Can You See Me Now?
Taking the Pulse of Transparency Efforts

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The Heat is On

- Unprecedented public challenges for higher education to be more accountable for results.

- Accompanying external demands for information about student and institutional performance are growing calls for institutions and accreditors to become more transparent about what they do and the results they achieve.

(Ewell, 2010)
Be Careful What You Wish For

➢ To balance legitimate demands of public interest and institutional autonomy, we need to determine the appropriate and acceptable applications of transparency efforts and ameliorate problematic aspects of making data public.

➢ It is especially important to discourage unacceptable uses of information by others. (Kuh, 2007)
Overview

✓ NILOA
✓ Accountability, Improvement & Transparency
✓ NILOA Web Scan Studies & Transparency Framework
✓ The Voluntary System of Accountability
✓ The Voluntary Framework for Accountability
✓ Lessons from the Wabash Study
Overview of NILOA

NILOA’s mission is to document student learning outcomes assessment work, identify and disseminate best practices, and support institutions in their assessment efforts.

SURVEYS ● WEB SCANS ● CASE STUDIES ● FOCUS GROUPS ● OCCASIONAL PAPERS ● WEBSITE ● RESOURCES ● NEWSLETTER ● LISTSERV ● PRESENTATIONS ● TRANSPARENCY FRAMEWORK ● FEATURED WEBSITES ● ACCREDITATION RESOURCES ● ASSESSMENT EVENT CALENDAR ● ASSESSMENT NEWS ● MEASURING QUALITY INVENTORY ● POLICY ANALYSIS ● ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

www.learningoutcomesassessment.org
Assessment Purposes

- Improvement
- Accountability
# Two Paradigms of Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic dimensions</th>
<th>Continuous Improvement</th>
<th>Accountability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Formative (improvement)</td>
<td>Summative (judgment)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>External</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td>Compliance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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## Implementation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrumentation</th>
<th>Multiple/triangulation</th>
<th>Standardized</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nature of evidence</td>
<td>Quantitative and qualitative</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference points</td>
<td>Over time, comparative, established goal</td>
<td>Comparative or fixed standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication of results</td>
<td>Multiple internal channels</td>
<td>Public communication, media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of results</td>
<td>Multiple feedback loops</td>
<td>Reporting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Concept of Transparency

- Accountability
- Communication
- Audience
NILOA Transparency Research

- Two Studies of Institutional Web pages--Web Scans
- Key Findings
- Transparency Framework/ Recommendations
Objective of Institutional Web Scans
To understand what student learning outcomes assessment information institutions post on their websites and where they post it.

- **Method of Data Collection**
  - Systematic review of websites
    - Starter pages, 5 click rule, Record in database
  - Limitations
    - Websites change, website finances and structure

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Exploring the Landscape: What Institutions Post on Their Websites About Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Activities

Natasha Jankowski & Julia Makela

Campuses report doing more assessment than they make accessible on their institutional websites. The typical institution shows only an average of two assessment activities. When information is posted, it is more often intended for internal institutional audiences.
Findings
Say vs. Show

- Institutions say that they are doing more than they show on their websites.

- **NILOA Survey Report**
  - “More Than You Think, Less Than We Need” released October, 2009
  - Survey asked chief academic officers at all accredited 2 & 4 year colleges and universities about their assessment practices.

- **NILOA Web Scan Studies**
  - Show that institutions say that they are doing more than they show on their websites.

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Comparison of Survey with Web Studies

[Bar chart showing comparison of survey data with web study data]
Location and Audience

- Student learning outcomes assessment information was most often available on web pages primarily targeting internal audiences.
  - Such as institutional research and provost pages

Interesting Fact: over 50% of institutions have an Assessment page
Results & Use

Institutions are more likely to show performance indicators than assessment results, but are still showing results more than 57% of the time.

Staci Provezis
Results & Use

Most institutions have assessment results listed in reports on their website.
Results & Use

Most institutions state that they use assessment findings for accreditation and improvement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percent of Institutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-Study</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify Areas of Improvement</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Planning</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modify General Education Curriculum</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department and Course-Level Changes</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alter Assessment Process</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change Policy</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek More Data</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify Areas of Faculty Development</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benchmarking</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Change</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Possible Influences

Public versus Private

Accreditation

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Influences

Institutions who participate in national initiatives are more likely to show assessment results.
Influences

Public institutions show more assessment results than private ones.
Influences

Institutions that have recently undergone accreditation show more assessment information, results, and use.
Recommendation #1

• Make assessment information more accessible (Volkwein, 2010)
  ○ Provide information on multiple web pages
  ○ Collaborate with other campus stakeholders
  ○ Update web pages regularly
  ○ Consider varying web browsers, accessibility of software, etc which influence ability to download documents
Recommendation #2

- Explicitly state assessment goals, activities, and initiatives on web pages
  - Ensure statements are understandable
BYU Learning Outcomes

This web page links you to the expected learning outcomes for each major at BYU. Learning outcomes are statements that describe the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that learners should have after successfully completing a learning experience or program. By reviewing the published learning outcomes for a given major, students and instructors can keep in mind and discuss the larger picture of student learning within that major how the courses, projects, assessments, and other learning activities help students accomplish those outcomes.

Tips for Students

By reviewing the program outcomes you can see the big picture of the knowledge and skills you will be able to use upon finishing the program.

Reviewing program outcomes will help you understand how the work you perform in individual courses can enable you to develop the knowledge and skills listed in the outcomes.

Knowing the program outcomes will help you develop and organize your personal portfolio of work that will help you impress potential employers.

Tips for Professors

By continually reviewing your outcomes, you will be able to quickly identify areas of strength and weakness in your program. Your case for making changes to improve student learning will be well documented and will contribute to ongoing accreditation for BYU.

By reviewing the published outcomes for your program, you can better plan what you will assess and how those assessments will help your students learn and achieve the outcomes.
Recommendation #3

• Help audiences understand assessment activities through simple examples and descriptions
  ○ Explain data in layperson’s language (Middaugh, 2010; Volkwein, 2010)
  ○ Use an outside reviewer
Learner Satisfaction
See how learners rate their Capella experiences.

On-line learners may have different needs, expectations, and priorities than more traditional students. At Capella, we strive to understand and meet those needs, priorities and expectations. One way we do that is to measure learner satisfaction using standardized surveys. These surveys allow us to evaluate Capella’s performance and to compare it to other similar institutions.

National Survey of Student Engagement
Each year Capella participates in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). In 2008, all Capella undergraduate students that were the equivalent of first-year or senior level students were invited to participate.

Results reported here are from students at the senior-year level. Capella’s results are compared to the survey’s the National Benchmark’s results, which represent learners from 769 different institutions. The response rates were 42% for Capella and 35% for the National Benchmark. Sampling error is ±/-.04% for Capella and 0.2% for the National Benchmark.

Survey details
NSSE obtains information from hundreds of colleges and universities nationwide about undergraduate student participation in programs and activities and their interactions with faculty and other students. The results provide a picture of how undergraduates spend their time and what they gain from attending college.

The numbers reported here reflect the percentage of respondents who chose the top 2 positive answers on a 4-point scale or the top 3 positive answers on a 7-point scale.

What Universities Enable Students To Do

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capella</th>
<th>National Benchmark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills.</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing clearly and effectively.</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking critically and analytically.</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using computing and information technology.</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working effectively with others.</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solving complex real-world problems.</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA)

Initiative by public 4-year universities to supply comparable, transparent information on the undergraduate student experience through a common web report – the College Portrait.

www.collegeportraits.org

Christine Keller
VSA Goals

• Provide a straightforward, useful tool for students during the college search process
• Assemble information that is transparent, comparable, and understandable.
• Demonstrate accountability and stewardship to the public.
Assessment Results

- Selected results from student surveys across 6 key areas
  - Areas: active learning, group learning, interaction with faculty/staff, diverse learning experiences, satisfaction, institution commitment

- Pilot project to directly measure and publically report student learning gains at institution level using a common method
  - Skills: critical thinking, analytic reasoning, written communication

Christine Keller
Educational Outcomes

- **College Portrait**
- **Student Surveys**
- **SLO Tests**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>College Portrait</th>
<th>Student Surveys</th>
<th>SLO Tests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Learning Outcomes Workshops

- Summer 2009 – Strategies for effective test administration
- Summer 2010 – Interpreting and using test results for institutional improvement
- Summer 2011 – More general VSA Forum, including a section on SLO
Evaluation & Next Steps

- During 2011, evaluate the efficacy of the College Portrait and SLO pilot study
  - Surveys, focus groups, interviews with VSA participants, non participants, and key audiences
- What is working, what isn’t working, and next steps
MORE INFORMATION

Websites

www.voluntarysystem.org
www.collegeportraits.org

Presentations/Reports from Workshops

http://www.voluntarysystem.org/index.cfm?page=LearningOutcomes

Christine Keller, VSA Executive Director

ckeller@aplu.org
FOR Community Colleges,  
BY Community Colleges

Kent Phillippe

www.aacc.nche.edu/vfa
What is the VFA?

- At its simplest, it is a framework that will define the measures appropriate for community colleges to gauge institutional performance.
WHY ARE COMMUNITY COLLEGES DEVELOPING A VFA?

- Responding to the need from within our sector to have more appropriate and useable accountability measures
- Benchmarking and peer comparison tools are desired
- National agreement on core measures of accountability positions our colleges to inform and influence required reporting (such as reporting for state and federal agencies, IPEDS, and accrediting bodies)
- We don’t have the right indicators or definitions of success
OUTLINE OF PROPOSED VFA STAGE ONE MEASURES (CONT.)

STUDENT PROGRESS AND OUTCOMES (SPO) MEASURES

- Measures of College Readiness
- Measures of Student Progress and Persistence
- Measures of Outcomes and Success
OUTLINE OF PROPOSED VFA STAGE ONE MEASURES (CONT.)

WORKFORCE, ECONOMIC, AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT MEASURES

- Career and Technical Education
- Non-credit courses
- Adult Basic Education / GED
STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

The VFA Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) Working Group has proposed eight learning outcomes it feels are appropriate to community colleges. In the first stage of the VFA, we will be asking colleges to determine if the proposed SLOs align with the learning outcomes assessed at their institution; the metrics used to quantify the outcome; and the population of students for which they are reporting the learning outcome. The eight SLOs proposed by the VFA are:

- Content/career specific skills and knowledge
- Teamwork and collaborative skills
- Global understanding and citizenship
- Communication (ability to speak, read, write, listen well)
- Analytical reasoning and critical thinking
- Quantitative literacy
- Information literacy
- Innovative and creative thinking
Can You See Me Now?

Taking the Pulse of Transparency Efforts

AAC&U Annual Meeting
January 2011
Transparency is a condition that allows improvement - but it does not cause improvement

Transparency works at two levels
Table 1

Two Paradigms of Assessment

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<tr>
<td>Intent</td>
<td>Formative (Improvement)</td>
<td>Summative (Judgment)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stance</td>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>External</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predominant Ethos</td>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td>Compliance</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Application Choices</th>
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<td>Multiple Feedback Loops</td>
<td>Reporting</td>
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Transparent with respect to whom?

- **External audiences**
  - Allow students, parents, government officials to evaluate the performance of colleges and universities
  - “It should support accountability and transparency so that students have a better idea about the value of the education they are buying...” Margaret Spellings 2010

- **Internal audiences**
  - Communication among practitioners and students to share information about what improves student learning
  - “The lessons are hidden. But if we open the book on physician’s results, the lessons will be exposed. And if we are genuinely curious about how the best achieve their results...they will spread.” Atul Gawande 2004
**External Transparency**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>High</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>What evidence?</td>
<td>Hidden in plain site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Good work in private</td>
<td>Sweet spot</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Internal Transparency**

Charlie Blaich
<table>
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<th>Internal Transparency</th>
<th>External Transparency</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
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</tr>
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<td>High</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good work in private</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweet spot</td>
<td>What evidence?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
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Charlie Blaich
Using transparency to promote improvement

• Rule 1
  – Posting information on the web does not mean that internal audiences will engage that content

• Rule 2
  – Sending out reports does not mean that internal audiences will read them
Using transparency to promote improvement

- Create events and activities that make information on the website or reports relevant
  - Teach people where the information is and how they can use it to advance their work
  - Host conversations in mixed groups to make sense of available information
    - Post summaries of these conversations
  - Involve students
    - Involve students directly with faculty and staff in conversations about assessment evidence
    - Talk with students about evidence, summarize their comments, and share these summaries with faculty and staff
Discussion?

Questions?

Comments?

www.learningoutcomesassessment.org