

Assessment Practices for Advancing Transfer Student Success:

Collaborating for Educational Change



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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION. Assessment as a High-Impact Practice 1

Campus Change Processes and Action Steps for Advancing Transfer Student Success 4

INITIATING A PROJECT

 STEP ONE: Set a Collaborative Project Tone Early in the Process 6

 STEP TWO: Proactively Coordinate and Connect Multiple Campus Initiatives 10

 STEP THREE: Maximize Engagement Based on Assessment and Collaborative Capacity . . . 14

CONCLUSION. Learning Proficiencies Can Be a Basis for Collaboration
for Transfer Student Success. 19

Degree Qualifications Profile Overview 22

Related Project: The Multi-State Collaborative to Advance Learning Outcomes 24

About the Authors 26

About the Quality Collaboratives Project 27



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INTRODUCTION

Assessment as a High-Impact Practice

America's institutions of higher education have been challenged to develop new strategies to improve the success of all students. With more and more students attending multiple institutions, improving the transfer process is key to ensuring all students succeed. AAC&U launched the Quality Collaboratives (QC) project in 2011 with support from Lumina Foundation and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation in order to find ways to make transfer between institutions easier and more efficient and, more importantly, to make students' achievement of important learning outcomes, as measured by authentic assessments, the central metric that should guide transfer.

Lumina's recently developed Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) was an important tool in this larger movement away from credits as proxies for student learning toward a system in which genuine proficiency is the measure of student progress and success. The DQP is a framework describing the essential learning outcomes that both employers and faculty claim as critical for college graduates and the levels of achievement on these outcomes that students should be able to demonstrate at the associate, baccalaureate, and master's degree levels (see page 22, below). As part of AAC&U's Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) signature initiative to ensure that all college students in the United States receive a liberal education, the QC project brought together twenty campuses and nine state university systems or state higher education commissions to collaborate and develop models that placed assessment of student learning at the center of the transfer process. This brief folio along with its more in-depth companion volume, *Collaboration for Student Transfer: A Nationwide Degree Qualifications Profile Experiment*, describe ways to refocus student transfer on demonstrated student learning proficiencies as a primary basis for transfer student success.

In today's policy environment, transfer success is too often defined narrowly as the timely completion of a degree. That desirable but inadequate measure has emerged largely because the current transfer process, especially from two-year institutions to four-year institutions, does not directly measure student learning proficiency and often presents vexing barriers for accepting student work at one institution that was

completed at a previous institution. Under most current practices, students are accepted for transfer when they have completed a negotiated set of credit hours attached to a defined set of courses. But those courses and credits are often determined institution by institution or even program by program, which can result in confusion that often leads to delayed progress or attrition, especially for students who change majors or attend more than one institution. Recently, however, many key stakeholders, particularly employers, have come to understand that seat time is an inadequate proxy for learning.

This folio is designed to help institutions interested in building successful cross-institutional collaborations to use the DQP to develop new approaches to advancing transfer student success and to assessing student learning. It begins with a flow chart (see pages 4–5) that summarizes the main components of the successful cross-institutional collaborations that were developed by the QC institutions. The folio then charts key action steps in the process flow chart and lessons learned by these institutions through their implementation of these kinds of collaborative projects.

Ten “dyads” composed of one two-year institution and one four-year institution, many of which already had established transfer relationships, participated in the QC project. All of these institutions also had already committed to developing better approaches to assessing student learning rather than settling for a list of completed courses, credits, and grades. Each dyad was encouraged to build on its pre-existing structures, policies, and practices as points of departure. Each dyad was free to determine its own approach to engaging faculty on its campuses. Finally, in order to bring coherence to the initiative, QC dyads were asked to assess the utility and viability of the DQP, the LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs)¹, and the VALUE rubrics² for assessing evidence of student learning for transfer success.

The flow chart below focuses on key components for change, and the results flowing from each component provide a generative framework for any institution or system to begin to reassess its transfer processes. Supplementing the flow chart are links to a set of QC project case studies on AAC&U’s website; these case studies contain many examples of the agendas for meetings, templates for documents, and examples of

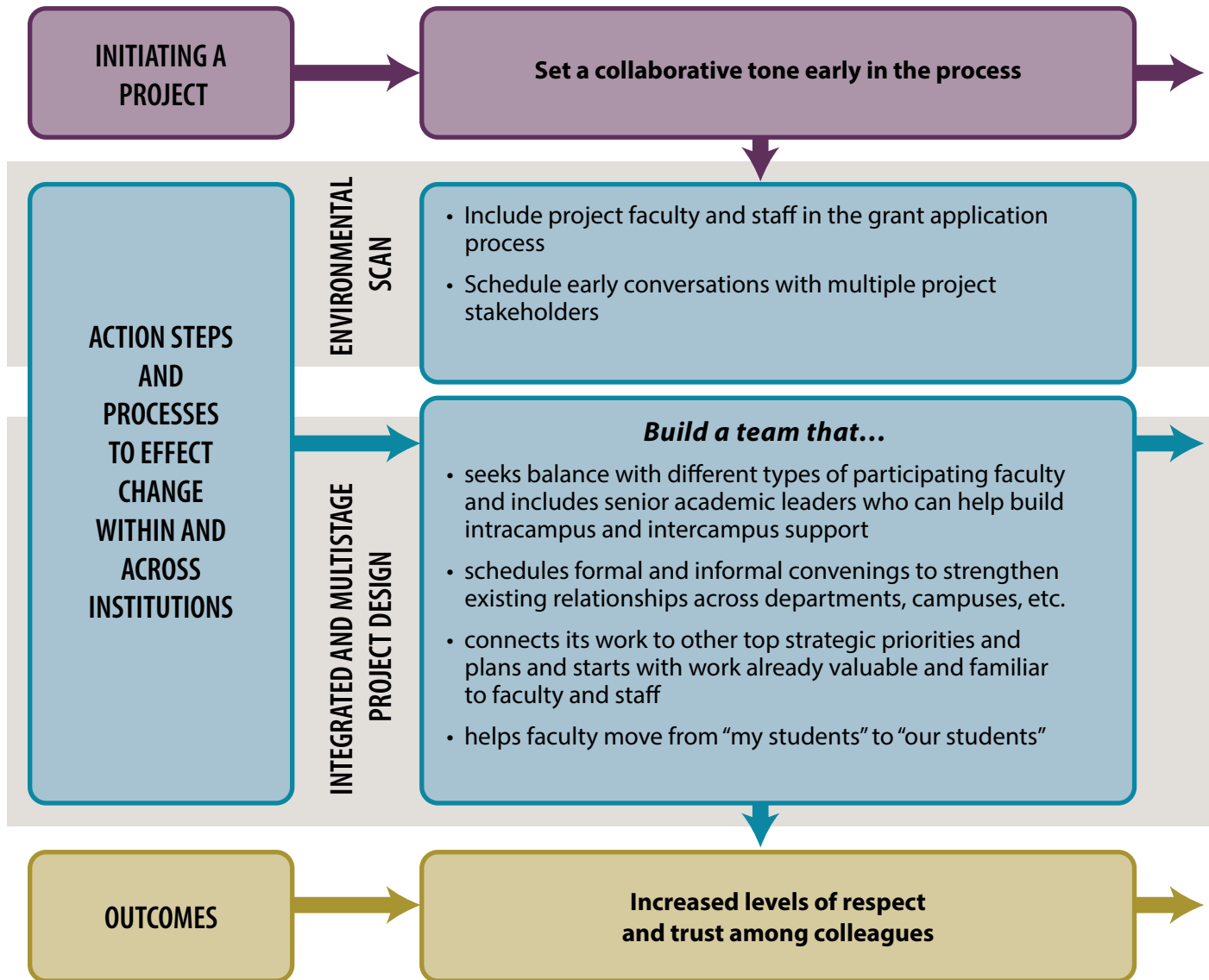
1 Developed by a national committee of faculty and employers as part of the LEAP initiative, the Essential Learning Outcomes describe the learning students need for successful participation in a global economy, democratic civic engagement, and enriched lives.

2 AAC&U’s VALUE (Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education) rubrics were developed by teams of faculty and other educational professionals to articulate expected levels of learning on the core dimensions of learning aligned with the LEAP ELOs.

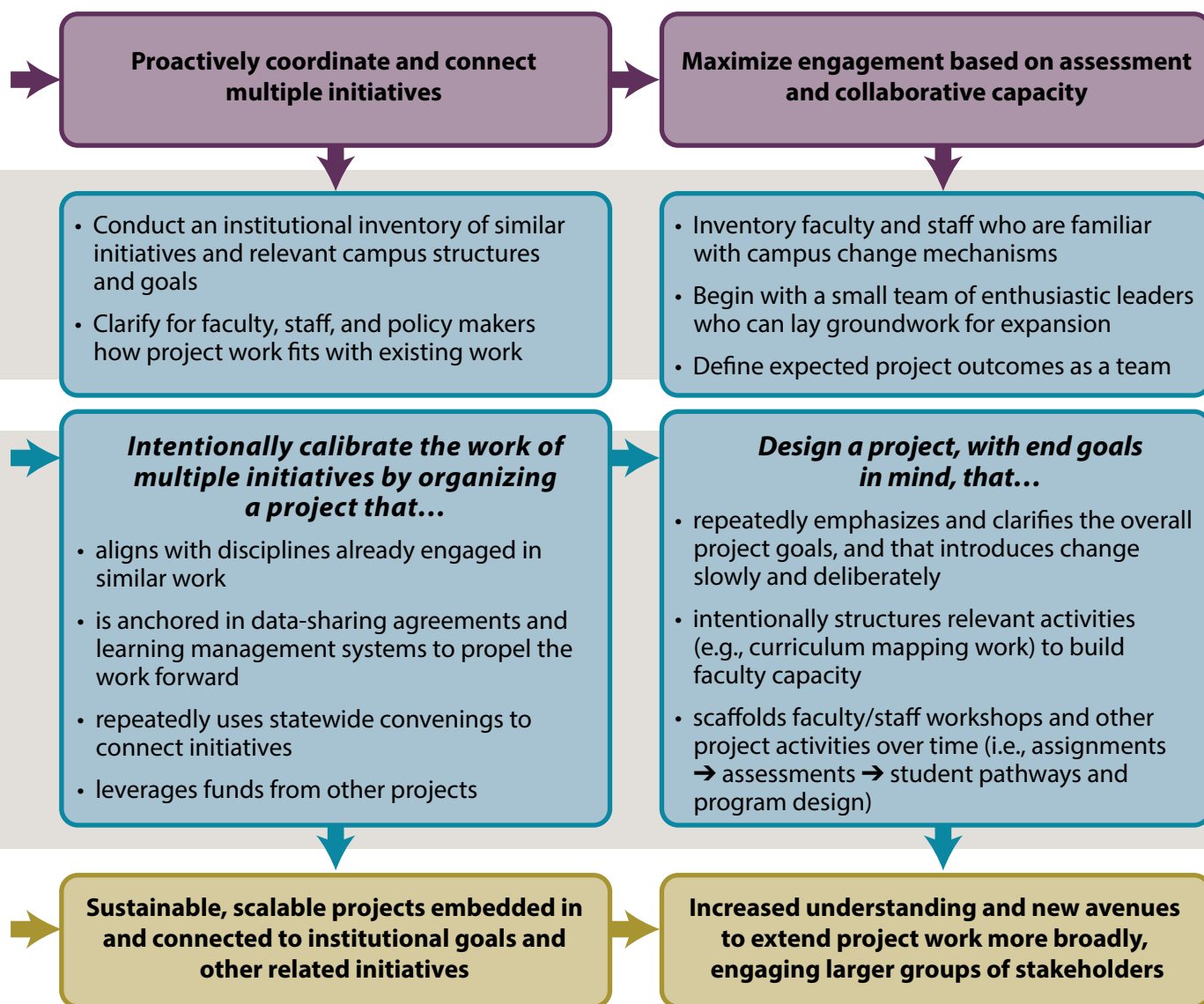
collaborative processes and actions taken, all supplied by the participating institutions. These resources are intended to assist others seeking to jump-start their own efforts to make assessment of student learning the basis for transfer success.

Although none of the QC dyads instigated substantial institutional change in transfer practices during the three-year project period, many of the dyads developed new assessment models that are still being further developed and expanded. In addition, faculty at these institutions determined that the DQP, the VALUE rubrics, and the LEAP ELOs were useful frameworks that articulated shared expectations for learning and important markers for how students can demonstrate their learning proficiency for transfer between institutions. One of the most exciting elements of the project, common across all the participating institutions, was the ability of campus leaders to engage large numbers of faculty and other educational professionals both within a single campus and across different campuses in this work. This was particularly evident when faculty found that student learning was the purpose of assessment—that was when assessment of learning outcomes proficiency became a part of their own daily work, something that was both useful and important. As the efforts of these participants demonstrate, a transfer process that is guided by evidence of student learning outcomes can be understood not just as “my work, in my course, at my institution,” but as “*our work*,” shared among colleagues.

Campus Change Processes and Action Steps



for Advancing Transfer Student Success



INITIATING A PROJECT: STEP ONE

Set a collaborative project tone early in the process

The heart of Quality Collaboratives was establishing assessment as a collegial conversation.

The Quality Collaboratives (QC) project was designed to help colleges and universities understand assessment as a way to improve students' learning experiences, which ultimately would improve students' transfer success. To do that, the first order of business was to ensure that institutions were using approaches to assessment that were useful and relevant to faculty's own teaching and to the institutions' general education and major curricula.

All dyads reported that these three resources were useful and flexible tools that meshed relatively easily with existing transfer policies and practices.

The QC dyad teams included faculty and administrators from both community colleges and universities. The teams were designed to generate conversation and collaboration among a diverse set of experts to identify the attributes of student work that should be expected at each level of a student's progress through the curriculum—at the first year, at graduation with an associate's degree or achievement of junior status, and at graduation with a four-year degree. Faculty were invited to consider these attributes and related levels of student work by using Lumina's Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) and the Association of American Colleges and Universities' (AAC&U's) VALUE rubrics (Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education) and LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs).

Each dyad used these resources in various ways. Some teams began their conversations by using one or more of these tools as starting points for cross-departmental and cross-institutional conversations. Some began by looking at student work and then comparing their perceptions to criteria enumerated in one or more of these frameworks. All dyads reported that these three resources were useful and flexible tools that meshed relatively easily with existing transfer policies and practices. Although the focus on students'

demonstrated learning proficiencies was a new and substantial departure from the entrenched reliance on credit hours at many of these institutions, the teams nonetheless developed useful approaches and even suggested principles and guidelines to increase engagement, cooperation, and, ultimately, the likelihood of sustainability. Multiple models of proficiency-based transfer emerged from their collaborations.

OUTCOME ONE

Increased levels of respect and trust among colleagues

Collaboration can build morale among faculty by creating intellectual communities.

Assessment can be fraught with innumerable and often conflicting faculty perspectives about its purpose, method, and fundamental usefulness. Successful projects must get past thinking about assessment as an external mandate. In focusing on two- and four-year institutions with existing transfer partnerships, the QC project worked to address the culturally embedded predispositions and stereotypes that existed at each institution, such as long-held biases about inferiority and superiority, reputation, and capabilities that often colored past practices and policies.

At the end of the project, every dyad reported a significant positive change from preconceived notions about partner institutions to more accurate and positive understandings. These changes resulted from the cross-institutional collaboration the institutions engaged in. Each dyad engaged faculty and other educational professionals in collaborative, shared work to assess student proficiency and, at least as important, to determine the assignments and pedagogies best suited to promote students' achievement of appropriate proficiency levels across programs and institutions.

CASE STUDY

Blue Ridge Community College (BRCC) and James Madison University (JMU)

BRCC and JMU have a long-standing partnership of many years, including articulation agreements, a transfer advising partnership, and a guaranteed admissions agreement for a specific degree. In addition, both institutions have used several of the same assessment instruments when measuring scientific and quantitative reasoning. The QC team targeted specific professional programs such as teacher education (the most popular BRCC-to-JMU transfer program), integrated science and technology, computer science, and engineering (a discipline the Commonwealth of Virginia has targeted for growth) on which to concentrate their efforts.

The assessment strand of this project included a massive data-sharing project, the development of rubrics for assessment of student learning in specific BRCC transfer courses, and the convening of faculty from both institutions to discuss student achievement levels and course content alignment.

As any work being done with student records requires serious attention to confidentiality, the Virginia Commonwealth Attorney General was brought into the project to work with the institutions on developing a data-sharing agreement, updating the previous agreement that had been used for the past twenty years. There were several anecdotal observations that faculty at both institutions wanted to investigate and, through the development of a large database of student grades and assessment scores, faculty teams were able to research some long-lingering questions. Additionally, faculty at both institutions were provided copies of the database for their own research purposes. This data sharing continues as new groups of students transfer from BRCC to JMU.

Information sharing of this amount and at this level of specificity requires strong trust between professionals at the two institutions. The sharing of so much information would have been much more difficult had the two institutions not already had a successful history of working together on numerous projects. Participation in the QC project provided the opportunity for the two institutions to update and expand their data-sharing agreements to better meet evolving faculty and institutional needs.

The focus was always on using the student data to identify opportunities to increase students' success as they transferred from BRCC to JMU and progressed into upper-level coursework. Institutes and meetings were held on both campuses with faculty and the assessment representatives from the QC teams to review the data, identify questionable results, and gather suggestions for further research.

As the collaboration progressed, project leaders introduced the Degree Qualifications Profile as a useful tool to support faculty in the assessment of assignments and to connect assessment with coursework in preparing students for transfer success. In this way, the project provided participants with a rich opportunity for reflection, particularly as they mapped the outcomes and the alignment of their courses. See www.aacu.org/qc/casestudies for sample templates and reports.

...the project provided participants with a rich opportunity for reflection, particularly as they mapped the outcomes and the alignment of their courses.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

1. Share data on student learning between institutions for analysis of proficiency and its link to student success for transfer success.
2. Agree on confidentiality of student data, usages for the data, and shared analysis of data findings for actions to improve practices and measures.
3. Engage faculty and other educational professionals for transparency of information gathering and use to establish trust among colleagues within and between institutions.

INITIATING A PROJECT: STEP TWO

Proactively coordinate and connect multiple initiatives

The Quality Collaboratives' participants were committed to the principle that assessment needs to be understood as different work, not more work.

One of the challenges facing a campus preparing to embark on a new transfer or assessment initiative is the resistance from faculty who are being asked to do “*one more thing*.” Colleges and universities face a cacophony of demands and calls for streamlining curricula, accounting for performance, and enhancing outcomes, all within a climate of budget constraints. In this context, assessment is often seen as one more item on an overlong list of things to do. To address this challenge, the QC project was designed and presented as a means of reinvigorating existing models of assessment that were still valued. When existing

approaches were held to be of dubious value, the project’s proficiency-based approaches were presented as a way to provide more useful and meaningful information on student achievement that directly connected to existing faculty work. Whatever the situation is at a given institution, change projects have a better chance of taking hold if they are focused on clear, pragmatic goals such as successful student transfer. Project leaders must understand that the sustainability of an initiative requires integration—old work and new work are combined to become *different work*, not *more work*.

...assessment is often seen as one more item on an overlong list of things to do.

OUTCOME TWO

Sustainable, scalable projects embedded in and connected to institutional goals and other related initiatives

The Quality Collaboratives project became an integral part of existing state- and system-level work.

Successful QC teams scanned the landscape of their respective campuses and identified work already under way that connected either to transfer practices or to efforts to develop and measure student achievement of learning outcomes. Although each QC partnership worked on a specific project, collectively they cast a wide gaze, looking at general education reform efforts, student affairs initiatives, and existing system-wide or grant-supported projects. Honoring the work of colleagues while building on and enhancing current work allows many more people and offices to see themselves and their work as contributing to the new directions or approaches being advanced by new projects. In an environment of limited resources, connecting and building on projects that already exist and are engaging colleagues' time and energy is a key strategy for introducing new ideas, approaches, practices, and policies that can enhance student success.

CASE STUDY

California State University System

This QC project involved creating parallel thematic general education pathways at a two-year institution, Pierce College, and a four-year institution, California State University–Northridge (CSUN). Students can take lower-division general education courses in a thematic path, such as sustainability, composed of a set of lower-division courses at both institutions and then upon transfer complete two or three upper-division general education courses in the same thematic path at CSUN. The project was part of a broader statewide

initiative, titled Give Students a Compass: Phase II, to make the transfer general education curriculum more relevant, purposeful, integrated, and engaging. Through conferences sponsored by the CSU system office and the Academic Senate of the California Community Colleges, and through a teaching commons (<http://teachingcommons.cdlib.org/geengage>) and listserv, virtually all of the twenty-three California State University campuses and many of the 112 California Community Colleges learned about the project.

The QC project both learned from and contributed to other system-wide projects, including work on student learning outcomes (SLOs) across California. Through an intersegmental faculty meeting to discuss SLOs and proficiency criteria included in the first phase of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education's (WICHE) Interstate Passport Initiative (www.wiche.edu/passport),¹ with only minor modifications, the participants were able to reach consensus about shared SLOs and proficiency criteria appropriate for students who have completed their lower-division coursework and were eligible for transfer.

CASE STUDY

University of Wisconsin

The Wisconsin System's QC projects coincided with two other system-wide initiatives focused on student learning outcomes and competencies—the UW Flexible Option (Flex)² and the Lumina-funded project on Prior Learning Assessment (PLA).³ All of the campuses that participated in the QC project are involved in either Flex or PLA, or both, and the timing of the unfolding curricular development and assessment has overlapped in remarkably productive ways, especially for the dyad of UW–Waukesha (a two-year institution) and UW–Parkside (a four-year institution). Faculty from the two campuses have enjoyed an

1 Through the Interstate Passport Initiative, WICHE is developing a new framework for block transfer agreements for the general education core based on learning outcomes and transfer-level proficiency criteria, rather than credits and courses.

2 The University of Wisconsin Flexible Option program is an online option in select degree programs; see <http://flex.wisconsin.edu>.

3 A competency-based prior learning assessments program; see <https://www.wisconsin.edu/news/archive/uw-system-receives-lumina-foundation-grant-to-expand-prior-learning-assessments-for-adult-students>.

extremely productive dialogue about different pedagogical delivery models and utilized the QC project and the DQP to inform and enrich the development of Flex curricula, a new Bachelor of Applied Arts and Sciences degree, and PLA, and vice versa.

The QC project has also been used as a leverage point for moving the University of Wisconsin System's learning outcomes work in new directions, bringing in new campus partners and providing a focus on the transfer policy context we now find ourselves in. Ultimately, the QC project brought together work from all these initiatives and from other projects that focused on shared learning goals and definitions of quality that could be integrated with existing system-wide goals for curricular reform, and, ultimately, more students graduating from college across the state. See www.aacu.org/qc/casestudies for more case studies and resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

1. Integrate transfer and assessment projects with other initiatives. Rather than present a new project as yet another initiative that would require more work, California and Wisconsin leaders presented QC work as an extension of or a way to leverage the work already invested in previous or ongoing initiatives.
2. Recognize that innovation is usually incremental, particularly when the innovation is the assessment of student learning outcomes. In the constantly changing economic and political context of higher education, the disentangling of bureaucratic barriers is itself an outcome worth pursuing—that work is a first step toward improving student pathways to success.
3. Establish assessment as a way to distinguish between what faculty intend to teach in their courses and what students actually learn. The QC project was designed to move assessment from an abstract goal to a concrete plan for examining students' actual work in order to determine students' levels of achievement. Furthermore, such work can move assessment to a new phase when faculty assess the assignments that generated the student work being assessed.
4. Leverage assessment to examine and reflect upon the quality of the student learning experience, a central concern to most faculty.

INITIATING A PROJECT: STEP THREE

Maximize engagement based on assessment and collaborative capacity

A collaborative focus on actual student work was the centerpiece of Quality Collaboratives assessment.

In order for change projects to be sustained over time, the affected participants—faculty, other educational professionals, students—must *own* the new approach to thinking about and conducting their work. Collaboration—whether within a single department or program, across multiple programs, or across two or more campuses—emerged as critical to the recurring question of how to obtain faculty support for and engagement with institutional change efforts. When faculty fully engage in assessment through the QC project models, the conversation focuses on the quality of the attributes of student work, the assignments that elicited the demonstration of proficiencies, and, finally, the teaching strategies used to develop the competencies. The conversation can then turn to the development and sequencing of assignments and the way assignments are scaffolded to help prepare students for the more advanced levels of performance expected for capstone projects, for successful transfer, and for completion of degree programs.

One outcome of productive collaborations can be a deepening realization of the way student learning outcomes improve when courses and even assignments within and across sets of courses are aligned to develop student competence over time and across content. Improving *intentionality* by developing assignments designed to take learning outcomes proficiency to more advanced levels can create meaningful learning experiences and more effective and rewarding teaching experiences. Ultimately, these collaborations can lead to a critical transformation in which assessment, almost always understood to be more work that requires more time and more resources, becomes, instead, inextricably embedded within curriculum designs and part of the daily work of good teaching.

CASE STUDY

The Kentucky Council for Postsecondary Education

The Kentucky Council for Postsecondary Education formed three assessment teams composed of faculty in three disciplinary areas—statistics, math, and developmental math—invited from both two-year and four-year institutions across the state. The challenge was to improve students’ quantitative literacy proficiency. Three teams of faculty, working on three separate days, used a “mash-up” of the Critical Thinking and the Quantitative Literacy VALUE rubrics to assess quantitative literacy. Each team rated the same sample of student work. All the work samples were assessed against the same proficiency levels described in the DQP and VALUE rubrics; demarcations were made at the two-year and four-year levels. The assessments of all three teams on three different days demonstrated high levels of agreement.

Scoring agreement on demonstrated level of achievement for student work among the three faculty groups was just under 80 percent. That remarkable demonstration of agreement suggests that it is feasible for faculty from multiple campuses and different types of institutions to uphold a standard of proficiency and illustrates the feasibility of establishing a standard of performance without standardization. The Kentucky faculty example also provides an emerging indicator of the feasibility of using outcomes assessment to mediate transfer, as faculty from a range of institutions across the state demonstrated remarkable agreement on the quality of student proficiencies.

The statewide disciplinary activity produced a number of insights:

1. Faculty observed that a single assignment might fit into one or more course levels—the expectation of performance might change rather than the difficulty or challenge of the assignment.
2. When faculty collaborate, they can design assignments that intentionally complement each other—within individual classes, but even more importantly as sequences situated among classes. The sequences are even more effective when those classes may be taken across different two-year or four-year institutions.

OUTCOME THREE

Increased understanding and new avenues to extend project work more broadly, engaging larger groups of stakeholders

Conscientious assessment illuminates opportunities ... and reveals new challenges.

Assignment alignment, sequencing, and scaffolding are at the nexus where the student learning experience, assessment, and faculty development meet. In the QC project, faculty and other educational professionals came together to explore how to assess transfer students' levels of proficiency in key learning areas.

CASE STUDY

Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis and Ivy Tech Community College

In Indiana, faculty used new curricular designs to prompt students to organize and reflect upon their work produced in courses taken as part of a new common general education transfer core enacted by state legislation. Starting with student assignments and work, a multi-institutional group of faculty developed common “dimensions of learning” that they then used to develop shared rubrics.

The use of rubrics to assign a numeric value to student work is a way to express how that work measures up against a standard. Students may still receive grades on these assignments, but grades are confined to an individual class and to a single faculty member—unlike assessment, which can be calibrated to an external norm. Grades tend to be idiosyncratic with variable standards. Students know this, and so it is not uncommon for them to seek out classes accordingly. A steady diet of idiosyncratic standards contributes to a perception of school as a game of Trivial Pursuit, with students collecting credits like pieces of pie, one at a time. The QC collaborations sought to develop this new approach as an antidote to this perception of education as a collection of unrelated courses.

CASE STUDY

Salt Lake Community College and University of Utah and Student E-Portfolios

Another useful tool for capturing student achievement is e-portfolios. All students in general education courses at Salt Lake City Community College (SLCC) create their own e-portfolios, which are used to document their progress toward program and institutional learning outcomes—the skills and understanding “that all students should possess.” Working together, SLCC and University of Utah faculty agreed upon common signature assignments in specified courses that would allow students to demonstrate their achievement of common learning outcomes shared by the business programs at both institutions. The students’ e-portfolios included the common significant assignments, documentation of extracurricular activities, résumés, and reflections about what they found to be most useful.

CASE STUDY

Massachusetts and Rubric Use

The QC teams in Massachusetts, like those in many other participating states, found rubrics useful for helping faculty develop a common language to articulate expectations for all students, including transfer and non-transfer “native” students. The key to the use of rubrics is the *norming* process. Norming, also known as calibration, involves a team of faculty collectively rating a sample of student work by mapping the work’s characteristics to a set of predetermined criteria, performance descriptors, and associated levels such as those outlined in a rubric. The discussion about these scores should be facilitated by an experienced rater who can bring the group to a reasonable amount or percentage of agreement. In Massachusetts, faculty at Mount Wachusett Community College and Fitchburg State University found enormous value in the norming process, often working in pairs and stressing the need to identify the evidence in student work in support of their ratings.

“Many faculty commented on how eager they were to participate in the scoring sessions in order to see how and to what degree students’ work represented their expectations. After scoring sessions, faculty

participants asked how long it would take for them to get the disaggregated data for their students' performance (as scoring was a blind process). Faculty clearly saw how their instructional design translated directly into student performance," according to the institutions' joint project report.

The University of Massachusetts Lowell and Middlesex Community College took this process a step further and invited faculty of all ranks and other educational professionals to review each other's assignments. Faculty used the same rubrics to examine assignments as they used to assess the student work produced by these assignments, and in that way were able to reflect upon the extent to which the assignment afforded students the opportunity to demonstrate the desired skills and mastery of content. All the participants reported that they were able to improve their final assignments substantively based on the peer review process. See www.aacu.org/qc/casestudies for more case studies and resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

1. Assessment efforts must include not just full-time faculty but also part-time and contingent faculty and student affairs professionals.
2. Assessment should align with national norms and frameworks to facilitate cross-department and cross-institutional agreement; the DQP and the LEAP VALUE rubrics represent such national frameworks.
3. Assessment priorities for engagement should begin with existing faculty work in their courses.

CONCLUSION

Learning Proficiencies Can Be a Basis for Collaboration for Transfer Student Success

Perhaps the most important outcome of the Quality Collaboratives (QC) project was the growing recognition among participants that educational achievement must entail much more than adequate progression through a collection of courses. The ultimate goal of all of the Quality Collaboratives and all the related change initiatives undertaken by participants is to enhance the quality of students' learning—as demonstrated through students' involvement in engaged pedagogies across the degree levels articulated in the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP). One policy question that both the DQP and LEAP frameworks seek to address is about *who* defines quality learning. The QC project resoundingly demonstrated that faculty and other educational professionals can come together across institutions and states to take the lead in defining quality. Students' demonstration of the expected levels of learning is critical for their success as they transfer or move between institutions. The campuses and state systems that participated in the QC project developed and tested new models that put student learning and faculty expertise and judgment at the center of the transfer process. The challenge remaining is to translate these models into forms that can be accommodated by the variety of technologies and cultures at the vast majority of institutions that currently rely on a checklist of courses, credits, and grades to measure student success.

The work of the twenty institutions in the Quality Collaboratives project provides compelling evidence and campus change examples in support of the following conclusions:

- A high level of agreement exists among faculty across institutions and states about the indicators of quality student learning.
- This expert faculty consensus is an important foundation of the shared agreement on the expected levels of student learning proficiencies needed for student transfer success between institutions.
- Faculty from different institutions and disciplines can use common frameworks like the DQP, the LEAP ELOs, and the VALUE rubrics as shared standards or expectations for learning proficiency for transfer without standardizing assignments, courses, or curricula.

The QC project illustrates a variety of models and practices to help us rethink current transfer processes and move toward processes that are based on students' actual demonstrated learning rather than purely instrumental measures such as seat time or credit hours. Higher education practitioners are now equipped with useful common frameworks (e.g., the DQP and the LEAP ELOs) and tools (e.g., the LEAP VALUE rubrics, student e-portfolios, assignment revision libraries like those developed by the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment) through which they can define and measure students' achievement of the learning outcomes both educators and employers agree are most important. AAC&U's website (www.aacu.org/qc/casestudies) contains numerous examples, templates, meeting agendas, and case studies from the states and institutions involved in the QC project. We can improve student success only when we define success as the achievement of the learning proficiencies all students need to thrive as citizens and participants in a global community.

DEGREE QUALIFICATIONS PROFILE OVERVIEW

A template of proficiencies required for the award of college degrees at the associate's, bachelor's, and master's levels¹

■ Knowledge

At each degree level, every college student should demonstrate proficiency in using both specialized knowledge from at least one field **and** broad, integrative knowledge from arts and sciences fields. **Both kinds of knowledge** should be pursued from first to final year, providing opportunities for **integration across fields and application to complex problems**—in the student's area of emphasis, in out-of-school settings, and in civil society.

BROAD AND INTEGRATIVE KNOWLEDGE

Key areas include the sciences, social sciences, humanities, arts, and global, intercultural, and democratic learning.

In **each area**, students

- Learn key concepts and methods of inquiry
- Examine significant debates and questions
- Make evidence-based arguments

In **addition**, at each degree level, students

- Produce work that integrates concepts and methods from at least two fields

SPECIALIZED KNOWLEDGE

Students demonstrate depth of knowledge in a field and produce field-appropriate applications drawing on both major field and, at the BA level and beyond, other fields. Students learn

- Discipline- and field-specific knowledge
- Purposes, methods, and limitations of field
- Applied skills in field
- Integrative skills and methods that draw from multiple fields and disciplines

¹ This chart summarizes Lumina Foundation's Degree Qualifications Profile, released in 2014. This release is informed by feedback from faculty and leaders from hundreds of colleges, universities, and community colleges that worked with the "beta version" of the document, which was published in 2011. The full Degree Qualifications Profile is available for download at <http://www.luminafoundation.org/resources/dqp>.

■ Intellectual Skills

Students hone and integrate intellectual skills across the curriculum, applying those skills both to complex challenges within major fields and to broad, integrative problem-solving challenges in general education and in civic, global, and applied learning. Skills include

- Analytic inquiry
- Use of information resources
- Engaging diverse perspectives
- Ethical reasoning
- Quantitative fluency
- Communication fluency

■ Civic and Global Learning

Students acquire knowledge required for responsible citizenship both from their formal studies (see knowledge and skills, above) and from community-based learning, and **demonstrate their ability to integrate both forms of learning in analyzing and addressing significant public problems and questions, in both civic and global contexts**. Civic learning may be demonstrated through research, collaborative projects, and/or field-based assignments.

■ Applied and Collaborative Learning

Students demonstrate their ability to **integrate and apply** their learning (see knowledge and skills, above) in complex projects and assignments, including collaborative efforts, that may include research, projects, practicums, internships, work assignments, performances, and creative tasks.

RELATED PROJECT: THE MULTI-STATE COLLABORATIVE TO ADVANCE LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT

The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) and the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) Association launched in 2011 the **Multi-State Collaborative to Advance Learning Outcomes Assessment (MSC)**. In its pilot year, the project initially engaged faculty in sixty institutions in nine participating states. The nine states participating in the MSC during the pilot year were Connecticut, Indiana, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, Oregon, Rhode Island, and Utah. Five of these states, Indiana, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Oregon and Utah, also participated in the Quality Collaboratives initiative. See www.sheeo.org/msc for the full list of participating institutions involved in both the pilot and continuing phases of the MSC work.

One of the assessment approaches to student transfer and learning proficiency explored in the QC was the VALUE rubric approach. The pilot study successfully demonstrated that rubric-based assessment can be taken to scale and can produce valid findings with credible and actionable information about student learning that can be used to improve curricular and assignment designs as well as alignment of learning proficiency and guided learning pathways, and to increase effectiveness of programs and classes in collaboratively advancing the most important learning outcomes of college across two- and four-year institutions.

“What this pilot study showed is that faculty from a variety of disciplines, from dozens of colleges and universities, from nine different states across the nation could assess the work students had done and evaluate it in a consistent and reliable way,” said SHEEO President George Pernsteiner. “There was no special test. There was no time away from the classroom. There was, however, a common understanding by faculty from diverse places and backgrounds of what constituted learning and whether students had demonstrated it.”

As part of the pilot study, more than 7,000 samples of student work produced in response to course assignments in students’ regular courses were uploaded to a web platform developed by Taskstream. One hundred and twenty-six faculty members were trained and then independently scored students’ work to produce a preliminary landscape analysis of student achievement at the participating schools. In the pilot year, samples of student work were collected and evaluated for achievement in three important learning outcome areas: written communication, critical thinking, and quantitative literacy. The faculty members

used common scoring rubrics— VALUE rubrics—that were developed and validated by faculty as part of AAC&U’s Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) initiative.

The MSC is part of AAC&U’s ongoing VALUE (Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education) initiative originally launched in 2007. In its pilot year, SHEEO and AAC&U tested the feasibility of cross-state and cross-institutional efforts to document student achievement without using standardized tests and without requiring students to do any additional work or testing outside their regular curricular requirements. The next phase expands the MSC model to more states and institutions with the goals of establishing nationwide benchmarks around learning as well as actionable information on dimensions of student learning that are both useful to faculty and other educational professionals and actionable for improvement of curriculum, pedagogy, and student engagement.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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ABOUT THE QUALITY COLLABORATIVES PROJECT

Part of the Association of American Colleges and Universities' (AAC&U's) ongoing Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) initiative, **Quality Collaboratives** was a three-year project (2011–14) designed to improve faculty assessment of student learning outcomes within the context of student transfer. Using Lumina Foundation's Degree Qualifications Profile as a common reference point for quality, project participants from two-year and four-year campuses in nine states focused on assessment practices, faculty leadership and development opportunities, and policies related to student learning and success. Pilot efforts stemming from the project are currently underway on campuses in each of the nine participating states, and system leaders are using the results to inform the development of new policies, frameworks, and models of faculty development that are appropriate for their entire systems. The Quality Collaboratives project was supported by funding from Lumina Foundation and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE) is a campus-based project sponsored by AAC&U as part of its LEAP initiative. VALUE is developing an approach to assessment that is based on examples of student work saved over time in an e-portfolio and completed through a student's curriculum and cocurriculum. Teams of faculty developed sixteen rubrics for AAC&U's LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes, which all students need for success as citizens and employees and for fulfilling lives. The VALUE rubrics are used to help institutions demonstrate, share, and assess student proficiencies and accomplishments at progressively more advanced and integrative levels of learning.

Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) is a national advocacy, campus action, and research initiative that champions the importance of a twenty-first-century liberal education—for individuals and for a nation dependent on economic creativity and democratic vitality. LEAP responds to the changing demands of the twenty-first century—demands for more college-educated workers and more engaged and informed citizens. Today, and in the years to come, college graduates need higher levels of learning and knowledge as well as strong intellectual and practical skills to navigate this more demanding environment successfully and responsibly. Launched in 2005, LEAP challenges the traditional practice of providing liberal education to some students and narrow training to others. Through LEAP, hundreds of campuses and several state systems are making far-reaching educational changes to help all their students—whatever their chosen major field of study—achieve a set of Essential Learning Outcomes fostered through a liberal education.

ABOUT AAC&U

The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) is the leading national association concerned with the quality, vitality, and public standing of undergraduate liberal education. 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 more than 1,300 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, and faculty members who are engaged in institutional and curricular planning. Its mission is to reinforce the collective commitment to liberal education and inclusive excellence at both the national and local levels, and to help individual institutions keep the quality of student learning at the core of their work as they evolve to meet new economic and social challenges.

Information about AAC&U membership, programs, and publications can be found at www.aacu.org.



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