



Within Our Sights: Toward National Leadership in Higher Education | October 18, 2013
Morning Panel Presentation
New Approaches to Assess LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes

Presenter Contact Information

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Campus Project

AAC&U's Quality Collaboratives Project:

Scaffolding Student Development of Essential Learning Outcomes

The University of Massachusetts Lowell and Middlesex Community College are one of nine national pairs of institutions with transfer relationships participating in AAC&U's Quality Collaboratives Project, "Assessing and Reporting Degree Qualifications Profile Competencies in the Context of Transfer" to improve the development of essential learning outcomes for students transferring between two and four year colleges. Our two institutions formed inter-institutional teams of faculty teaching in high transfer programs to develop assessments for Quantitative Literacy (QL) at both the Associate and Bachelor degree levels. We designed our project with faculty engagement in mind. Rather than starting with the assessment of artifacts that had not been developed with any thought to the rubric that we were using to assess them, we began our work by mapping the DQP standards for QL at the Associate and Bachelor degree levels to the VALUE QL rubric, and discussing the applicability of those standards, as measured by the VALUE rubric criteria, to expectations for student achievement at the two degree levels. Once faculty had given careful consideration to these criteria, they went to work, in their inter-institutional, discipline-based teams, designing cumulative assignments that they would implement and then assess. Most faculty teams developed a disciplinary rather than institutional focus. They identified QL-related concepts within the discipline that students often struggle with – within and across institutions, and working backwards from the Bachelor degree level of expectation, designed assignments that reflected scaffolded expectations of student mastery of those concepts from freshman to senior levels. The transfer conversation shifted gradually from "content we cover" – inputs – to "skills students should be able to apply" – outcomes. Faculty engagement in the development of these carefully-scaffolded assignments led to their investment in the assessment of student products, which in turn generated reflective discussions about ways in which those results could be improved.

Vision Project Outcome Areas

✓ **Student Learning**

Research and Data

Project Duration: *April 2012 - August 2014*

- Year 1, 20 faculty from 2 institutions with transfer relationship collaborate to develop, implement and assess scaffolded assessments of essential learning outcomes
- Year 1, 600 students (240 at MCC, 360 at UML) in high transfer programs impacted by intentional integration and assessment of essential learning outcomes
- Year 2, additional 10 faculty join project from same high-transfer programs, increasing project impact
- Year 2, additional 300 students (900 total, 360 at MCC, 540 at UML)

The information in this handout has been provided by the panelist



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Campus Project

Mount Wachusett Community College and Fitchburg State AAC&U Quality Collaborative

Fitchburg State University and Mount Wachusett Community College (MWCC) have established a partnership to develop shared assessments of student learning related to the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) Essential Learning Outcomes for Written Communication, Quantitative Reasoning, Information Literacy and Civic Engagement. Through a pair of grant-funded projects that have also incorporated the work of other 2 year and 4 year public institutions in Massachusetts, Fitchburg State and MWCC have engaged faculty and staff in the development and application of better assessment instruments and policies. The projects have emphasized direct faculty-designed assessments of student work at different points in their academic careers to insure that assessment results can be used to inform instructional and curricular change within an institution and across institutions for the purpose of seamless transfer. These efforts support the Vision Project Outcomes of Student Learning, College Completion and Workforce Alignment by developing mechanisms to better assess student learning and improve transfer pathways in critical areas of workforce need.

Vision Project Outcome Areas

- ✓ **College Completion**
- ✓ **Student Learning**
- ✓ **Workforce Alignment**

Research and Data

Project Duration: *February 2012 - August 2014*

- Building a Community of Practice starting with 34 assessment scholars from MWCC and Fitchburg State University involving multi-disciplinary teams of both faculty and staff working together to develop a shared vision of each outcome based on existing institutional definitions, LEAP ELOs, and the Lumina Foundation DQP for use of information resources/information literacy, quantitative fluency/quantitative reasoning, civic learning/civic engagement, and written communication.
- Collecting and assessing 292 student artifacts representing quantitative reasoning, information literacy, written communication, and civic learning using adapted LEAP Value Rubrics and TK20 as the assessment management system; revising and refining rubrics to focus on shared learning outcomes and enhance teaching practices; incorporating norming activities to make assessments more authentic and spark discussions of intentional and transparent pedagogy.
- Engaging in “targeted dialogues” with over 40 faculty campus wide, soliciting samples of student work in the areas of Humanities, Business, Education, Human Services/Behavioral Sciences, and the STEM fields to more deeply connect and strengthen transfer pathways using curricular conversations as the shared currency.
- Crafting signature assignment prompt templates and other curricular development instruments to insure that course assignments accurately capture all elements of the learning outcomes.
- Eighty percent of assessment scholars agreed or strongly agreed that the QC had helped in leveraging faculty content areas expertise to develop discipline-specific approaches to assessing learning outcomes.
- Eighty percent of assessment scholars agree or strongly agree that the QC activities helped them understand national efforts towards improving outcomes-based assessment and institutional and state level involvement in the work of assessment.