establish an infrastructure for academic assessment, facilitate the assessment of university and programmatic learning outcomes, coordinate institutional and program assessment, and provide ongoing support services for academic assessment at BGSU. This link provides information and resources for assessment, maintains the technological infrastructure (i.e., Canvas) to support academic assessment, offers faculty and programs support line workshops and consultation on topics related to academic assessment, and assists in the collection and distribution of institutional and programmatic assessment data. The link also provides information and creates documents related to academic assessment that are used at the institutional level for various activities related to accreditation.

**Dr. Jessica Turner** is the Associate Director of Academic Assessment. **Dr. Carrie Hamelsky** is the Field and Evaluation Program, a faculty affiliate of the office who conducts faculty professional development and consultations on the use of Canvas for assessment of BGSU and program learning outcomes. The link provides information and creates documents related to academic assessment that are used at the institutional level for various activities related to accreditation.

**BGSU** Office of Academic Assessment  
BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY  
900 Ohio  
400-222-6500  
[assessment@bgsu.edu](#)

**EXCELLENCE IN ASSESSMENT**  
DESIGNEE

Bowling Green State University's (BGSU) [Office of Academic Assessment](#), part of the [Institutional Effectiveness](#) webpage, is a NILOA Featured Website! BGSU is also an [Excellence in Assessment \(EIA\) Designee](#) recognized in 2017 for excellence assessment work. The Office of Academic Assessment (OAA) provides the university with assessment information and resources, offers professional development for faculty and programs through workshops and consultations across various assessment-related topics, and helps the institution collect and disseminate assessment data. Through the OAA website, visitors

Why are we doing the things we are doing?

What is the process?

Who is involved?

What is my role?

Transparency in Process:  
Clarity in Structure

# Transparency in Learning: Transparency to Students



Who is aware of learning outcomes? When and in what ways?



Are students clear on why they are doing assignments or different tasks? How their learning connects across courses or experiences or employment?



Can we measure students on things they weren't aware they were being measured upon?



Do they know they learned something? And is it what we intended?

NO TIME TO EXPLAIN



GET IN THE LLAMA



# Transparency and Covid-19

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Transparency can be a mechanism by which we make the value and worth of educational experiences clear to students, help them make decisions on how to navigate education, as well as determine where to put their attention during a global pandemic crisis. It's also just smart educational practice.

# Leveraging the Student Voice in the Transparency of Student Learning Outcomes

April 30, 2020 Virtual Presentation, NILOA webinar



Ruth Slotnick, Ph.D., Director of Assessment

Christina Ouellette, Graduate Assistant of Assessment

Joanna Boeing Bratton, Assistant Director of Assessment (non-presenting)

 @ruthslotnick

 boeingbratton

 @BSU\_COuellette



# About Bridgewater State University

- Largest of the 9 Massachusetts state universities
- 9,000 undergraduate
- 1,500 graduate students
- 53% first gen students
- 28% students of color
- 94 academic degree programs



## **BIG Problem with Transparency in 2014**

- Academic program learning outcomes were difficult to find
- Mostly located in self-study documents or hard drives
- Very limited visibility of outcomes for 94-degree pathways

# External Drivers of Transparency

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NILOA Transparency Framework (2011)

Excellence in Assessment (EIA) designation criteria and rubrics (2016)

New England Commission Standard (NECHE) 9.16: Evidence of Transparency (2016)

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# Appeals (without GA)



**Academic Affairs Assessment Council** for why transparency matters – if only starting with visibility of learning outcomes



**Program Chairs & College Deans** and tried to have them take small steps forward



**BSU Marketing & Communications** to include the outcomes on the university's external site including the BSU Catalog

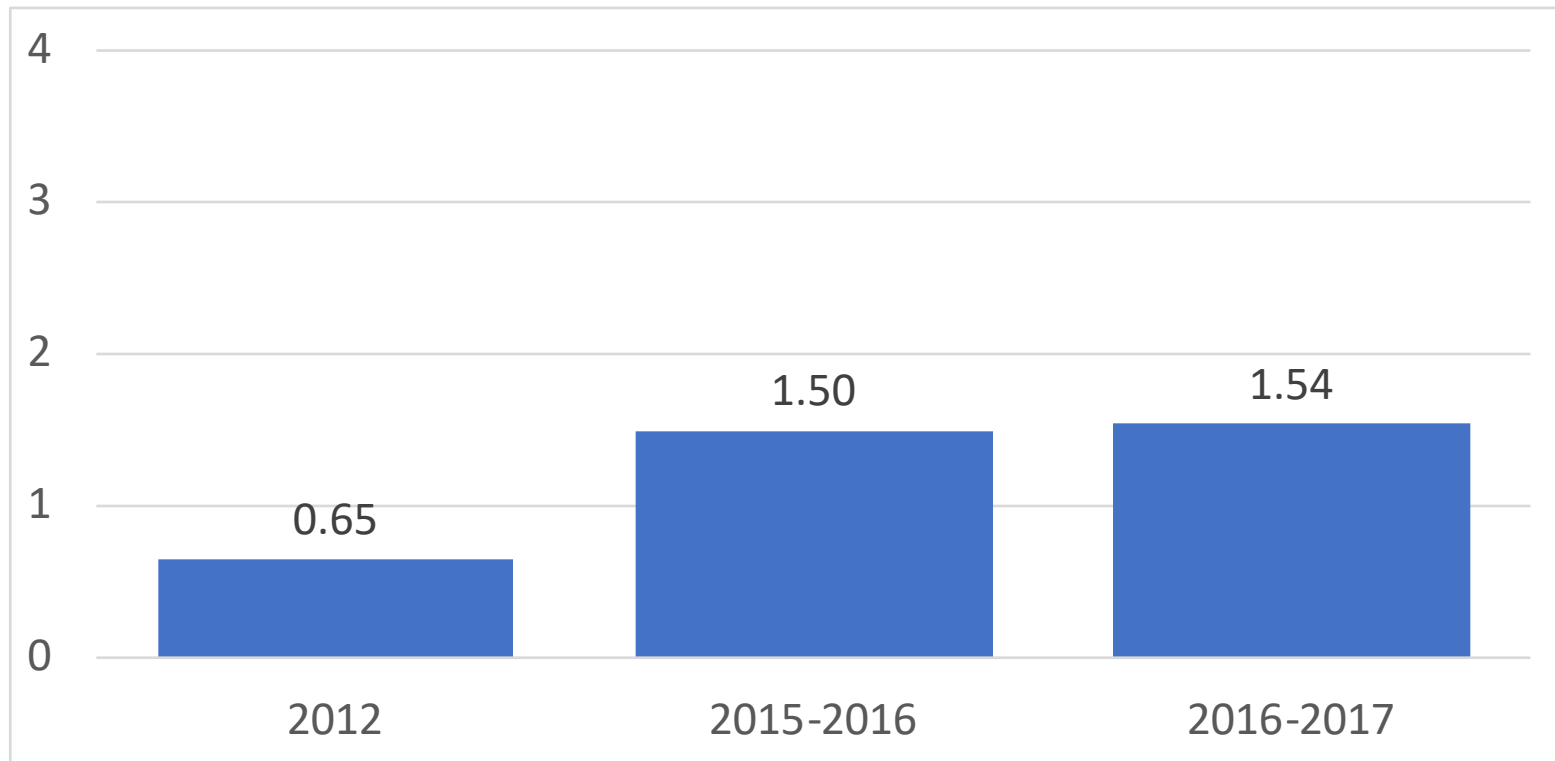


# General Campus Response



# How bad was our transparency? 100+ hour project

Transparency definition: Prominently posted at or linked to multiple places across both internal & external websites. Published in handbooks, reports, or elsewhere. Easy to find & read.



*Figure. BSU Transparency Results for Academic Degree Programs*





Scratched our heads, swore like sailors, we re-routed our efforts,

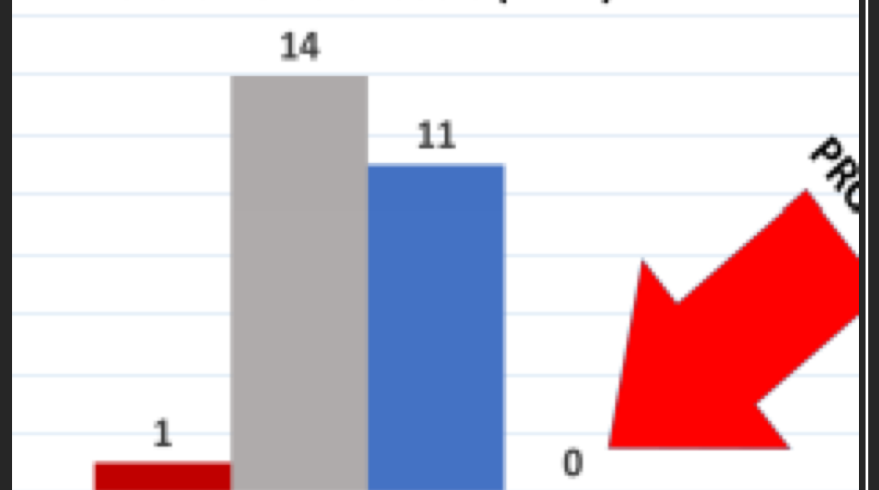
**AND WE**

Hired a graduate assistant who posted program outcomes on the Office of Assessment website

So, what did we do?



### of Handbooks for Learning Outcomes, Mission Statements & Goals (n=14)



■ BSU Mission Statement

■ Department/Program Mission Statement

■ Department/Program Goals/Objectives

■ Department/Program Learning Outcomes

of Degree Program Handbooks (n=14), and the explicit University Mission Statement, Department/Degree Program Mission Statement, Department/Degree Program Goals/Objectives & Department/Degree Program Learning Outcomes.

### Holistic Score of Degree Program Handbooks by College (n=14)

# TRANSPARENCY TR[ACTION]



## No GA

Transparency  
data alone;  
no action  
2015

## Kerri

Internal posting  
of program  
outcomes  
2017

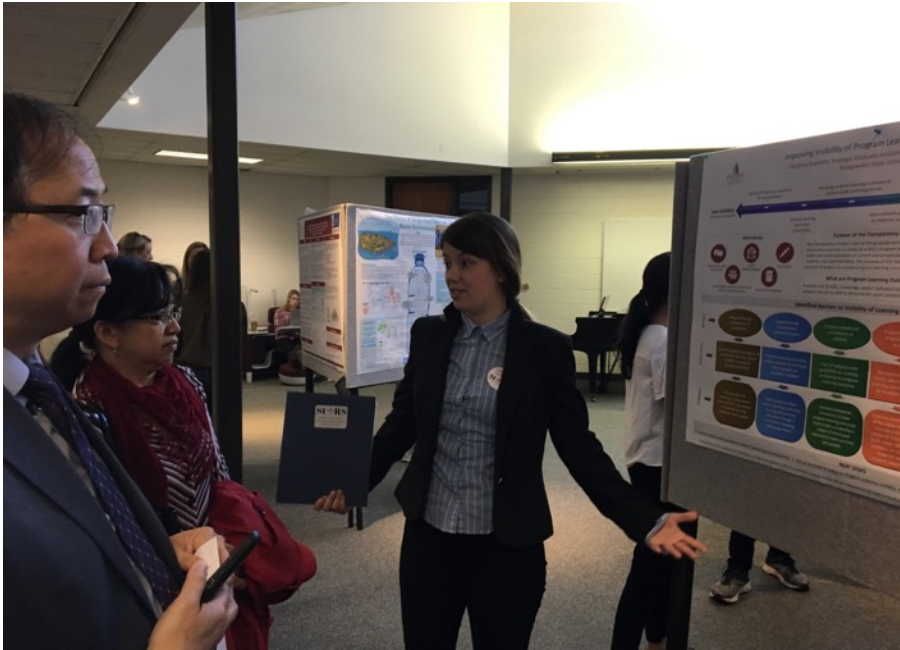
## Rafa

Handbook data,  
Assessment  
Council listening  
2018

## Christina

Outcomes  
published BSU  
website  
2019







"Students don't care about program learning outcomes" -Professor



"They don't care how assignments align and don't want to see a grid in the syllabi" -Adjunct Faculty

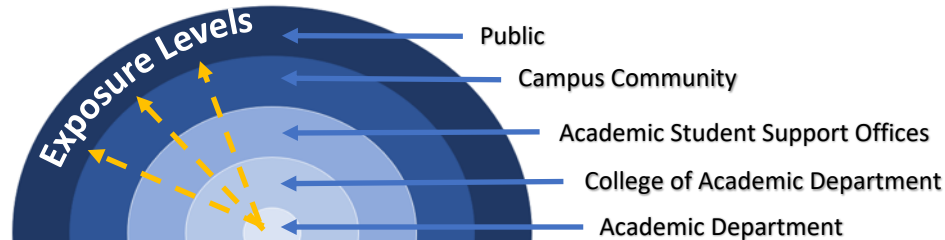


"I don't think anyone is going to sit down and talk to you about learning outcomes transparency" -College Dean

# BSU Transparency Framework



Bridgewater State University  
Office of Assessment



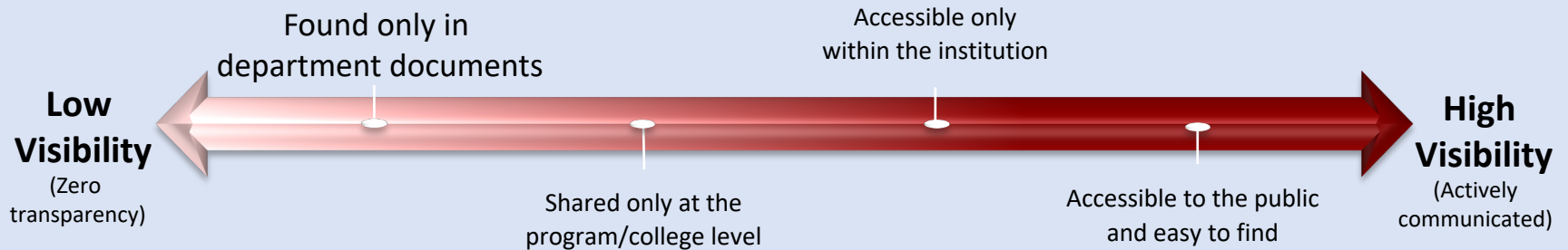
**Level 5: Highest Transparency**

**Level 4: Integration Beyond the Program Level**

**Level 3: Connection and Application at the Program Level**

**Level 2: Active Communication of Program Learning Outcomes with Students**

**Level 1: Visibility of Program Learning Outcomes**



# Current Situation



BUDGET CUTS &  
LOSS OF GA



COVID19  
PANDEMIC

# Recap and moving forward: Integrating the student voice to increase transparency

Identify	Identify key students or student groups to promote visibility for prospective and current students
Empower	Empower students to ask how learning outcomes tie into the selection of a student's major, especially during the pandemic
Invite	Invite current students to share their stories of connecting program outcomes to classes, internships, and a future career



# Wrap-up & Resources

- We have a NILOA Assessment in Practice paper coming out in May with our strategies tool kit
- We will be presenting at the virtual Higher Education Assessment Conference on May 12
- In June, Christina will be featured on a NILOA podcast
- We are launching the [BSU National Learning Outcomes Transparency survey](#) today [RIGHT NOW!]

# Webinar with Watermark

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May 5, 2020 | 3:00-4:00 pm EDT

COVID Conversations: Adapting Assessment &  
Focusing on Outcomes During a Crisis



Tracey Floto  
Trine University



Bliss Adkison  
University of  
North Alabama



Susan Brooks  
University of  
Findlay



Natasha  
Jankowski  
NILOA

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# Thank You for Being a Part of the Series!

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<https://youtu.be/etviGf1uWlg?t=33>