Hand in Hand: Authentic Assessment & Collaboration

Bethany L. Miller, Ph.D.

June 2026

Institute on Authentic Assessment

Objectives of this presentation

- Walk away with at least one idea that sparks you.
- Understand the connection between assessment and collaboration
- Understand that inclusive and collaborative assessment can be a powerful tool for encouraging student agency and student success.

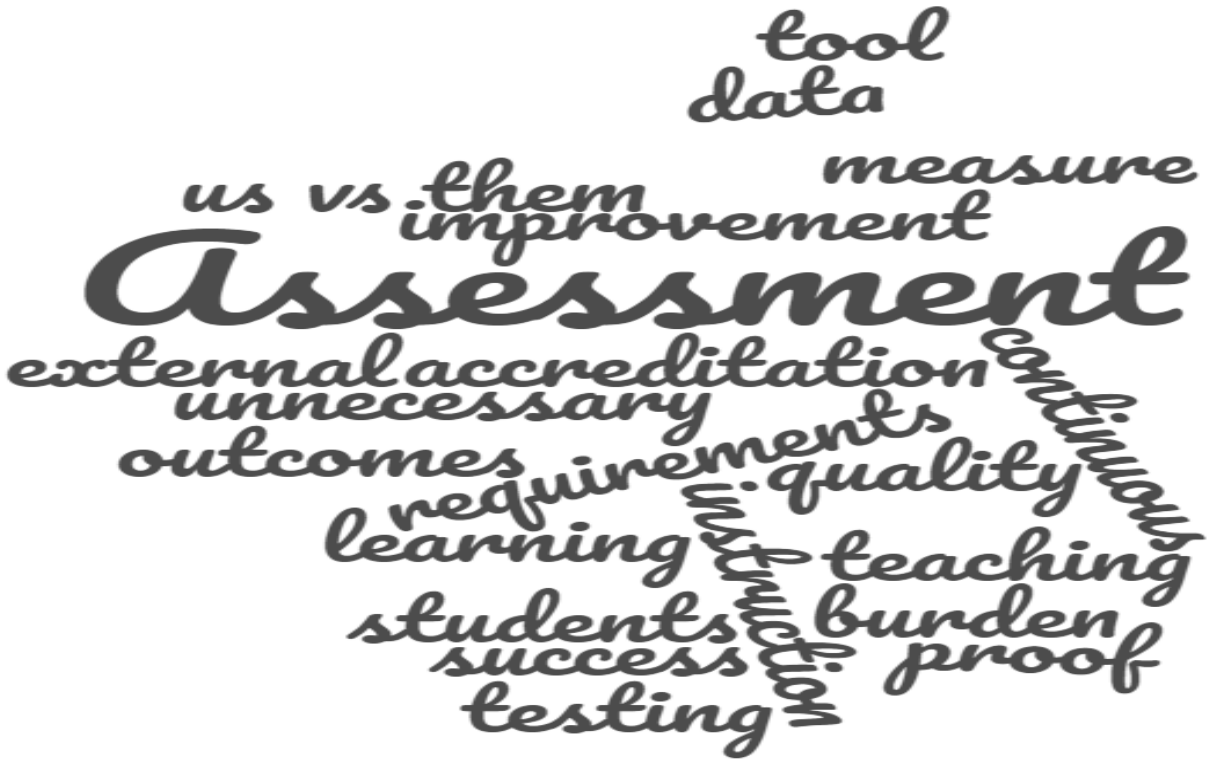
How do you define…?

Collaboration
Inclusiveness
Purpose of Assessment

Context



Narratives surrounding assessment



Why assessment?

The assessment of student learning begins with educational values. **Assessment is not an end in itself but a vehicle for educational improvement.** Its effective practice, then, begins with and enacts a vision of the kinds of learning we most value for students and strive to help them achieve. Educational values should drive not only what we choose to assess but also how we do so. **Where questions about educational mission and values are skipped over, assessment threatens to be an exercise in measuring what's easy, rather than a process of improving what we really care about.**

~ American Association for Higher Education (1992)

NILOA Assessment Philosophies

Compliance/Reporting	Measurement
• Meet the reporting requirements & demands of administrators, accrediting bodies	• Focus on the most appropriate & accurate (valid and reliable) measures of learning
Student-Centered	**Teaching & Learning**
• Students actively participate in a process to learn about their own learning	• Enhance teaching and student learning & development • Address faculty and staff questions about teaching & learning

Source:
What is Your Philosophy of Assessment? May 2020, NILOA

Assessment Definitions

"...a process that enables us to determine the **fit between what we expect our students to understand and be able to do and what they actually demonstrate** at points along their educational careers." *(Maki)*

"…the **systematic collection, review and use** of information about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of **improving student learning and development**." *(Palomba and Banta, emphasis added)*

What do departments and programs assess?

Student Learning & Development (i.e. How well are students achieving your intended outcomes for learning & development?)

+

Program Effectiveness (i.e. Is your program functioning effectively & equitably in the context of the overall institutional mission?)

Assessment **FOR** Learning

Using assessment to enhance teaching and learning.

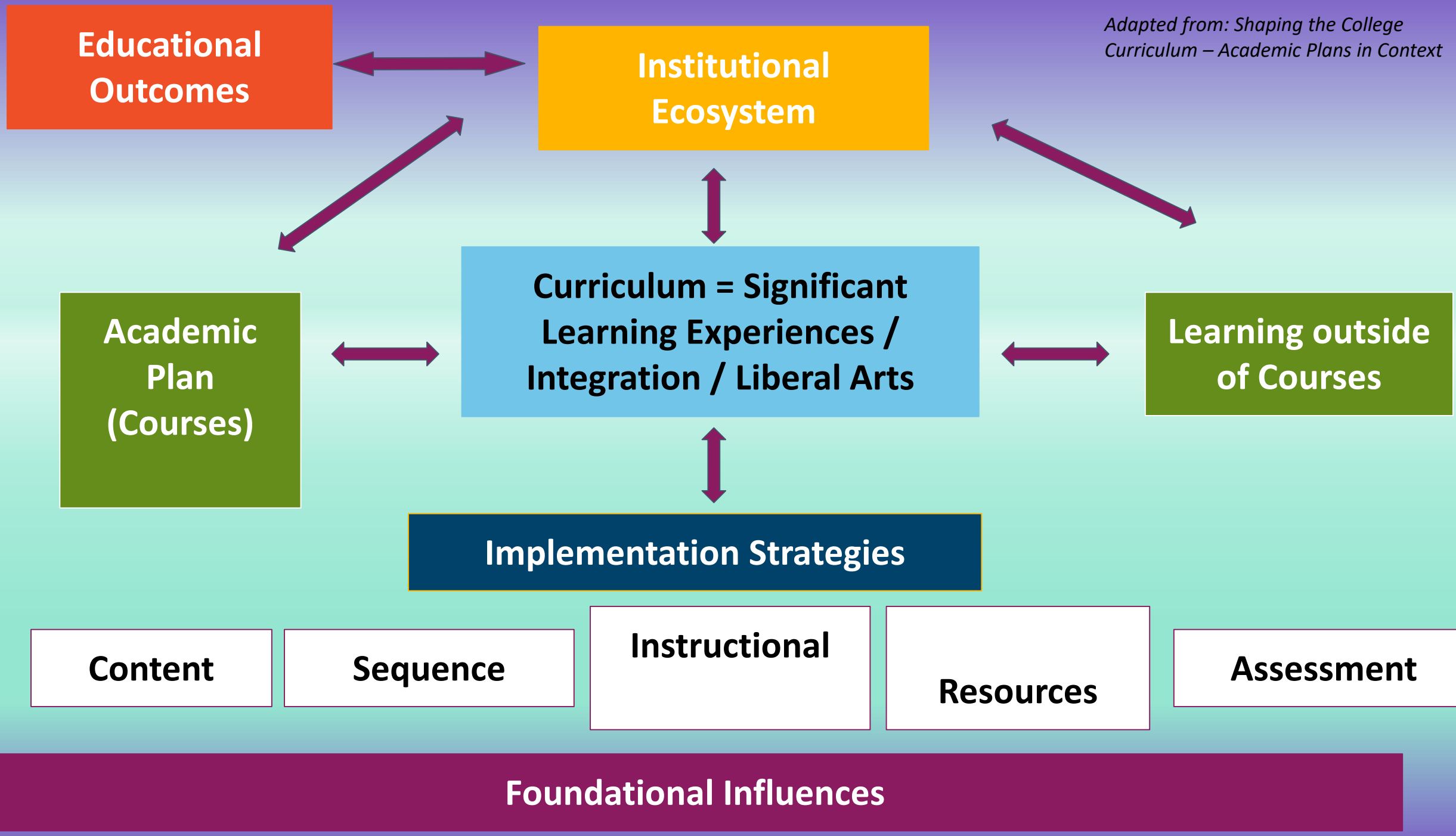
Deep-Rooted Challenges

Systems and structures often utilize:

- A deficit approach (e.g., the problem is with [fill in the blank])
- Lagging indicators instead of leading indicators
- White, male, neuro-typical performance and experiences as benchmarks

We can't address challenges like these without an inclusive mindset.

- What structures or barriers affect people's experience?
- What information will help inform our understanding of the myriad of experiences during those experiences? How and why do experiences differ?
- What contexts inform our understanding of this topic (e.g., race, socioeconomics, first generation status, culture, etc.)?


Educational Outcomes
Institutional Ecosystem
Adapted from: Shaping the College Curriculum – Academic Plans in Context
Academic Plan (Courses)
Curriculum = Significant Learning Experiences / Integration / Liberal Arts
Learning outside of Courses
Implementation Strategies
Content
Sequence
Instructional
Resources
Assessment
Foundational Influences

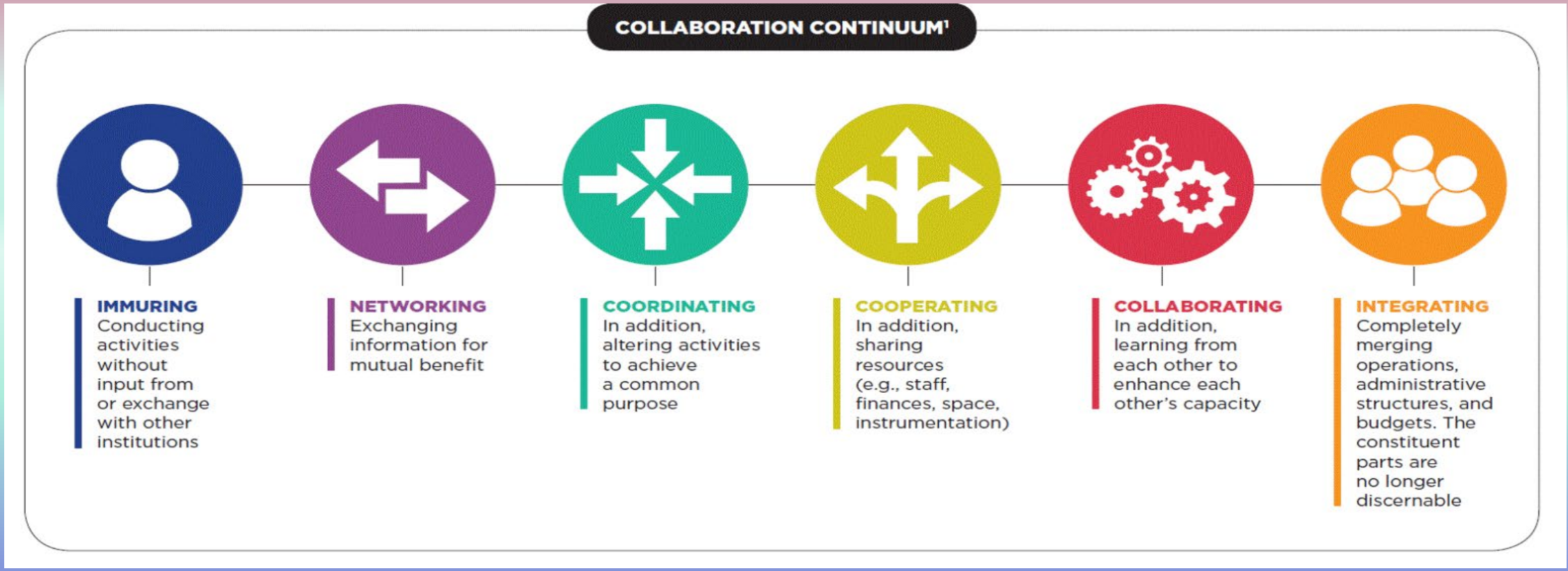

DATA. LOTS OF DATA, BIG DATA
EVERYWHERE
memegenerator.net


LET OUR POWERS COMBINE!

What do we know about collaboration?



The Collaboration Continuum



The original Collaboration Continuum, which included Networking, Coordinating, Cooperating, and Collaborating, comes from Arthur T. Himmelman, Collaboration for a Change: Definitions, Decision-making Models, Roles, and Collaboration Process Guide. January 2002, Himmelman Consulting, Minneapolis, MN.

©2015 Debra Mashek. Shared under Creative Commons License (Attribution 3.0 Unreported). Please cite as: Mashek,D. (June, 2015). Capacities and Institutional Supported Needed along the Collaboration Continuum. A presentation to the Academic Deans Committee of The Claremont Colleges, Claremont. CA

Principles of Collaboration

- Clear communication and expectation setting
  - Shared understanding
  - Clear charge
- Expectation setting
- Trust
- Defined roles
  - Clear leadership definition
  - Value of all members of the collaboration
- Change management
- Solid relationships

Strategies and Behaviors for Relationship Building

1. Get to know people in your organization even if you are not currently engaged in work with them.
2. Be visible on campus; attend events, student activities (performances, lectures, athletic contests) that are authentic to your interests.
3. Ask questions and listen. Curiosity is your friend.
4. Be true to your word. Do what you say you will do.
5. Be genuine and authentic.
6. Don’t say bad things about people or their work. Don’t gossip.

Challenges of Collaboration



Dear heart, please stop getting involved in everything. Your job is to pump blood. That's it.



Challenges of Assessment

- Resources
  - Human capital/capacity
  - Technology
- Cost
- Culture
- Competing priorities/reasons for assessment
- Perceptions
- Data collection
- Closing the loop

Plan - process is important to set up on front end

Do - collecting and sharing data facilitates dialogue,

Act - closing the loop is important

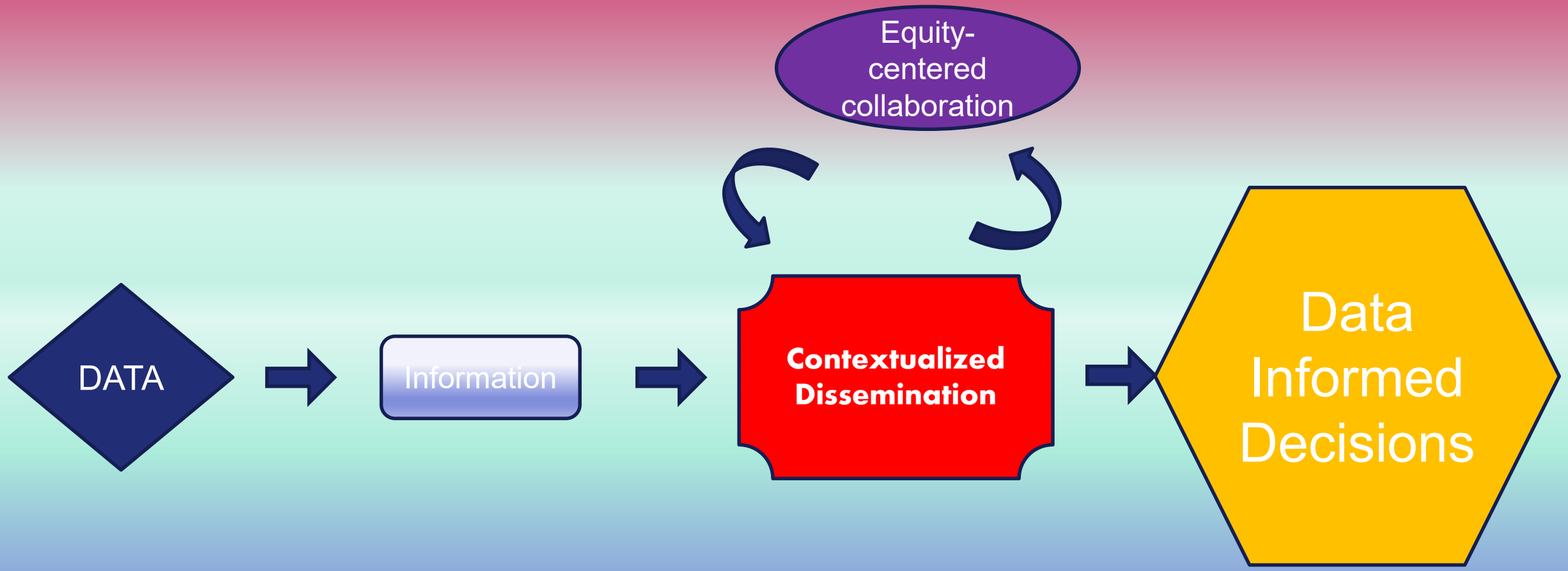
Holistic view of student success through data-informed decision support will move things forward

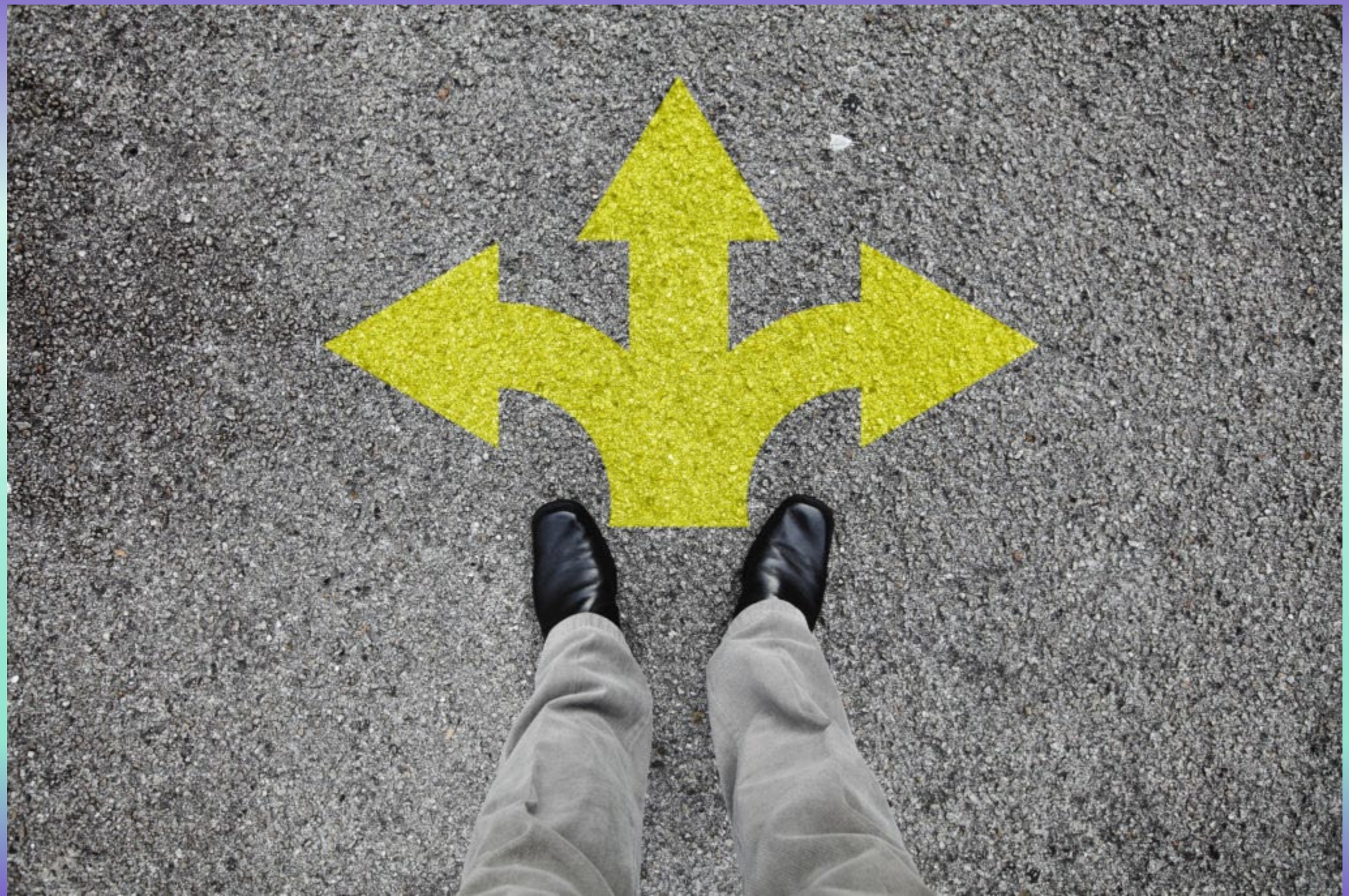
Concrete action items/deadlines

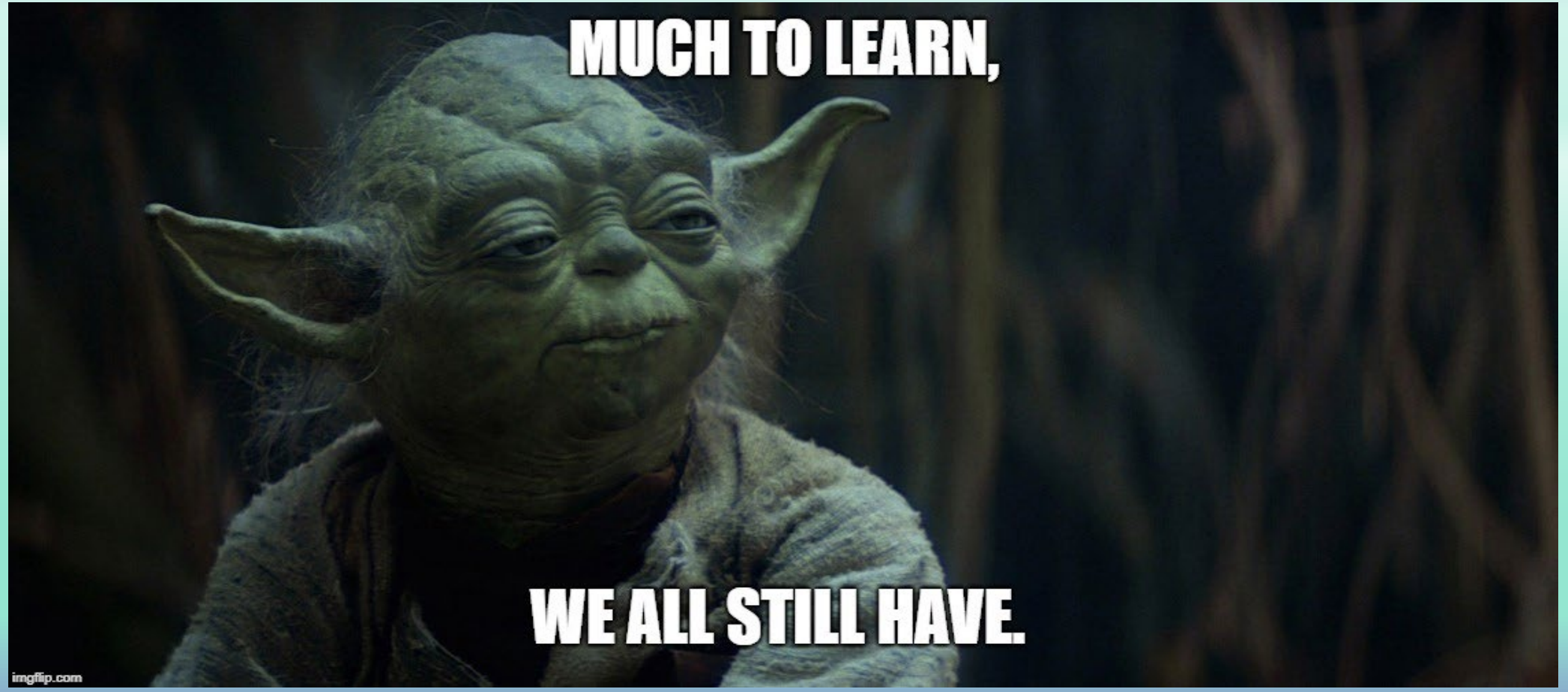
Circle back with people (accountability)

Key questions to keep in mind:

- What can I do within my realm of responsibility or within the realities of the culture in which I work?
- How can I (or my office) be part of relevant collaborative conversations if we aren't already?
- What assumptions are being made at the small and large scales, and every place in between?
- Who has responsibility for the data related to the work? IR/assessment? Are those people included early? In a meaningful way?
- What data and information exist, and who has access?


Equity-centered collaboration
DATA
Information
Contextualized Dissemination
Data Informed Decisions




MUCH TO LEARN,
WE ALL STILL HAVE.
imgflip.com



Bethany L. Miller

Email: bmille14@Macalester.edu

LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/in/bethany-l-miller-ph-d-723ab048