2010

Creating Clear Pathways: Assessing and Enhancing the First Year Experience at WMU

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Creating Clear Pathways: Assessing and Enhancing the First Year Experience at WMU

Assessment in Action -- March 12, 2010

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Current Concerns about Student Success in College

- **College-going stakes higher today than at any point in history**
- **45% students in 2yr-colleges depart during their first year, & 1 of 4 leave from 4-yr schools**
- **Enrollment & persistence rates of historically underserved students lagging**
- **51% of high school grads have reading skills necessary for college; 25% of students in 4-yr colleges need 1 yr of remedial coursework**

Concerns about <u>Quality</u> in Higher Education

WRONG WAY

- *"Has the quality of teaching improved? More important, are students learning more than they did in 1950?....The honest answer to these questions is that we do not know."*
- *"The moment has surely come for America's colleges to take a more candid look at their weaknesses and think more boldly about setting higher educational standards for themselves."*

Bok, D. (2006). *Our Underachieving Colleges: A Candid Look at How Much Students Learn and Why They Should Be Learning More*

"Colleges... do so little to measure what students learn between freshman and senior years. So doubt lurks: how much does a college education – the actual teaching and learning that happens on campus – really matter?"

David Leonhardt, *NYTimes*, Sept 27, 2009

Current Concerns Require Action: Assessment & Improvement

Over the last few years, particularly since the Spelling's Report, there's a...*"palpable sense of urgency for colleges to **demonstrate** that they provide a high-quality undergraduate education by reporting on their students' cognitive and personal development."*

- Pascarella (2010) Change magazine

Context for Assessment and Improvement

- **Greater emphasis on student learning outcomes and evidence that student performance measures up to standards**
- **Demands for comparative measures**
- **"Technology" of assessment has made great strides, but is still short of demonstrating learning outcomes most institutions claim**
- **Increased calls for public disclosure of results**

(Ewell, 2008; Maki, 2004; Trends in Learning Outcomes, General Education, and Assessment, AAC&U, 2009)

Two Paradigms of Assessment

	Assessment for Continuous Improvement	Assessment for Accountability
Strategic dimensions		
Purpose	Formative (improvement)	Summative (judgment)
Stance	Internal	External
Predominant ethos	Engagement	Compliance
Application choices		
Instrumentation	Multiple/triangulation	Standardized
Nature of evidence	Quantitative and qualitative	Quantitative
Reference points	Over time, comparative, established goal	Comparative or fixed standard
Communication of results	Multiple internal channels and media	Public communication
Uses of results	Multiple feedback loops	Reporting

Ewell, Peter T. (2007). Assessment and Accountability in America Today: Background and Context. In *Assessing and Accounting for Student Learning: Beyond the Spellings Commission*. Victor M. H. Borden and Gary R. Pike, Eds. Jossey-Bass: San Francisco.

What is Currently Important in Student Learning Outcomes Assessment?

- Multiple measures
- Diagnostic, milestone, and culminating assessments all necessary
- **Wide range of assessment practices** – basic to more complex assessments of learning environment, authentic assessment, student work, direct learning outcomes, "value-added"
- Measures of college-level learning by different majors, fields, levels
- **Demonstrate action on assessment results**
- **Quality improvement – measuring change, real improvements in student learning**

Overview

- **Why assessment matters**
- **Student engagement perspective**
- **Assessment and the First Year Experience**
  - Expectations – Experiences Gap
  - Measures of quality in the First Year Experience
  - Learning Outcomes and Growth in the first year
- **Assessment and Improvement**
- **Implications: Creating Clear Pathways**

What is Student Engagement?

The extent to which students engage in and are exposed to empirically proven effective educational practices

➢ **Activities and practices shown to be related to desired educational outcomes**

OK, but what *is* Engagement?

- **Challenging academic work**
  - High expectations
  - Deep approaches to learning
- **Quality involvement with faculty**
- **Enriching activities and high-impact practices**
  - Active and collaborative learning
  - Powerful educational experiences
- **Supportive peers, faculty, staff, campus**

Why Does Engagement Matter?

The time and energy students devote to educationally purposeful activities is the single best predictor of their learning and personal development.

Decades of Research
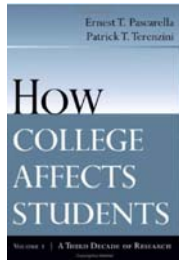
The impact of college is largely determined by individual effort and involvement in the academic, interpersonal, and extra-curricular offerings on a campus. It is important to focus on the ways an institution can shape its offerings to encourage *student engagement.*

Paraphrased from
Pascarella & Terenzini (2005), p. 602

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE): Key Aims

- **To enrich the discourse about college quality**
  - Shift the focus to teaching & learning
  - Proven effective educational practices
- **To provide diagnostic information to support the improvement of undergraduate education**
  - Actionable information based on valid & reliable measures
  - Meaningful comparisons

Why NSSE? (2)

- **Direct assessment of learning is problematic**
  - Diversity of U.S. institutions and missions
  - Diversity of fields of study
  - Measurement challenges
- **Focus instead on *effective practices***
  - Grounded in research on student learning
    - Quality of student effort
    - Principles of good practice

NSSE

In your experience at your institution during the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following? Mark your answers in the boxes. Examples: ☒ or ☒

	Very often	Often	Some-times	Never
a. Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Made a class presentation	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in	☐	☐	☐	☐

www.iub.edu/~nsse

NSSE suite of instruments

| Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement	National Survey of Student Engagement	Faculty Survey of Student Engagement
◆Annual survey of first-year students at baccalaureate degree-granting institutions	◆Annual survey of first-year and senior students	◆Parallel survey to measure faculty expectations for student engagement
◆Administered prior to start of classes, usually at orientation or welcome week	◆Administered during spring term	◆Administered during spring term
◆2007 WMU	◆2009 WMU administration (total 5 administrations, 2010 administration)	◆2009 WMU (total 4 administrations, plus, 2010)

What can we learn about the first college year from BCSSE, NSSE and FSSE?

➢Gaps between…
  ➢student expectations and experience?
  ➢faculty expectations and students' experience?
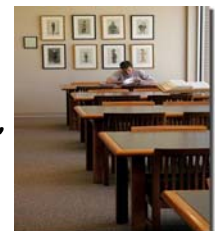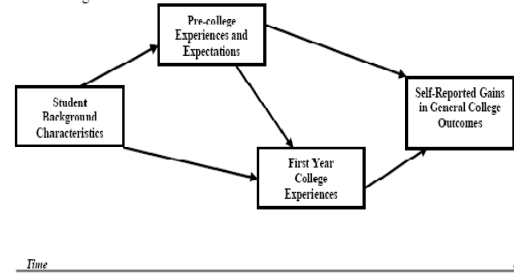
Expectations Matter
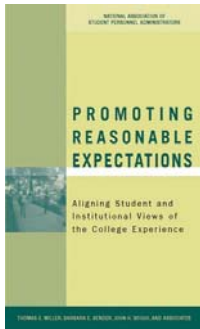
Consequences for unmet expectations are high. Disappointed students fail to optimize their college experience, leave institutions, and sometimes abandon higher education all together.

Miller, T., Bender, B., Schuh, J, and Associates (2005). Promoting Reasonable Expectations: Aligning Student and Institutional Views of the College Experience. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Conceptual Model: Expectations, Experiences & Educational Gains

Figure 1: Conceptual Model of Relationships between Student Background Characteristics, Pre-college Academic Experiences and Expectations, College Experiences, and Self-Reported Gains in Selected College Outcomes during the First Year of College

What do new students expect from college? Are expectations met?

– **"A lot will be demanded of me."**
– **"Courses will be challenging."**
– **"I may not get all 'As' in college"**
– **"I hope to make lots of new friends"**
– **"I should wait until my second year to get involved"**

What Students Expect of College

College Expectations:

❖ **92% expect grades of B or better**

❖ **56% expect to spend <u>more than 15 hours per week</u> studying**

Source: BCSSE

What do first-year students do?

1. What percent of full-time first-year students at WMU study, on average, <u>more than 15 hours</u> per week?

      (a) 18%
      (b) 23%
      (c) 33%
      (d) 41%
      (e) 50%

c. 33% WMU FY
(slightly lower than peers 38%)

Worrisome Gap?
Time spent studying

- **First-year students average about 13-14 hrs. per week studying**

- **Entering first-year students EXPECT to study more than they actually do in college**

- **Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) data indicate that faculty <u>expect</u> students to spend more than twice that amount preparing (estimated 24-30 hrs. a week for FT)**

Expectations for College Class Experiences

❖ **78% of entering students expect to frequently** (often + very often) **ask questions in class or contribute to class discussions**

❖ **59% expect to frequently** (often + very often) **work with peers on projects during class**

❖ **72% expect to frequently** (often + very often) **work outside of class with other students on projects**

What do first-year students do?

2. What percent of WMU first-year students _frequently_ ("very often" + "often") asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions?

(a) 28% (b) 35% (c) 47% (d) 57% (e) 65%

d. 57% WMU FY
(slightly more than peers, 51%)

What do first-year students do?

3. True or False.

WMU first year students work more frequently during class than outside of class with peers.

True.
51% during class,
41% outside of class

What Students Expect in College

Involvement in campus activities:

❖ **6% of entering students expect to spend "0 hours" participating in co-curricular activities in college**

❖ **About 55% expect to spend between 1-10 hours per week in co-curriculars**

What do first year student do?

4. What percent of WMU first-year students spend no time participating in co-curricular activities?

43% report _0 hours_
42% spend between 1-10 hours per week

What do first-year students do?

5. What percent of first year students report they frequently ("often or very often") received prompt feedback on their academic performance?

(a) 27% (b) 35% (c) 44% (d) 53% (e) none of the above

d. 53% WMU
(on par with peer institutions)

WMU FSSE & NSSE comparison Prompt Feedback

	Lower Division	Upper Division
FACULTY gave prompt feedback often or very often	**83%**	**89%**

	1st yr. Students	Seniors
STUDENTS received prompt feedback often or very often	**53%**	**55%**

Expectations, Engagement and Success in College

- **Overall pattern:** Students initial expectations for their academic involvement **is less than faculty might wish**, and their <u>actual</u> engagement is *even less*
- *Students set in place in their first semester of college the pattern of time allocation that will serve them across their years in college*
- Faculty and campus educators need to detail the <u>specific</u> activities that will lead to success in college courses

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What do educationally effective institutions do to foster student engagement and success?

STUDENT SUCCESS *in* COLLEGE

CREATING CONDITIONS THAT MATTER

George D. Kuh
Jillian Kinzie
John H. Schuh
Elizabeth J. Whitt
and Associates

Six Shared Conditions of Educationally Effective Institutions

1. "Living" Mission and "Lived" Educational Philosophy
2. Unshakeable Focus on Student Learning
3. Environments Adapted for Educational Enrichment
4. **Clearly Marked Pathways to Student Success**
5. Improvement-Oriented Ethos
6. Shared Responsibility for Educational Quality

Lessons for Student Success

4. *Clearly Marked Pathways to Student Success*

- ❖ **Make plain to students the resources and services available to help them succeed.**
- ❖ **Some guideposts tied directly to the academic program; others related to student and campus culture.**
- ❖ **Institutional publications accurately describe what students experience.**

Lessons for Student Success

4. *Clearly Marked Pathways to Student Success*

- ❖ **Efforts tailored to student needs.**
- ❖ **Mutually reinforcing student expectations and behavior, institutional expectations, and institutional reward systems.**
- ❖ **Redundant early warning systems and safety nets**

Anticipatory socialization to involvement opportunities

At Longwood, the "New Student Leadership Program" brings 80 first-year students to campus prior to the beginning of the fall semester to explore leadership skills, build support networks for leadership development, and provide opportunities faculty and staff to identify potential stu leaders.

Longwood builds "Citizen Leaders"

ONE WAY →

ONE WAY

Socialization to Academic Expectations

Wheaton new students read a common book and essays by faculty that respond to the reading. Assigned readings, faculty responses, and the website combine to introduce incoming students to preferred ways to grapple with intellectual issues.

Intentional acculturation

Rituals and traditions connect students to each other and the institution

KU's "Traditions Night." 3,000 + students gather in the football stadium to rehearse the Rock Chalk Chant, listen to stories about the Jayhawk, learn the "I'm a Jayhawk" school song, and hear stories intended to instill students' commitment to graduation

Connect Students to Campus in Meaningful Ways

University of Maine at Farmington's Student Work Initiative employs students* in meaningful work in student services, laboratories, and field-research. Such experiences provide students opportunities to apply what they are learning to practical, real-life situations.

*__*50%__ of UMF's students work on campus*

Be Explicit About What it Takes… "Introduce Students to Academic Citizenship"

Student success requires that professors explain more things to today's students that we once took for granted –

"You must buy the book, you must read it and come to class, you must observe deadlines or make special arrangements when you miss one"

Richard Turner (Thought & Action, 1998, p.4)

Lessons from National Center for Academic Transformation

- ✓ *If doing something is important, require it (first-year students don't do 'optional')*
- ✓ *Assign course points to the activity*
- ✓ *Monitor and intervene when necessary*

www.thencat.org/Newsletters/Apr06.htm#1

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Institutional Responses to Student Engagement Assessment Results

- **Fort Lewis College** requires multiple drafts of papers before submitting – "drafting" – new students have low expectations for this practice at entry, but majority end up doing it frequently because it is built into Freshman Academic core courses.

- Must teach students (and faculty) how to participate actively in class – **not enough to encourage "ask questions!!"** but to structure, help students monitor their participation (Clickers, quizzes, think-pair-share, learning goals). "**Seminaring**" at Evergreen State College.

## Findings from NSSE and AAC&U: Some Educational Activities are Unusually Effective

Growing evidence that "high-impact practices" provide substantial educational benefits to students

[AAC&U, 2008 publication: *High-Impact Educational Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access To Them, and Why They Matter*]

High-Impact Practices

Educational experiences that make a significant difference to student persistence, learning outcomes, and student success.

1. **Structural features**
2. **Pedagogical practices for all classrooms**
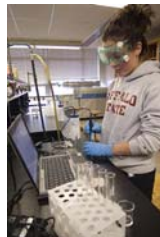
High Impact Activities

★ **First-Year Seminars and Experiences**
★ **Common Intellectual Experiences**
★ **Learning Communities**
★ **Writing-Intensive Courses**
★ **Collaborative Assignments and Projects**
★ **Undergraduate Research**
★ **Diversity/Global Learning**
★ **Service Learning, Community-Based Learning**
★ **Internships**
★ **Capstone Courses/Projects**

High Impact Pedagogical Practices

NSSE items, Educationally Purposeful Activities :
- Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions
- Made a class presentation
- Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment
- Worked with other students on projects during class
- Worked with classmates outside of class on assignments
- Tutored or taught other students (paid or voluntary)
- Participated in a community-based project as part of course
- Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor
- Discussed ideas from readings/classes with faculty outside class
- Received prompt feedback on your academic performance
- Worked harder than you thought
- Worked with faculty on activities outside coursework (committees, student life, etc.)
- Discussed ideas from readings/classes with others
- Had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity and those who differ from you - religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values

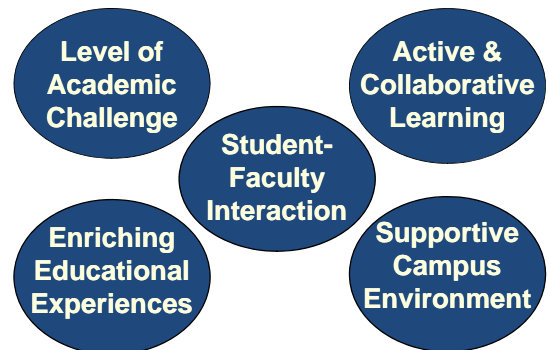## To Ponder….Creating Clear Pathways for Student Success

- **What do prospective students learn about what they can expect and what is expected of them?**
- **How do new students (first years and transfers) learn what it takes to succeed?**
- **What rituals or traditions signal student success?**
- **What signature programs, high impact practices exist for assuring student success?**
- **What warning systems or safety nets are in place for intervention?**
- *How do you know???*

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:
How effective are the NSSE benchmarks in predicting important educational outcomes?

Pascarella, Seifert, & Blaich
(*Change*, Jan/Feb, 2010)

NSSE Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice

- Level of Academic Challenge
- Active & Collaborative Learning
- Student-Faculty Interaction
- Enriching Educational Experiences
- Supportive Campus Environment

Predicting Educational Outcomes

Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education

- **First-year students**
- **Longitudinal pre-test/post-test design**
- **19 institutions from 11 states**

Predicting Educational Outcomes

Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education

Seven Liberal Arts Outcomes
- **Effective Reasoning & Problem Solving**
- **Moral Character**
- **Inclination to Inquire & Lifelong Learning (2)**
- **Intercultural Effectiveness (2)**
- **Personal Well-Being**

Predicting Educational Outcomes

Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education

Findings
- NSSE benchmarks had a significant positive association with difference scores for the seven outcomes
- Active & Collaborative Learning associated with intercultural effectiveness
- Yes, though Student-Faculty Interaction consistently positive, it was not significantly associated

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Predicting Educational Outcomes

Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education

"NSSE results are good proxy measures for growth in important educational outcomes such as critical thinking, moral reasoning, intercultural effectiveness, personal well-being, and a positive orientation toward literacy activities."
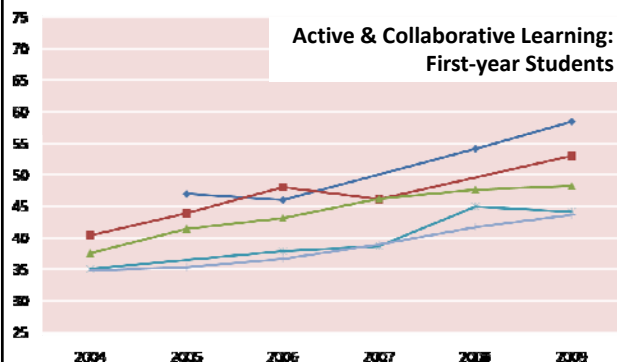
Are Institutions Improving?

- **Opportunity: 10th NSSE administration**
- **Institutions with multiple years of NSSE make it possible to assess change (or stability) in engagement over time.**
- **Comparing results over time**
  - **Four NSSE administrations, 2004-2009**
  - **Examined Benchmarks and High-Impact Practices**
  - **As indicated by effect size and linearity of trend**

Are Institutions Improving?

- **Evidence of improvement found at 41% of institutions on at least one measure;**
  - **These institutions represented all types and sizes**
  - **Examples of downward trends were rare**

Are Institutions Improving?

Active & Collaborative Learning: First-year Students

Are Institutions Improving?

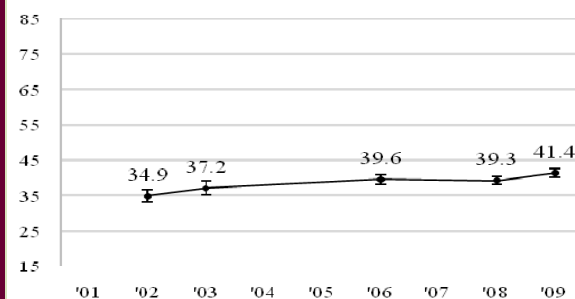# Yes.

Systematic improvement efforts have paid off.

Multiyear Benchmark Results WMU

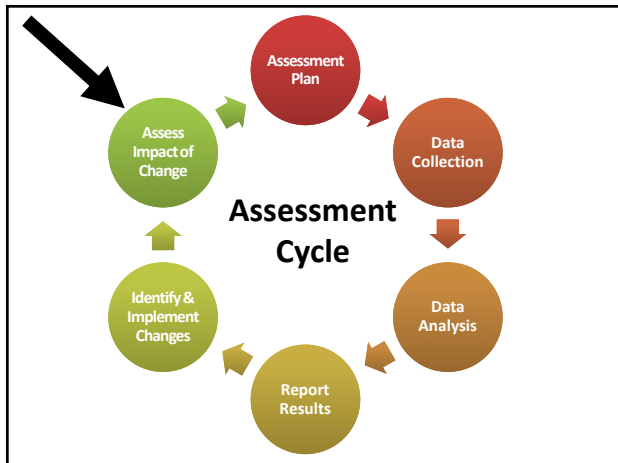Active and Collaborative Learning (ACL)

34.9 37.2 39.6 39.3 41.4

Assessment into Action

Putting Student Engagement Data to Use

Assessment Cycle

- Assessment Plan
- Data Collection
- Data Analysis
- Report Results
- Identify & Implement Changes
- Assess Impact of Change

Youngstown State Univ (OH)

Integrating NSSE Results with Other Institutional Data

- **Examines NSSE data in relation to direct measures of learning and progress – *within subpopulations***
- **Compares NSSE to internal survey data on general education and diversity**

Pace University (NY)

Using NSSE data for improvement throughout the entire university

- **Emphasized goal of "student-centeredness"**
- **Used NSSE items in program assessments (service learning, capstone courses, study abroad)**
- **Improving the sophomore experience**

Pace University (NY)

Using NSSE data for improvement throughout the entire university

- **Examined engagement by school/college, including professional accreditation**
- **Assigned full-time faculty to teach Univ 101 course, and advise the same students**
- **"One-stop" initiative for student services**

Viterbo University (WI)

Effectively Communicating Results Internally and Externally

- **Benchmarks against peer institutions**
- **Disseminates item results related to active and collaborative learning for faculty, and the campus environment for administrators.**
- **Assesses diversity learning**
- **Faculty increased active learning strategies**

Wittenberg University (OH)

Appointed a Presidential Task Force on engagement in both academic and co-curricular environments

- **Encouraged faculty investment by stressing that engagement is rooted in academics**
- **Identified functional areas that helped promote student success**

Final thoughts…

1. If assessment doesn't help improve teaching and learning activities and ultimately, student success… *why bother with it?*
2. Link data to develop a solid foundation for action.
3. Improvement begins in small ways – so start something!
4. Evaluate effectiveness of action. Celebrate and tweak.
5. Implementing change in colleges and universities is difficult, and takes *time…be in it for the long haul!*

Discussion and Comments

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