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Organizing Assessment to Foster Students' Best Work



Council for the Advancement of Standards
National Symposium
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*Our Students' Best Work:
A Framework for Accountability
Worthy of Our Mission*



A Statement of the AAC&U Board of
Directors (second edition, 2008)

<http://www.aacu.org/publications/pdfs/StudentsBestreport.pdf>

A Framework for Assessment



- ★ Essential Aims – Leading to Outcomes
- ★ High Impact/High Effort Learning Practices
- ➔ ★ Assessments That Focus and Deepen Learning



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Setting the Context for Approaches to Assessment

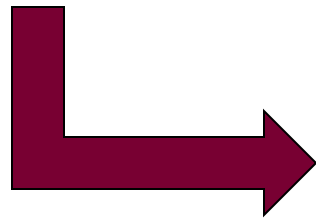


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Changing Designs for College Learning

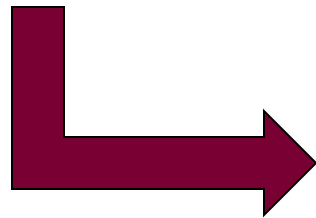


The Nineteenth Century College



A Common Core Curriculum
(All learning is “general and liberal education”)

The Twentieth Century University

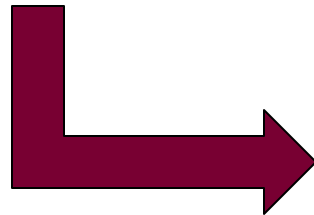


Breadth + Depth
(Majors and research take center stage)

Changing Designs for College Learning



The Twenty-First Century Academy



Learning in Transition:

Rethinking educational purposes and practices to better prepare for

- the knowledge explosion
- global interdependence
- innovation in the workplace
- diverse democracy



The New Themes in College Learning



- ★ Goals Across the Educational Experience, Rather than Course by Course, or Program by Program
- ★ Capabilities Developed Over Time
 - e.g., Analytical and Teamwork Skills
 - Intercultural Knowledge and Fluency
 - Civic Learning
 - Integrative Learning



The New Themes in College Learning, cont.



- ★ Integrative Learning—Across the Educational Experience
 - Academic Learning with Field-Based Learning
 - General Education with Majors
 - Liberal Arts with Professional Fields
 - Cornerstone to Capstone
 - Curriculum with Co-Curriculum





Preparing Students for Complexity and Change: The Essential Learning Outcomes



- ★ Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World
- ★ Intellectual and Practical Skills
- ★ Personal and Social Responsibility
- ★ Integrative and Applied Learning



*The Changing Goals for
Student Learning Imply Changes
in the Way We Assess Learning*



- ★ Grades Do Not Track Cumulative Progress
- ★ We—and Policy Leaders—Want to Know What Students Are Gaining, Over Time

Three Common Approaches to Assessment of Learning Gains



- ★ Surveys and Student Self-Reports
- ★ Standardized National Tests
 - Multiple Choice
 - Performance Tasks
 - e.g., The Collegiate Learning Assessment
- ★ Persistence and Completion



The Crucial Weaknesses in Standard Approaches



- 1) They provide either indirect or very narrow evidence about students' actual learning
- 2) They do nothing to help students take ownership of their own progress

What AAC&U Recommends— In “Our Students’ Best Work”



- ★ Design Local Versions of Essential Learning Outcomes
- ★ Anchor Assessment in the Curriculum and Co-Curriculum
- ★ Use Rubrics to Assess (Sample) Students’ Progress Over Time



What AAC&U Recommends, cont.



- ★ Capture Students' Emerging and Best Work in Portfolios
- ★ Make Students Our Partners in Assessing Their Progress in Achieving Essential Learning Outcomes



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Where Do We Find Evidence About Students' Learning Over Time?

High Impact Practices



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





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*High Impact Practices:
What They Are, Who Has Access
to Them, and Why They Matter*
by George D. Kuh
(LEAP report, October 2008, www.aacu.org)



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AAC&U's VALUE Project



- ★ Provides VALUE Rubrics, keyed to the Essential Learning Outcomes
- ★ Ties Assessments to Students' Own Work in HIPs – e.g. Research, Projects, Service, Internships, Capstones, etc.
- ★ Shows What Students Can Do With Their Knowledge





The VALUE Rubrics



★ Example

- Integrative Learning

All 15 VALUE Rubrics can be found at:
<http://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/index.cfm>



What VALUE Adds



- ★ Students—and Faculty—Know What’s Expected
- ★ Students Can Include Co-Curricular Evidence
- ★ Projects Are Part of Courses Students Have to Take
- ★ The Assessment Projects “Count”
- ★ Faculty and Staff Can See What Works—and Not
- ★ Work Is Sampled for Public Reporting on Students’ Learning Gains

*When We Are Intentional About
Expected Learning Outcomes,
Assessment Itself Can Become a
High Impact Practice*



*The Proof is in the Portfolio –
and Institutions That Are Rich in
High Impact Practices Are Poised
to Lead the Way*



*Students Need to Know that
Their Best Work Is Expected*



*And Their Work is the Most
Important Evidence We Have
About How Well They Are Using
Their Time in College*





*So, Is There a Role
for Surveys?*

Absolutely!



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*Surveys Help Us Assess
the Campus Climate for
Key Learning Outcomes*



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AAC&U's Core Commitments Project



- ★ Educating Students for Personal and Social Responsibility
 - Personal and Social Responsibility Inventory (PSRI)
 - Administered to 23,000 Students and 9,000 Faculty and Student Life Staff
 - 23 Institutions



2007 Administration of the Personal and Social Responsibility Institutional Inventory

Dimension: Contributing to a Larger Community



“The importance of contributing to a larger community **is** a major focus of this campus”

Current academic standing	% “Strongly Agree”
First Year	49
Sophomore	38
Junior	37
Senior	35

Student sample: N = 23,950

Source: pers. comm., Eric Dey, University of Michigan



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2007 Administration of the Personal and Social Responsibility Institutional Inventory

Dimension: Contributing to a Larger Community



“Faculty publicly advocate the need for students to become active and involved citizens”

Current academic standing	% “Strongly Agree”
First Year	44
Sophomore	35
Junior	36
Senior	34

Student sample: N = 23,950

Source: pers. comm., Eric Dey, University of Michigan



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2007 Administration of the Personal and Social Responsibility Institutional Inventory

Dimension: Contributing to a Larger Community



“This campus has helped me expand my own awareness of the importance of being involved in the community and contributing to the greater good”

Current academic standing	% “Strongly Agree”
First Year	38
Sophomore	33
Junior	33
Senior	32

Student sample: N = 23,950

Source: pers. comm., Eric Dey, University of Michigan



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2007 Administration of the Personal and Social Responsibility Institutional Inventory

Dimension: Taking Seriously the Perspectives of Others



“Helping students recognize the importance of taking seriously the perspective of others is a major focus of this campus”

Current academic standing	% “Strongly Agree”
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First Year	41
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Sophomore	32
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Junior	30
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Senior	29
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Student sample: N = 23,950

Source: pers. comm., Eric Dey, University of Michigan



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2007 Administration of the Personal and Social Responsibility Institutional Inventory

Dimension: Taking Seriously the Perspectives of Others



“I have developed an increased ability to learn from diverse perspectives during the time I have been in college”

Current academic standing	% “Strongly Agree”
First Year	52
Sophomore	51
Junior	54
Senior	56

Student sample: N = 23,950

Source: pers. comm., Eric Dey, University of Michigan



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Eliciting Students' Best Work



- ★ Shared Goals/Outcomes
- ★ Clear Expectations Tested by Campus Climate Surveys
- ★ High Impact Practices
- ★ Portfolios that Turn a Spotlight on Students' Actual Work



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*Students Bring Their Hopes
for the Future to College*



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*Helping Students Use Their
Time Wisely Is the Core
Purpose of Assessment*



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Their Hopes, Our Responsibility



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