What do we want our students to learn?
How do we build courses (and curricula) to serve these goals?
How do we know students are learning?
How can students build their own, persuasive narrative of the knowledge and skills their education has developed?

WHY FOCUS ON THESE QUESTIONS?
It's our job to reflect thoughtfully & collectively on our teaching.
It makes us more student-centered (framing our work around their needs, their expectations, their “time-line”)
It builds a better, stronger community (in educational, economic, and civic terms)

“BEGIN WHERE PEOPLE ARE, NOT WHERE YOU WANT THEM TO BE.”
Public Agenda, a NYC mediating agency

WHERE ARE MANY COLLEAGUES?
DEALING WITH BAD MEMORIES OF PAST ASSESSMENTS

Thinking back on assessments that were . . .

~~ the work already underway ~~
course & program assessment
evaluative rubrics
Gen Ed outcomes (ISU & state-wide)
Taskstream technology
committees on assessment & review
Session 1: Assessment in the 21st Century

**ASSESSMENT NOW**

- Top-down
- One size fits all
- Isolated from the rest of the world

- Relied on standardized tests (over course work)
- Focused on collecting (but not using) data
- Disconnected from faculty; *(Shhh -- maybe assessment will just go away)*

"Mired in a culture of compliance, student learning outcomes assessment has had an embarrassingly modest impact on student and institutional performance. Assessment needs to be embedded in the ongoing work of teaching and learning, using evidence to improve the educational experience of students."

- Natasha Jankowski

"Returns assessment to the faculty relying on work done in the regular contexts of teaching and learning rather than turning to 'add on' instruments and approaches that are externally developed and administered."

- Pat Hutchings

"Assessment is ongoing and decentralized. It occurs every time a faculty member examines a particular student response to an exam, demonstration, or assignment."

- Peter Ewell
Standardized testing is antithetical to assessing adaptive and inventive competencies. Yet, nonstandard problems are the ultimate test of students’ competence—at work, at life, and in the community.

Preparing students to tackle nonstandard, unscripted problems and questions, where “right answers” are not known and where the nature of the problem itself is likely uncertain at best, and often actively contested. College must prepare learners to deal with the complex and uncertain, not just with the rote and routine.

**WHAT’S AT THE CENTER OF ASSESSMENT TODAY?**

- Student learning
- Guidance of faculty disciplinary experts
- Clear (& repeated) statements of purpose
- Assignments clearly tied to stated goals
- Scaffolded, sequential coursework
- Attention to students’ NEXT steps

**Many forms of assessment**

- Lab demonstrations
- Capstones
- Rubrics
- Journals
- Student presentations/performance
- Essays
- Exhibits
- Group projects
- Licensure results
- Pre-test/post-test
- NSSE (National Student Survey)
- Student self-evaluation
- Peer evaluation
- E-portfolios
- Alumni/employer/intern surveys

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**TABLE 3: SLOCMH Survey:** To what extent does your institution use the following approaches to assess undergraduate student learning?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage used by individual instructors or units</th>
<th>Percentage used in one’s discipline or school</th>
<th>Percentage used in one’s department or college</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Performance assessments other than grades (e.g., class participation, skill improvement exercises)</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubrics (pre-coded or locally developed)</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-assessment programs (e.g., portfolio, 360-degree feedback, self-assessment)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLOCMH assessments (from national standards)</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student work showcasing achievement or learning outcomes</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer surveys</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National model assessments (NSSE, COEES, CREQ, NSP, CEP, FLS, LSC, PC, etc.)</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External review of student achievement (e.g., accreditation, lab and other demonstrations, field experiences, portfolios, critiques, expositions, capstone projects)</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni surveys</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student interviews or focus groups</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council for Aid to Education (CAE)</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student involvement in decision making</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
KEYS WITH ACCREDITORS:
➤ clear purpose
➤ consistent effort to assess
➤ varied measures
➤ faculty engagement
➤ campus workshops
➤ integrate assessment w/other campus review projects (for continuous work)
➤ using assessment data to improve teaching
➤ this visit

WHAT’S HAPPENING ON OTHER CAMPUSES?:
National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA):
third nationwide survey of provosts, 2017
➤ institutional learning outcomes
➤ focus of assessment: compliance, improvement
➤ using a variety of data collection approaches (exs: rubrics, classroom-based performance assessments, capstones)
➤ supporting faculty use of assessment results and wider stakeholder involvement
➤ reliance on institutional research offices + faculty-led assessment committees
➤ majority of changes occur at the program- and course-level (esp. at the assignment, course, and program-level)

WHAT’S HAPPENING ON OTHER CAMPUSES?:
➤ many organizational features support assessment;
but policies on promotion and tenure lag behind
➤ little assessment of co-curricular improvement, resource allocation, trustee and governing board deliberations, and equity goals
➤ institutions’ websites do not provide much publicly-available information on assessment activities
➤ limited use of assessment-related technologies
➤ the greater an institution’s size and selectivity, the less likely it is to employ a variety of assessment activities

SOME USEFUL REMINDERS


Like many college professors, I find the rhetoric of "outputs" and "outcomes" artificial, a fake metric that feeds the bureaucratic machine. Six or seven years ago, I mentioned this to an undergraduate class at Duke University.

I said: "You will not find any trite and clichéd ‘outcomes’ on my syllabus."

One student responded: “Will I find serious and meaningful ones?”


I realized that most students have no idea what they are supposed to be learning in a classroom beyond the "content" level –
nor do they know why the content is valid in and of itself nor what use or application or purpose it will have beyond the final exam.

I now frequently ask my students to collaboratively think about what outcomes they would like from a particular class and compose their own learning outcomes.
Imagine a first meeting of the academic year where no one talked about budgets, assessment, course assignments, or parking. What if we all started the year discussing what disciplinary ideals link us in our fields — and how we might best introduce those goals to our students?

Anne Hyde  
University of Oklahoma

What does a major, program, or degree represent?  
seat time?  
Carnegie credit hours?  
grade point averages?  
required courses?

All of these suggest what majors or degrees represent in terms of numbers.  
What do majors, programs, or degrees represent in terms of learning?

-How clearly do we define the learning that our majors, programs, and degrees develop?  
-How well do our students (and parents, employers, and policymakers) understand these goals?  
-When do students understand these issues?  
-When they complete program of study?  
-When they enter program of study?  
-How well do we clarify these objectives and expectations to secondary schools & other post-secondary institutions?

What do we want our students to learn?  
How do we build courses (and curricula) to serve these goals?  
How do we know students are learning?  
How can students build their own, persuasive narrative of the knowledge and skills their education has developed?