Facilitating an Assignment Charrette: Providing Space for Faculty-led Conversations on Assignment Design

National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment
Making Learning Outcomes Usable & Transparent

State Council of Higher Education for Virginia

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Today's Speakers

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Policy & Analysis
SCHEV

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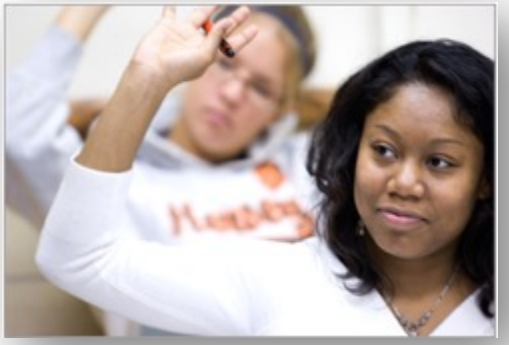

NILOA

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

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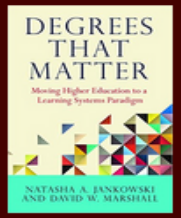
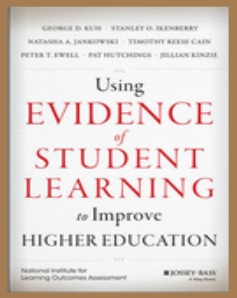
We are pleased to announce the release of a new NILOA book, *Degrees that Matter: Moving Higher Education to a Learning System Paradigm*. The book is available now.



Application materials for the 2018 Excellence in Assessment Designation are now available!

- Survey Report
- EIA Designation
- NILOA Newsletter
- Tuning Impact Study
- NILOA Coach



Click here to browse NILOA's Assignment Library.

California State University Northridge

The Academic Assessment and Program Review website is this month's Featured Website in the category of Communication and Centralized Assessment Repository.

Featured Website Archive

In the News | Archive

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How to Revamp a Curriculum

Thu, Feb 01, 2018 - 08:00 am

The Chronicle of Higher Education

The Chronicle for Higher Education has a Special Report containing four articles focused on revamping the curriculum to keep programs up-to-date, meet industry needs, keep programs and courses current, and maintain quality.

Microcredentials, MicroMasters, and Nanodegrees: Whats the Big Idea?

Thu, Feb 01, 2018 - 08:00 am

Cathrael Kazin for The Evolllution

This author explores the potential that microcredentials have for reforming the higher education credentialing landscape. Microdegrees can represent different ways of communicating the value of a postsecondary education.

What Gallup Learned About Higher Education

Thu, Feb 01, 2018 - 08:00 am

Zac Auter for Gallup News

New research by Gallup discusses the importance of students conveying the value of their education to future employers. One way institutions can help is by encouraging internships or work-integrated learning during college that can give students a greater understanding of their degree and the skills they have learned.

State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV)

http://www.schev.edu

Who's here today?

I've never heard of assignment charrettes before!? I'm here to learn more about them.

I've participated in an assignment charrette.

While I've not been part of a charrette, I have talked with others at my campus about assignment design informally.

I'd like to facilitate an assignment conversation on my campus.

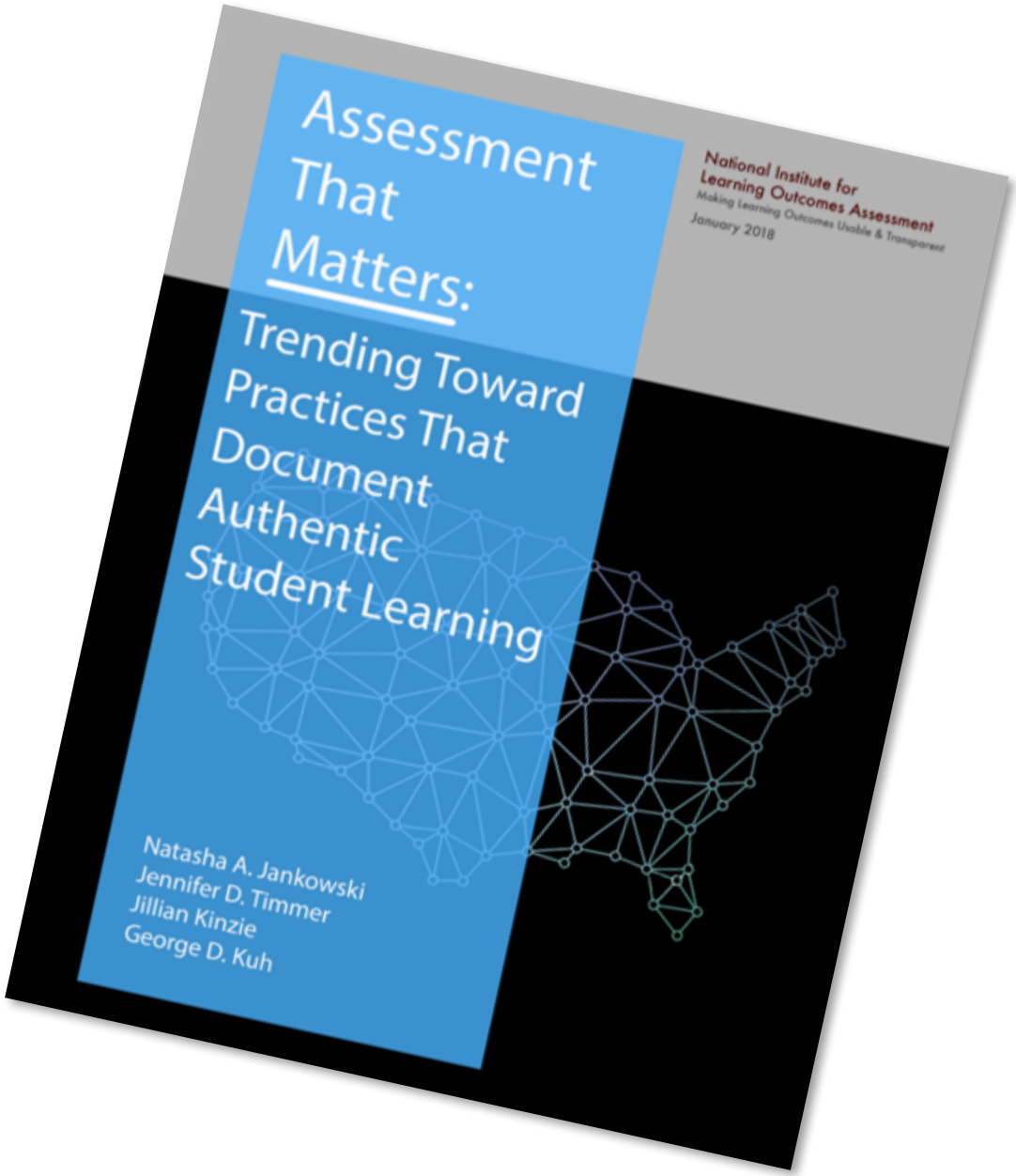
Someone told me to be here.

Welcome!!

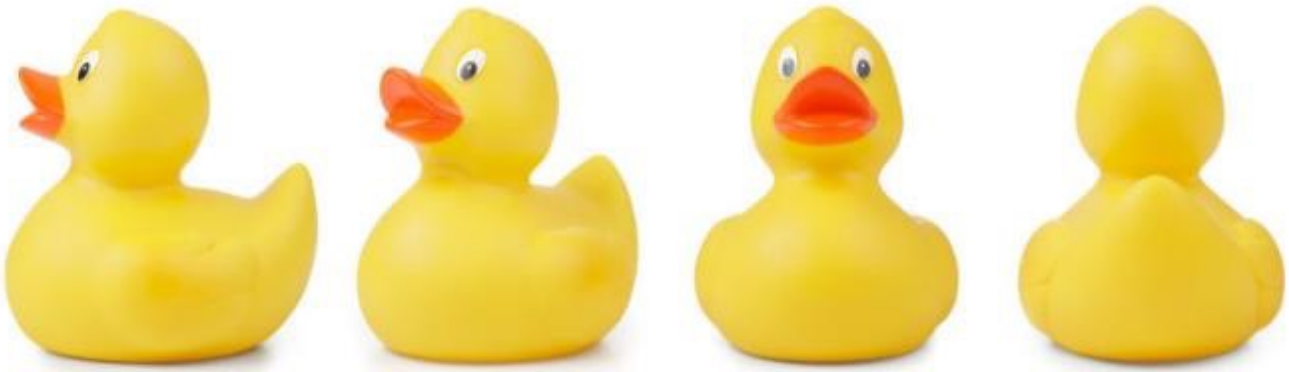
If you have led or participated in an assignment conversation, please share about the experience via the chat box

Findings from NILOA's Survey of Provosts 2017

62% currently facilitating faculty work on the design of assignments



Learning Outcomes are Increasingly Aligned



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

Assessment for Student Success is based on authentic measures of student learning

Classroom-based assessment

Rubrics

National Student Surveys

Assignments as Assessments

Faculty are working to create a curriculum that intentionally builds in integrated learning opportunities over time for students to apply and practice as well as transfer their knowledge and skills through assignments, in and out of courses.

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. Elevate scholarly nature of the work

Building on campus efforts already underway

Reflecting a conception of assessment as integral to teaching and learning vs “exoskeleton” (Ewell 2013).

What's a "charrette"?

"Charrette" (Fr.) means a small cart. Because architecture students once deposited their assignments in it as the cart was rolled through the studio, architects now use the word to refer to **an intense creative effort in a limited time period**.

Aussi . . .

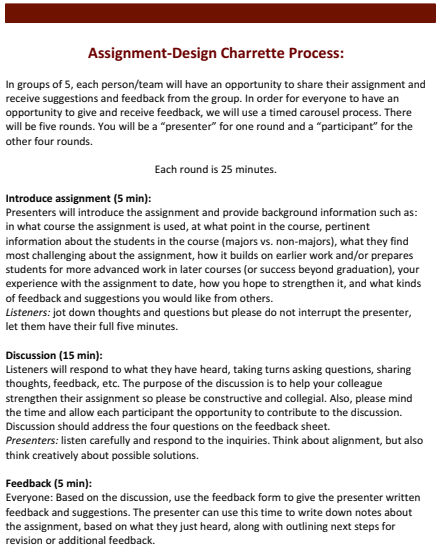
(a) In the tradition of the "atelier," architecture students progress through the curriculum in the company of their mentors and peers. This approach offers an interesting model for an integrated education.

(b) The tradition rests on the assumption that much of your learning will come from one another.

Small Group Process

25 minute segments per person/assignment

- Present assignment briefly—which outcomes, what course, which students, how does it work….
- Discussion with group (focus on questions on feedback form)
- Save 5 minutes for written feedback
- Breath
- Start again…
- Debrief at end



Assignment-Design Charrette Process:

In groups of 5, each person/team will have an opportunity to share their assignment and receive suggestions and feedback from the group. In order for everyone to have an opportunity to give and receive feedback, we will use a timed carousel process. There will be five rounds. You will be a "presenter" for one round and a "participant" for the other four rounds.

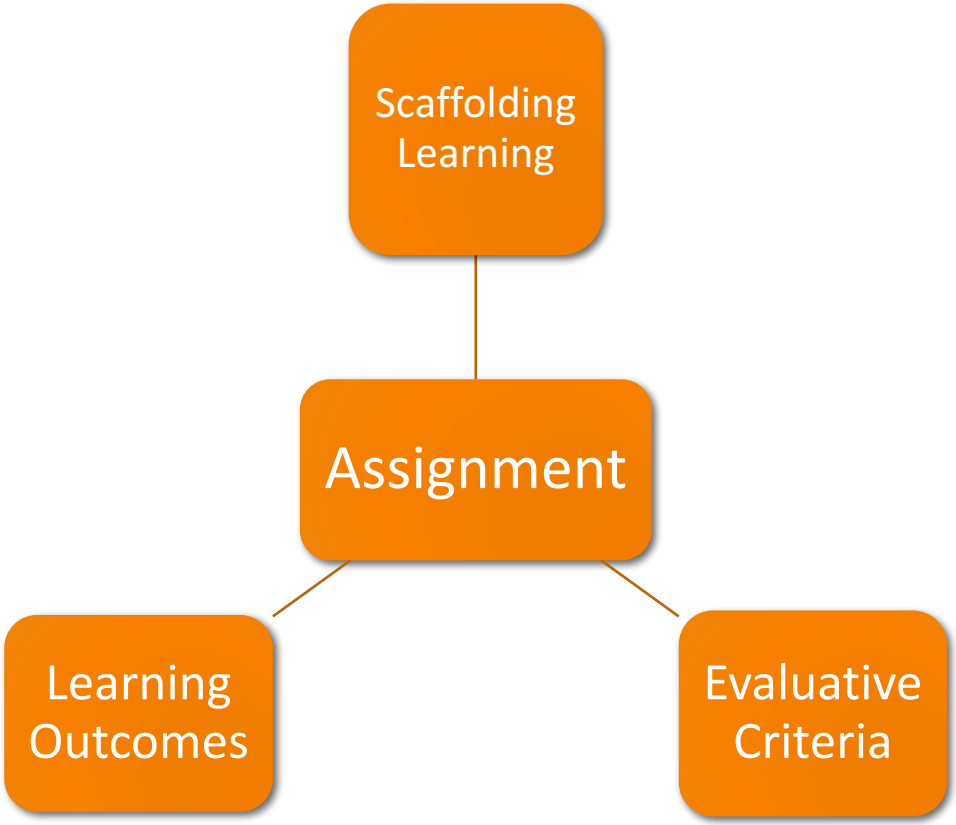
Each round is 25 minutes.

Introduce assignment (5 min):
Presenters will introduce the assignment and provide background information such as: in what course the assignment is used, at what point in the course, pertinent information about the students in the course (majors vs. non-majors), what they find most challenging about the assignment, how it builds on earlier work and/or prepares students for more advanced work in later courses (or success beyond graduation), your experience with the assignment to date, how you hope to strengthen it, and what kinds of feedback and suggestions you would like from others.
Listeners: jot down thoughts and questions but please do not interrupt the presenter, let them have their full five minutes.

Discussion (15 min):
Listeners will respond to what they have heard, taking turns asking questions, sharing thoughts, feedback, etc. The purpose of the discussion is to help your colleague strengthen their assignment so please be constructive and collegial. Also, please mind the time and allow each participant the opportunity to contribute to the discussion. Discussion should address the four questions on the feedback sheet.
Presenters: listen carefully and respond to the inquiries. Think about alignment, but also think creatively about possible solutions.

Feedback (5 min):
Everyone: Based on the discussion, use the feedback form to give the presenter written feedback and suggestions. The presenter can use this time to write down notes about the assignment, based on what they just heard, along with outlining next steps for revision or additional feedback.

Assignments as a way in



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Assignment-Design Charrette Feedback Sheet:

Assignment_____

Comments From_____

1. What learning outcomes do you think students will be able to demonstrate with this assignment? How does it need to be modified to better align with the outcomes of interest?

2. What are the main strengths of this assignment for assessing the identified outcomes?

3. Thinking about the assignment from the point of view of students, what questions or suggestions do you have?

4. How does the assignment align with the evaluative criteria? Are there mixed signals sent to students?

5. Other suggestions and possibilities – especially in response to the author's questions about improving the assignment?

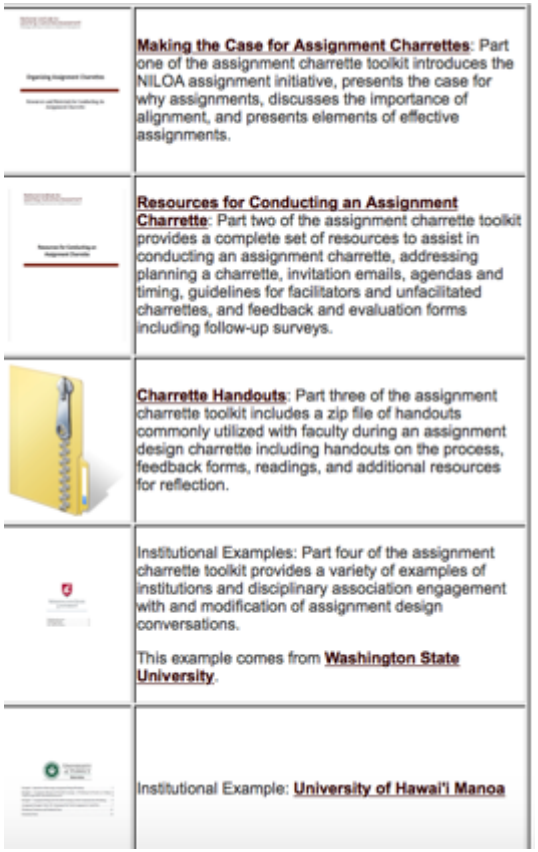
Feedback

76% of participants said “it helped me more clearly see my assignment through my students’ eyes.

59%: I’m more aware of aligning my assignments with desired institutional outcomes.

38%: helped to lead or facilitate an event about assignment design on their campus

Resources: Toolkit



	Making the Case for Assignment Charrettes: Part one of the assignment charrette toolkit introduces the NILOA assignment initiative, presents the case for why assignments, discusses the importance of alignment, and presents elements of effective assignments.
	Resources for Conducting an Assignment Charrette: Part two of the assignment charrette toolkit provides a complete set of resources to assist in conducting an assignment charrette, addressing planning a charrette, invitation emails, agendas and timing, guidelines for facilitators and unfacilitated charrettes, and feedback and evaluation forms including follow-up surveys.
	Charrette Handouts: Part three of the assignment charrette toolkit includes a zip file of handouts commonly utilized with faculty during an assignment design charrette including handouts on the process, feedback forms, readings, and additional resources for reflection.
	Institutional Examples: Part four of the assignment charrette toolkit provides a variety of examples of institutions and disciplinary association engagement with and modification of assignment design conversations. This example comes from **Washington State University**.
	Institutional Example: **University of Hawai'i Manoa**

http://www.learningoutcomeassessment.org/assignmenttoolkit.html

Entry point if needed

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A Way Forward

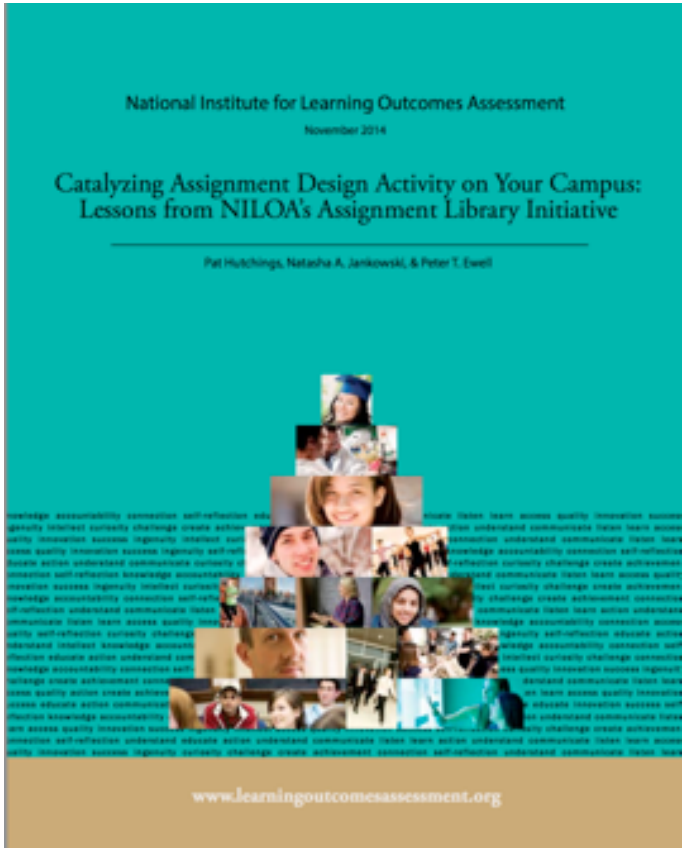
A question we routinely receive regarding working with faculty on assignment design is how to get started. What if assignments have never been shared and faculty are reluctant to do so? What if there isn't safe space to talk about assignments? What if we can't start conversations with assignments and need another way in? Fortunately, Karen Ford from the University of Sheffield addresses these issues by providing a means to initiate conversations with faculty about assessment ranging from the value and purpose of learning outcomes, assessments, and rubrics to issues of assignment design. In her interactive presentation, "Let's Face It", Karen outlines a faculty development workshop that is backward designed to create a space to openly discuss issues of teaching, learning, and assignment design. The collaborative workshop allows faculty to make connections between assessment practices in specific courses with the learning outcomes of a program and institution. The approach raises faculty assessment literacy by engaging them in assessing an assignment as a group, working their way through uncovering the value of learning outcomes, assignment prompts, and rubrics. The work is trans-disciplinary in that it takes an issue-based approach to problem solving as opposed to a disciplinary lens. Karen (2016) states in a paper accompanying a presentation given at the Assessment in Higher Education Seminar on the activity,

> I suspect we are all so busy getting on with the business of assessment, that taking the time to scrutinize what we collectively know about assessment and how it is applied in practice beyond our sphere is perhaps something we feel unable to justify. After all, assessment is taking place and students are graduating, so an assumption is easily made that all those involved in the assessment process are cognizant of underlying principles and processes and explicitly operating in light of them. I am not convinced this assumption is a sound one.

Karen designed the faculty-led activity to use a staged approach, immersing participants into the grading an assignment with intentional issues built into its design, providing a safe space by using an example already developed. She writes of the experience working with faculty from different universities, colleges, and disciplines that the conversations were candid, frank, practice-based, and created space for dialogue. We are delighted to share her resource as part of the assignment toolkit and hope you find it as useful as the faculty who have participated in the activities.

Natasha Jankowski
Director, NILOA

Please cite as: Ford, K. (2016, June). *Let's face it: A transdisciplinary approach to exploring, articulating, and striving for valid, reliable, aligned, and transparent assessment.* Paper presentation at Assessment in Higher Education Seminar Day, Manchester, UK.



Assignment design in Virginia

Motivating question: How can we support faculty and institutions across the state?

- Train the trainer workshop (February 2017)
- Regional charrettes (August 2017, March 2018)
- Online charrettes (February/March 2018)

The nitty gritty

Ahead of the charrette:

- Send out call for participants
- Ask participants to submit an assignment and reflective memo two weeks in advance (see the NILOA toolkit for sample invitation and memo template)
- Assign participants to groups of 4-6 people
  - Mix disciplines and institutions, if possible
- Distribute assignments and memos (or post them to a cloud-based folder) several days in advance
- If you are not having a presenter frame the charrette, ask participants to view one of the NILOA videos or webinars (e.g., “Unfacilitated Assignment Design on Your Campus”)

The nitty gritty (continued)

At the charrette:

- Have participants sit in their assigned groups. Make adjustments for no-shows, as necessary
- Provide forms for written feedback on the tables – one form per person per round. (The NILOA toolkit has a form you can use or modify.)
- Watch the time and announce when it's time to move from intro to discussion, from discussion to written feedback, etc
- Include time after the last round for the entire group to reflect on the experience – what did they learn?
- Collect immediate written feedback on the event – What did you find helpful or beneficial about this experience? What questions or concerns do you have? What support do you need to continue this work on your campus?

Lessons Learned

Decide what you want the charrette to accomplish and let that drive your other decisions -- e.g., who should be there, what format to use, if a facilitator is needed

Don’t try to take on too much in one setting (i.e. doing assignment and rubric conversations) – this is hard, intellectual work

The ”special sauce” is getting folks together to talk collaboratively about assignments from a shared starting point and perspective. Provide framing and structure, then let the process unfold

Proceed with confidence and trust in humanity

How are we feeling?

I’m overwhelmed!?

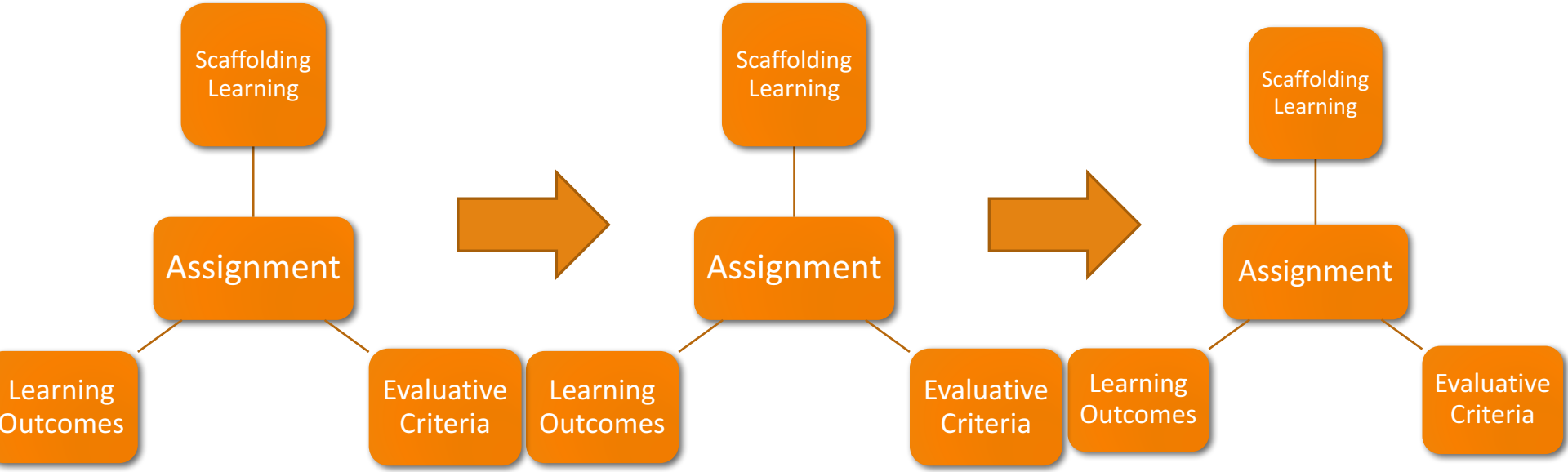
I think I can do this!

I’m wondering with whom I should partner…

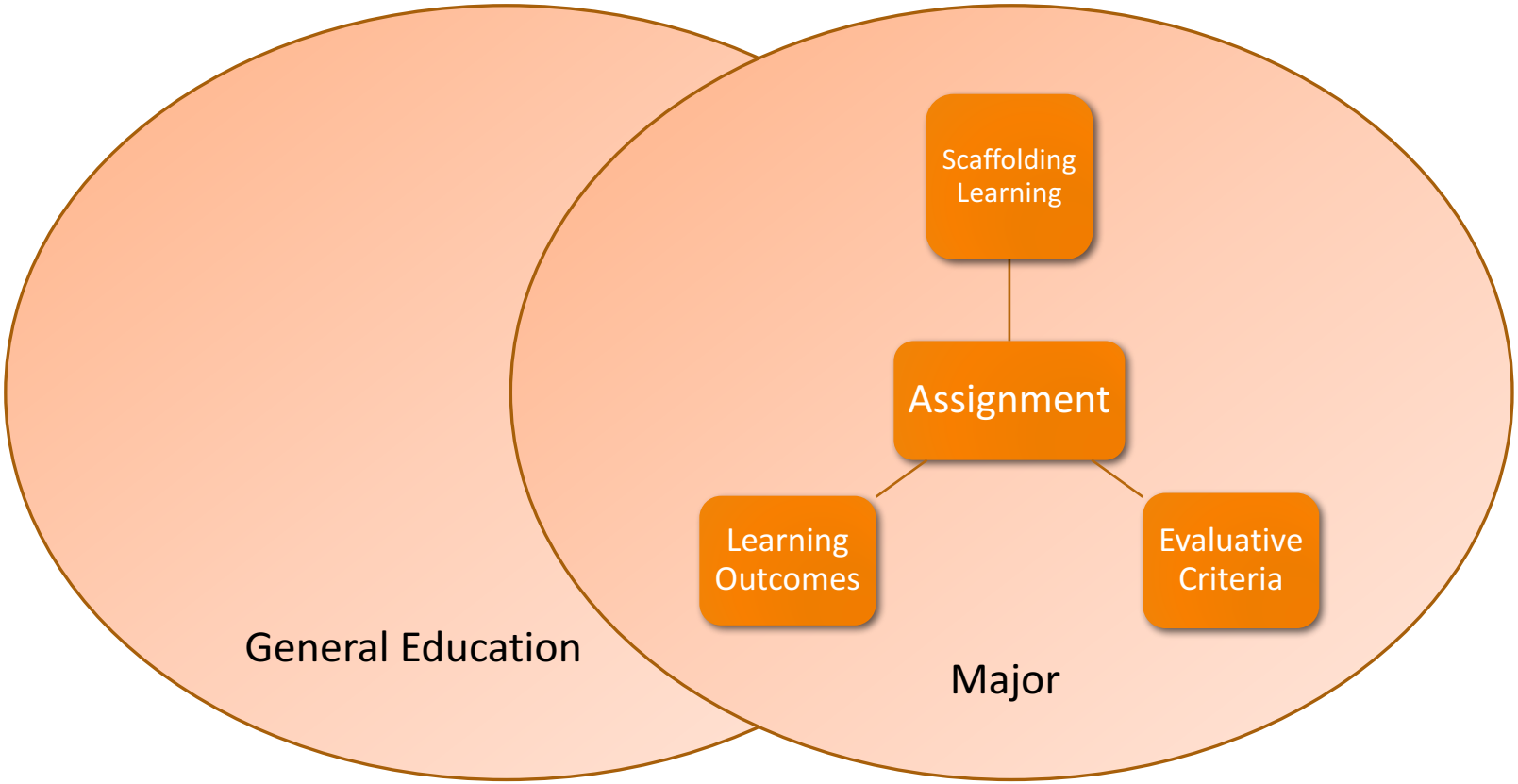
Are there people who can help me facilitate a charrette?

What else have you got for me?

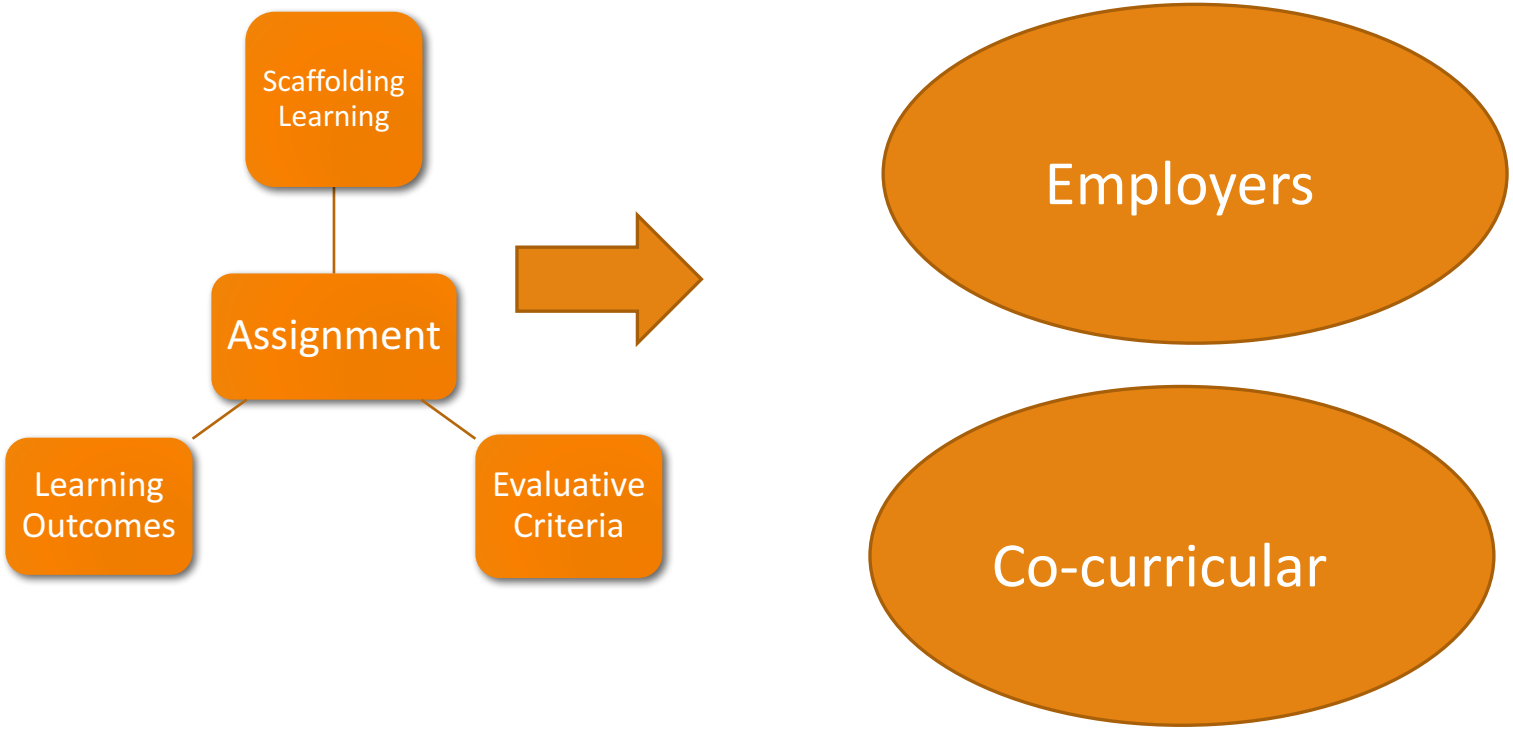
Modified Approaches: Connect over time…



Program View and General Education



Connections beyond program



Online Submission Process

DQP Assignment Library

Search for an assignment by a keyword using the search box or by clicking on any specific tag.

Search By: Title | Search | View All

Academic Disciplines and Assignment Characteristics

- Arts and humanities
- Community engagement
- Exam
- Health Sciences
- Library assignment
- Online course
- Presentation
- Research methods
- Spreadsheet
- Business
- Education
- General education
- History and social sciences
- Life sciences
- Physical sciences
- Program assessment
- Self-assessment
- VALUE rubrics
- Capstone
- Engineering
- Group project
- Introductory course
- Mathematics and computer science
- Portfolio
- Reflection
- Sequenced/scaffolded assignments
- Writing assignment

DQP Proficiencies

- Analytic inquiry
- Broad and Integrative Knowledge
- Communicative fluency
- Ethical reasoning
- Quantitative fluency
- Applied and Collaborative Learning
- Civic and Global Learning
- Engaging diverse perspectives
- Intellectual Skills
- Specialized Knowledge

Chat Box

What additional resources or tools do you need to help make this work happen?

Questions

Email: niloa@education.illinois.edu

http://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org

www.assignmentlibrary.org

www.degreeprofile.org

UPCOMING WEBINARS

Fostering a More Systematic Approach to Assessment

Wednesday, March 28

Influencing Student Intentions to Foster Deeper Learning

In partnership with Best Teachers Institute

Thursday, March 22

Visit watermarkinsights.com/webinars to register!

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Feedback!

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