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A Comprehensive Approach to Assessment of High-Impact Practices

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NILOA Mission

The National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA), established in 2008, is a research and resource-development organization dedicated to documenting, advocating, and facilitating the systematic use of learning outcomes assessment to improve student learning.

AAC&U Mission

The mission of the Association of American Colleges and Universities is to advance the vitality and public standing of liberal education by making quality and equity the foundations for excellence in undergraduate education in service to democracy.

Abstract

High-impact practices, such as learning communities, capstones, undergraduate research, and community-based experiences, are effective pedagogies. Most of these practices have been around for decades. By clustering the effective elements of these activities through the term "high-impact practices," we bring together elements which we know are effective pedagogies, without weight to any one practice over another. The vast majority of campuses can proudly point to multiple high-impact practices happening somewhere within their institutions, not just one or two. Thus, to talk singularly about high-impact practices—and the assessment of them—would be like evaluating just one tire on a car. To ultimately understand what makes an institution move requires looking at all of the moving parts. And given the intense focus across institutions of higher education on identifying, tagging, and touting their high-impact practices, assessment is what will separate the committed practitioners from the casual adopters. A good assessment plan for high-impact practices starts with acknowledging three things. One, the name alone does not make them high-impact. Two, evidence of effect requires assessing more than outcomes, alone. And three, assessment must be, at every stage, attentive to equity. Building upon these three ideas, this Occasional Paper outlines a process of effectively assessing high-impact practices at your institution.

A Comprehensive Approach to Assessment of High-Impact Practices

Ashley Finley

The great thing about effective pedagogy is that everyone wins. Students love being engaged. Faculty love the excitement that comes from students' engagement. Admissions personnel benefit from having innovative practices to highlight. Student affairs professionals find well-deserved recognition as co-educators. Senior administrators celebrate the link between effective pedagogy and increased retention and graduation rates. And even though all of the above is highly simplified, there is an element of truth in each statement.

The support for these statements comes largely from scholarship around high-impact practices, or effective pedagogies, such as learning communities, capstones, undergraduate research, and community-based experiences.[1] Most of these practices have been around a while (more like decades, than years), but the clustering or grouping of the effectiveness of the activities through the term, "high-impact practices," is efficient in lumping all of the things we know are effective pedagogies together, without weight to any one practice or another. And while the list will most certainly expand as we learn more about a range of effective pedagogies that advance student learning and success (e.g. work study, mentoring and advising), even as it currently exists, the vast majority of campuses can proudly point to multiple high-impact practices happening somewhere within their institutions, not just one or two. Thus, to talk singularly about high-impact practices—and the assessment of them—would be like evaluating just one tire on a car; to ultimately understand what makes an institution move, requires looking at all of the moving parts.

The tricky thing about high-impact practices is that they can be hard to scale, hard to sustain, and hard to assess. An argument can be made that the first two challenges (scale and sustainability) are closely related to the third (assessment). Finding the administrative resources and political capital to reach appreciable levels of scaled practices, along with sustainability of resources over time, are often the result of having sufficient evidence to make the case that such things are worth the time and investment. A solid assessment plan is, therefore, crucial. But the biggest impediment to assessing high-impact practices may very well be the name itself. The term, "high-impact," almost *assumes* efficacy. With a name like that, what is left to assess? The answer is plenty. And given the intense focus across institutions of higher education on identifying, tagging, and touting their high-impact practices, assessment is what will separate the committed practitioners from the casual adopters.

The biggest impediment to assessing high-impact practices may very well be the name itself. The term, "high-impact," almost *assumes* efficacy. With a name like that, what is left to assess? The answer is plenty.

A good assessment plan for high-impact practices starts with acknowledging three things. One, the name alone does not make them high-impact. Two, evidence of effect requires assessing more than outcomes, alone. And three, assessment must be, at every stage, attentive to equity. The place where scholarship has most failed our collective understanding of high-impact practices is in the differential access and effects on outcomes across various

[1] For a background on high-impact practices, read this excerpt from the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) from *High-Impact Educational Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access to Them, and Why They Matter*, by George D. Kuh (2008). Visit AAC&U's resources page on high-impact practices for updated information and campus case studies.

student populations, and particularly those students traditionally underserved by higher education. There is evidence to suggest that high-impact practices are good for all students, though certainly not in the same ways (Finley & McNair, 2013; Kuh & O'Donnell, 2013). The rapid and increasing diversification of American higher education demands equity not be an afterthought for assessment. The goal of understanding and addressing institutional equity gaps in student learning and success as a result of participation in high-impact practices must be baked into assessment plans from the beginning.

Chucking the Checklist

Perhaps the best *and* the worst thing that happened for the assessment of high-impact practices is that a list was created identifying the ten most prevalent experiences, including first-year seminars, community-based learning, senior capstones and projects (Kuh, 2008). In 2016, ePortfolios were added to the list as an "eleventh" high-impact practice (Watson, Kuh, Rhodes, Penny Light, & Chen 2016). Even though a great many of these practices had been around for decades (see for example, Brownell & Swaner 2011), the value of a list was to conceptualize high-impact practices in aggregate, enabling campuses to recognize just how many of these experiences students might encounter during their college journey. The "list" has promoted campus conversations about breadth of high-impact offerings, how experiences might be scaffolded to encourage learning and development over time, and opportunities for expansion and strategic planning.

However, the "list" can also sometimes be viewed as a "checklist." The detriment of the checklist is the temptation to "check off" which practices are being done without asking deeper questions about student learning, equity gaps, and even quality of delivery. This may be because efficacy is assumed, or because the imperative of quantity can reign over pleas for quality, or some other combination of factors. Regardless, when assessment is reduced to checking boxes, what is known is that a practice exists, rather than whether that practice is actually making a difference for students.



In fairness to campus practitioners and leaders, one benefit of the checklist is to invite inventories for where high-impact practices exist across campus. One consequence of encouraging "a thousand seeds to grow" within the autonomous environments of college campuses is not knowing where exactly those seeds have been scattered. Doing an inventory (i.e., asset mapping) of where exactly high-impact practices exist is an important step for any assessment plan. Moreover, the best inventories should seek to pair practices with a description, rather than a label alone (e.g., "service-learning" or "writing intensive"), to be inclusive of faculty or campus divisions that may be engaging in similar practices but calling them by different names.

But inventories alone cannot address critical questions about student learning outcomes, quality of implementation, or equity gaps. Herein lies the greatest challenge (and opportunity) for the assessment of high-impact practices. To do assessment well is to evaluate multiple components of the experience, from resources to outcomes, and to move beyond the checklist mentality for implementation and scaling of these practices.

One way to go beyond the checklist in a manner that is mindful of both implementation and questions of practice is through employing a logic model. The remainder of this paper applies a logic model framework to explicate how a multi-dimensional approach

can be undertaken for the assessment of high-impact practices. Logic models have been used in various contexts but follow a common structure consisting of: impact, outcomes, outputs, activities, resources, and assumptions (for examples, see Figure 1 and the W. K. Kellogg Foundation's Logic Model Development Guide). Much has been written about the use of logic models to inform program evaluation, particularly in higher education. As a tool intended to explicate a program's theory of change, there is little room to hide in a logic model. There is also every opportunity to insert commitments to equity and transparency at every step in the process.

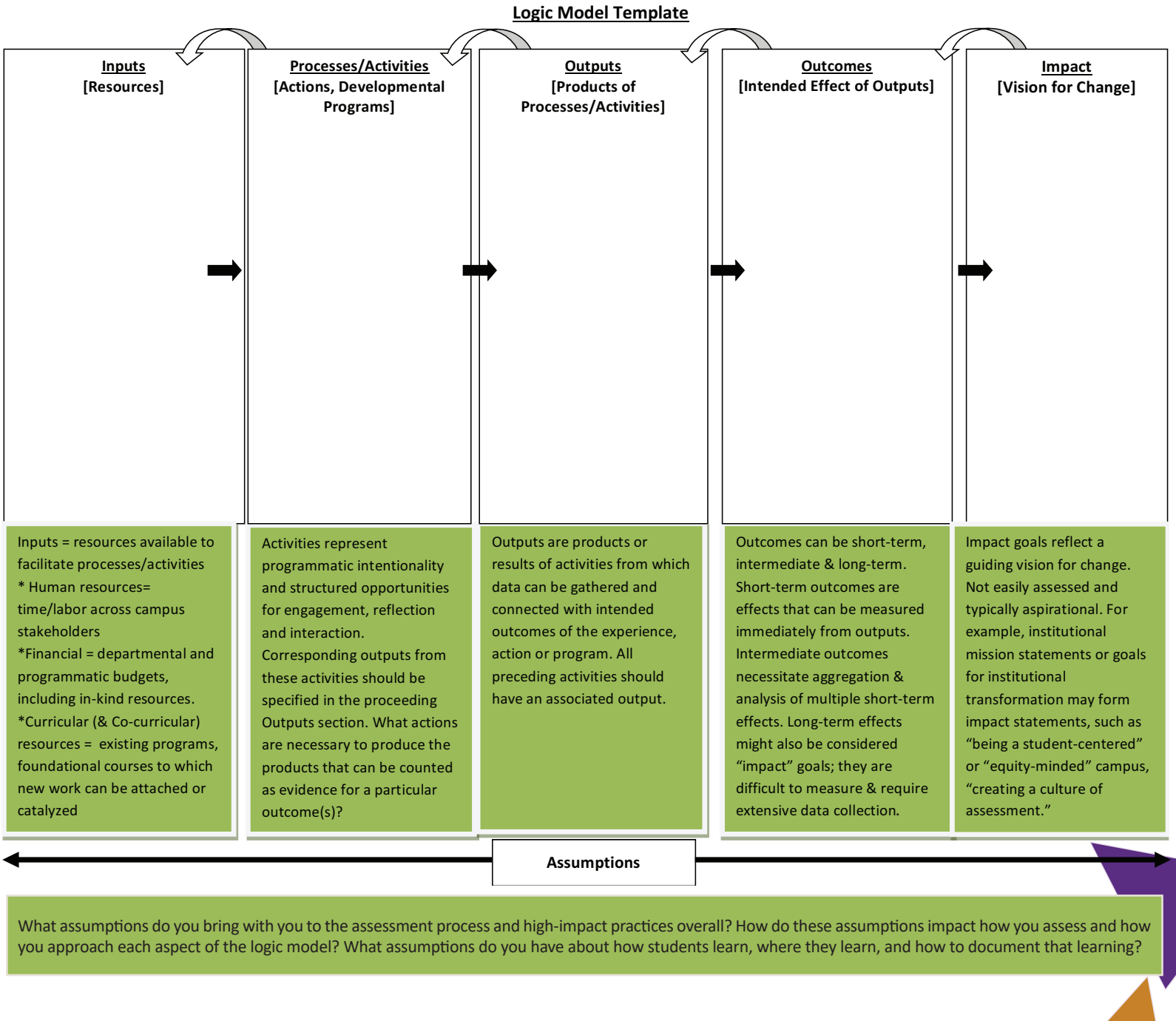


Figure 1: Logic Model Template. Adapted from W. K. Kellogg Foundation, *Logic Model Development Guide*. For more information see https://www.aacu.org/node/5682.

Starting with the (Very) End: Articulating the Vision

In assessment parlance, logic models are based upon backward-design. Backward-design suggests that the examination of a learning experience or program should start with a clear sense of the intended outcomes first and then work backward to ensure the process of assessment is firmly rooted in the defined and operationalized objectives of the program or practice. But what backward design approaches can often miss, even when starting with the outcomes, is the imperative for doing the work in the first place. The question that should come before "What are our outcomes?" is "What is our commitment to or vision for student learning and success?" Thus, the starting point with logic models is not necessarily a list of outcomes (those come next). Rather, the starting point is a statement of the intended value, purpose, and worth of the endeavor. Effective vision statements (sometimes referred to as "impact statements"), particularly with regard to high-impact practices, should situate the high-impact practice within a larger imperative or instiutitonal priority for student learning and success. This statement is also an opportunity to highlight an institution's commitment to or strategic vision for equity and inclusive excellence. For example, "The university strives to provide a transformative and equitable education for all students through innovations in teaching, learning, and community engagement."

Vision statements may be drawn from a college or university mission statement or strategic plan. They are not intended to be directly assessable but rather to serve as a kind of "North Star" for guiding the work and providing inspiration throughout the process. Additionally, because logic models are meant to serve as communication tools, vision statements can often be helpful for reminding people of the imperative of the work, or for inviting new colleagues into a shared understanding of that imperative. When colleagues groan, "What's the point of these learning communities?" The vision statement provides a window into why the effort of that specific high-impact practice is part of a grander vision for student learning and success. Initiative fatigue is real for faculty. Having language that inspires and energizes stakeholders who are investing time and energy into the process of implementing high-impact practices can provide clarity on intentions, roles, and engagement.



Like every part of the logic model, vision statements should be examined over time for revision and/or updating. In other words, they should be re-assessed. This can be particularly important as commitments to equity emerge or change by becoming more targeted, better articulated, more fully understood, or all of the above to improve collective understanding. In this way, the "Vision" box of logic models can also help capture the ways in which campus mindsets and values may shift and evolve around the use of high-impact practices (see Appendix).

Establishing Endpoints and Timelines: Articulating Outcomes

Once the imperative for high-impact practices has been articulated, the next step is to specify assessable outcomes that are linked to the expected changes in students' development and learning as a result of their participation in the experience. Outcomes within logic models, however, go a step further to distinguish between outcomes that are short-term, intermediate, and long-term. Because outcomes do not occur at exactly the same time, it is helpful to specify how much or for how long evidence would need

to be gathered to indicate changes in a desired outcome. The guiding questions for this section of the logic model should address changes in student learning and success, and also effects on equity gaps. For example: What changes are expected with regard to short-term, intermediate, and long-term student learning and success outcomes as a result of students' engagement in one or *multiple* high-impact practices? In what areas, do we expect equity gaps to be reduced over time? What learning will be acquired or reinforced from this experience? How does the experience connect, relate to, or integrate with learning from other curricular and co-curricular learning experiences?

Short-term outcomes often include outcomes pertaining to students' learning and development because changes in these outcomes can typically be assessed in a relatively short amount of time (i.e., a semester or a year). AAC&U's Essential Learning Outcomes (www.aacu.org) may help to inform a list of potential outcomes, many of which have been widely adopted across two- and four-year colleges and universities. Additionally, program learning outcomes and course learning outcomes are also an excellent starting point for connecting outcomes with high-impact practice experiences. Campuses would be wise to connect these outcomes with supporting employer research from AAC&U (see https://www.aacu.org/public-opinion-research) and other sources (see, for example, Carnvale & Smith, 2013), to make explicit the link between learning and career preparedness for students. Short-term outcomes might also reflect campus priorities for improving students' development of intrapersonal and interpersonal competences, such as resilience, coping with failure, self-efficacy, belonging and relationship-building, to which high-impact practices may uniquely contribute (Finley, forthcoming).

But tracking short-term improvements or boosts in learning and development outcomes for students will not tell the whole story about high-impact practices. For one, campus stakeholders tend to be interested in gains over time with regard to learning and development outcomes, not just at a single point in time. Stakeholders may also want to assess cumulative changes in learning and development across students' engagement in multiple high-impact practices. Additionally, leadership at all levels will want to consider effects of high-impact practices on retention, persistence, and graduation rates. Because such aims necessitate gathering evidence over a longer period of semesters and years, these outcomes are typically considered to be "intermediate" to recognize the need for accumulated or tracked data before viable results will emerge.

Long-term outcomes can take many years to gather sufficient evidence to indicate progress. When thinking about high-impact practices, long-term outcomes might be thought of as cultural shifts in practices, ideologies, or goals for reaching increased levels of scale. Moving from a teaching-centered to student-centered campus culture; becoming more equity-oriented; embedding high-impact practices throughout general education or within most academic programs are a few examples. These outcomes may also involve the assessment of long-term trends in student learning as a result of engagement in sustained high-impact practices, such as across cohorts and/or comparative gains across class ranks or credit accumulation (e.g., first-year to senior comparisons).

Whether the outcome is short-term, intermediate, or long-term, considerations of equity should always be included. Without these questions, campuses ignore one of the most persistent findings about student success in higher education—that student experiences are far more different *within* campuses than *across* them. The ability to locate where and

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how experiences differ demands the articulation of outcomes, at multiple levels, that recognize students are not a homogenous group. Examining equity within high-impact practices across these categories of outcomes might involve, for example, the assessment of differences in learning gains across student populations (short-term), comparative analyses of retention, persistence, and graduation rates (intermediate), and accumulated evidence that couples (hypothesized) reductions in equity gaps over time with climate survey data on broader attitudinal changes regarding diversity and inclusion across student populations, including minoritized groups (long-term).

Good (Enough) Evidence: Articulating Outputs

Outcomes require evidence. It is an obvious enough point until one comes to grips with the vast amounts of evidence on most college or university campuses and all the possibilities for gathering more. There is indirect evidence (e.g., student surveys, focus groups) and direct evidence (e.g., student work products graded or scored using rubrics, standardized assessments scored based upon students' written responses). There is the evidence collected in classrooms (graded student work and course evaluations) and institutional surveys on the student experience (e.g., NSSE, CIRP). There is also evidence collected after students leave (i.e., alumni surveys). The degree to which any of it matters for high-impact practices is one to be thoughtfully considered and then connected to the intended learning outcomes for a particular high-impact practice.

When this is done, what often comes to light is how little we know about the connection of high-impact practices with direct evidence of students' demonstrated learning. For over a decade, the evidentiary case for high-impact practices, singularly or in aggregate, has largely been made through indirect sources, such as the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). This is especially concerning as the emphasis on linking high-impact practices with broad, transferable learning outcomes, particularly the kind connected with career preparedness, is only likely to grow. Additionally, because high-impact practices have been shown to have differential effects on traditionally underserved students' self-reported gains and also on retention and graduation rates (see Finley & McNair, 2013; Finley & McNair, 2016; Kuh, 2008; Kuh & McDonnell, 2013) it is critical to have direct evidence from different populations of students to help tease out actual learning gains that may be correlated with other findings.



While indirect outputs might include evidence from national or local campus surveys, direct outputs can reflect specific products of student work intended to address particular learning outcomes. Examples of such work products might be: signature assignments produced in capstone courses, artifacts contained in ePortfolios or the ePortfolio itself, reflections or group projects produced in first-year seminars or first-year experiences; undergraduate research papers or presentations. All of these types of work products can be matched with rubrics intended to assess the desired learning outcomes, ideally over time to gauge progression in learning. The AAC&U VALUE rubrics provide a template for these types of rubrics across a range of learning outcomes (www.aacu.org/value).

There is no such thing as a perfect survey, rubric, or focus group script. This is why evidence is often best when used in combination with a variety of sources and methodologies. Gathering enough substantiating evidence to indicate high-impact practices are meeting the intended outcomes is not an endeavor that should seek, or even requires, perfection.

It is a process that should target improvement of practices and promote conversations among stakeholders focused on evidence-based decision-making. When focused on institutional advancement, the best outputs for high-impact practices will strike a balance between indirect and direct sources of evidence to ensure no one source of data (and its inherent methodological caveats) overly guide decision-making. Multiple data sources will also ensure multiple opportunities for disaggregating data (of any type) across student populations to assess for equity gaps and related strategies for improvement.

The Quality of Engagement: Articulating Activities

The "Activities" box of logic models can often seem like the easiest piece to fill in when thinking about high-impact practices. When the question is: "What are we doing?", the easy response is to list high-impact practices by name (e.g., capstone, service-learning, learning communities). But the real question in the "Activities" box is, "How are we implementing this experience such that it will produce good *evidence* (outputs) of *outcomes*?" When framed this way, the assessment of activities related to high-impact practices moves from a focus on *what* is happening, to a focus on *how well* it is being done.

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The notion that experiences are only high-impact when implemented with attention to quality is a familiar refrain within research and discussions of these practices (Clayton-Pedersen & Finley, 2010; Finley & McNair, 2016; Kuh & O'Donnell, 2013). Kuh and O'Donnell (2013), for example, laid out a helpful list of eight quality dimensions that often accompany high-impact practices (p 10). These quality dimensions are:

1. Performance expectations set at appropriately high levels;
2. Significant investment of time and effort by students over an extended period of time;
3. Interactions with faculty and peers about substantive matters;
4. Experiences with diversity, wherein students are exposed to and must contend with people and circumstances that differ from those with which students are familiar;
5. Frequent, timely and constructive feedback;
6. Periodic, structured opportunities to reflect and integrate learning;
7. Opportunities to discover relevance of learning through real-world applications; and
8. Public demonstration of competence.

Assessing high-impact practices in terms of the quality with which they are being implemented mean, at minimum, addressing the degree to which these elements exist. For example, in what ways do syllabi and assignments provide high expectations for student learning and engagement in their experience? In what ways are students investing significant time and effort throughout the experience, whether over a semester, a year, or longer? How are students encouraged to explore diverse perspectives and to engage with people different from themselves as part of the experience? Are there consistent opportunities for reflection and constructive feedback? Will students have the opportunity to present their work or "teach out" what they have learned?

Using a rubric, for example, that connects quality dimensions with levels of intensity (e.g. high, medium, low), syllabi and assignments can provide one source of information on the quality of high-impact practices by serving as artifacts to be scored. Faculty can also use such a rubric to self-assess their own delivery of the experience. Additionally, end-of-experience student surveys can provide insights into the degree to which students perceive the quality dimensions existed as components of the experience and which components made a difference in their engagement. Combining these forms of data, direct (i.e., syllabi, assignments) and indirect survey responses and self-assessments, can inform the interpretation of evidence on outcomes. For example, if evidence on actual learning gains is weak or unclear, the assessment of the quality of components of the high-impact practice can expose areas of implementation that can be strengthened or adjusted.

Quality dimensions also hold particular significance in thinking about equity. Each dimension is an opportunity to consider how culturally responsive teaching can shape student's engagement in the experience, whether inside or outside the classroom. Lenses of cultural competence and critical consciousness can be employed to encourage students, particularly those from underserved backgrounds, to engage in a high-impact practice through their own vantage point and to value the perspective they bring (Larke, 2013). For example, as interaction, reflection, feedback, and even demonstrations of competence are incorporated into the experience, each should consider a diversity of students' perspectives, backgrounds, and cultural touchstones. Students should also be invited to engage in quality dimensions through the vantage point of cultural wealth—that each student uniquely brings valuable cultural resources to the learning experience that inform their understanding and application of the learning (see for example, Yosso, 2005; Rendón, Nora, & Kanagala, 2014).

Thinking Boldly About Resources: Articulating Inputs



High-impact practices are often perceived as requiring a lot of resources, though arguments have also been made for budget-friendly solutions (Wellman & Brusi 2013). Regardless, of the type of high-impact practice (or any pedagogical approach for that matter), there is no question that resources matter. Nevertheless, despite the temptation to jump directly to available resources, the use of logic models can help in resisting this approach. By working backwards from the vision, through intended outcomes, to needed outputs, and intentional activities, inputs should come last to allow the process of how high-impact practice(s) *should* operate to be fully articulated first. This ensures that understanding what is needed to execute the process is not artificially constrained by a scarcity mindset ("We don't have this or that."). Instead, what is needed for execution is informed by the articulated elements of the plan itself.

In the strictest sense, inputs should be associated with what is needed for intended activities. But in the best sense, and in the case of high-impact practices, they should be thought of expansively. First, inputs should account for the specific high-impact practices currently operating on campus. When programs like first-year seminars, learning communities, service-learning, internships, and the like, already exist, they *are* resources because they have budgets and people connected to them. It may not be enough money or enough people, but even meager resources count. And the resource of knowledgeable staff who can teach others should not be underestimated. The process of creating an inventory of existing high-impact practices on campus can serve as a valuable step in

understanding the extent of available resources. Such an inventory should also be paired with an examination of levels of participation in those experiences across populations of students, specifically those traditionally underserved by higher education, to understand access and participation gaps as part of an overall commitment to addressing equity.

Second, if the type or extent of practices is unknown, asset-mapping is a helpful way to get a handle on where high-impact practices are occurring. For example, department chairs can be a helpful group to query about the types and degrees with which high-impact practices are occurring within programs. When conducting asset-mapping it can be helpful to describe practices, rather than asking stakeholders to respond to a particular label or name. For example, not everyone knows what constitutes service-learning or even community engagement. So, defining what a practice is and leaving it up to respondents as to what it is called can go a long way toward identifying the range of practices happening across campus and toward building common language over time.

Third, when considering who or what types of programming might contribute to the activities associated with high-quality, high-impact practices, there is an opportunity to think expansively across campus offices and services. Faculty are resources, as are student affairs professionals, librarians, professional advisors, peer mentors, orientation leaders, and community members (and the list goes on). Centers for teaching and learning, for community engagement, for research, for diversity and multiculturalism, and for writing all provide a host of services that can be tapped to support faculty professional development and student development. Offices of Institutional Research, of Effectiveness, and of Assessment can all contribute vital assessment assistance for telling a story of efficacy and of equity regarding high-impact practices on campuses. Thus, the approach to assessing inputs for high-impact practices is to evaluate just how much exists before determining what is still needed. Along with this comes the recognition that faculty alone are not responsible for delivering high-quality, high-impact practices. Almost by definition, high-impact practices extend beyond the classroom in ways that can actively and intentionally involve a range of campus- and community-based resources.

Faculty alone are not responsible for delivering high-quality, high-impact practices. Almost by definition, high-impact practices extend beyond the classroom in ways that can actively and intentionally involve a range of campus- and community-based resources.

Finally, campuses are sometimes seeking to develop new high-impact practices. The compelling research on ePortfolios (Watson et. al., 2016; Eynon & Gambino, 2018; Eynon & Gambino, 2017), for example, has encouraged many campuses to explore implementing this high-impact practice into some, if not all, of the student experience. In this case, resources for beginning ePortfolios would become inputs and the activities related to launching or piloting ePortfolios would be placed in the "Activities" box (e.g., faculty development, new student orientation, curricular connections). But it is worth pointing out that well before these boxes are completed, it is assumed that there has already been an articulation of how ePortfolios contribute to an imperative for student learning, equity, and success; relevant outcomes; and sources of evidence (as preceding boxes in the logic model). Even though inputs can be thought of as the gas that makes the car go, one still needs to know where the car is going in the first place.

Final Considerations for a Comprehensive Approach

A final point on logic models as a tool to assist in assessing learning within high-impact practices is that assumptions underlie every stage of developing the model and every box that gets filled. Because logic models are intended to be collaborative tools, there is the

opportunity for colleagues to respectfully challenge each others' assumptions, and then to test the assumptions that remain. Common assumptions often revolve around the belief that everyone is on the same page about mission and goals; that faculty will or will not engage (and just who or what those faculty or departments are); that evidence does or does not exist and who has it; or that resources are scarce. In addition, there are assumptions about how students learn, where they learn, and how to document that learning that need to be explored.

Undertaking the process of developing logic models helps to address perhaps the biggest assumptions of all: that high-impact practices cannot be assessed or are too difficult to assess. The mistake that is often made in this assumption is thinking phenomena as complex as student engagement and student learning and development can be neatly tied to a single act of assessment. That is an impossible task. Honoring the multi-faceted nature of what constitutes well-aligned (think: mission and outcomes), well-mined (think: evidence), and well-designed (think: high-quality) high-impact experiences requires fortitude, process, and logic. It also requires, as the preceding argument hopefully conveys, an unwaivering commitment to equity—not just in disaggregating outcomes data—but in every step of assessment along the way.

Just as a logic model approach to assessing high-impact practices can assist campuses in taking a comprehensive approach to gauging the institutional efficacy of these practices, such an approach can also contribute significantly to a broader collective understanding of the value of these practices nationally. This type of multi-dimensional approach would help to address a deep well of questions about quality, equity, and learning that arise at multiple points across the processes of implementation and development of these practices. We know that high-impact practices (when done well) empower students. It is time to empower ourselves—as practitioners, researchers, and leaders—to fully assess their worth.



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Appendix: Sample Logic Model for Assessing High-Impact Practices

Inputs [Resources]

- Inventory of existing High-impact practices:
  - Learning Communities
  - First-year Seminars/Experience
  - Community Engagement (e.g. service-learning; global learning; community-based research; clinicals and field work; internships)
  - ePortfolios
- Institutional Research/Office of Assessment
- Teaching and Learning Center
- Office of Community-Engagement
- Office of Diversity and Inclusion
- Community Partners
- Curricular Supports and Budgets (e.g. general education, departments)
- Student Affairs/Student Life
- Alumni/Career Services
- Advising

Processes/Activities [Actions, Developmental Programs]

Qualities of High-Impact Practices:

- Performance expectations set at appropriately high levels;
- Significant investment of time and effort by students over an extended period of time;
- Interactions with faculty and peers about substantive matters;
- Experiences with diversity;
- Frequent, timely and constructive feedback;
- Periodic, structured opportunities to reflect and integrate learning;
- Opportunities to discover relevance of learning through real-world applications; and
- Public demonstration of competence.

(from Kuh & O'Donnell, 2013, *Ensuring Quality and Taking High-Impact Practices to Scale*, Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities, p. 10)

Outputs [Products of Processes/ Activities; Sources of Evidence]

Direct Evidence

- Use of rubrics (e.g. VALUE rubrics) to score student work products, such as:
  - Group projects
  - Reflection journals
  - Assessment of ePortfolios
  - Signature work
  - Capstone projects
  - Community-based projects
  - Oral presentations
- Institutional Research data on post-graduation employment

Indirect Evidence

- Institutional Research Surveys related to student experience or learning (e.g. National Survey of Student Engagement/Community College Survey of Student Engagement; CIRP; Climate Surveys)
- Locally developed surveys
- Focus groups
- Alumni surveys
- Course evaluations

Outcomes [Intended Effect of Outputs]

Short-Term (evidence collection approximately one semester to one year)

- Semester or one-year gains in learning outcomes such as critical thinking, written communication, civic skills (such as civic awareness or perspective-taking)
- Disaggregated gains by student populations

Intermediate (evidence collection approximately 2-4 years)

- Improvements in retention
- Changes in retention by student populations
- Intermediate gains

Long-Term (evidence collection requires at least five or more years across multiple cohorts)

- Changes in graduation rates over time
- Improvements in student learning over time
- Persistent reductions in equity gaps over time
- Changes in participation rates within and across high-impact practices across student populations

Impact [Vision for Change]

"The university strives to provide a transformative and equitable education for all students through innovations in teaching, learning, and community engagement."

Assumptions

The university assumes that the more students engage in meaningful learning experiences, supported by aligned assessments that allow multiple means to demonstrate competence, that students will feel valued and more likely to persist, exhibit resilience, and experience success in future employment. In order to ensure meaningful learning experiences are available to all students, the entire university community needs to be involved in implementation, including students themselves.

Adapted from W. K. Kellogg Foundation's Logic Model Development Guide

About the Author

Dr. Ashley Finley, is the Senior Advisor to the President and Vice President of Strategic Planning and Partnerships for the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). She was previously the senior director of assessment and research at AAC&U and also national evaluator for the Bringing Theory to Practice Project. Most recently she served as the associate vice president for academic affairs & dean of the Dominican Experience at Dominican University of California, where she implemented a comprehensive framework for student learning and success centered around high-impact practices, including holistic advising and ePortfolios.

Dr. Finley's research and campus consultations focus on connecting best practices for program implementation, assessment design, and equity with institutional outcomes for student success and strategic planning. A significant component of this work at the campus and national levels has focused on the connection of students' personal development (such as resilience, belonging, identity, and sense of purpose) with their learning and civic engagement. She has published a number of articles, book chapters, and monographs, including *Assessing Underserved Students' Engagement in High-Impact Practices* (with co-author Tia McNair), *Civic Learning and Teaching*; *Assessing Underserved Students' Engagement in High-Impact Practices*; and "Well-Being: An Essential Outcome for Higher Education."

Prior to beginning her national work, Dr. Finley was a faculty member in the department of sociology at Dickinson College. She received a B.A. from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and an M.A. and Ph.D., both in sociology, from the University of Iowa.

About NILOA

- The National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA) was established in December 2008.
- NILOA is co-located at the University of Illinois and Indiana University.
- The NILOA website contains free assessment resources and can be found at http://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org.
- The NILOA research team has scanned institutional websites, surveyed chief academic officers, and commissioned a series of occasional papers.
- NILOA's Founding Director, George Kuh, founded the National Survey for Student Engagement (NSSE).
- The other co-principal investigator for NILOA, Stanley Ikenberry, was president of the University of Illinois from 1979 to 1995 and of the American Council of Education from 1996 to 2001.

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About AAC&U

AAC&U is the leading national association dedicated to advancing the vitality and public standing of liberal education by making quality and equity the foundations for excellence in undergraduate education in service to democracy. Its members are committed to extending the advantages of a liberal education to all students, regardless of academic specialization or intended career. Founded in 1915, AAC&U now comprises 1,400 member institutions—including accredited public and private colleges, community colleges, research universities, and comprehensive universities of every type and size.

AAC&U functions as a catalyst and facilitator, forging links among presidents, administrators, faculty, and staff engaged in institutional and curricular planning. Through a broad range of activities, AAC&U reinforces the collective commitment to liberal education at the national, local, and global levels. Its high-quality programs, publications, research, meetings, institutes, public outreach efforts, and campus-based projects help individual institutions ensure that the quality of student learning is central to their work as they evolve to meet new economic and social challenges. Information about AAC&U can be found at www.aacu.org

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