

# Assessment UPdate

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## Closing Equity Gaps with Intrapersonal Competency Outcomes-Based Assessment

**Marilee Bresciani Ludvik, Stephen Schellenberg, Nina Salcedo Potter, Sandra Kahn, Rey Monzon, and Randall Timm**

**W**HAT IF YOU COULD CONNECT YOUR OUTCOMES-BASED ASSESSMENT DATA TO a performance indicator, such as the reduction of academic probation rates for first year, first time, commuter students? And what if the way in which you collected your data informed the re-design of a one-unit university seminar course, so that you could know which learning outcomes could be influenced within that course and which learning outcomes significantly predicted cumulative grade point average (GPA)? It's possible. And here is why...

Many institutional leaders make decisions on what we call “above-the-surface” kind of data. This kind of data is like the tip of an iceberg; it contains quickly identifiable comparative performance indicators. “Above-the-surface” data are easy to collect and use to identify trends. They often include cumulative grade point average (GPA), academic probation rates, persistence rates, and graduation rates. Other easy-to-identify data also include standardized test scores. We equate this kind of data to “above-the-surface” data using the iceberg analogy because many leaders see this data—often made readily available to them—and subsequently react to it. And just as a ship's captain would do upon seeing the tip of an iceberg in the ocean, higher education leaders might change their direction as quickly as possible; that is, of course, if they think that direction is likely to put their organization and students in harm's way.

Building on the iceberg analogy, if organizational leaders don't take time to look below the surface and inquire into what contributed to the “above-the-surface” performance indicators, they may still cause harm to themselves and their students by steering the organization in the wrong direction. Leveraging Otto Scharmer's (2009) organizational change Theory U, this kind of below-the-surface inquiry requires a deeper dive into exploring what types of organizational beliefs, values, and ways of being and doing contributed to those easy-to-identify above-the-surface indicators. This necessitates critical dialogue, collaborative planning, and outcomes-based assessment of the efforts that often go unseen and do contribute to creating the performance indicators. With regard to what lies below the surface in the learning and development context, in addition to the aforementioned organizational behaviors, are students' learning

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# Assessment Update

## Progress, Trends, and Practices in Higher Education

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outcomes—intrapersonal competencies that significantly predict student success (NAS 2018). Intrapersonal competencies, such as sense of belonging, conscientiousness, growth mindset, grit, persistence, and reflective learning, to name just a few, can come in varying levels depending on the individual student's lived experience. And we know that context and culture influence the way students are able to cultivate these skills and show evidence of being able to apply them effectively.

Decades of neuroscience research has illustrated that some intrapersonal competencies are malleable. These competencies can inform and align with specific student learning and development outcomes often referred to by neuroscientists as neurocognitive skills. These skills can be referred to as crystallized intelligence outcomes (facts and knowledge) or fluid intelligence (Herman and Hilton 2017; Zelazo, Blair, and Willoughby 2016; NAS 2018; Bresciani Ludvik 2017; 2018; 2019; 2020; 2021). Fluid intelligence neurocognitive skills can be identified in one context, yet not in another, and are often applied through multiple cultural lenses (Herman and Hilton 2017; Zelazo, Blair, and Willoughby 2016; NAS 2018; Bresciani Ludvik 2017; 2018; 2019; 2020; 2021). Fluid skills such as planning, growth mindset, sense of belonging, conscientiousness, emotion regulation, reflective learning, prosocial goals and values, and self-regulation (to name a few) require educators to understand the building blocks of these intrapersonal competencies (aka learning outcomes) in order to assess which students come in with certain types of intrapersonal competency capital and in what contexts, and which students require opportunities to cultivate specific intrapersonal competencies further.

That means that we, as educators, have the responsibility to design, deliver, and then evaluate the effectiveness of our "below-the-surface" efforts to influence these "below-the-surface" intrapersonal competencies that optimize "above-the-surface," easy-to-identify-and-react-to performance indicators. The challenge is that, as mentioned earlier, context and culture influence learning and its measurement. This also means that the cultivation of these competencies that contribute to students' time to degree acquisition is not static. If we don't engage in outcomes-based assessment, we won't be able to formatively influence students' attainment of these needed competencies (that include many employee-desired skills).

Now, consider for a moment that ignoring the cultivation of the intrapersonal competencies may be one of the many things that is contributing to equity gaps. Engaging in the inquiry methodology that supported the discovery of malleable learning competencies mirrors the kind of assessment we need to engage in to close equity gaps. For neuroscientists, gathering first-person direct self-report data serves as an umbrella or watermark, if you will, for the interpretation of all other forms of data they collect. This means that in addition to the devices that observe neurological changes, such as functional magnetic resonance imaging, they invite participants to share direct self-reports of what they experienced. As opposed to stating the level of their participants' satisfaction, these self-reports are detailed descriptions of the nuances of the experience of learning and are often filled with emotive expressions.

In our work to connect a one-unit university seminar course to pre- and post-questionnaires that assess various intrapersonal competency attainment, we would have missed opportunities to discover how to refine a decrease in academic probation rate had we not gathered the students' voice of experience. Student's first-person direct self-report data continues to give us insight into context and culture, as do the first-person direct self-report experiences of the instructors, the student success coaches, and academic advisors who work closely with these students to identify their strengths and opportunities to achieve. Adding assessment of the in-class experiences (e.g., experience samplings) and out-of-class behavioral tasks (e.g., applied learning in a variety of contexts) creates an even more meaningful picture of the varying context and cultures that contribute to cultivating our

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## Fostering a GREAT Place for Student Success: Critical Component #3, Engage Our Students in Meaningful, Evidence-Informed Interventions

Stephen P. Hundley

**T**HE THEME OF MY EDITOR'S NOTES throughout 2021 is *Fostering a GREAT Place for Student Success: Five Critical Components for Institutions*. GREAT is an acronym that stands for Graduate, Retain, Engage, Admit, and Tell. It is an organizing framework that reverse-engineers the strategic enrollment management process by beginning with the end in mind and working backward. The looming enrollment cliff, coupled with ongoing implications resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, make this a timely topic. All of us—regardless of our role in the higher education ecosystem—need to remain focused on student success. In Volume 33, Issue 1, I provided an overview of the critical components necessary for us to do so:

1. *Graduate* our students and prepare them for post-degree roles and contexts.
2. *Retain* our students and promote timely persistence to degree completion.
3. *Engage* our students in meaningful, evidence-informed interventions.
4. *Admit* new students and position them for success within the institution.
5. *Tell* prospective students, their parents, and other influencers about the institution's value proposition.

Critical component #1 was addressed in Volume 33, Issue 2, and critical component #2 was addressed in Volume 33, Issue 3. In this issue, we discuss critical component #3: strategies to *engage* our students in meaningful, evidence-informed interventions. Engagement is key to a student's higher education learning experience, often

contributing to the development of an individual's personal, academic, and professional identities. Engagement is “the term usually used to represent constructs such as quality of effort and involvement in productive learning activities” (Kuh 2009, p. 6). Such engagement activities take place in academic settings and in co-curricular and community venues, and approaches for assessing, documenting, and improving student engagement continue to be a priority for colleges and universities.

### Academic Engagement

Being academically engaged means students give the psychological effort and investment toward understanding and mastering the knowledge and skills promoted in a course or program. Fostering academic engagement relies on several strategies, including *creating a welcoming, inclusive campus environment* where all students are valued and respected as individuals. This extends to the instructional context, where *supportive instructors can create positive learning conditions* where student engagement can flourish. They do so by being invested in the teaching-learning process, caring about students, setting challenging-yet-achievable expectations for students, providing meaningful classroom interactions with peers and the instructor, and displaying enthusiasm about the subject matter, among other qualities (Pascarella and Terenzini 2005).

*Well-designed, coherent courses and learning experiences* are also necessary for engagement. Designers of learning can

foster engagement by building on and integrating students' prior knowledge in the current instructional context, scaffolding learning so that students see how discrete concepts are related to each other, giving students opportunities to work and learn collaboratively with diverse peers, and providing students ample means to acquire and apply their learning in both real and simulated practice situations (Kuh et al. 2015). *Giving students agency in their learning* is also key to their engagement. Doing so provides relevance, coherence, and significance for students, while also intentionally valuing their respective backgrounds and lived experiences. This is especially significant as colleges and universities continue to attract “new majority” students—those who have historically been underserved by our institutions (McNair et al. 2016).

Additional strategies to promote academic engagement include *Transparency in Learning and Teaching (TiLT)* and *High Impact Practices (HIPs)*, both of which can promote student interest in, and commitment to, their learning. TiLT is an engagement approach in which instructors help students understand how and why they are learning content in particular ways by intentionally involving them in co-creating the learning process and explaining the significance of assignments and learning activities, including how outcomes of learning will be useful to students in the future (Winkelmes et al. 2016). Likewise, HIPs are educationally purposeful activities designed to promote student learning

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# Adapted Excerpt from Improving Student Learning at Scale: A How-to Guide for Higher Education

Keston H. Fulcher and Caroline O. Prendergast

[Editor's Note: This article is excerpted from the authors' latest book, *Improving Student Learning at Scale: A How-to Guide for Higher Education*. Learn more at <https://bit.ly/3yWImmW>]

**D**ESPITE THE DECADES-LONG HISTORY of assessment in higher education, little evidence indicates that assessment results in improved student learning. To understand why this is the case, we must first develop a common language for discussing learning improvement at scale. Each of these terms—*student learning*, *improvement*, and *at scale*—require explanation.

By *learning*, we mean the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that students acquire through education. Learning can occur in broad, general areas like writing, ethical reasoning, art appreciation, and oral communication. Learning can also occur in discipline-specific areas like functional anatomy, corporate law, fluid dynamics, and sculpting, or in attitudinal and behavioral domains such as sense of belongingness and ability to collaborate with diverse peer groups.

By *improvement*, we mean demonstrated increases in student knowledge, skills, and attitudes due to changes in the learning environment (throughout this book, we will refer to these changes as *interventions*). Of note, to move the needle on skills like ethical reasoning or corporate law requires powerful intervention that often spans multiple courses. To demonstrate such improvement, one must gather baseline data, change the learning environment, and reassess to determine student proficiency under the new learning environment. The comparison of the

baseline data and the reassessment must show that students who experienced the changed learning environment perform better than students who did not. We refer to this general methodology—assess, intervene, reassess—as the *simple model for learning improvement* (Fulcher, Good, Coleman, and Smith 2014).

As a basic example, imagine that biology faculty were concerned with the bone-identifying abilities of students graduating from their program. They presented senior students with a computer-based skeleton model and asked them to identify as many bones as they could. On average, suppose that they found the assessed group of seniors were able to identify 135 out of 206 bones. This measurement would provide the baseline estimate of student bone-identification proficiency. The faculty could then modify the curriculum, emphasizing practice with identifying bones and providing feedback about students' bone-identifying abilities (constituting a change in learning environment). Then, imagine that the next cohort of students, all of whom had experienced the new curriculum, was reassessed and found to be able to identify an average of 197 bones. This would represent a 62-bone improvement over the previous cohort (i.e., the reassessment showed better performance). In this situation, the evidence would demonstrate that learning improvement had occurred.

In earlier work, we noted that higher educators often confuse the words *change* and *improvement* (Fulcher, Good, Coleman, and Smith 2014). People are often excited to label any modification assumed or expected to be useful as an

“improvement,” even in the absence of proof that the modification leads to a better outcome than its predecessor. Using the bone identification example, the faculty members might prematurely (and incorrectly) claim that learning improvement has taken place as soon as curricular modifications are made. However, we would argue that faculty members merely made a *change* to the learning environment at that point. Only after reassessment, which demonstrated better learning (the 62-bone increase in students' average identification ability) than under the old curriculum, could faculty claim that the change had actually been an *improvement*.

We have also found that the issue of scale is often overlooked in improvement efforts. While individual faculty members frequently work to make their courses better, coordinated efforts that stretch across entire academic programs are rare. When we refer to learning improvement “*at scale*,” we mean improvement efforts that span an entire program, affecting all affiliated students. What is considered a “program” is likely to vary across institutions. Generally, when we discuss academic programs, we mean academic degree programs or general education programs.

Let's continue with the biology example to illustrate an effort that occurs at scale with a complex structure. The biology program graduates 150 students per year; therefore, learning improvement at scale should focus on developing and implementing interventions that affect all 150 students. Furthermore, the faculty felt that the skill was challenging enough that it could not be adequately addressed in

just one course. Therefore, the proposed interventions for bone identification spanned two required courses, 101 and 102. Further, imagine that each of those courses is composed of three sections (each of which enrolls 50 students), and that these six sections are taught by six different faculty members.

In this context, pursuing learning improvement at scale would require all six faculty to integrate their work through a process we will refer to throughout this book as *alignment*. Faculty demonstrating alignment are coordinated in their approach to teaching. *Horizontal alignment* means that all faculty teaching sections within the same course work collaboratively and have agreed on a common set of outcomes and common strategies to accomplish these outcomes. In our biology example, the three faculty members teaching 101 would need to demonstrate horizontal alignment with each other, as would the three faculty members teaching 102. Note that horizontal alignment can be viewed on a spectrum where utter alignment means every faculty member does everything in a lock-step manner (which we rarely advocate). On the other extreme, with no alignment, sections bear almost no resemblance except for the course name.

*Vertical alignment* refers to the connection among sequential courses that are meant to build on one another in the service of program-level outcomes. Strong vertical alignment enables seamless scaffolding as a student progresses through a program. Faculty members in earlier courses prepare students for downstream success; and faculty in later courses of a sequence can count on students having certain skills when they enter the classroom.

In this case, no single faculty member would have the ability to improve the learning of all students. For example, if only one instructor teaching a single section of a single course made substantial adjustments to her section, only a portion of the program's students would be affected. Although this instructor would deserve commendation, learning improvement

at scale would not be achieved, because only a small number of students would be affected by the new interventions. Furthermore, even those students would have only received the intervention in one course, not in both courses (101 and 102) as intended.

Now, imagine if a learning improvement initiative were attempted for all undergraduates of an institution. If 1,000 students are in each graduating cohort, then the interventions would need to reach all 1,000 students. As opposed to six faculty members, as in the biology example, dozens of faculty members would likely need to coordinate with each other. This kind of large-scale collaboration is necessary for most learning improvement initiatives, but it also requires new strategies and careful planning to increase the likelihood of success.

Given the complexity of large-scale learning improvement projects, it is unsurprising that successful examples are scarce in the literature. Nevertheless, solutions are possible if the stakeholders approach the problem more strategically. For example, we—assessment professionals—have traditionally approached the learning improvement problem from an assessment perspective. We thought the most important question was how to better use assessment results for improvement. This question is not a bad one, but it is far too narrow. We were asking a question about an isolated part, hoping the answer would solve a system-sized problem.

Assessment professionals' failure to ask (and answer) the right questions has had insidious consequences. The question we focused on—how to better use assessment results for improvement—implies that the learning improvement problem would be solved by making assessment results more accurate and useful. Indeed, many of us in the assessment community (including ourselves) conceptualized the lack-of-improvement problem as a methodological issue. If we could only increase the validity of assessment claims; if we could only make the results easier for faculty to digest;

if only the results provided diagnostic feedback.

Make no mistake, we *do* need high-quality assessment practices to support learning improvement efforts. But good assessment is merely a necessary condition for improvement, not a sufficient one. Other necessary—but, alone, insufficient—questions include the following:

- How can faculty work together to improve student learning?
- How can administrators, such as department heads, deans, provosts, and presidents, help faculty prepare for improvement?
- How can faculty development opportunities be used to support improvement efforts?
- What changes in the learning environment (i.e., learning interventions) have been shown to reliably move the needle on student learning?
- How can institutional and accreditation policy support learning improvement?

All these questions must be addressed within the context of a larger question: How do we build more effective learning systems to positively affect student learning at scale? This question subsumes the others, and the search for its answer forms the basis of our work. We endeavor to help faculty and administrators reconfigure their educational parts to create more effective learning environments that in turn will facilitate improved student learning at scale. ■

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# NILOA Transparency Framework: Implications for the Publicity of Student Learning Outcomes

Nhung Thi Tuyet Pham

HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY AND cost are always under public criticism. Therefore, higher education institutions experience the constant pressure of public discourse regarding assessment of student learning outcomes for the purposes of accountability, transparency, and quality improvement. In response to the critics, four national transparency initiatives developed templates for their member colleges and universities to publicly report on their website activities and evidence related to student academic attainment (Jankowski and Provezis 2011). Online reporting is the fastest way to provide this information to internal stakeholders, such as faculty, staff, and administrators, and to external stakeholders, including students, parents, and state or regional accreditors. Evans (2017) asserted that using the NILOA Transparency Framework is one of the most successful ways to communicate assessment information to internal and external stakeholders and demonstrate a high level of accountability and institutional integrity to regional accreditation (Jankowski and Provezis 2011).

The NILOA Transparency Framework comprises six components: student learning outcome (SLO) statements, assessment plans, assessment resources, current assessment activities, evidence of student learning, and use of student learning evidence. SLO statements clearly state the expected knowledge, skills, attitudes, and competencies that students are expected to achieve at an institution of higher education. Assessment plans display the institution's plan for gathering evidence of

student learning. Assessment resources provide necessary information to facilitate the assessment process. Current assessment activities share the activities and projects that institutions are working on. Evidence of student learning shares the assessment results of SLOs. And use of student learning identifies the successes and areas for improvement (NILOA 2011). No empirical studies had been conducted on implementation of the NILOA Transparency Framework. This paper reports on research exploring the websites of 23 institutions that followed the NILOA Transparency Framework. The purpose

(Krippendorff 2004) and a constant comparative method among the types of institutions (Thomas 2013) were used to analyze the data source across the 23 institutions.

## Findings and Discussion

*Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs).* All websites provided mission, vision, goals, and definitions of SLOs. For program learning outcomes, most institutions linked back to the college and department website. For institutional learning outcomes (ILOs), some master and research institutions also differentiated ILOs for

The most immersive models of student-involved assessment engage students as investigators with a central role in the institutional assessment process by creating positions for students in offices of assessment.



was to learn how institutions can transparently communicate assessment of SLOs to internal and external stakeholders. Implications are provided to facilitate other institutions' implementation of NILOA Transparency Framework or to update the current assessment website.

## Method

At the time of the research, 26 institutions reported they were following the NILOA Transparency Framework. Three websites could not be accessed; therefore, the total for data analysis was 23. The institutions were classified as associate, bachelor, master, and research (see Table 1). Qualitative content analysis

undergraduate and graduate levels. In addition, four of 12 research institutions also posted outcomes for non-academic units (e.g., co-curricular and administrative units).

*Assessment Plans.* Five institutions (one associate, bachelor, and master, and

**Table 1.**

*Number of Institutions Following the NILOA Transparency Framework by Type*

Institution Level	Number of Institutions
Associate	1.3
Bachelor	2.6
Master	3.2
Research	4.12

two research) provided a two-year or four-year assessment plan for institutional assessment. One master university provided a five-year assessment plan. Most master and research universities posted an annual program assessment timeline on their website. Three research universities also communicated additional assessment plans at the college and department level. Another three research universities also shared their plan for academic program review. Two bachelor institutions communicated assessment plans for co-curriculum units. Six research universities displayed a summary assessment plan for both co-curricular and administrative units. Most institutions embedded the use of assessment management software (AMS) in the assessment planning. The findings revealed that associate and bachelor institutions posted more thorough information about their institutional assessment plans while master and research universities posted more types of assessment plans (e.g., academic, non-academic, and academic program review).

*Assessment Resources.* The identification of resources in assessment activities varies across the types of institutions. First, an assessment toolkit (such as handbook, rubric, glossary) and assessment workshops/training are commonly provided on all the websites. In addition, the institutions provide instructions on using AMS in the assessment process. To facilitate implementation of assessment for faculty new to the assessment process, some institutions provided videos to support self-learning. Second, most institutions linked to their regional accreditation on the website and some institutions also linked specialized accreditation from colleges and department websites. Noticeably, one research university also quoted the feedback of regional accreditation from the last visit on the website. In addition to an assessment toolkit and AMS, most master and research universities provided information on professional assessment organizations such as NILOA, Association of American Colleges and Universities, and assessment conferences

such as the Assessment Institute and Association for the Assessment of Learning in Higher Education. Furthermore, research universities demonstrated extensive efforts to engage internal stakeholders in assessment activities through assessment grants and funds to support faculty scholarship (four research institutions), assessment newsletter (one research institution), assessment committee responsibilities (four research universities), and meeting minutes (some posted the minutes in public, but some were password protected). The findings indicated that master and research universities demonstrated transparent efforts to engage faculty in assessment scholarship and university internal quality assurance by allocating targeted resources.

*Current Activities.* Most institutions shared assessment strategies designed to facilitate closing the assessment loop. Associate institutions mostly shared activities to facilitate institutional assessment. Bachelor, master, and research institutions posted activities to engage stakeholders in both institutional and program assessment. Some examples of activities included embedding annual assessment results in the five-year or seven-year program review process (one associate, one master, and six research institutions); faculty engagement (six research institutions); organizing formal assessment forums (four research institutions); holding university assessment retreats (two bachelor and two research institutions); organizing annual assessment conferences (three research institutions) or informal assessment forums (e.g., coffee and conversation to discuss assessment results [one research institution]), or sharing workshop and conference presentation materials (three research institutions); and recognizing faculty assessment efforts (one master and one research institution). In addition to institutional and program assessment, some institutions shared additional assessment projects such as Quality Enhancement Plan or Degree Qualifications Profile. The literature has indicated that many institutions have

faced challenges in closing the assessment loop; therefore, the findings in this study provide some strategies to facilitate the assessment discussion for quality improvement.

*Evidence of Student Learning.* Nineteen institutions provided assessment reports, while two bachelors and two research institutions did not. Two major types of assessment reports are full and summary. Nineteen institutions provided summary assessment reports and four institutions (two bachelors and two research universities) provided both full and summary assessment reports. Most summary reports are one or two pages. The maximum length of a full report was 20 pages. Most institutions analyzed assessment data in a way that would facilitate sharing and discussion. This finding is a significant improvement over findings by Jankowski and Provezis (2011), which showed 22% of institutions had more than 100-page assessment reports and 54% of the institutions included long tables of data that were hard to read or comprehend. Some institutional assessment reports provided both direct assessment (mostly course-based assessment and standardized exams such as GEA, CLA, CAAP) and indirect assessment (student surveys such as NSSE). Most of the institutions in this sample benchmarked the assessment results with previous years, which is an improvement over findings by Jankowski and Provezis (2011), which showed that 70% of the institutions did not benchmark the results with peer institutions or previous results. All institutions publicly posted summary reports, but two out of four institutions posted full assessment reports with password protection. This finding is consistent with the recommendation from Jankowski and Provezis (2011) to communicate portions of assessment results to external stakeholders.

*Use of Evidence.* All institutions, except for four research universities, provided a brief narrative on how they used assessment results to improve student learning, such as improving the

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# Beyond the “Asian American” Category: Disaggregating Data by Ethnic Group for Better Assessment

Corinne Maekawa Kodama

**A**SIAN AMERICANS ARE THE FASTEST growing racial group in the United States (U.S.) (Budiman and Ruiz 2021), reflected in their growth in higher education across all regions of the country and institutional types. The Asian American population is also extremely diverse, encompassing 48 ethnic groups which differ significantly from each other in education, income, immigration history, and other characteristics, making this population challenging to assess accurately (AAPI Data 2021). However, despite this ethnic diversity, on most campuses outside of California, these students are grouped under an umbrella “Asian/Asian American” category (that sometimes also includes Asian international students), masking a great deal of important demographic information that influences college success. Both academia and government have encouraged campuses to collect ethnically disaggregated data to better understand Asian Americans, while recognizing the challenges of doing so (AAPI Data 2021; National Forum on Education Statistics 2016; Teranishi 2010). Thus, this article describes one successful effort to capture the ethnic diversity of an Asian American student population in the absence of formal institutionally disaggregated data collection.

## Institutional Context

The University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) is an urban, research I institution with one of the most ethnically diverse student populations in the country. For at least the past 15 years, Asian American

students have made up between 20%–25% of the student body, perhaps not surprising given that Illinois (and particularly the Chicago area) has the largest numbers of Asian Americans in the Midwest (Asian American Center for Advancing Justice 2012).

Like most campuses, historically UIC has not collected student data disaggregated by ethnicity. In 2004, the Chancellor’s Committee on the Status of Asian Americans conducted the first-ever ethnically disaggregated survey of Asian

a focus on collecting Asian American student information disaggregated by ethnicity.

## The Survey

The online demographic survey was administered annually from 2011 to 2015. The primary recruitment was done through direct e-mails to all Asian American-identified students, with quarterly reminders as well as raffle prize incentives. (Pacific Islanders were also included, but due to small numbers their results are not

Viewing Asian American students through a lens of ethnic disaggregation reveals many differences in demographics and educational needs that are lost when viewing them as one monolithic group.



American undergraduates, and results showed great variation between ethnic groups on a number of background characteristics and educational experiences, though not a full population sample. In 2008, UIC became an Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institution (AANAPISI), and by 2015 had been awarded three federal grants between 2010–2020 to support Asian American student success. (To qualify for an AANAPISI, an institution’s undergraduate enrollment must be at least 10% AANAPI and at least 50% of degree-seeking students must be Pell-eligible and/or the institution must have a lower than average educational and general expenditure per student.) Funding supported a multi-year survey from 2011–2015 with

reported in the results.) The survey was also promoted in person at Asian American-targeted events, academic courses, student organization meetings, as well as online via listservs and social media outlets.

Over the four-year period, the survey garnered 1,700 unique responses, which were evenly divided by class level. (For students who filled it out more than once, the most recent response was used.) This represented approximately 43% of the total UIC Asian American undergraduate population as of Fall 2015. While not a population sample, survey results were matched up with institutional data to provide additional information on student characteristics.



## What We Learned from Disaggregating Data about Our Asian American Students

1. *UIC's Asian American students are very ethnically diverse.* Survey results indicated respondents from at least 22 different ethnic groups. The four largest groups were (a) Indian American (27%); (b) Chinese American (19%); (c) Filipino American (19%); and (d) Korean American (14%). While not a full population sample, these are the same groups that are most prominent in the Chicago metro area (AACAJ 2012), as well as in a previous campus study. Nine groups had a sample size higher than 30: Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Japanese, Korean, Pakistani, Taiwanese, Thai, and Vietnamese American. For more robust analyses, Pakistani and Bangladeshi were combined into one group and Vietnamese, Cambodian, Lao, and Hmong into a "Southeast Asian American" group, as they share similar immigration histories and educational backgrounds. However, there is no perfect way to determine which and how many categories to use in implementing Asian American disaggregated data efforts.
2. *There is great variation between Asian American ethnic groups on almost all variables affecting student success.* While this was not a surprise based on existing research, census data, and anecdotal experiences, having campus data to reflect these ethnic variations at UIC was invaluable. Differences included:
  - **Immigrant Generation:** Consistent with national data, 66% of the survey respondents indicated being born in the U.S. However, disaggregated data showed that 76% of Chinese Americans and 72% of Filipino Americans were U.S. born, but only 57% of Indian American and 55% of Pakistani/Bangladeshi Americans. This information is important in understanding potential cultural differences among Asian American students, as well as

challenging the stereotype of Asian Americans as foreigners.

- **Language:** Almost half of the survey respondents indicated that their family's primary language were Asian languages. Disaggregated results showed that Chinese American, Southeast Asian American, and Korean American families had the highest percentages speaking an Asian language at home, at approximately 60% (in contrast to only 23% of Filipino Americans), revealing the student populations most in need of language and/or writing support.
- **Financial Need:** Consistent with national data (Kocchar and Cilluffo 2018), results showed great income inequality among UIC's Asian American students: while the average household income was \$63,000, the standard deviation was \$50,000! Filipino American and Indian American groups had the highest incomes above \$80,000, while Pakistani/Bangladeshi American and Southeast Asian Americans had the lowest, under \$62,000. While the financial need of UIC students was generally well-known, the degree to which this affected certain Asian American populations was not. This was particularly notable given how few college scholarship opportunities are targeted specifically at Asian Americans.
- **Parental Education:** Thirty-seven percent of the Asian American students reported that they or their siblings were the first in their family to attend college. However, this rose to a high of 66% for Southeast Asian American and 54% of Chinese Americans, compared to 28% of Indian American students and 23% of Filipino Americans. Additionally, 55% of Chinese American and 61% of Southeast Asian American respondents had parents with a high school education or less. While consistent with the overall UIC numbers of first-generation college students, this challenged the common misconception that Asian Americans

come from highly educated families.

- **High School Background:** While 24% of Asian American respondents attended Chicago Public Schools (CPS), a much greater number of Chinese American (44%) and Southeast Asian American students (35%) attended CPS compared to 12% of Indian Americans and Korean Americans. In contrast, 39% of Korean American and 30% of Indian American students attended Cook county (suburban) public schools. Filipino American students had the largest percentage from private schools, perhaps not surprising due to their predominantly Catholic background. Given the great differences between high schools in the Chicago area, these findings may reflect differing student needs in academic preparation and have implications for outreach and admissions strategies.
  - **Academic Readiness:** An important finding was that twice as many survey respondents required math remediation in their first year (10%) compared to English (5%), contradicting the image of Asian American students as good in math. Disaggregated results revealed that for Filipino American students, the need for math remediation was seven times what it was for English. Southeast Asian and Pakistani/Bangladeshi American groups also had higher levels of need for math remediation, while Chinese Americans and Korean Americans needed the most assistance in English. This information could help English and math departments target outreach and interventions to those most in need of support.
3. *This data combats conventional wisdom about a population often misunderstood.* Results showing many urban, low-income, and first-generation college students were not surprising given UIC's overall demographics, though the ethnic disaggregation highlighted issues for specific Asian American communities. This data was  
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# Assessment Institute Insights

## Preparing for the 2021 HIPs in The States Track at the Assessment Institute

Christopher Basgier, Amy Cicchino, Brandi L. Gilbert, and Matthew R. Lexow

**H**IPS IN THE STATES, CREATED IN 2017, is a community that promotes research into high-impact practices (HIPs) and their effect on student learning and success. In 2020, after three years of independent conferences, HIPs in the States joined the Assessment Institute in Indianapolis as a separate track. The collaboration opened the HIPs in the States community to new voices and ideas, and in 2020 we gathered to share research-based strategies and commiserate on the challenges related to delivering and sustaining HIPs—especially during a global pandemic. When the Assessment Institute announced that its 2021 conference would similarly be online and free, we came together with Ken O'Donnell and Jerry Daday to develop a four-week workshop throughout the month of February. During this series, participants would hear their colleagues' ideas in a community of practice—potentially finding opportunities for cross-institutional collaboration—and find the time, space, and support to develop their conference proposal.

Members of the HIPs Community of Practice identified four priorities as we planned the February professional development series:

- delivery and assessment in online or hybrid modalities,
- social and racial justice,
- institutional scaling and assessment, and
- specific faculty professional development, inclusiveness, and universal design.

As the series began, we recognized that these priorities are the fertile ground for current and future research in HIPs.

To practice what we preach, we decided to adapt the eight features of HIPs

described by Kuh, O'Donnell, and Schneider (2017) into our workshop design:

- high expectations appropriate to an academic conference,
- concentrated effort over several weeks of a workshop series, instead of a one-off workshop,
- interactions with the HIPs community of practice about substantive matters,
- experiences with colleagues at diverse institutions working on a broad range of HIPs,

types, including two-year colleges, regional comprehensives, minority-serving institutions, and PhD-granting universities. Of the 39 panels accepted for the 2021 HIPs in the States track at the Assessment Institute, 12 included at least one individual who participated in the professional development series. Three of those 12 were multi-institutional collaborations, which was another goal of the series. Only 11 participants completed our post-survey, but they were largely enthusiastic about the ex-

Joining the Assessment Institute and expanding the reach of HIPs in the States has provided opportunities to come together as a community and welcome colleagues from other tracks who are new to HIPs.



- feedback via small group discussions and a peer review activity,
- relevance to local contexts and national conversations,
- submission of a proposal as a “public” demonstration of competence, and
- opportunities to reflect on learning during breakout sessions and a final post-survey.

With these eight features in conjunction with the four priorities, we aimed to develop strong proposals for the 2021 Assessment Institute through four professional development workshop sessions in which participants heard from thought leaders, drafted and refined their ideas, and received peer feedback on their developing proposal.

### Participation and Results

Eighty people joined us for the series, representing a wide range of institution

experience, with 10 agreeing that it was a good use of time. One participant who was new to the HIPs community of practice praised the collegial, welcoming atmosphere, and added, “I found it so helpful to hear about cutting edge work in this field, and to network.” This participant pointed to two of our primary goals for the series: to foster cutting-edge research and to promote new networking opportunities.

Below are conversations from each of the four priority topics in the series along with an upcoming panel that will feature the topic in greater detail.

### Online/Hybrid Modalities

The pandemic provided a crash course in the benefits and challenges of delivering and assessing HIPs in online or hybrid modalities. The rapid change allowed creativity to adapt or try new methods, yet the transition was

time-consuming and training opportunities were often underutilized. These modalities allowed for more personal connections and increased collaboration within and across institutions, but that came with Zoom fatigue and reduced connections for some populations. Finally, flexibility and fewer barriers to participation improved access for some, yet reduced access for others and presented additional inclusivity challenges. What will we keep from this unplanned experiment, especially in the context of using course-based HIPs to scale and improve equity and access? How can we use assessment on learning and participation to create or improve our HIPs? Learn more at the panel “The Student Experience: Online HIPs during a Pandemic,” led by Colleen M. Smith (University of Central Florida).

### Social and Racial Justice

George Kuh’s (2008) original HIPs research suggested that HIPs are especially meaningful for underrepresented and minoritized students. Some questions about diversity, equity, and inclusion have persisted ever since: How do we increase access for underrepresented students? How do we ensure the faculty and staff who deliver HIPs are as diverse as the students who benefit the most—without putting an undue burden on them? Additionally, the uprisings for social and racial justice of the last year have raised new, urgent questions about the role of HIPs in promoting justice in higher education: How might we leverage HIPs for antiracist or anti-oppressive transformation on our campuses? How can we assess HIPs in ways that do not privilege ways of communicating and learning that are historically coded as White? Learn more at the panel “Assessing the Impact of High-Impact Practices: A Critical Quantitative Approach to Assess Access, Equity, and Outcomes of HIPs Participation,” led by Kaitlyn N. Stormes (UCLA), Kelly Young (CSU, Long Beach), and Kerry L.B. Klima (CSU, Long Beach).

### Scaling and Efficacy

In her 2019 article, Ashley Finley notes that “the term ‘high impact,’ almost always *assumes* efficacy.” It is easy to assume that the name alone confers inherent quality that can be infinitely scaled, but practitioners know that quality and scaling require substantial institutional support. Questions concerning how to provide quality, effective HIPs at scale persist. Participants raised the following questions about scaling and efficacy: How do practitioners distinguish between programs that call themselves “high-impact” and those practicing HIPs with fidelity? How do institutions develop HIPs at multiple sites without falling into the trap of offering HIPs in a “cafeteria” model? How do institutions develop meaningful taxonomies to guide efforts at scaling? Considering the many challenges faced during the past year, HIPs in the States members also ask how institutions can provide meaningful HIPs at scale while also offering HIPs in online and remote modalities. Learn more at “HIPs and hipS: Scaling High-impact Practices Across Campus,” presented by Tsu-Ming Chiang (Georgia College and State University), Patrick Lucas (University of Kentucky), and Mark St. Andre (University of Utah).

### Professional Development

HIPs professional development covers a range of issues, including how to create a shared institutional language with clear definitions for HIPs, encourage faculty and staff in new contexts and at different stages in their careers to join or build HIPs communities of practice, recognize work related to HIPs (e.g., compensation, tenure, and evaluation processes), guide faculty in assessing how HIPs impact students, and help faculty and staff turn their experiences with HIPs into scholarship of teaching and learning projects. The pandemic has made professional development both harder and more necessary, leading us to

ask how we do this work when budgets are being tightened and faculty and staff are on the brink of burnout. How do we design professional development that can sustain us? One panel addressing these issues is “HIP Health: Taking the Pulse of High-Impact Practices,” presented by Taunya Dressler (University of Utah), Kathie Campbell (Salt Lake Community College), and Shari Lindsey’s (University of Utah).

### In Closing

Joining the Assessment Institute and expanding the reach of HIPs in the States has provided opportunities to come together as a community and welcome colleagues from other tracks who are new to HIPs. We were able to find common struggles and bright spots as we discussed our experiences in this new professional development series. We look forward to continuing these discussions and opportunities to connect and reflect in our conference sessions and throughout the year. These are important topics to collectively consider as our institutions evolve and we face new challenges and opportunities to create high-quality, high-impact practices and experiences for all students. ■

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# NILOA Perspectives

## ***Credentials: Understand the Problems, Identify the Opportunities, Create the Solutions***

Paul L. Gaston and Michelle Van Noy

**L**ONG BEFORE THE PANDEMIC, THE need for a book on the academic credentials environment had become clear.

On the one hand, a dramatic increase in the number and variety of academic credentials, the spectrum of providers, and the means of program delivery had expanded educational opportunities considerably. For instance,

- Credentialing options for students had multiplied. In addition to degrees, non-degree credentials, most offered through short-term, highly focused programs, promised close alignment with opportunities for employment.
- Many more providers emerged, including for-profit institutions and those offering only distance education.
- Access expanded. Isolated locations no longer posed an insurmountable barrier to educational accomplishment.

But on the other hand, there were accounts of innumerable individuals who had squandered thousands of dollars on programs leading to questionable credentials. Sudden institutional closures devastated students, faculty and staff members, and communities. Employers expressed dissatisfaction with the preparation of graduates. Enrolled students with access to academic advising were finding it difficult to choose among competing opportunities, while students unaffiliated with any institution had little access to advice. Concerns that tuition had become too expensive, institutions were investing in the wrong priorities, and oversight of institutional performance failed to assure quality

were shared by many policy makers and opinion leaders.

In short, a proliferation of credentials appeared to have created “too much choice” and too little clear information, a situation in which misjudgments become more likely and risks may outpace benefits.

Every one of these symptoms of dysfunction was exacerbated by the pandemic. Making wise choices from a confusing array of opportunities became even more difficult. Distinguishing between responsible and predatory providers became a far greater challenge. Finding meaningful pathways through short-term, non-credit credentials to a competitive qualification without good advice? A high bar, indeed, and one that far too many individuals fail to clear.

That paradox—expanded opportunities for students and institutions offset by serious challenges demanding attention—lies at the heart of the book we have written for publication this fall by Stylus Publishing LLC. The title is simple: *Credentials*. But because the problem is anything but, we have a subtitle: *Understand the problems. Identify the opportunities. Create the solutions*. We hope that many will find the book useful, but we are speaking especially to those who can make the greatest difference in addressing the challenges we consider, namely, academic administrators, faculty members, and academic advisors.

### **What This Book Seeks to Do—and What It Doesn't Do**

In *Credentials*, we describe historical contexts where they are relevant, but we have not written a history of

postsecondary education. We have defined many of the credentials offered and addressed many of the issues that they raise, but this is not a reference book that lists all academic credentials. We have considered how theory can expand our understanding of how credentials function in the marketplace, but we have not written a theoretical study. Instead, as the subtitles suggest, we seek to raise *questions* that leaders should consider, to clarify *choices* they may be facing or are likely to face, and to propose *initiatives* we believe they should consider.

The plan of the book expresses this practical aim.

In the first of three parts, we describe the credentials environment—how credentials function in practice, how their proliferation has created an unprecedented array of educational choices, and why this abundance represents a mixed blessing. Credentials are almost always both transactional and symbolic. Their value for individuals lies both in what they enable and in what they represent.

In the second part, we focus on categories of credentials, from associate and doctoral degrees to non-degree credentials. We consider the challenges posed by degree programs and look at some salutary innovations. But we give even greater attention to credentials that are often misunderstood or overlooked. For instance, we attempt to clarify the important differences between *certificates* and *certifications*, we consider the phenomenon known as academic “boot camps,” and we point to the implications of corporate providers “acting like universities.” We devote a full chapter to apprenticeships, which offer

unprecedented access to careers and professions through programs shared between industries, corporations, and educational institutions.

We conclude with two chapters that consider the implications of the credentials environment for responsible academic leadership in volatile times. The first discusses the importance of maintaining a balanced priority on quality and equity. The second offers 12 practical propositions for consideration and, we hope, for action.

### Implications for Assessment

Readers of *Assessment Update* might ask why such a book should interest those focused principally on assessment. There are three answers.

First, throughout the book, we emphasize the importance of carefully developed and clearly articulated learning and performance outcomes, institution by institution, credential by credential, course by course. Because the pursuit of this important priority varies widely,

there is important progress to be made. Creating such outcomes is essential to the offering of meaningful credentials. Only those that attest to the accomplishment of documentable outcomes should pass muster.

Second, we regard assessment as the inseparable companion of such outcomes. There are far too many providers that rely on comfortable assumptions as to the value of the credentials they offer. Here again, there is important work to be done, and we encourage that work both by clarifying what criteria students should consider in weighing the advantages of an institution or program and by offering examples of good practice. But the good news is that through appropriate assessment, providers will not only be able to examine their effectiveness in preparing students for remunerative careers and satisfying lives, but they will also become more agile and competitive themselves. And because a commitment to equity should be among the values of every educational provider, assessment

based on data disaggregated in ways that serve institutional priorities can reveal areas that need attention.

Finally, we repeatedly endorse the principle that has emerged through the four decades of the assessment movement: assessment without results is hokey. Many of the initiatives we recommend—for curricular improvements, for improved advising, for making a priority of effective pedagogy—will depend for their success on the resourceful use of reliable data.

Indeed, it would have been impossible to conceive this book without a strong commitment to the value of clear learning and performance outcomes, effective assessment, and spirited follow-through leading to institutional and programmatic improvement. ■

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## NILOA Transparency Framework: Implications for the Publicity of Student Learning Outcomes

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assessment plan, conducting additional professional development, making curricular changes, or improving teaching and learning processes. One bachelor institution mentioned the university assessment committee used assessment results for decision-making. Four research institutions provided evidence of faculty publications related to assessment and student learning as outcomes of resource allocation for assessment activities. Although these 23 institutions highlighted key actions for improvement, there were limited actions for improvement relating to the strategic planning process, and changes in institutional policy or resource allocation.

### Implications

This research supports the need for university assessment offices to include

transparent assessment information for stakeholder access on their website. Assessment professionals and stakeholders can then explore the implementation of appropriate assessment initiatives at their own universities. A master university used this study's finding to build a new assessment website and improve the university assessment process by adopting a two-year assessment plan for general education assessment, revising the annual program assessment timeline, posting more instructions for using AMS (both in pdf and video) to facilitate assessment activities, revising and updating assessment toolkits for institutional use, switching to a one-page assessment report to facilitate university committee discussion of assessment results for decision-making, awarding a certificate of excellence in

assessment and commitment to assessment to recognize faculty efforts in assessment activities in college meetings, and updating assessment information in the university's daily news. Good practices that this master university plans to implement include ILOs for graduate programs, informal forums for faculty to engage in discussion of assessment results, regular funding to support faculty scholarship in student learning assessment, and alignment of the assessment timeline with institutional fiscal allocation to ensure assessment results will be considered in resource allocation to close the institutional effectiveness loop. ■

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important in reminding administrators that Asian American students are not that different from other student populations at UIC and was an eye opener to those who subscribed to the notion that Asian American students are well off and do not need support. Findings also countered national narratives about Asian American students, particularly the Chinese American population, which is known to be bifurcated on a variety of socioeconomic markers; results showed that UIC’s Chinese American students were not “model minority,” upper-middle-class students but instead were urban, low-income, first-generation college students who faced challenges in their pursuit of higher education. This was particularly important information to share on a campus in the Midwest region where Asian Americans are often overlooked and misunderstood—one of the biggest challenges in developing Asian American-targeted academic and student support services.

### Implications

Viewing Asian American students through a lens of ethnic disaggregation reveals many differences in demographics and educational needs that are lost when viewing them as one monolithic group. Survey results were shared in a widely distributed report (Kodama, Yin, Lee, and Su 2017) as well as campus presentations to inform the campus community. Results

have helped to build a more nuanced understanding of our Asian American students, as different findings by ethnicity have challenged our campus to think more carefully about which student populations could most benefit from programs and targeted outreach (e.g., admissions for Chinese and Southeast Asian Americans; financial aid for Pakistani/Bangladeshi and Southeast Asian Americans). This is both for departments who did not realize Asian Americans needed their services and those that were already serving Asian Americans but had not realized the vast ethnic differences. It has encouraged us to think about where else we might find ethnic differences in student needs, experiences, and outcomes for future assessment. We are continuing the collection of disaggregated data within Asian American-targeted courses and events, asking students for their ethnic background on evaluation forms to learn more and discover other gaps and/or inequities.

This survey was part of a decade-long effort to encourage UIC to collect institutional student data disaggregated by ethnicity, which has great potential to improve assessment efforts and understanding of a diverse student body. It is important to note that disaggregated ethnic data collection also would benefit other racial groups whose diversity may be masked by pan-ethnic categories (e.g., Hispanic/Latinx). In 2017, the administration began collecting ethnic identification from UIC students, though the implementation

and reporting practices could be strengthened and more widespread. We hope that our example of ethnically disaggregated research and data collection will be useful to other institutions in demonstrating the benefits of having more nuanced data and advancing the conversation about improving assessment of diverse populations.

Note: The full survey report is available online at [www.go.uic.edu/uncovering](http://www.go.uic.edu/uncovering). For more information, contact Corinne Kodama at [ckodama@uic.edu](mailto:ckodama@uic.edu) or Karen Su at [karensu@uic.edu](mailto:karensu@uic.edu). ■

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# Fostering a GREAT Place for Student Success: Critical Component #3, Engage Our Students in Meaningful, Evidence-Informed Interventions

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and engagement. These include first-year experiences, learning communities, collaborative assignments and projects, undergraduate research, global learning, and capstone experiences. Because of the benefits students enjoy by participating in these experiences, attention has increasingly been paid to ensuring quality and fidelity of HIPs, addressing equity issues regarding who has access to HIPs, and effectively sustaining and scaling HIPs across the institution (Kuh, O'Donnell, and Schneider 2017).

## Co-Curricular and Community Engagement

To address the holistic development of learners, colleges and universities invest in programs and services in the co-curricular context to augment and reinforce learning taking place in academic settings. This is significant to *fostering a student's sense of belonging, deepening their involvement on campus, and equipping them with social capital*—the latter is value derived from membership in social groups, social networks, or institutions that can give individuals the competence and confidence to succeed in future settings. Institutions tend to offer students plentiful opportunities for co-curricular engagement and, in doing so, opportunities to gain social capital (Jensen and Jetten 2015).

On many campuses, students can participate in *meaningful events and activities designed to provide enrichment and enjoyment*. Such examples include lecture and film series, social events, fraternity and sorority life, cultural programs, and artist series. Many institutions are also investing considerable attention in the *professional development of students* through their involvement in student government, on-campus employment, leadership and career development programming and resources, alternative spring break experiences, and social justice causes important to the campus

and community. *Attention to the wellbeing of students* often gets manifested through campus recreation and athletics programs, programs focused on helping students make healthy and responsible personal choices, and access to mental health and counseling resources and services.

*Encouraging students to engage with their peers* is another essential part of their college experience. Providing such opportunities can build a student's sense of community and foster their ongoing identity development. This can occur through student organization involvement, residential-based learning communities, honors-oriented programming, and affinity group affiliation—the latter is especially important to meeting the needs of, and providing supportive resources for, increasingly diverse student populations within the institution (Brown and Burdsal 2012). Finally, *fostering community engagement within students is a core mission of many higher education institutions*. Advocating civic matters, becoming involved in political and social activism, participating in service learning, and participating in community outreach activities are all examples of how students can become engaged in their broader community context (Melville, Dedrick, and Gish 2013).

## Assessing, Documenting, and Improving Student Engagement

Student engagement takes place in various contexts within and outside the institution. Providing opportunities to assess and document such engagement has long been a priority for faculty, staff, and administrators. *Local surveys and focus groups* are useful in capturing the experiences, perceptions, and areas where future attention and resource allocation should occur. These can help to identify patterns of engagement, aided by disaggregating data by specific student demographics to uncover gaps and opportunities;

to understand the types of engagement activities most valued and needed by students; and to determine how well a particular engagement approach is meeting its intended goals, including making ongoing improvements based on feedback.

Institutions often desire an understanding of how student engagement experiences within their campus context compares to those of others—including both peer and aspirant institutional benchmarks. The *National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)* is a popular and credible resource to aid in such efforts. NSSE is administered on college and university campuses to first-year and senior students and seeks feedback on engagement indicators (academic challenge, learning with peers, experiences with faculty, and campus environment) and HIPs (service learning, learning communities, research with faculty, internship or field experience, study abroad, and culminating senior experience). In addition to providing comparative engagement information, NSSE's goals include incorporating the periodic survey as part of a larger assessment and improvement strategy, reviewing results with campus stakeholders, and using findings to guide improvements to enhance student learning and success (Kinzie and Franklin 2020).

Finally, and importantly, documenting and improving the *learning* from varied student engagement experiences is also necessary. One emerging tool to aid in this effort is the *Comprehensive Learning Record (CLR)*, which “provides students with a record of these experiences so that they can appropriately articulate their learning with prospective employers or when applying for graduate and professional programs” (Daday, Hahn, and Morrical 2021, p.1). These digital records capture verified learning experiences in which students have participated, including academic courses and programs, co-curricular contexts in community or experiential settings, or through other forms of competency-based or prior learning assessment. Although a relatively new framework, CLRs are evolving as one way to capture

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more fully the robustness and richness of student engagement in higher education.

A collegiate education endeavors to prepare students for life after graduation by teaching them the skills they will need in their field, preparing them to be active citizens, and preparing them to contribute positively in a diverse, globally connected world. Encouraging students is necessary for meeting these goals. Therefore, it is important for institutions to take steps to promote academic, social, and civic engagement on campus, including attracting and embracing more diverse student populations. This relies on various strategies to *admit* new students and position them for success within the institution. We will discuss this critical component toward fostering a GREAT place for student success in Volume 33, Number 5. ■

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## Closing Equity Gaps with Intrapersonal Competency Outcomes-Based Assessment

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diverse students' intrapersonal competencies that directly correlate with and predict their success. Yes, this is simply another way to articulate what outcomes-based assessment involves.

In closing, we invite institutional leaders and policy makers to continue to monitor disaggregated "above-the-surface" data. And we also invite a deeper dive into exploring what has contributed to those performance indicators prior to allocating resources to either reward performance improvement or to fund initiatives that promise improvement. While our society appears to remain motivated by easy-to-identify above-the-surface kind of indicators that inform a quick reaction, as education design scientists, we are just beginning to discover how to meaningfully facilitate specific improvements in malleable intrapersonal competencies for the diverse population of students we serve. And doing so requires a deeper dive. As such, we hope that this article will prove beneficial to providing a theoretical framework that will open critical and compassionate dialogue to discover your students' strengths

and opportunities and leverage resources to close equity gaps. ■

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*Dedicated to the memory of our dear colleague, Rey Monzon, the former director of student affairs research and assessment at San Diego State University (SDSU). He was a hidden face behind much of the progress on some of the university's highest priorities.*

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