

ASSIGNMENT DESIGN: A FACULTY-CENTERED APPROACH TO IMPROVING TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

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.

- SURVEYS • WEB SCANS • CASE STUDIES • FOCUS GROUPS
- OCCASIONAL PAPERS • WEBSITE • RESOURCES • NEWSLETTER
- PRESENTATIONS • TRANSPARENCY FRAMEWORK • FEATURED WEBSITES • ACCREDITATION RESOURCES • ASSESSMENT EVENT CALENDAR • ASSESSMENT NEWS • MEASURING QUALITY INVENTORY • POLICY ANALYSIS • ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN • DEGREE QUALIFICATIONS PROFILE • TUNING

www.learningoutcomesassessment.org

National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment

Making Learning Outcomes Usable & Transparent

[About Us](#) | [NILOA Publications](#) | [Resource Library](#) | [Degree Qualifications Profile](#) | [Transparency Framework](#) |

[FULL NAVIGATION >>](#)

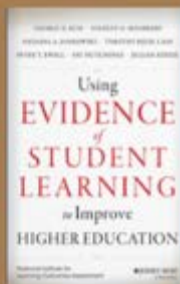


Welcome to NILOA



We are pleased to announce the release of NILOA's 29th occasional paper on the topic of equity and assessment.

- [Occasional Paper](#)
- [NILOA Newsletter](#)
- [EIA Applications](#)
- [Featured Assignment](#)
- [RFP for Coaches](#)



NILOA Calendar						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

[Click here to browse NILOA's Assignment Library.](#)

Point Loma Nazarene University

Point Loma Nazarene University's assessment website is this month's Featured Website in the category of Communication and Centralized Assessment Repository.

[Featured Website Archive](#)



In the News | [Archive](#)

[Join Our Email List](#)

'Regaining Public Trust'

Mon, Jan 30, 2017 - 08:00 am
Colleen Flaherty, Inside Higher Ed

During the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU)'s 2017 Annual Meeting, participants, including NILOA's Director Natasha Jankowski, discussed the need to increase transparency and communication of student learning in order to build public trust.

Report on Professors' Role in Student Success

Mon, Jan 30, 2017 - 08:00 am
Emily Tate, Inside Higher Ed

In a newly released report from the American Council on Education (ACE) written by NILOA's Director, the relationship between faculty instruction and student outcomes is explored through five points of intersection.

ACRL releases Rewired: Research-Writing Partnerships within the Frameworks

Tue, Jan 24, 2017 - 08:00 am
Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL)

Highlighting the importance of partnerships, the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) published an edited book titled "Rewired: Research-Writing Partnerships within the Frameworks" that explains how librarians and faculty can collaborate and develop the field of information literacy.

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

Purpose

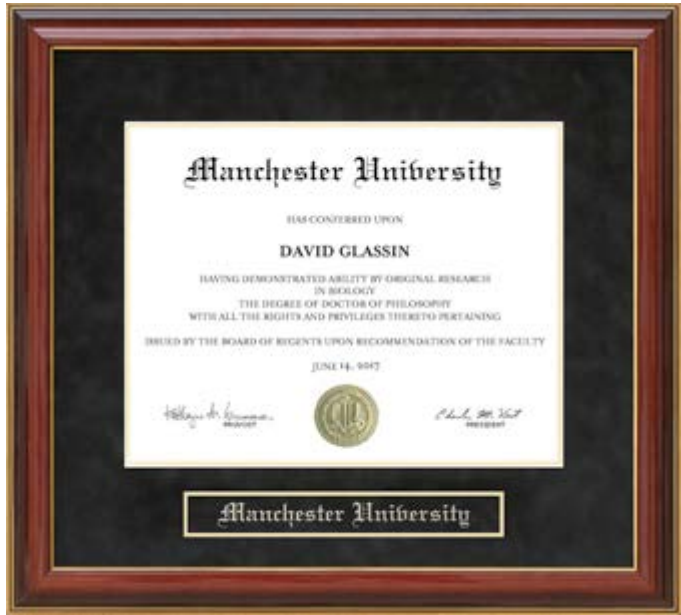
Why do we do assessment? What is the value and purpose of engaging in assessing student learning?

Value

- Institutions of higher education are increasingly asked to show the value of attending, i.e. impact in relation to cost; employment
- 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



WHAT DOES A A DEGREE REPRESENT?



seat time?

Carnegie credit hours?

grade point averages?

required courses?

clinical hours?

*All of these suggest what degrees represent in terms of **numbers**.*

*What do degrees represent in terms of **learning**?*

But...

Do our assessments help answer these questions or prepare students for experiences in the “real world” or in the field of employment?

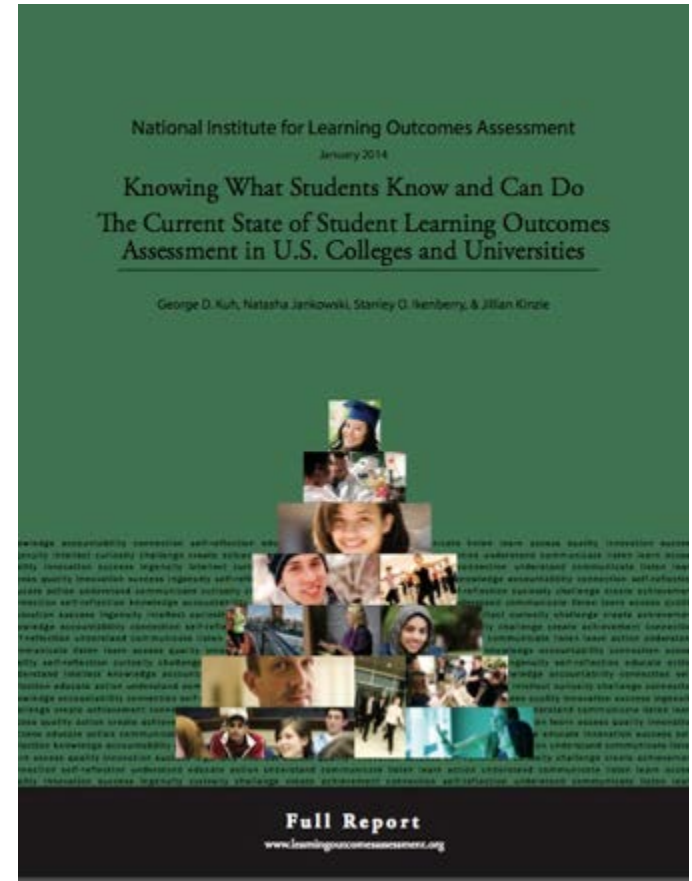
How can we offer various approaches to authentically assess student learning – not just in our course, but how our courses connect and add up to an integrated degree or credential?

Course  Program  College  GE

Why Focus on Assignments?

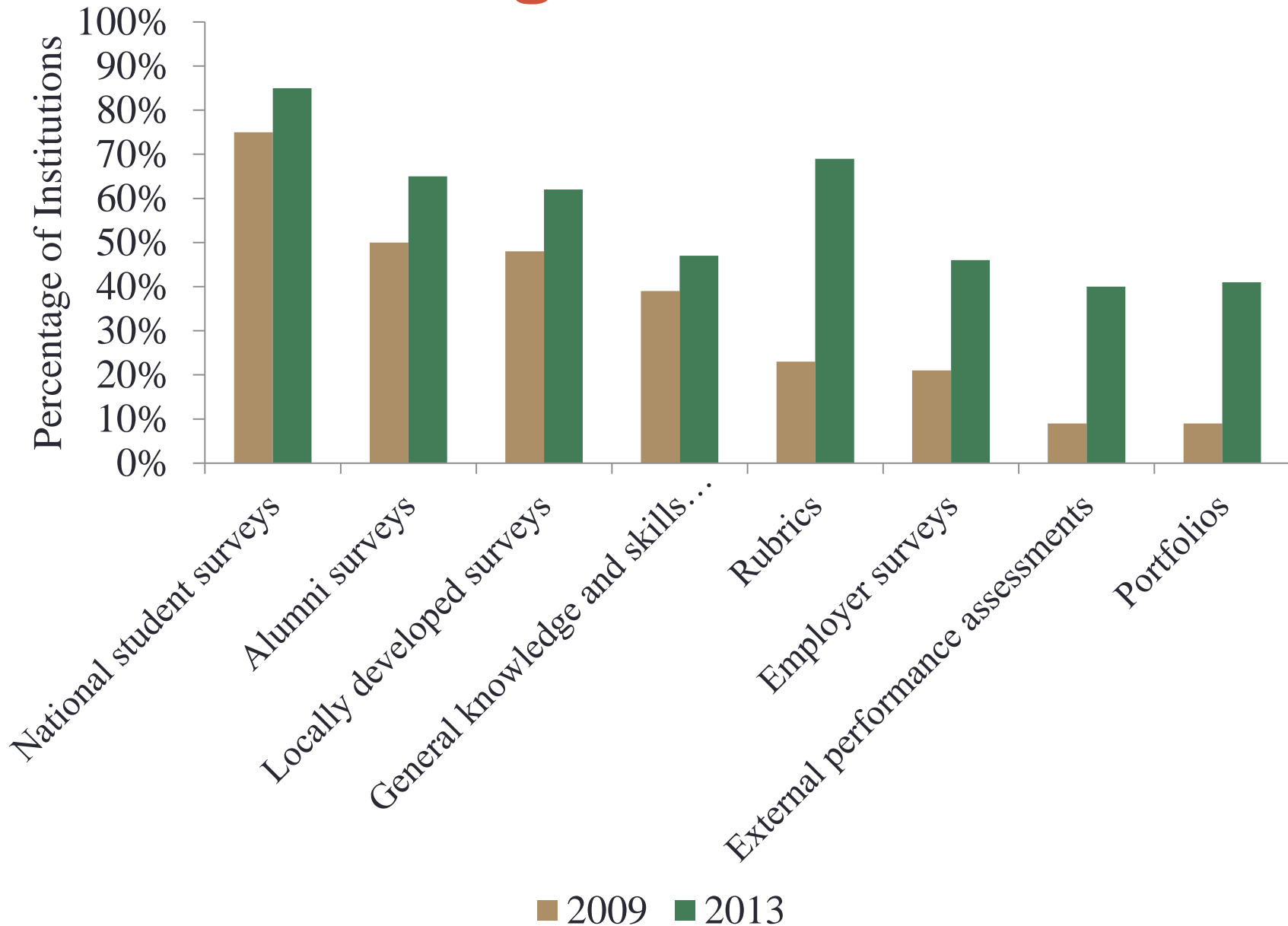
Most valuable assessment approaches:

- Classroom-based assessment
- National student surveys
- Rubrics



<http://www.learningoutcomeassessment.org/knownwhatstudentsknowandcando.html>

Change Over Time



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.

But we have tensions...

Pathways

Institutions are redesigning curriculum and making scaffolded pathways for students – do the students know about it and move through the curriculum in the way it is designed?



Are students even aware?

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

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.)

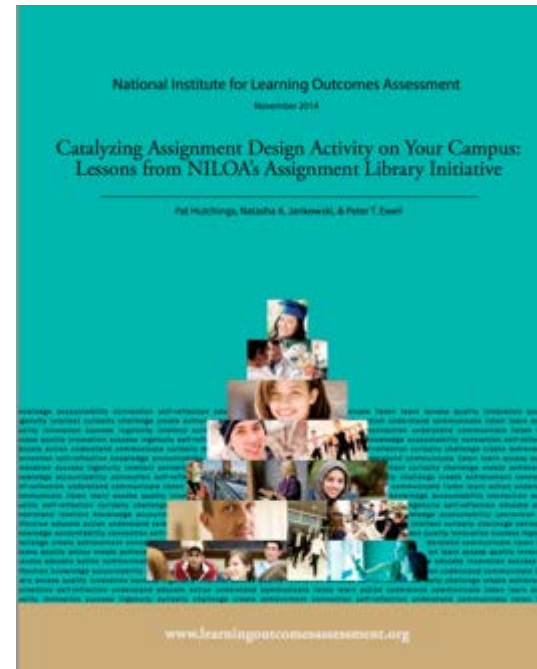
Rubrics

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

Summative to Formative

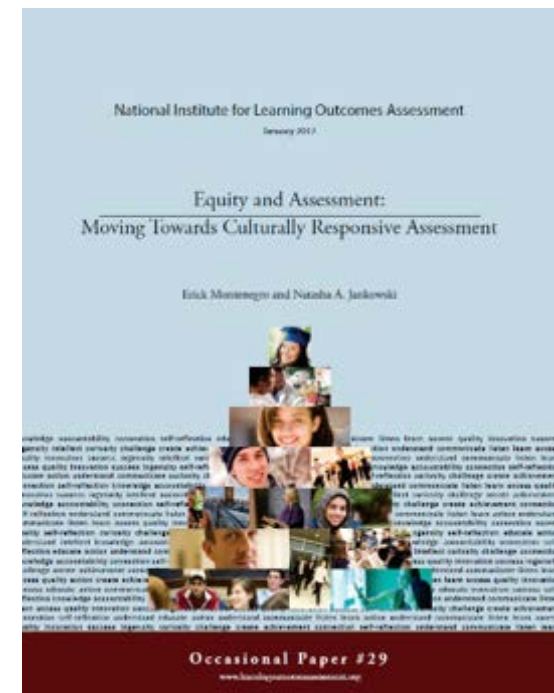
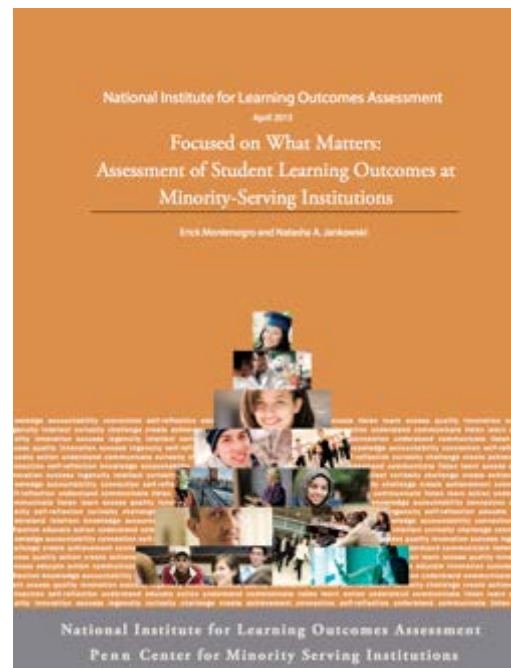
- Embedded assignments
- Feedback and feed forward
- Integrate with advising
- Move from assessing at end of program or time at institution to assessing throughout
- Know before capstone or summative assessments where students are – *all* students



Student-centered assessments

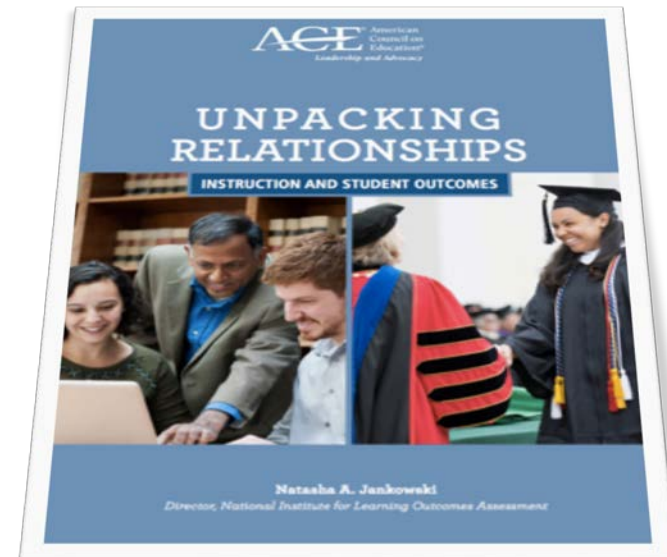
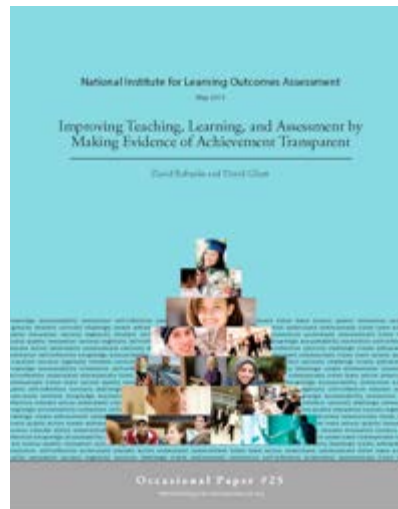
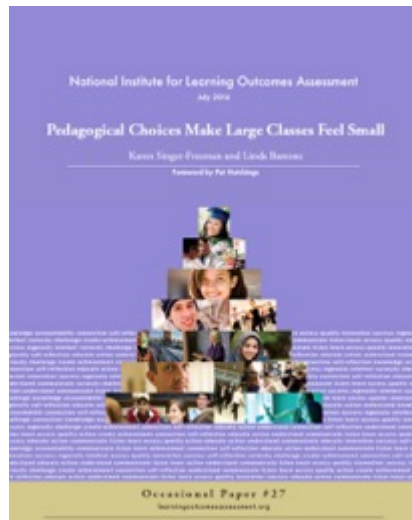
Is it one assessment for all students or multiple paths to demonstrate learning in ways that focus upon students?

- What would culturally responsive assessments look like?



Meta-cognition

- Foster ability in students to evaluate their own learning
- Communication to students – transparency
- Make aware of assessments
 - Rubrics – allow students to evaluate their own learning
 - Example of group work feedback
 - Assignment audience shift and genre shift



Involving students

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

- How do we think about alignment from shared outcomes to data collection? How do we decide where learning in relation to outcomes occur and where we should collect data?
 - Making sense of data – the story of the lonely students

Content and Concepts

How do we allow space in our courses for time to actively engage students in their learning?

Airplane story time



Implications for our work

- Listen to your faculty!
 - Complaints are generally on target
 - There are things that our current reporting system does not capture
- Alignment and mapping are crucial



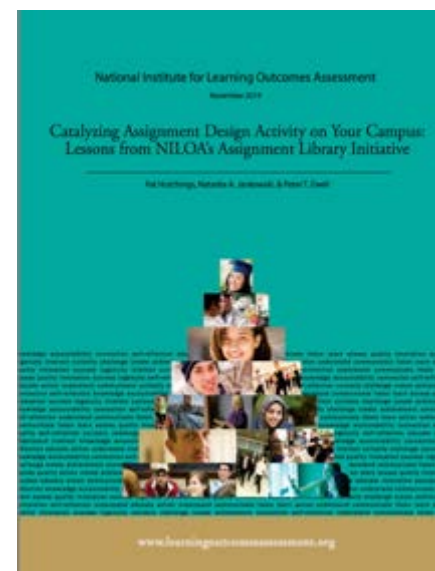
Fitness of Method or Approach

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)

- 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*?



Transference of Knowledge and Skills

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.

They need to apply over time.

Alignment

- How do you ensure alignment between our assignments and a given learning outcome for a learning experience?
- How do we create assignments and activities that will elicit student demonstration of a specific learning outcome?
- How do we know that we have mapped our assignment to rubric criteria?

Possibilities

Ideas on assignment modification

- Shifting audience (in writing assignment)
- Modify genre (blog, pamphlet, drama, graphic novel, poster, oral presentation, debate)
- Practice throughout courses



Timing and Placement of Assignments

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?

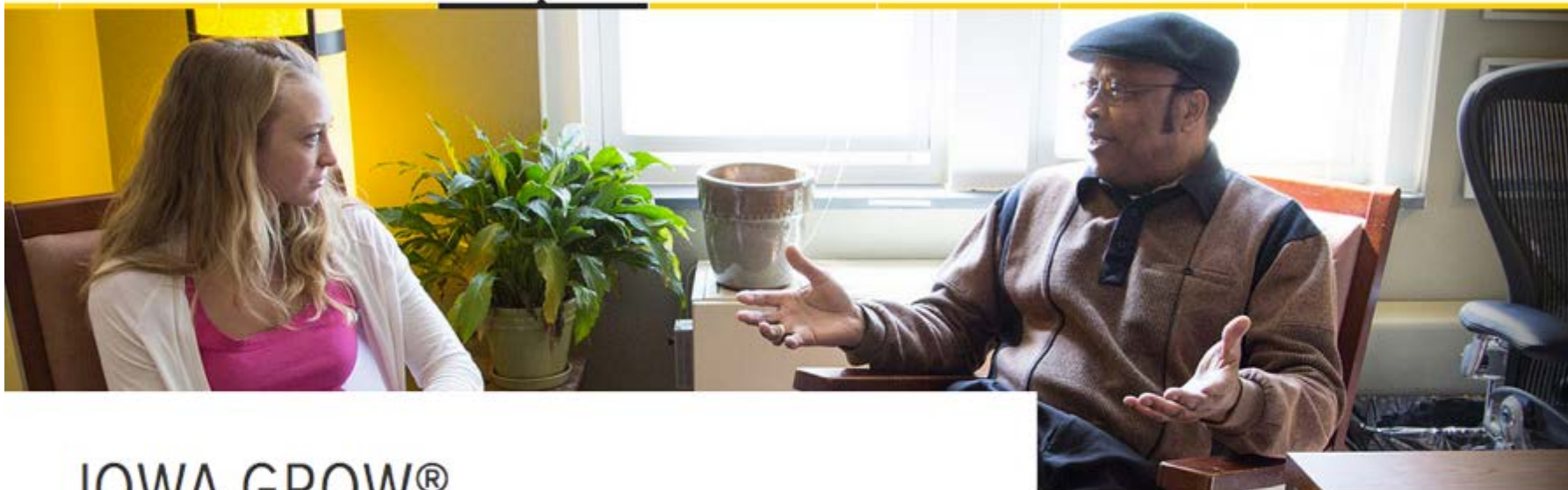


Curriculum Design

Are we utilizing meaningful assessment data in the design of our curriculum?



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](#)

The NILOA Initiative

- An **online library** of high-quality peer-endorsed assignments linked to DQP outcomes.
- Designed by faculty, part of the intellectual work they already do, course embedded.
- Building on campus efforts already underway
- Reflecting a conception of assessment as integral to teaching and learning vs “exoskeleton” (Ewell 2013).

What we did (and will do again)

- Invited faculty applications (with draft assignment)
- Brought the group together for a day-long meeting
- Worked in 5-6 person, facilitated “charrettes”

- 76% of participants said “it helped me more clearly see my assignment through my students’ eyes.
- 59%: I’m more aware of aligning my assignments with desired institutional outcomes.
- 38%: helped to lead or facilitate an event about assignment design on their campus

What Are We Up To Here?

- A chance to refine an assignment you're working on
- To contribute to the work of others
- To meet like-minded colleagues in other areas

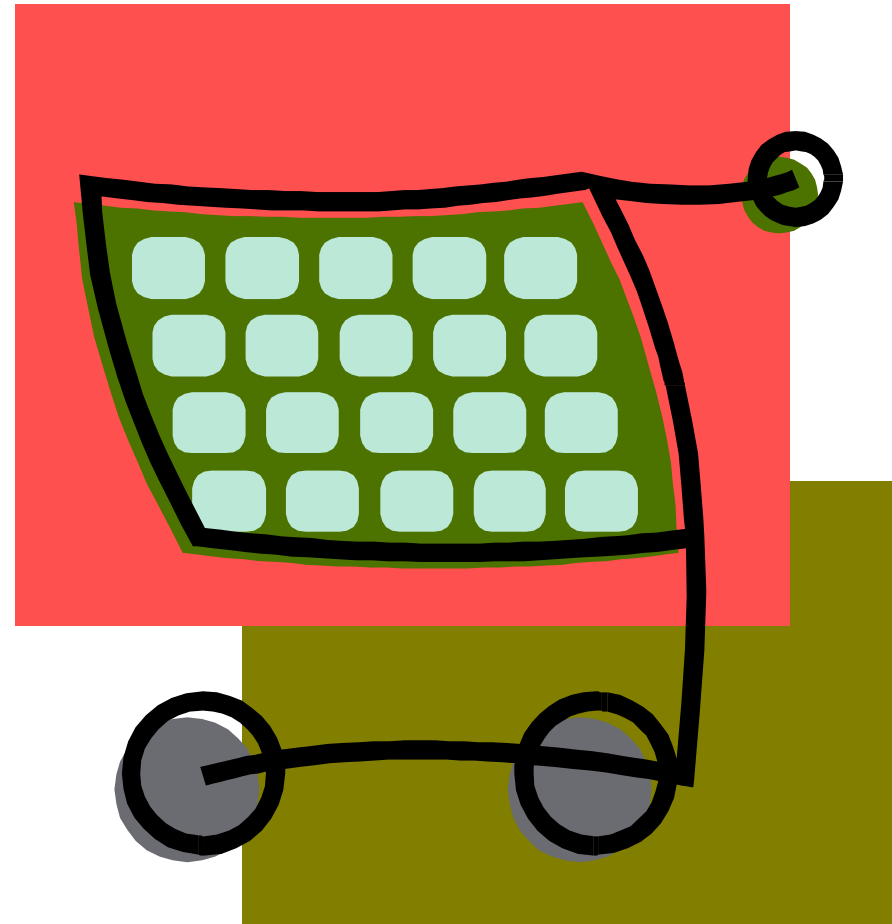
What's a "charrette"?

"Charrette" (Fr.) means a small cart. Because architecture students once deposited their assignments in it as the cart was rolled through the studio, architects now use the word to refer to **an intense creative effort in a limited time period.**



Aussi . . .

- (a) In the tradition of the “atelier,” architecture students progress through the curriculum in the company of their mentors and peers. This approach offers an interesting model for an integrated education.
- (b) The tradition rests on the assumption that much of your learning will come from one another.



Small Group Process

25 minute segments per person/assignment

- Present assignment briefly—which outcomes, what course, which students, how does it work....
- Discussion with group (focus on questions on feedback form)
- Save 5 minutes for written feedback
- Breath
- Start again...
- Debrief at end

Assignment-Design Charrette Process:

In groups of 5, each person/team will have an opportunity to share their assignment and receive suggestions and feedback from the group. In order for everyone to have an opportunity to give and receive feedback, we will use a timed carousel process. There will be five rounds. You will be a “presenter” for one round and a “participant” for the other four rounds.

Each round is 25 minutes.

Introduce assignment (5 min):

Presenters will introduce the assignment and provide background information such as: in what course the assignment is used, at what point in the course, pertinent information about the students in the course (majors vs. non-majors), what they find most challenging about the assignment, how it builds on earlier work and/or prepares students for more advanced work in later courses (or success beyond graduation), your experience with the assignment to date, how you hope to strengthen it, and what kinds of feedback and suggestions you would like from others.

Listeners: jot down thoughts and questions but please do not interrupt the presenter, let them have their full five minutes.

Discussion (15 min):

Listeners will respond to what they have heard, taking turns asking questions, sharing thoughts, feedback, etc. The purpose of the discussion is to help your colleague strengthen their assignment so please be constructive and collegial. Also, please mind the time and allow each participant the opportunity to contribute to the discussion. Discussion should address the four questions on the feedback sheet.

Presenters: listen carefully and respond to the inquiries. Think about alignment, but also think creatively about possible solutions.

Feedback (5 min):

Everyone: Based on the discussion, use the feedback form to give the presenter written feedback and suggestions. The presenter can use this time to write down notes about the assignment, based on what they just heard, along with outlining next steps for revision or additional feedback.

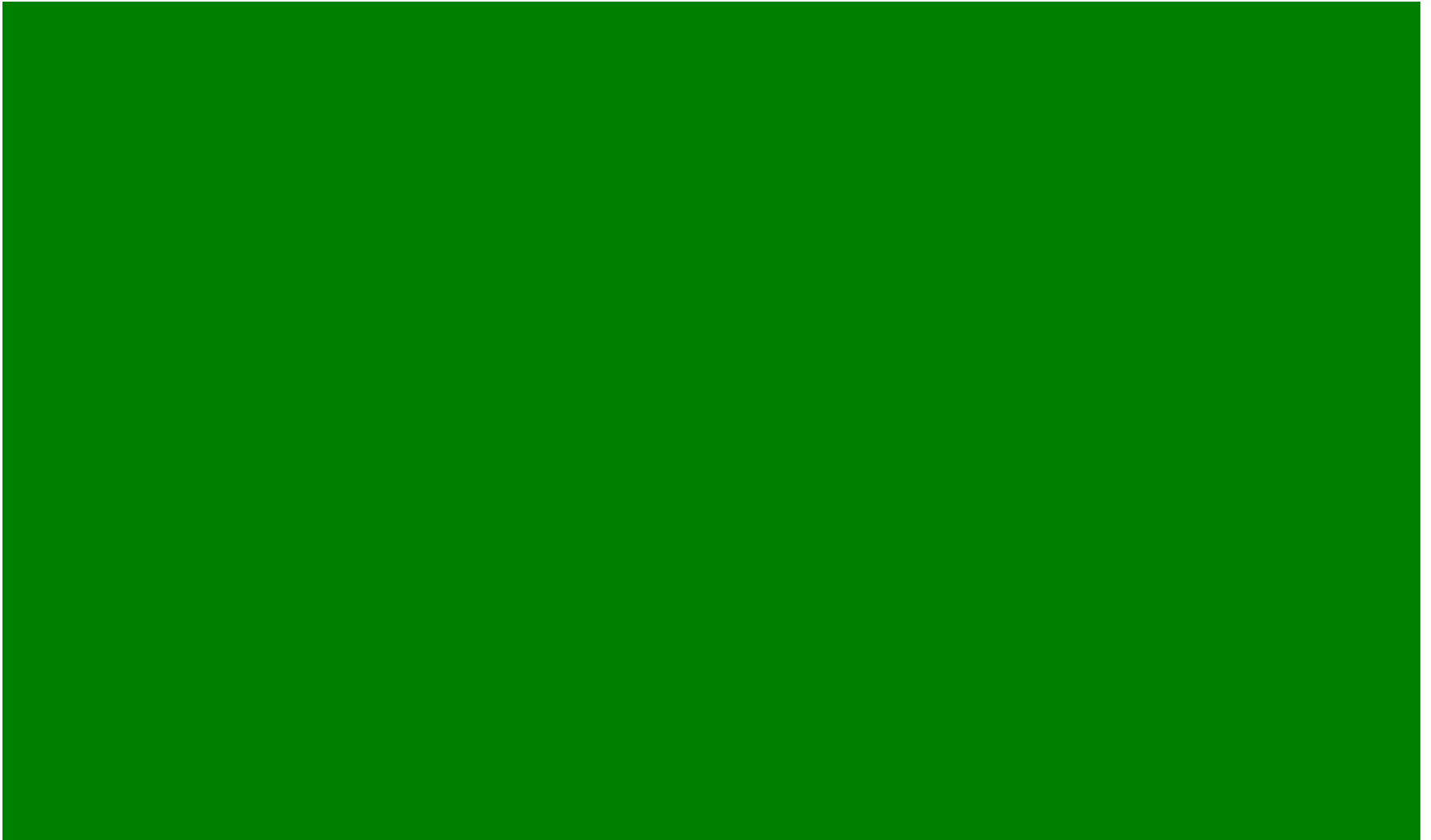
Assignment-Design Charrette Feedback Sheet:

Assignment _____

Comments From _____

1. What outcomes do you think students will be able to demonstrate with this assignment?
2. What are the main strengths of this assignment for assessing the identified outcomes?
3. Thinking about the assignment from the point of view of students, what questions or suggestions do you have?
4. Other suggestions and possibilities – especially in response to the author's questions about improving the assignment?

Assignment One



Thank You!



Reflect

- How did it go?
- What did you like about it?
- What worked well?
- What needs to be different?
- How might you continue these conversations?

Action Steps

- What from these conversations is usable in your local context?
- How can you get assignment conversations occurring on your campus?
- What resources do you need?

Take Aways for Implementing

- Role of facilitator or doing it unfacilitated
- Importance of opening framing

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

Organizing Assignment-Design Work On Your Campus

A Tool Kit of Resources and Materials

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

Entry point if needed

National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment *Making Learning Outcomes Usable & 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 Jankowski
Director, NILQA

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.

DQP Assignment Library

Search for an assignment by a keyword using the search box or by clicking on any specific tag.

Search By:



[Search](#)

[View All](#)

Academic Disciplines and Assignment Characteristics

- [Arts and humanities](#)
- [Community engagement](#)
- [Exam](#)
- [Health Sciences](#)
- [Library assignment](#)
- [Online course](#)
- [Presentation](#)
- [Research methods](#)
- [Spreadsheet](#)
- [Business](#)
- [Education](#)
- [General education](#)
- [History and social sciences](#)
- [Life sciences](#)
- [Physical sciences](#)
- [Program assessment](#)
- [Self-assessment](#)
- [VALUE rubrics](#)
- [Capstone](#)
- [Engineering](#)
- [Group project](#)
- [Introductory course](#)
- [Mathematics and computer science](#)
- [Portfolio](#)
- [Reflection](#)
- [Sequenced/scaffolded assignments](#)
- [Writing assignment](#)

DQP Proficiencies

- [Analytic inquiry](#)
- [Broad and Integrative Knowledge](#)
- [Communicative fluency](#)
- [Ethical reasoning](#)
- [Quantitative fluency](#)
- [Applied and Collaborative Learning](#)
- [Civic and Global Learning](#)
- [Engaging diverse perspectives](#)
- [Intellectual Skills](#)
- [Specialized Knowledge](#)

What next?

- How can we stay in touch and build a community of practice around this work?

Questions and discussion

- Email: niloa@education.illinois.edu
- <http://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org>
- www.assignmentlibrary.org
- www.degreeprofile.org



Curriculum Mapping: The Process

- 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?

	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
Content								
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
Critical Thinking								
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
Communication								
SLO 6: Written communication skills	Introduced	Reinforced		Reinforced		Reinforced		Mastery / Assessed
SLO 7: Oral communication skills		Introduced	Reinforced		Reinforced	Mastery / Assessed		
Integrity / Values								
SLO 8: Disciplinary ethical standards		Introduced		Reinforced	Reinforced			Mastery / Assessed
SLO 9: Academic integrity	Introduced	Reinforced	Reinforced	Reinforced		Reinforced		Mastery / Assessed
Project Management								
SLO 10: Interpersonal and team skills			Introduced		Reinforced		Reinforced	Mastery / Assessed
SLO 11: Self-regulation and metacognitive skills	Introduced			Reinforced	Reinforced	Reinforced		Mastery / Assessed

Center for University Teaching, Learning, and Assessment
<http://uwf.edu/cutla/>

Sample Curriculum Map (Level of Skill)

	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
Content								
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
Critical Thinking								
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
Communication								
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		
Integrity / Values								
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
Project Management								
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

Center for University Teaching, Learning, and Assessment

<http://uwf.edu/cutla/>

Sample Curriculum Map (Assignments & Embedded Assessments)

Why do curriculum mapping?

- What are we hoping to achieve through mapping the curriculum?
 - Alignment (within a program, between general education and institutional goals, etc.)
 - Identifying where and how particular outcomes are expected, explicitly taught for, and assessed (Ewell, 2013)
 - Backwards design the curriculum
 - Understand the nature and role of course pre-requisites
- **Mapping as a lens – it is a way of seeing organizational structure**
- **Do our assumptions about alignment actually hold?**

What else can be mapped?

- Content
- Structure
- Course-taking patterns
- Assignment timing
- Co-curriculum
- **Where does learning happen? Does a curriculum map inherently assume academic affairs at the expense of student affairs or other institutional elements? CTE? Continuing Ed? Employment?**

Resources on Mapping

