

# A Dialogue on Meaningful Assessment: Bergen Community College

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NATASHA JANKOWSKI, DIRECTOR

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR LEARNING OUTCOMES  
ASSESSMENT (NILOA)

# National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment

Making Learning Outcomes Usable & Transparent



## 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.

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# National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment

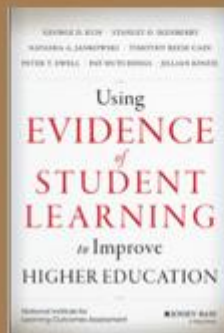
Making Learning Outcomes Usable & Transparent

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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.



We are pleased to announce the release of a new NILOA book this month, *Degrees that Matter: Moving Higher Education to a Learning System Paradigm*. To read more about the book click [here](#).

[NILOA Newsletter](#)[Occasional Paper 31](#)[New Book!](#)[TLNI Institute](#)[Assessment Institute](#)

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## Borough of Manhattan Community College

The Borough of Manhattan Community College's Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Analytics website is this month's Featured Website in the category Centralized Assessment Repository.

[Featured Website Archive](#)

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### Competency-based Education Could Benefit Veterans by Recognizing Their Military Skills

Mon, Dec 11, 2017 - 08:00 am

John Strauss for Lumina Foundation

This piece by Lumina Foundation provides resources on how competency-based education (CBE) could assist veterans in earning course credit by transferring their skills and experience while in the military into the college setting.

### Creating College Credit Policies That Validate Adult Learners

Mon, Dec 11, 2017 - 08:00 am

Iris Palmer for Education Commission of the States

Adult learners come to college equipped with various skills and experiences that could be leveraged for course credit. Initiatives such as prior learning assessment (PLA) and competency-based education (CBE) attempt to provide college credit for learning acquired outside of academia.

### Statewide and Online Only in California

Mon, Dec 11, 2017 - 08:00 am

Ashley A. Smith for Inside Higher Ed

California has proposed the creation of a new state-wide online-only college focused on work-force credentials and non-degree certifications aimed at enrolling the approximately 2.5 million Californians with some college experience but no degree.

# Purpose

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Why do we do assessment? What is the value and purpose of engaging in assessing student learning?

# Value

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Institutions of higher education are increasingly asked to show the value of attending, i.e. impact in relation to cost; employment – what is the value of a degree and what does it represent in terms of learning?

Public and policy makers want assurance of the quality of higher education

Regional and specialized accreditors are asking institutions to show evidence of student learning and instances of use





# Are you lonely?

Tired of working on your own?  
Do you hate making decisions?

**START A COMMITTEE!**

*You can —*

- See people
- Show charts
- Feel important
- Point with a stick
- Eat donuts
- Impress your colleagues



## COMMITTEES

THE PRACTICAL ALTERNATIVE TO WORK

**NOT IMPRESSED**

# Bergen Assessment Handbook

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Three main reasons to assess:

1. To prove: What should students be learning and in what ways should be they growing?
2. To inform: What are students actually learning and in what ways are they actually growing?
3. To improve: Using the answers to 1 and 2, what should be done to facilitate student learning and growth?

# National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment

November 2009

## Assessment, Accountability, and Improvement: Revisiting the Tension

Peter T. Ewell

Foreword by George D. Kuh



Occasional Paper #1

[learningoutcomesassessment.org](http://learningoutcomesassessment.org)



# Principles of Local Practice

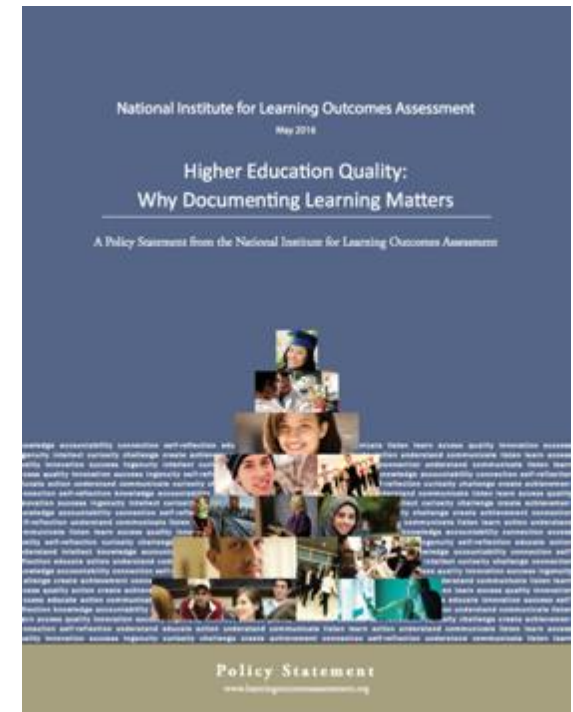
Develop specific, actionable learning outcomes statements.

Connect learning outcomes with actual student demonstrations of their learning.

Collaborate with relevant stakeholders, beginning with the faculty.

Design assessment approaches that generate actionable evidence about student learning that key stakeholders can understand and use to improve student and institutional performance.

Focus on improvement and compliance will take care of itself.



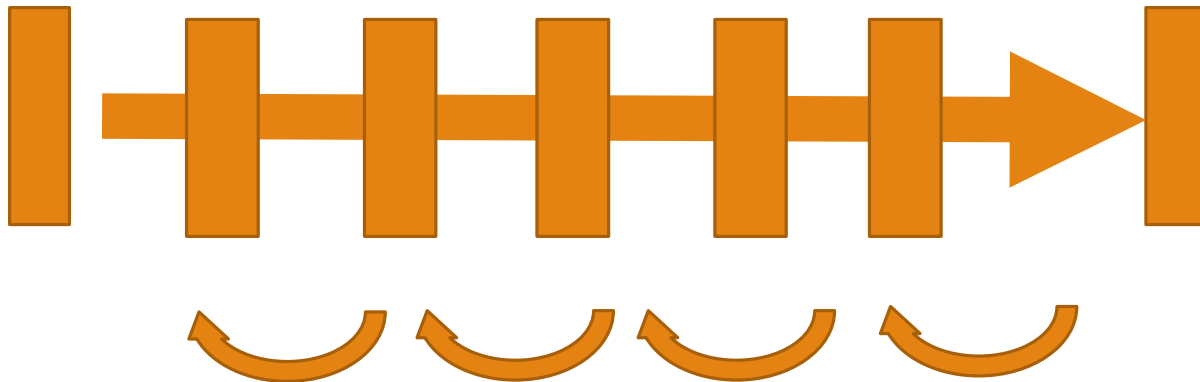
# Institutional or Program Improvement

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# Learning Improvement

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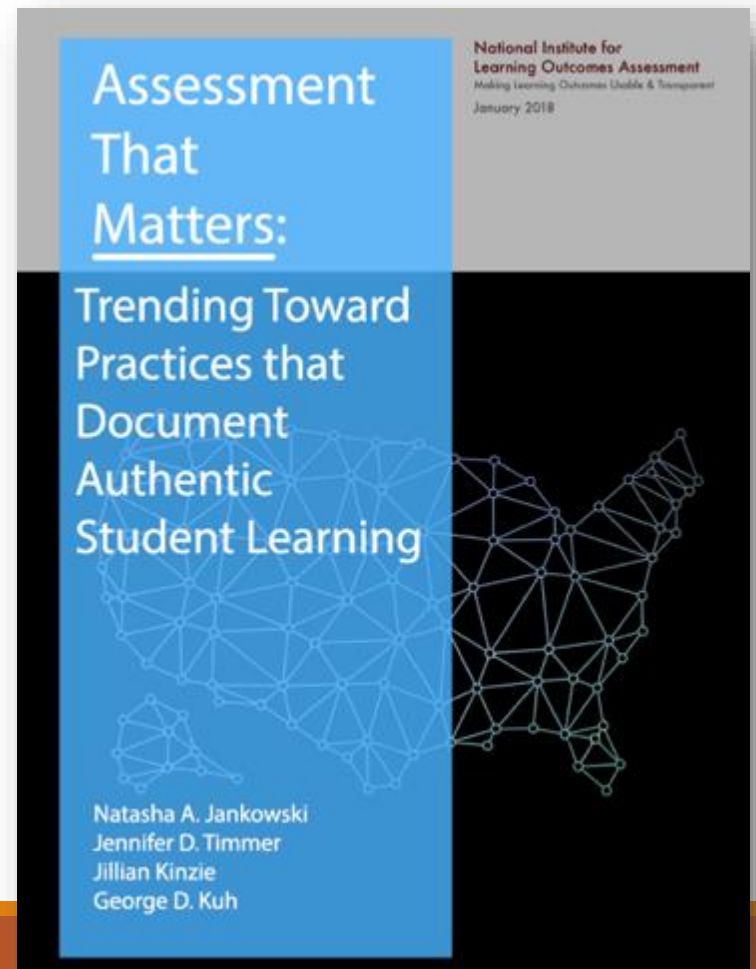
# Assessment That Matters

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It is not an unattainable promise land...

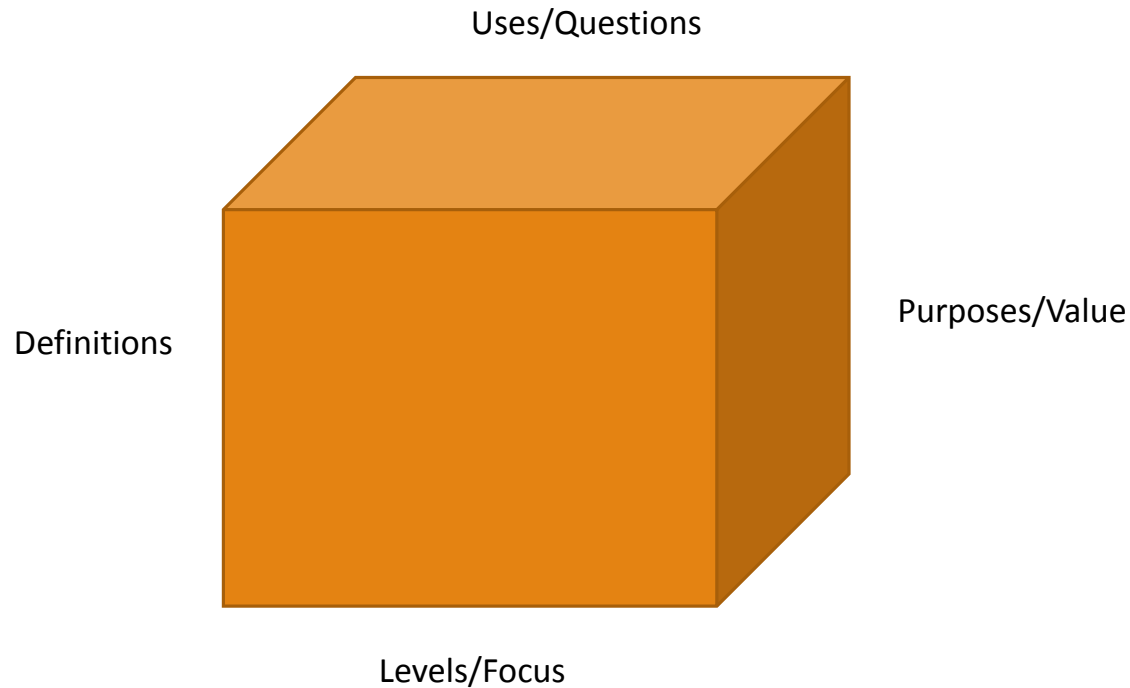
We see the field moving in that direction with the most valuable source of institution-level assessment results being <drum roll>

**Classroom-  
based  
assessment**



# Assessment Cube of Misunderstandings

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# Three Schools of Thought

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Measurement

Compliance (Reporting)

Teaching and Learning (Improvement)



# Measurement

Built upon scientific principles or empirical research, objective, rational, validity, and reliability

*The Multi-State Collaborative: A Preliminary Examination of Convergent Validation Evidence ~Mark Nicholas, John Hathcoat, & Brittany Brown*

- Testing and standardization
- Must be measureable
- Argue narrowing of curriculum
- Goal driven
- Focused on process
- Interventions
- Pre/post
- Comparisons



# VALUE report

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# Compliance

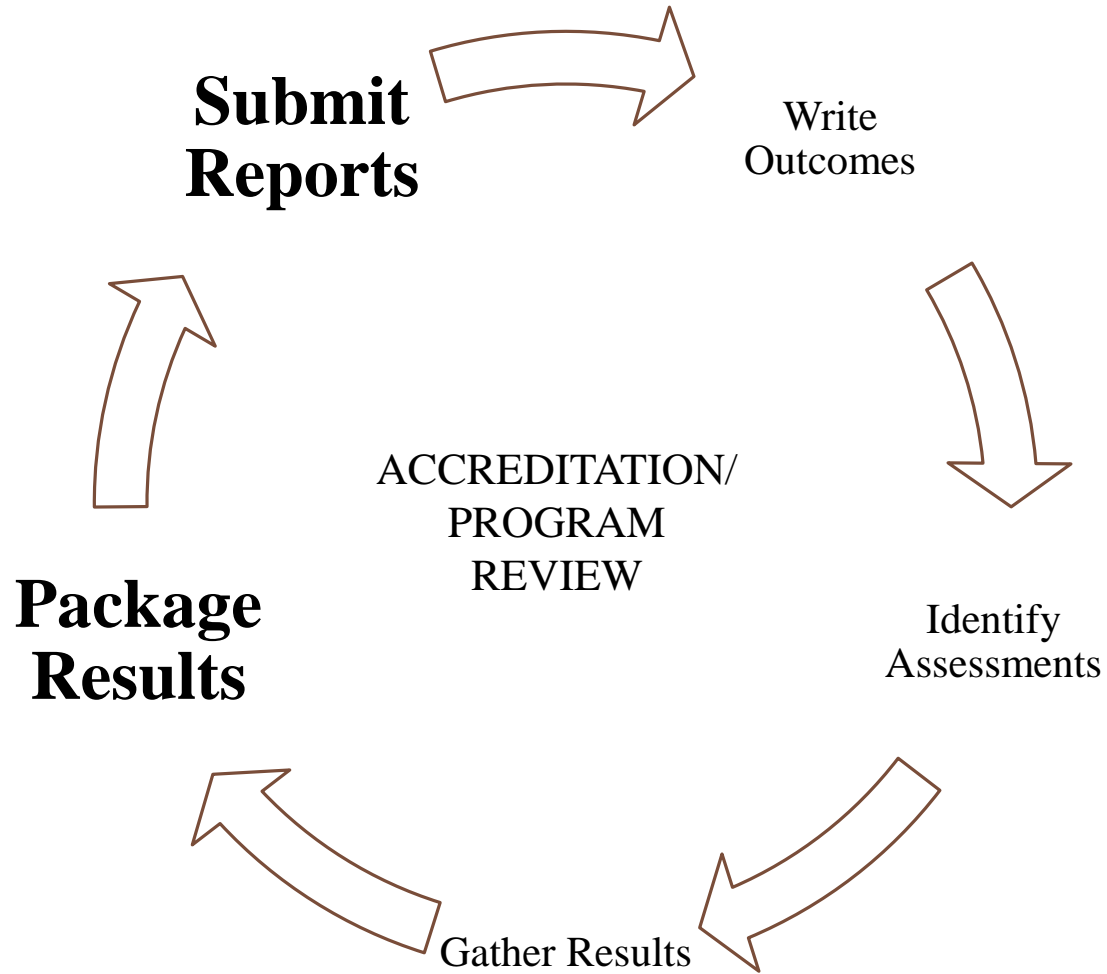
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Documenting institutional quality assurance through reporting frameworks

*Is assessment destroying the liberal arts?* ~Karin Brown

- Bureaucratic
- Laborious
- Time consuming
- Separated from teaching and learning
- Add on
- Accountability and quality assurance
- Reporting and archive
- Lots of data collection, minimal use





GEORGE D. KUH · STANLEY O. IKENBERRY  
NATASHA A. JANKOWSKI · TIMOTHY REESE CAIN  
PETER T. EWELL · PAT HUTCHINGS · JILLIAN KINZIE

Using  
**EVIDENCE**  
*of*  
**STUDENT**  
**LEARNING**  
*to Improve*  
**HIGHER EDUCATION**

National Institute for  
Learning Outcomes Assessment

**JOSSEY-BASS**  
A Wiley Brand

But where are the students...?

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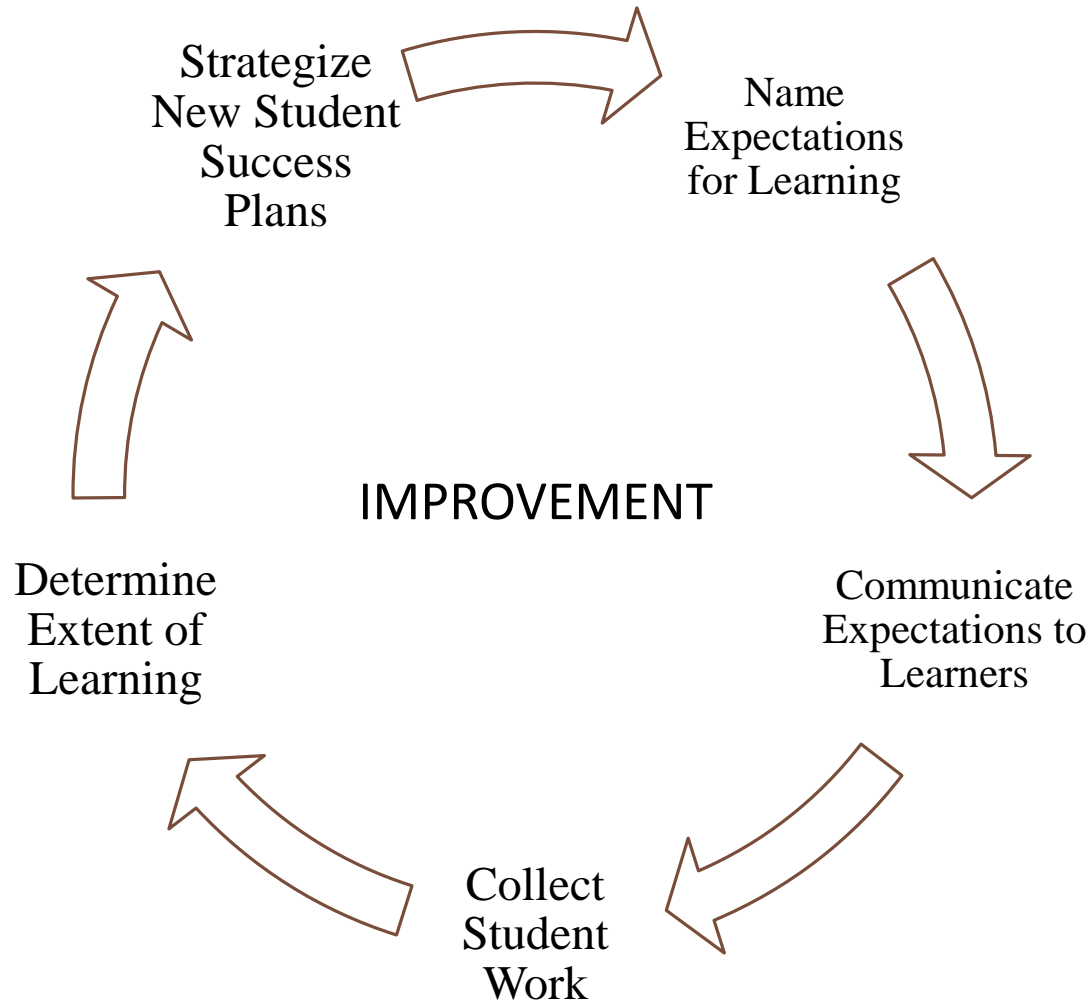
# Teaching and Learning

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Focus on pedagogy, understanding of student experience, informing program improvement, embedded in curricular design and feedback, builds student agency

*Does continuous assessment in higher education support student learning?*  
~Rosario Hernandez

- Driven by faculty questions regarding their praxis – is what I am doing working for my students?
- Improvement oriented
- Focus on individual students
- Students as active participants – not something done to them
- Formative
- Feedback
- Collaborative
- Assessment for learning
- Adaptive and embedded



# Why don't we see improvement?

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John Hattie (2008). *Visible Learning: A Synthesis of Over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement*.

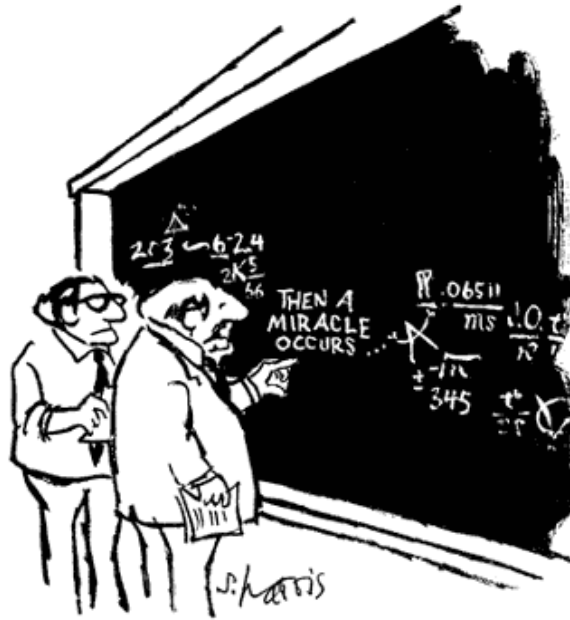
We report *changes*, not evidence of improvement per se, assuming that changes will lead to improvements.

If our process is about doing assessment and not improving learning, why would we report improvements?

# What does good assessment look like for us?

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Why do we think that what we are doing, for these students, will lead to enhanced learning, at this time?



"I think you should be more explicit here in step two."



# Epistemology

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Assessment is fundamentally about epistemology – what does it mean to say a student knows or fails to demonstrate that they know something? How do we know students have learned? How can we say that students are learning or acquired knowledge? But what are our epistemologies and beliefs about learners and how students learn?

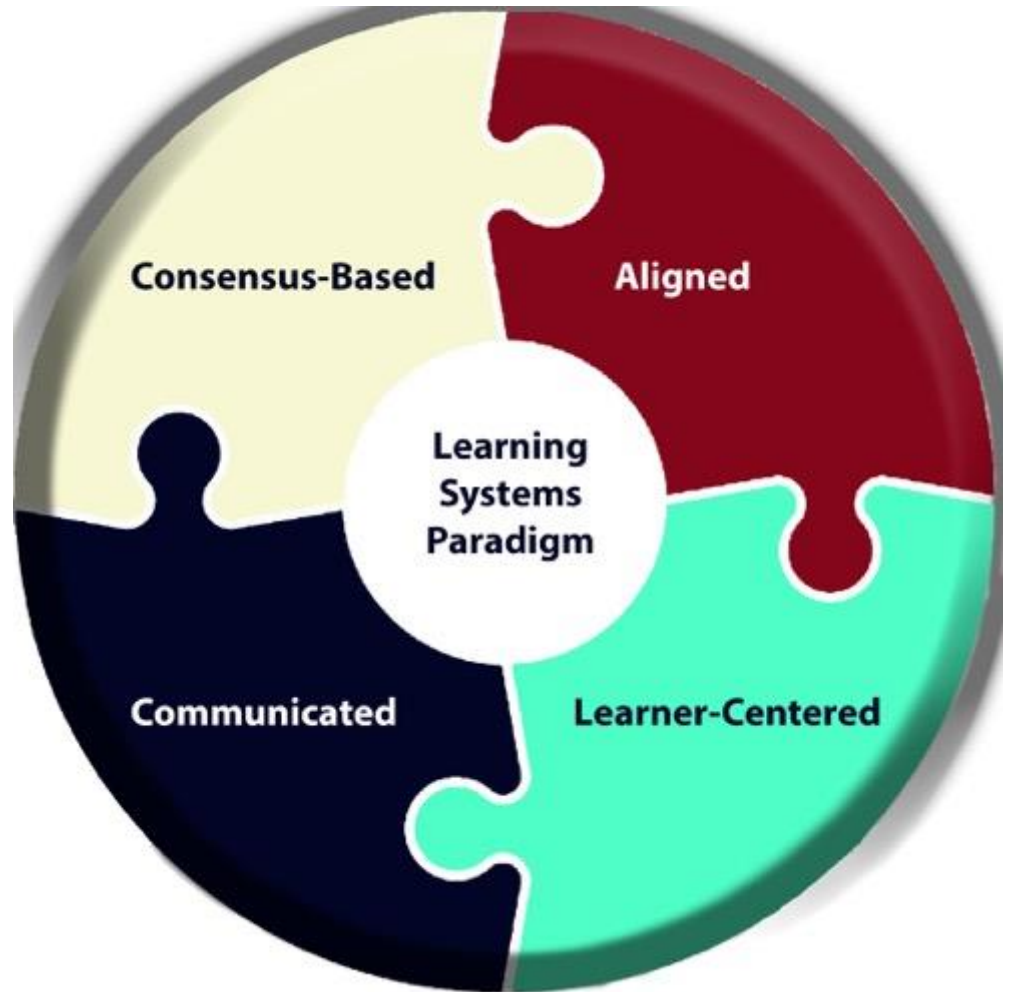
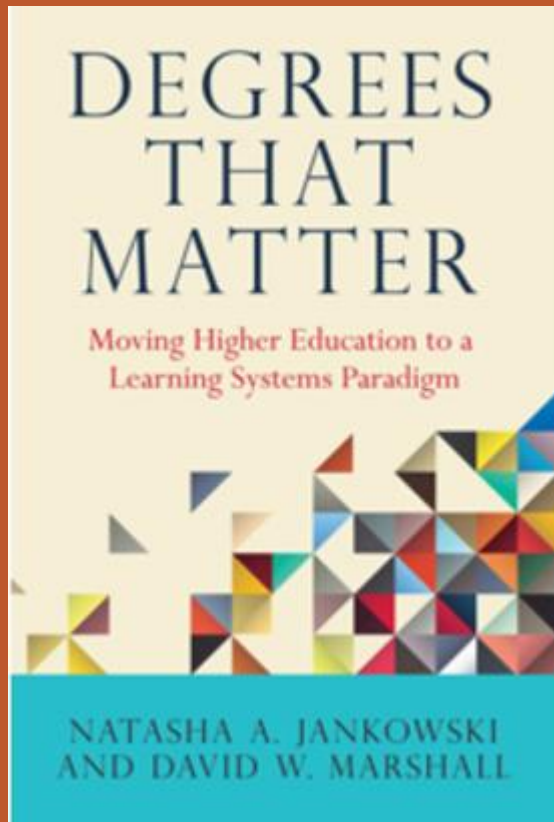
# Bergen Definition

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Outcomes assessment: Refers to the systematic collection and analysis of information to **improve student learning**. CIE asks faculty to assess their **program** goals for this purpose. Each department assesses one of their program goals on a two-year cycle.



# The Learning Systems Paradigm



# Consensus-based

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Through faculty-led conversations, reflections, and explorations with employers, alumni, students, and others, a shared understanding and consensus is reached on learning outcomes. This shared understanding serves as the foundation for revising outcomes for enhanced clarity and designing educational experiences.

# Bergen Formative Rubric

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1. Is there evidence of collective conversation within the program/department?
2. Is there evidence of collective conversation around the assessment results and recommendations for improvement?

# Alignment

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Using the agreed upon learning outcomes, faculty and staff align educational experiences throughout the institution for intentional integration, coherence, and fostering of multiple pathways. Alignment involves curriculum mapping, scaffolding, assignment design, mapping of career pathways, and co-curricular engagement.

# Alignment:

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The Bergen Gen. Ed. Assessment process means we need to think about alignment between assignments and rubrics

How do you ensure alignment between our assignments and a given learning outcome for a learning experience?

How do we know that we have mapped our assignment to rubric criteria?

# Bergen Formative Rubric

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1. Does the goal/outcome to be assessed flow logically from the stated program/department description or mission statement?
2. Is the goal/outcome clearly written to enable assessment?
3. Is the means of assessment appropriate for evaluating the performance of this goal?
4. Was data collected and analyzed according to the assessment plan?
5. Is the plan for program improvement consistent with the results of the assessment?



# Fitness of Method or Approach

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Part of alignment is fitness of method or approach – if asking students to *explain* something, multiple choice test might not be the best approach, but if asking students to *identify* – it might be very appropriate...



# Verbs (and I don't mean Bloom's)

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Alignment and fitness of method occur in relation to the verbs identified in the learning outcome statement

In your own assignment – what are you asking students to actually *do* or *demonstrate*?



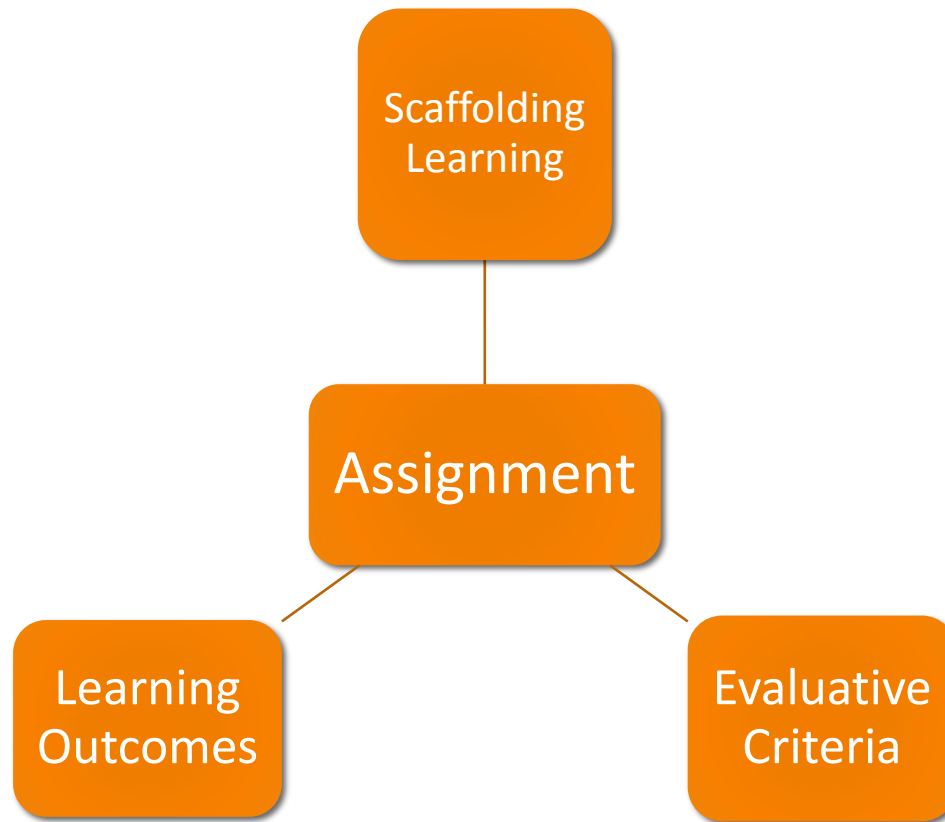
# Assignments as Assessments

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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.

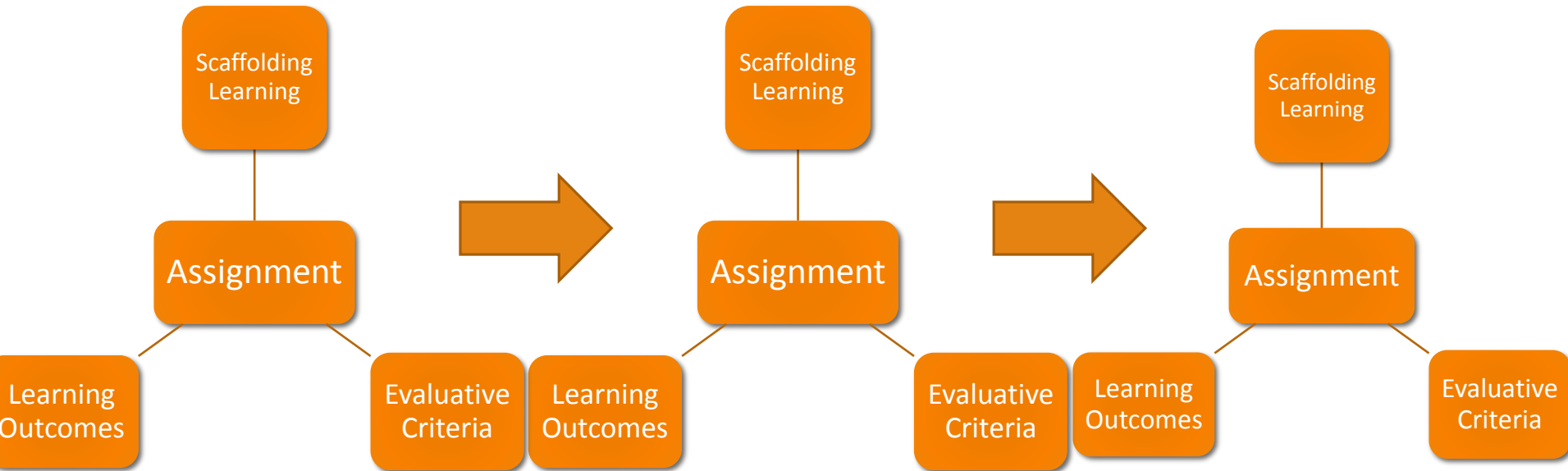
# Assignments as a way in

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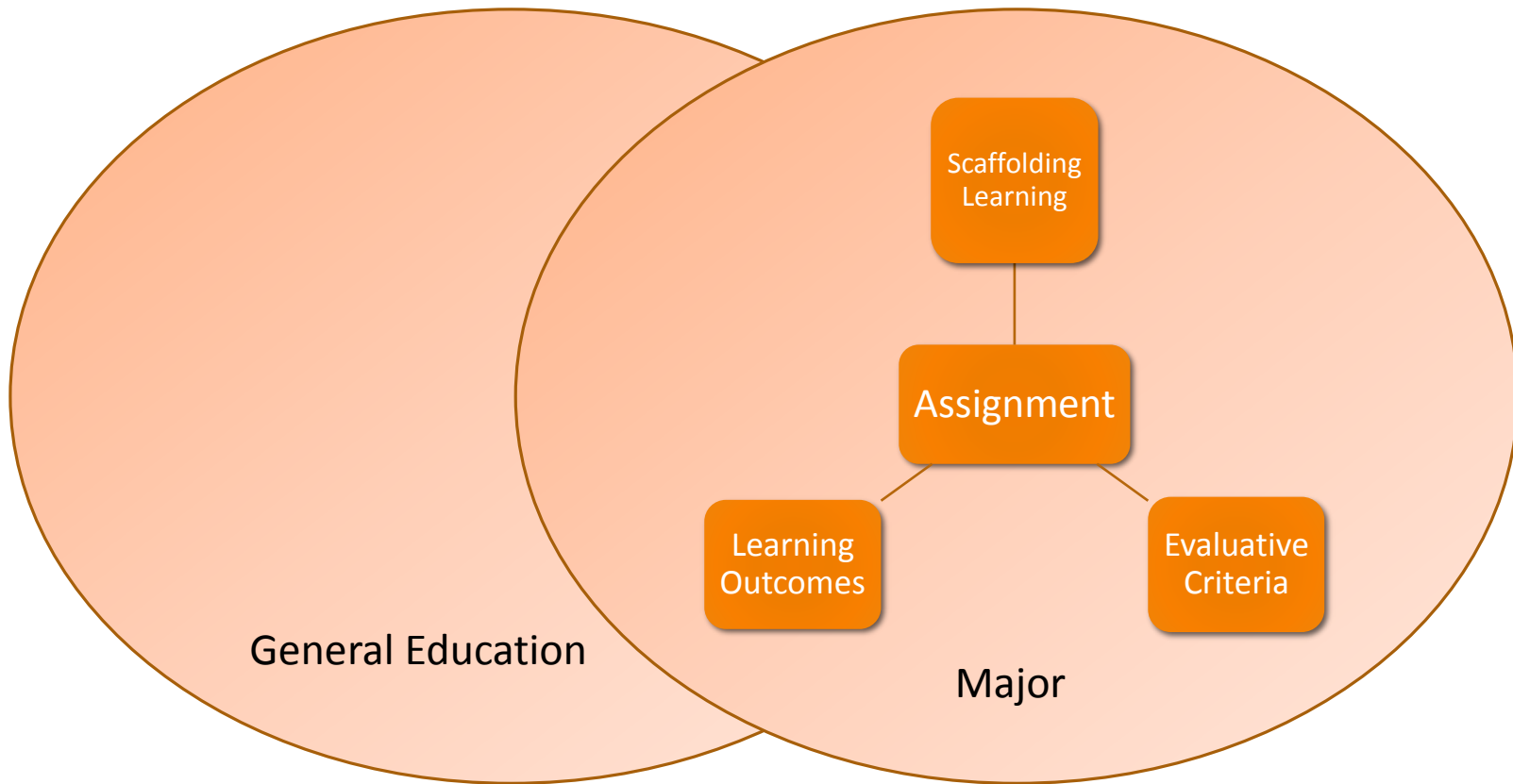
# How assignments connect

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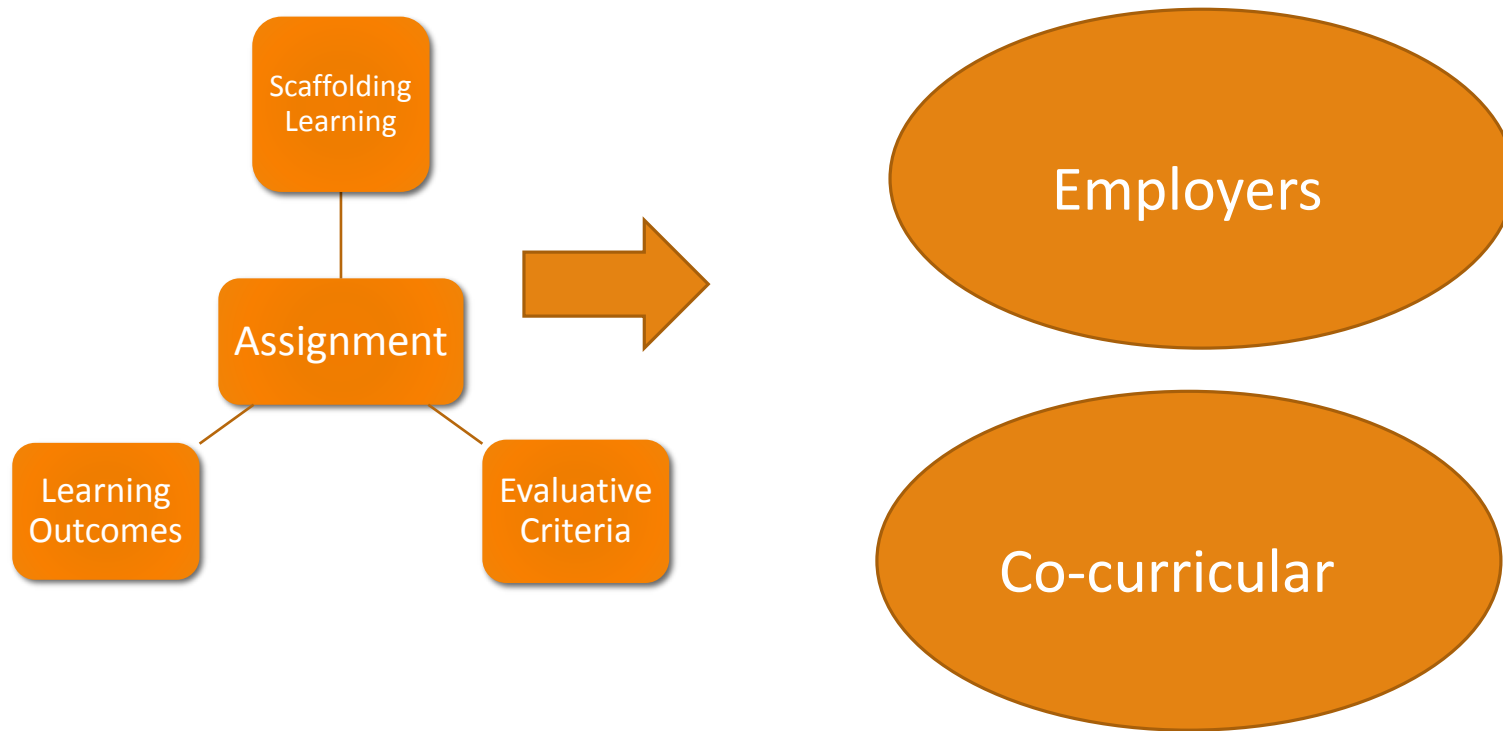
# Program View

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# Connections

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Implications for transcripts, career  
development, and pathways

# Learner-Centered

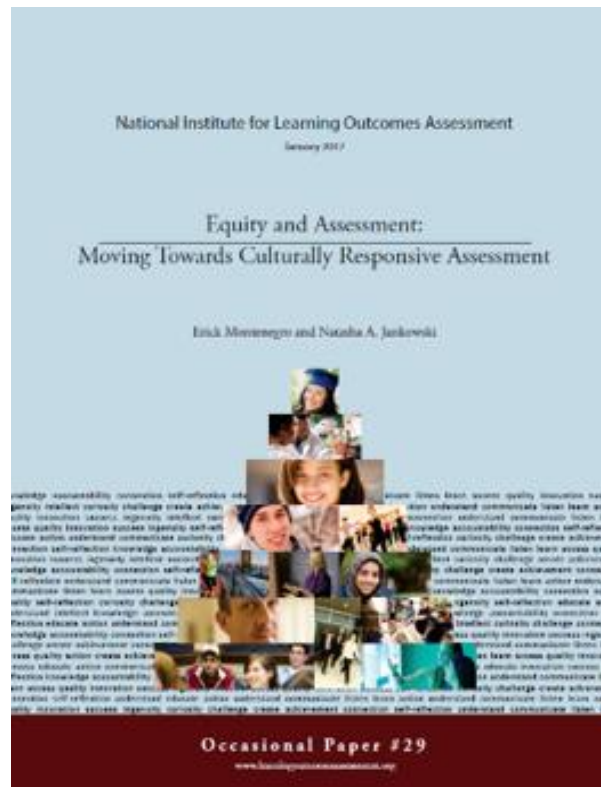
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The educational system reorganizes educational experiences around *all* students and their learning. Taking a student view includes consideration of issues of equity, learning-focused transfer, alternative delivery models, flexibility in offerings, integration of prior-learning assessment, ensuring stackable credentials, and building multiple pathways.



# Involving students

Assessment is not something we do to students it is something we do with students.





# Timing and Placement of Assignments

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Do we consider student movement through curriculum in terms of the placement of signature assignments? Do we also consider transfer points and convergence between general education and the major?




# Examples



The University of Iowa Search Division of Student Life

## VICE PRESIDENT FOR STUDENT LIFE

HOME TOM'S PAGE INITIATIVES ASSESSMENT AWARDS PARENTS STAFF



### IOWA GROW®

*Learning, Connecting, Reflecting*

Employment during college helps contribute to student success when meaningful connections between learning in the classroom and learning on the job are made evident. IOWA GROW® uses brief, structured conversations between student employees and their supervisors to help students connect the skills and knowledge they are gaining in the classroom with the work they are doing, and vice versa. IOWA GROW® is focused on making student employment a "high-impact activity" - one that requires students to reflect on their learning and connect their learning within and beyond the classroom.

#### Four Quick Questions

1. How is this job fitting in with your academics?
2. What are you learning here that's helping you in school?
3. What are you learning in class that you can apply here at work?
4. Can you give me a couple of examples of things you've learned here that you think you'll use in your chosen

### INITIATIVES

INITIATIVES

- IOWA GROW®
- How We GROW®
- Implementation
- Recognition and Resources
- Multiculturalism and Diversity
- Collegiate Readership Program

# Communication

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Communication and collaboration with students and other audiences through transparent discussions around the outcomes and educational system works to make the implicit explicit. Communication involves exploration and integration with advising, alternative transcripts, admissions, and employers.

# Transparency

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Awareness of Learning Outcome Statements



# Are students even aware?

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Student focus groups reveal that most students are not even aware they are being assessed. But upon learning about assessment...wish they had been told about it earlier.



# Transparency in Assignments

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Transparency in Teaching and Learning: <https://www.unlv.edu/provost/teachingandlearning>

## ***Purpose***

Skills you'll practice by doing this assignment

Content knowledge you'll gain from doing this assignment

How you can use these in your life beyond the context of this course, in and beyond college

## **Task**

What to do

How to do it (Are there recommended steps? What roadblocks/mistakes should you avoid?)

## **Criteria**

(Are you on the right track? How to know you're doing what's expected?)

## **Annotated examples of successful work**

(What's good about these examples? Use the checklist to identify the successful parts.)



# Rubrics

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Do we share our rubrics or criteria with students and actively engage them in the review process?

Rubric Criteria	Student Evaluation	Faculty Feedback
Rubric Content	Stipulate why gave score did	Faculty stipulate why gave score did
	Stipulate what they need to do to advance	Targeted feedback to improve

# Transference of Knowledge and Skills

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We know that students have the hardest time with transferring knowledge - realizing something they learned before can be applied in another context.

We have to teach them to reflect and have them apply over time.

# Communicating our Assessment Work

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Evidence of student learning is used in **support of claims or arguments** about **improvement and accountability** told through **stories** to **persuade a specific audience**.

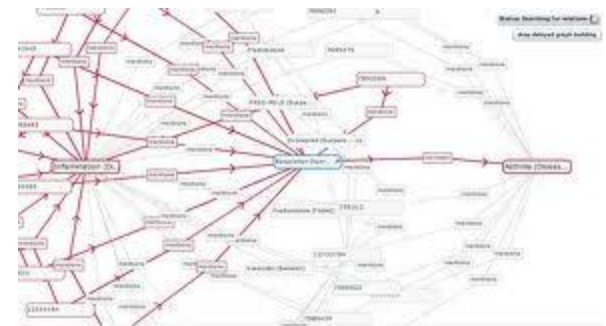
**Need to tell our story and help  
students tell theirs.**

# Causal Statements

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The ability to make causal claims about our impact on students and their learning

Institutional structures and support + student = enhanced learning



# Difficulty of Causal Statements

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Mobility of students

Untracked changes

Changes in courses add up to program level change

Lack of clarity on what even counts as a program

Life

Levels at which use occurs

Longer than a year cycle

Loosely coupled relationships



# The Why

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Toulmin (2003)

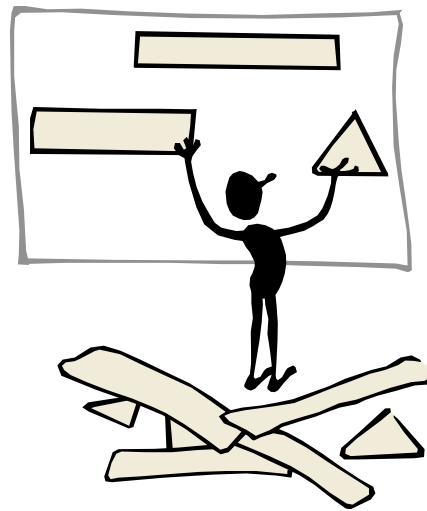


# Theories of Change

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Why do we think the changes we make will lead to better outcomes?

What is assumed in the changes we select as it relates to how students understand and navigate higher education?



# For instance...

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Coverage and content

Opportunities and support

Intentional, coherent, aligned pathways

Within each of these is the belief about root causes – why students were not learning or not meeting the outcome and the mechanism by which the institution can help them succeed



# Excellence in Assessment Designations



National recognition program for campus assessment leaders at two levels

Evaluation based on the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA) Transparency Framework

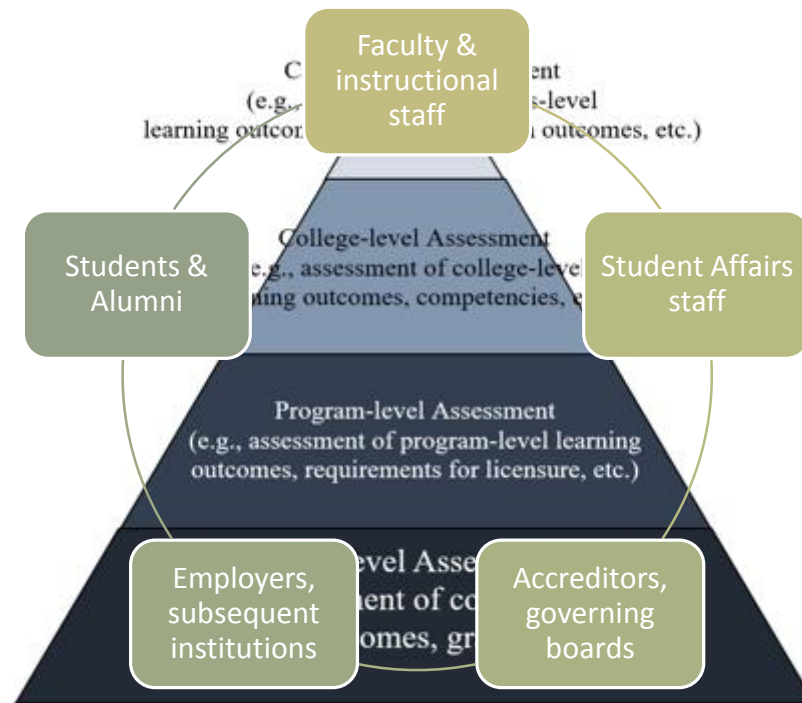
Focus on campus-wide assessment – including student affairs & external stakeholders

Joint project of the VSA, NILOA, and the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U)



# Why did we create the EIA Designations?

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# EXCELLENCE IN ASSESSMENT

## 2017 Designees





# EXCELLENCE IN ASSESSMENT

## 2016 Designees



# Connection Points

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To ensure student success, it's how all of the pieces connect together to support collective development of active and engaged learners.

# Curriculum Mapping: The Process

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Focused on curriculum and program learning outcomes

Two-dimensional matrix representing courses on one axis and outcomes on the other

Faculty identify which courses address which learning outcomes

Is it an individual process or one of consensus building?

If two faculty members individually mapped the curriculum would they end up with the same map?

What is standard of alignment? Is one paper in one class enough?

# Bergen Mapping

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Curriculum mapping is a tool that allows faculty to align courses in their programs to see how they relate to one another and where gaps in learning may exist.

Course #	Learning Outcomes
Courses	Level
	Emphasis
	Measure

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Learning Outcomes	Course 1	Course 2	Course 3	Course 4
Learning Outcome 1	X		X	
Learning Outcome 2		X		
Learning Outcome 3		X	X	X



	Introductory Course	Research Methods	Advanced Content Course A	Laboratory / Practicum Course	Advanced Content Course B	Advanced Content Course C	Advanced Content Course D	Capstone Course
<b>Content</b>								
SLO 1: Disciplinary knowledge base (models and theories)	Introduced		Reinforced		Reinforced	Reinforced	Reinforced	Mastery / Assessed
SLO 2: Disciplinary methods		Introduced		Reinforced		Reinforced		Mastery / Assessed
SLO 3: Disciplinary applications	Introduced		Reinforced		Reinforced		Reinforced	Mastery / Assessed
<b>Critical Thinking</b>								
SLO 4: Analysis and use of evidence		Introduced		Reinforced	Reinforced		Reinforced	Mastery / Assessed
SLO 5: Evaluation, selection, and use of sources of information	Introduced	Reinforced		Reinforced		Reinforced		Mastery / Assessed
<b>Communication</b>								
SLO 6: Written communication skills	Introduced	Reinforced		Reinforced		Reinforced		Mastery / Assessed
SLO 7: Oral communication skills		Introduced	Reinforced		Reinforced	Mastery / Assessed		
<b>Integrity / Values</b>								
SLO 8: Disciplinary ethical standards		Introduced		Reinforced	Reinforced			Mastery / Assessed
SLO 9: Academic integrity	Introduced	Reinforced	Reinforced	Reinforced		Reinforced		Mastery / Assessed
<b>Project Management</b>								
SLO 10: Interpersonal and team skills			Introduced		Reinforced		Reinforced	Mastery / Assessed
SLO 11: Self-regulation and metacognitive skills	Introduced			Reinforced	Reinforced	Reinforced		Mastery / Assessed

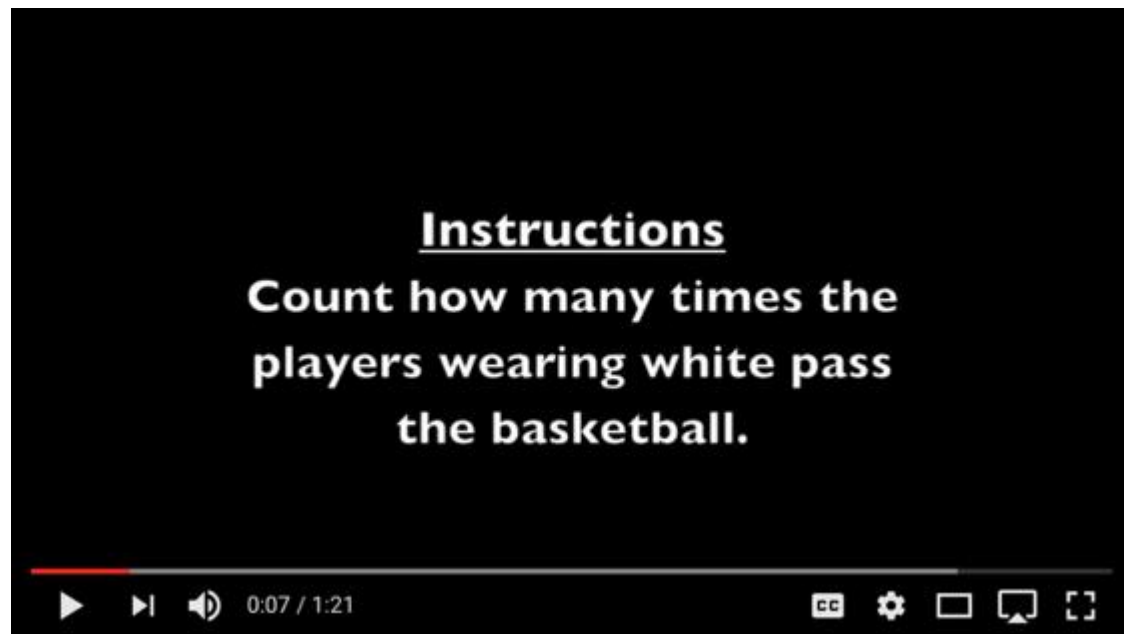
	Introductory Course	Research Methods	Advanced Content Course A	Laboratory / Practicum Course	Advanced Content Course B	Advanced Content Course C	Advanced Content Course D	Capstone Course
<b>Content</b>								
SLO 1: Disciplinary knowledge base (models and theories)	Exam Questions		Exam Questions		Exam Questions	Exam Questions	Exam Questions	Capstone Portfolio
SLO 2: Disciplinary methods		Exam Questions		Exam Questions		Exam Questions		Capstone Portfolio
SLO 3: Disciplinary applications	Exam Questions		Exam Questions		Class Project		Term Paper	Capstone Portfolio
<b>Critical Thinking</b>								
SLO 4: Analysis and use of evidence		Term Paper		Lab Paper	Class Presentation		Term Paper	Capstone Portfolio
SLO 5: Evaluation, selection, and use of sources of information	Annotated Bibliography	Term Paper		Lab Paper		Term Paper		Capstone Portfolio
<b>Communication</b>								
SLO 6: Written communication skills	Reflection Essays			Lab Paper		Term Paper	Term Paper	Capstone Portfolio
SLO 7: Oral communication skills			Class Presentation	Poster Session	Class Presentation	Class Presentation		
<b>Integrity / Values</b>								
SLO 8: Disciplinary ethical standards		Reflective Paper		IRB/ACUC Proposal	Reflective Paper			Capstone Portfolio
SLO 9: Academic integrity	Class Assignments & Exams	Exams & Term Paper	Class Exams	Class Assignments & Exams	Class Assignments & Exams	Exams & Term Paper	Exams & Term Paper	Capstone Portfolio
<b>Project Management</b>								
SLO 10: Interpersonal and team skills			Peer Review of Team Skills		Project Client Feedback		Peer Review of Team Skills	Capstone Portfolio
SLO 11: Self-regulation and metacognitive skills	Class Assignments & Exams			Class Assignments & Exams	Class Assignments & Exams	Exams & Term Paper		Capstone Portfolio

Learning Outcomes	General Education	Major Courses	Activities and Experience That Provide Support	Possible Careers
Learning Outcome 1	General education courses that support the learning outcomes	Courses that address specific outcomes	Cocurricular elements that support specific outcomes	Possible career paths related to the map
Learning Outcome 2				

Learning Outcomes	Prior Learning	Courses	Other Required Courses, Recommended Electives	Activities and Experience That Provide Support	Work-Based Learning Experiences	Certifications and Licensures	Possible Careers	Learner Identified
Learning Outcome 1	Prior learning that is accepted in relation to specific outcomes	Courses that address specific outcomes	Other courses that support and reinforce specific outcomes	Cocurricular elements that support specific outcomes	Employment and other experiences that reinforce specific outcomes	Possible certifications connected to the outcomes	Possible career paths related to the map	Elements identified by learners as supporting learning outcomes
Learning Outcome 2								

# Selective Attention Test

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# UNPACKING RELATIONSHIPS

INSTRUCTION AND STUDENT OUTCOMES



**Natasha A. Jankowski**

*Director, National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment*

# Resources for Implementing

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## **Organizing Assignment-Design Work On Your Campus**

### **Unfacilitated Guide**

**A Tool Kit of Resources and Materials**

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

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# Entry point if needed

## National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment Making Learning Outcomes Visible & Transparent

### 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 Jenkowiak  
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.

## National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment

November 2018

### Catalyzing Assignment Design Activity on Your Campus: Lessons from NILOA's Assignment Library Initiative

Pat Mulvihill, Natasha K. Jenkowiak, & Peter T. Ewell



[www.learningoutcomesassessment.org](http://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org)



# Questions and discussion

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Email: [niloa@education.illinois.edu](mailto:niloa@education.illinois.edu)

<http://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org>

[www.assignmentlibrary.org](http://www.assignmentlibrary.org)

[www.degreeprofile.org](http://www.degreeprofile.org)

