



Foreword

By Lynn Pasquerella, *President of the Association of American Colleges and Universities*

For the past decade, the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) has shaped the landscape of higher education through championing the Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE) approach to student learning outcomes assessment. Designed in response to the 2006 Report of the U.S. Department of Education's Commission on the Future of Higher Education (widely known as the "Spellings Report"), VALUE offers an alternative to the report's recommendation that standardized tests, administered to first-year and graduating students, be utilized as the primary method for evaluating student progress and proficiency. Calling into question the efficacy of the statistical methodology embedded within the scope of narrowly focused, commercially available standardized tests, AAC&U instead proposed the expansion of learning outcomes assessment across the curriculum and cocurriculum, using artifacts of student work from a variety of courses and disciplines. Teams of faculty representing the rich diversity of AAC&U's membership, from community colleges and four-year residential liberal arts colleges to large research universities and mid-sized regional colleges, took up the charge to develop rubrics corresponding to each of the 16 Essential Learning Outcomes that emerged from AAC&U's signature initiative, Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP).

Reflecting AAC&U's deep and abiding commitment to quality and equity as the foundations for excellence in undergraduate education, the trailblazing nature of the VALUE project resulted in a paradigm shift. Grounded in the assumption that achieving high-quality education for all students, at all types of institutions, requires assessment data derived from authentic student work carried out within courses and cocurricular programs, VALUE positions faculty at the center of the assessment process. Leveraging their expertise, faculty across the country are engaged in creating and scoring student work in course-embedded assignments. As higher education professionals, they understand that student learning develops over time and that demonstrated success requires not only challenging students with increasingly complex problems, but also providing them with opportunities to engage in self-reflection about their work from their first to final semesters. In the end, this type of comprehensive assessment of applied learning outcomes across a broad range of disciplines supplies faculty with the crucial data necessary to improve course assignments and overall pedagogy. It is a process that has the capacity to contribute to faculty professional development and student success alike.

From its inception, there has been increasing demand for participation in and access to the robust assessment protocol, data and resources provided by VALUE and targeted to the needs of specific institutions. Ongoing efforts to enhance scale were catalyzed by the establishment of a VALUE Institute. Launched in fall 2017, AAC&U has been deeply gratified by the level of interest exhibited by institutions of higher education from around the world, and the Institute welcomes all programs, colleges, universities and consortia to engage in the VALUE approach to assessment. To that end, the evidence-based research contained in *We Have a Rubric for That* supports the VALUE methodology, offering a compelling rejoinder to the notion that standardized tests are the only and most reliable method for assessing student learning outcomes. At the same time, it provides a model for developing an asset-based approach to assessment that focuses on positive performance rather than on what students are lacking, alongside a roadmap for undertaking future research and exploration in the realm of learning outcomes assessment.

Amid the growing skepticism regarding the value of liberal education and a lack of confidence among the American public that higher education is having a positive influence on our society, the collective enterprise being carried out through the VALUE Initiative is more critical than ever. We look forward to working together toward achieving our shared objectives of advancing student success and fulfilling the promise of American higher education.