LEAP

Collaboration for Student Transfer

A Nationwide Degree Qualifications Profile Experiment

By TERREL L. RHODES, SUSAN ALBERTINE, GARY R. BROWN, JUDITH RAMALEY, REBECCA DOLINSKY, and HEATHER McCAMBLY

Association of American Colleges and Universities
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Foreword

Collaboration for Student Transfer: A Nationwide Degree Qualifications Profile Experiment is one of two primary reports to emerge from a national project focused on student learning and success in the context of student mobility and transfer. In 2011, with grant funding from Lumina Foundation and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) launched Quality Collaboratives: Assessing and Reporting Degree Qualifications Profile Competencies in the Context of Transfer (the QC project). This project, part of AAC&U's ongoing Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) initiative, had two primary goals. First, it sought to build the capacity of educators to use Lumina Foundation's Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) as a shared framework to facilitate successful student transfer and to encourage a greater focus on the quality of student learning, including assessment, rather than just on seat time or credit hour accumulation. Second, it sought to help partnering two-year and four-year institutions strengthen transfer students' achievement of the LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes, a set of twenty-first-century learning outcomes identified through the LEAP initiative that are included in the DQP.

Today, most college students in the United States do not attend a single institution in pursuit of their degrees. Accordingly, the successful attainment of a degree or other credential often depends on a smooth transfer process as students move among higher education providers. Since the largest number of students transfer between two-year and four-year institutions, the Quality Collaboratives project was designed to explore the DQP and its focus on student learning proficiencies as a guide for improving the transfer process and reorienting it toward student learning.

Representatives of nine state systems participated in the project, examining state-level policy related to student transfer and piloting new strategies to align curricular pathways and document student achievement. Each state effort was led by one or two "dyads"—pairs of a two-year and a four-year institution that share a significant transfer student population. Over the course of the three project years, participants from ten dyads in nine states explored and tested ways to revise or adapt existing transfer practices in order to acknowledge more fully the importance of demonstrated learning proficiency in determining progress toward degree attainment. The participating state systems were the University of Oregon System (and later the Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission), the California State University System, the Utah System of Higher Education, the North Dakota General Education Council, the University of Wisconsin System, the Indiana Commission for Higher Education, the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, the State Council on Higher Education for Virginia, and the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education.

Overall, project participants explored three separate but intersecting aspects of the transfer process: (1) the assessment of learning proficiencies, (2) faculty leadership for advancing and documenting student achievement of shared learning goals or proficiencies, and (3) campus and state policies related to student learning. Through face-to-face national meetings; campus, dyad, and statewide convenings

Quality Collaboratives Participating Institutions

CALIFORNIA
- California State University–Northridge
- Pierce College

INDIANA
- Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis
- Ivy Tech Community College

KENTUCKY
- Elizabethtown Community and Technical College
- University of Louisville

MASSACHUSETTS
- Fitchburg State University
- Middlesex Community College
- Mount Wachusett Community College
- University of Massachusetts Lowell

NORTH DAKOTA
- Statewide public and private colleges and universities through the North Dakota General Education Council

OREGON
- The Oregon University System

UTAH
- Salt Lake Community College
- University of Utah

VIRGINIA
- Blue Ridge Community College
- J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College
- James Madison University
- Virginia Commonwealth University

WISCONSIN
- University of Wisconsin–Fox Valley
- University of Wisconsin–Oshkosh
- University of Wisconsin–Parkside
- University of Wisconsin–Waukesha

and communication; and the development and testing of resources and tools, participants developed a portfolio of strategies for engaging with the DQP and other new frameworks and approaches for documenting the quality of student learning. By intentionally working with campuses and state systems that already were approaching student transfer in new and varied ways (e.g., through statewide mandated transfer frameworks, credit acceptance policies, and efforts to map or align disciplinary or general education curricula), the Quality Collaboratives project was able to identify a wide range of potential models for enhancing student learning related to transfer student success and faculty collaboration across institutions. These models all approached transfer through the lens of quality learning and demonstrated achievement.

This publication is anchored by a flowchart, pages 6 and 7, that reflects campus-based work that QC dyads engaged in during the project. The flowchart serves as a guide for campus practitioners seeking to initiate similar transfer-based change efforts on their campuses. The reader can follow the columns in the flowchart from left to right, and start with three major points of consideration when initiating a new project on campus, as gleaned from the QC project: (1) set a collaborative tone early in the process, (2) proactively coordinate and connect multiple campus initiatives, and (3) maximize engagement based on assessment and collaborative capacity. Follow each of these points down their respective columns to three outcomes from the QC project: (1) increased levels of respect and trust among colleagues; (2) sustainable, scalable projects embedded in and connected to institutional goals and other related initiatives; and (3) increased understanding and new avenues to extend project work more broadly, engaging larger groups of stakeholders. In between these points of consideration and project outcomes are the action steps. Each of the eleven action steps is correlated with a QC dyad case study that resides on AAC&U's website at www.aacu.org/qc/casestudies.

This report and its companion, *The Quality of a College Degree: Toward New Frameworks, Evidence, and Interventions*, along with two shorter booklets (one on assessment strategies and one on collaborative steps to enhance student transfer focused on demonstrated learning proficiency), an online resource hub, and a suite of case studies and campus tools, present the rich findings and insights from this cross-state and cross-campus exploration of student success in the context of transfer.

We invite you to examine the "lessons learned" from the project—lessons about the assessment of student proficiencies, faculty leadership, and policy at the campus, system, and state levels that can help campus and state leaders facilitate intracampus and cross-campus collaboration for student transfer success.

— **TERREL L. RHODES,** *Quality Collaboratives Project Leader and AAC&U Vice President for Quality, Curriculum, and Assessment*

— **CAROL GEARY SCHNEIDER,** *President, Association of American Colleges and Universities*

Acknowledgments

The Quality Collaboratives project leaders would like to thank our partner colleagues—and their institutions—who stepped up to the challenge to examine student transfer assumptions and practices. The resources produced through the project are the direct results of the engagement and risk-taking of the faculty and administrators across these twenty community colleges and universities and the leaders at the system and state levels in the nine participating states. The project was a testimony to their efforts and desire to enhance student achievement and successful transfer in higher education. It exemplified the kind of collaborative effort needed to advance a nationwide reform agenda focused on both degree completion and quality learning. The work of the project revealed the benefits of collaborating across institutions, states, and systems to advance student learning and success. We also would like to thank Lumina Foundation and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation for their generous support of the Quality Collaboratives project. In addition, sincere plaudits are due to the editors and designers in AAC&U's Office of Communications, Policy, and Public Engagement who have produced these publications with so much care, patience, and integrity.

INTRODUCTION

The Challenges for Effective Transfer and the Role of the Degree Qualifications Profile

We are pleased to present this report from Quality Collaboratives (QC): Assessing and Reporting Degree Qualifications Profile Competencies in the Context of Transfer, a project developed by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) with funding from Lumina Foundation and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. This project was part of a multifront national effort to support greater levels of student success in broad-access institutions.

Quality Collaboratives was a large-scale effort to road test Lumina Foundation's Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) as a useful framework within which faculty and institutional state representatives could facilitate transfer between two-year and four-year institutions and redefine student success in terms of student learning in addition to graduation rates. The DQP creates a framework for educators to see college learning as a progression through curricula and educational experiences that help students achieve a broad set of learning outcomes at progressively more complex and sophisticated levels of proficiency as they pursue degrees (see appendix A).[1] The goals of the project were to (1) field-test the DQP in the context of transfer, (2) help community colleges and partnering four-year institutions assess student learning outcomes in the context of transfer, and (3) explore ways in which faculty can take the lead on transfer through collaborative assessment of actual student work.

The DQP creates a framework for educators to see college learning as a progression through curricula and educational experiences that help students achieve a broad set of learning outcomes at progressively more complex and sophisticated levels of proficiency.

Representatives of nine state systems and ten dyads of two-year and four-year transfer partner campuses (twenty total campuses) that share significant transfer student populations participated in the QC's exploration of the DQP in the context of transfer assessment, faculty collaboration, and public policy. The participants brought to the project multiple institutional lenses for examining the utility of the DQP, reflecting the diversity of American higher education. This publication focuses on the integral entwining of direct assessment of student learning and faculty leadership that is central for successful student transfer. A separate publication, *The Quality of a College Degree: Toward New Frameworks, Evidence, and Interventions*, focuses on policy implications for states and institutions.

The QC project addressed three elements that are often absent in the national discourse on student success. The first is a clear focus on the components of a quality education, which, in effect, define the learning students need to achieve. This project and the DQP begin with the notion that "completion" is not synonymous with "success."

The second is the recognition that quality learning must be a shared or collaborative responsibility. An ever increasing number of college students, especially

1 A "beta" version of the DQP was introduced in 2011 and tested in a family of major, nationwide projects. The first edition, revised according to feedback from college and university campuses and from national associations, was released in 2014; see www.luminafoundation.org/resources/dqp.

Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) and the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP)

The LEAP initiative outlines goals for student learning and recommends high-impact educational practices to help students achieve the goals. The DQP provides reference points for building those expectations for student learning into the design of degree programs at three levels—associate's, bachelor's, and master's. Whereas LEAP describes "essential" student learning, the DQP shows an institution—and transfer partners—how to translate those learning goals into program requirements, course assignments, and learning assessments.

—Adapted from *The Degree Qualifications Profile* (Lumina Foundation 2014)

community college students, do not attend a single institution.[2] Therefore, quality can no longer be defined institution by institution or course by course.

The third element is a strong emphasis on faculty collaboration—both within and across institutions—to increase student success, which must be defined as student learning *and* completion rates.

Readers concerned with increasing student success in public higher education will learn from this report that there are ways to create collaborative, cross-institutional partnerships that promote successful student transfer. Drawing directly from in-depth work on twenty campuses in nine states, the QC project demonstrated that there are ways to build from a diverse range of existing practices toward a shared understanding of student proficiency. The QC project also demonstrated that faculty can and do play an essential leadership role in defining and developing evidence of student learning achievement that can be shared across institutions and used to facilitate transfer.

Context

AAC&U has worked for almost two decades with faculty, administrators, other educators, community partners, and employers to identify the student learning outcomes that are most essential to success in the workplace and life and that prepare college graduates to contribute in a global society. Through its Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) initiative, AAC&U has codified these outcomes as the LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs) (see appendix B). The question driving the QC project was whether the DQP could help educators ensure these outcomes in a transfer context.

Prior to the start of the QC project, all nine participating state systems and most of the QC institutions had embraced the LEAP ELOs as guiding goals for learning. The DQP, which incorporates the LEAP ELOs,[3] organizes learning categories in order to demonstrate how degree programs of all levels and their component elements can help all students both develop and demonstrate the intended learning outcomes of the program.

A key premise of the QC project is that higher education is in a long-term shift from credit hours to demonstrated proficiencies as the building blocks of college degree programs. The QC project showed what it will take to move proficiencies into the center of higher education's efforts to focus on what students have learned and how they can apply their learning to complex, unique projects and problems. Such a move could go a long way toward demonstrating to the general public how higher education works and help students achieve sought-after

2 According to the National Student Clearinghouse, 46 percent of students who earn a four-year degree complete some portion of their coursework at a two-year institution. See National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, "Contribution of Two-Year Institutions to Four-Year Institutions," *Snapshot Report*: Spring 2015 (Herndon, VA: National Student Clearinghouse): 1.

3 AAC&U President Carol Geary Schneider is a coauthor of both the Essential Learning Outcomes and the Degree Qualifications Profile.

proficiencies. As Paul Gaston notes in a recent article in *Change* magazine, much of the ill will toward higher education in the United States results from confusion around two key questions: "First, what do universities do and how well do they do it? Second, what do degrees mean in terms of what students know and are able to do?" When it comes to answering these questions, Gaston continues, "the two most productive initiatives have been those undertaken respectively by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) and by Lumina Foundation. . . . Taken together, these two largely complementary undertakings are important steps towards a shared vocabulary of college degrees and what they are meant to signify."[4]

Today, as educational professionals and policy makers alike worry about the numbers of students who get derailed when they transfer back and forth among two-year and four-year institutions, it is more important than ever to focus on helping students move from place to place and still obtain quality credentials in a timely manner. In this context, AAC&U and the state systems and campuses participating in the QC project hypothesized that the new DQP framework could help faculty and administrators work more effectively together on behalf of their students. As educators move toward agreement on a profile of the learning that ought to be achieved by the time a student completes a degree, we must ensure that these shared expectations will help institutions agree on common learning goals without limiting students' capacity to take different pathways to achieve those learning outcomes.

Two Strands of Work: Assessment and Faculty Leadership

The QC campus dyads of established two-year and four-year transfer partners were in very different stages of thinking about their existing transfer processes and whether alternative approaches might be useful. Most participants had little experience with the DQP, but many were familiar with the LEAP ELOs. The earlier work many of these institutions had conducted with each other as transfer partners, and their previous involvement with the LEAP initiative, enabled their team members to more readily understand the purposes of the QC project and to more quickly develop collaboration, mutual respect, and trust among themselves.

As educators move toward agreement on a profile of the learning that ought to be achieved by the time a student completes a degree, we must ensure that these shared expectations will help institutions agree on common learning goals without limiting students' capacity to take different pathways to achieve those learning outcomes.

The QC project set out to test the usefulness of the DQP framework for re-envisioning existing transfer practices to see how they might affect transfer assessment, faculty engagement, and state- and system-level policy. In addition, the QC project leaders worked with state-level systems leaders in order to explore the ways in which they might influence policies and practices that could bring the work of the participating local campus experiences with the DQP and LEAP ELOs to a larger set of institutions and stakeholders, and encourage broader attention to the importance of demonstrating student learning in ways that go beyond the use of narrow measures as proxies for learning, such as credit hours.

4 Paul L. Gaston, "The Vocabularies of Higher Education: Addressing the Problems They Create," *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning,* September/October 2014, 11, 13–14.

QC project participants started by exploring ways to modify existing transfer policies and practices so that they would be based on demonstrated proficiency of learning outcomes, rather than on course completion and grades alone. In Indiana, for example, the transfer work revolved around a newly mandated state general education transfer curriculum; in Massachusetts, it evolved in the context of an annual statewide report on student performance; and in Kentucky and Utah, the project focused on bringing expected levels of performance on learning outcomes for majors into alignment with broader institutional outcomes expected for all students.

One focal point for the QC project was the assessment of transfer students' proficiencies in relation to the DQP descriptors of expected learning at each degree level. However, as explained in chapter 1, faculty leadership and judgment proved critical to determining the assessment strategies to emphasize across institutional cultural contexts. The project participants did not develop new assessment tools to measure student progress. Instead, they adapted approaches and assessment instruments already in use at their institutions in order to shift the focus of institutional measurement from the accumulation of seat time and credit hours, which often are divorced from any actual demonstration of learning, to what students *can do* with their learning.

Ultimately, the DQP prompts educators to move from counting courses to determining proficiency through evidence drawn from the assessment of authentic student work.

Transfer articulation agreements too often treat the course credit as an "island" on its own, rather than as a place where learning outcomes and student abilities are achieved and demonstrated. Ultimately, the DQP prompts educators to move from counting courses to determining proficiency through evidence drawn from the assessment of authentic student work. If faculty and institutions were to focus on the transferable nature of learning and the development of outcomes over time as students progress from lower to higher levels of performance, then transfer, completion, and such functions as placement and advising could be based on students' demonstration of proficiencies as well as credit and course accumulation.

What Follows

This report identifies both assessment of student learning proficiency and faculty leadership development as foundational to student transfer reform, and each requires the other to be successful. However, it does so in a way that allows readers to follow each strand. In addition to the multiple campus and state-level examples that are included in the following chapters, AAC&U's website contains additional resources from the QC project that may be useful to anyone wishing to explore the DQP, LEAP, or faculty leadership development[5] and assessment of student learning (http://leap.aacu.org/toolkit/projects/quality-collaboratives/resources-for-participants).

5 AAC&U's Faculty Collaboratives project is creating a set of dynamic hubs developed and curated by faculty in ten separate states that have been actively engaged with the LEAP initiative for many years; the goal is to share with a nationwide audience the local work that has been successful in enhancing student learning and faculty leadership development.

Chapter 1 focuses on a pervasive theme among the QC campuses: the centrality of faculty in any effort to utilize or implement a proficiency-based approach to student learning outcomes, including the use of learning outcomes as a basis for student transfer. The role of all faculty members (tenured, tenure track, adjunct, contract, full time, and part time) was recognized and explored across the project. The QC project revealed a set of opportunities for institutions and states to engage faculty members, regardless of their rank or status. The QC project participants employed a range of actions, strategies, and professional development practices that helped faculty recognize the potential value of the DQP as a useful framework for collaborative work related to student transfer and learning.

Chapter 2 shifts to an examination of the strategies used by the QC participants to facilitate collaboration to improve student transfer assessment practices. The participants began by considering their institutions' existing practices. This chapter identifies a variety of approaches for measuring learning and engaging faculty in order both to enhance cross-campus collaboration and to use the DQP to stretch or expand the conceptualization of assessment and its role in transfer. Using the principles of the DQP framework to reconceptualize the assessment of student learning was a challenge for participants who had built transfer articulation structures on the credit hour and course catalog categories, but promising approaches emerged through the QC project.

The QC project revealed a set of opportunities for institutions and states to engage faculty members, regardless of their rank or status.

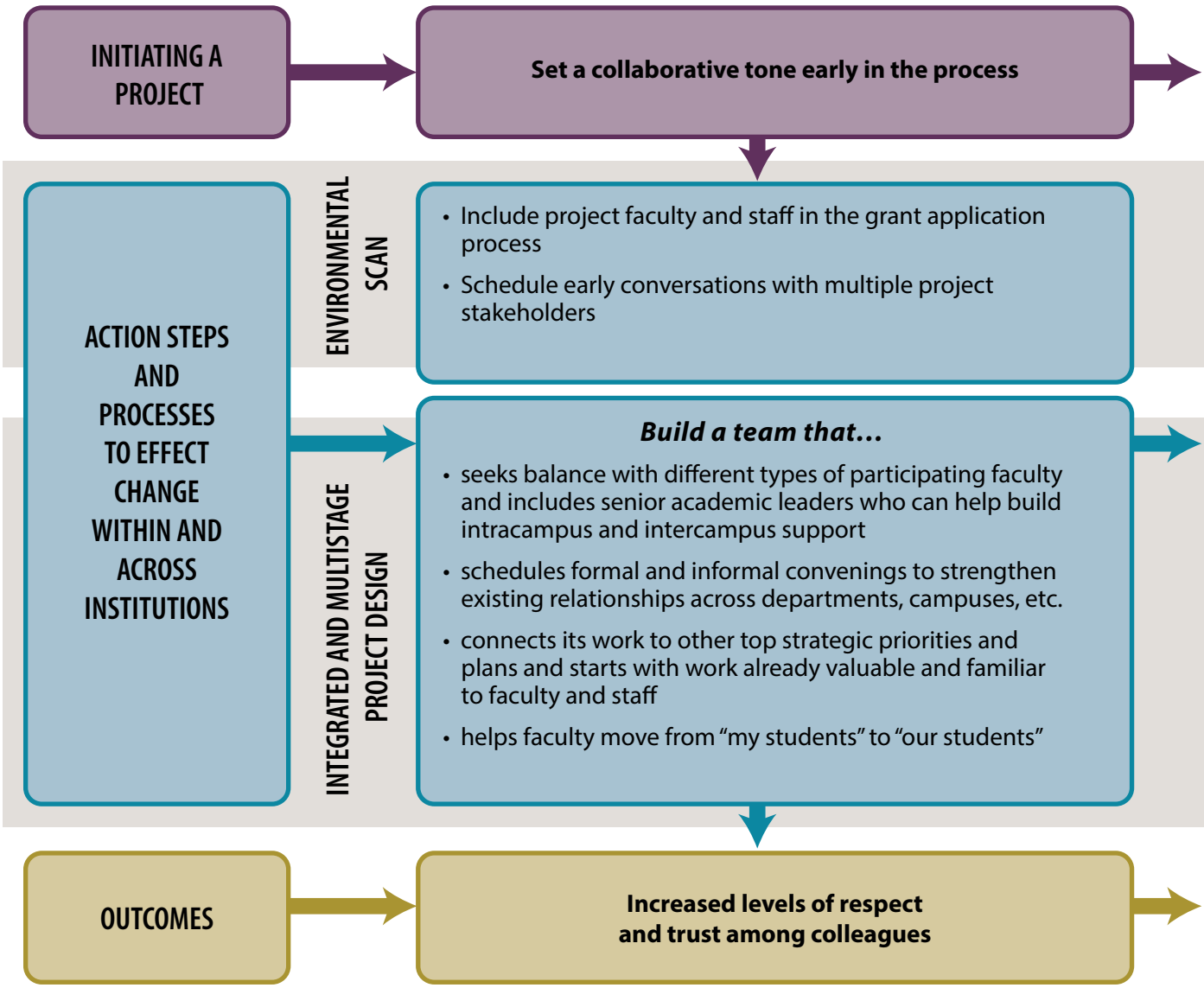
Chapter 3 addresses the opportunities and challenges that arise when faculty are no longer defined as solo actors, but rather as part of a shared community entrusted with constructing purposeful educational pathways and determining the key learning expectations of degree programs. Just as student learning is a social activity conducted within a broad community, faculty leadership is a social process within a community of colleagues. The twin concepts of shared responsibility and collective sense-making are central to faculty leadership and critical to students' attainment of learning competencies.

Finally, the concluding chapter looks specifically at how the DQP was used on different campuses and highlights recommendations for introducing the DQP in ways that enhance faculty engagement. A flowchart depicting the overarching themes, components, and key dimensions that emerged from the QC project provides a visual guide to the learning process (see fig. 1, page 6). Two companion booklets have been developed from the flowchart; one focused on the action steps associated with collaborative change, and the other on assessment strategies that work.

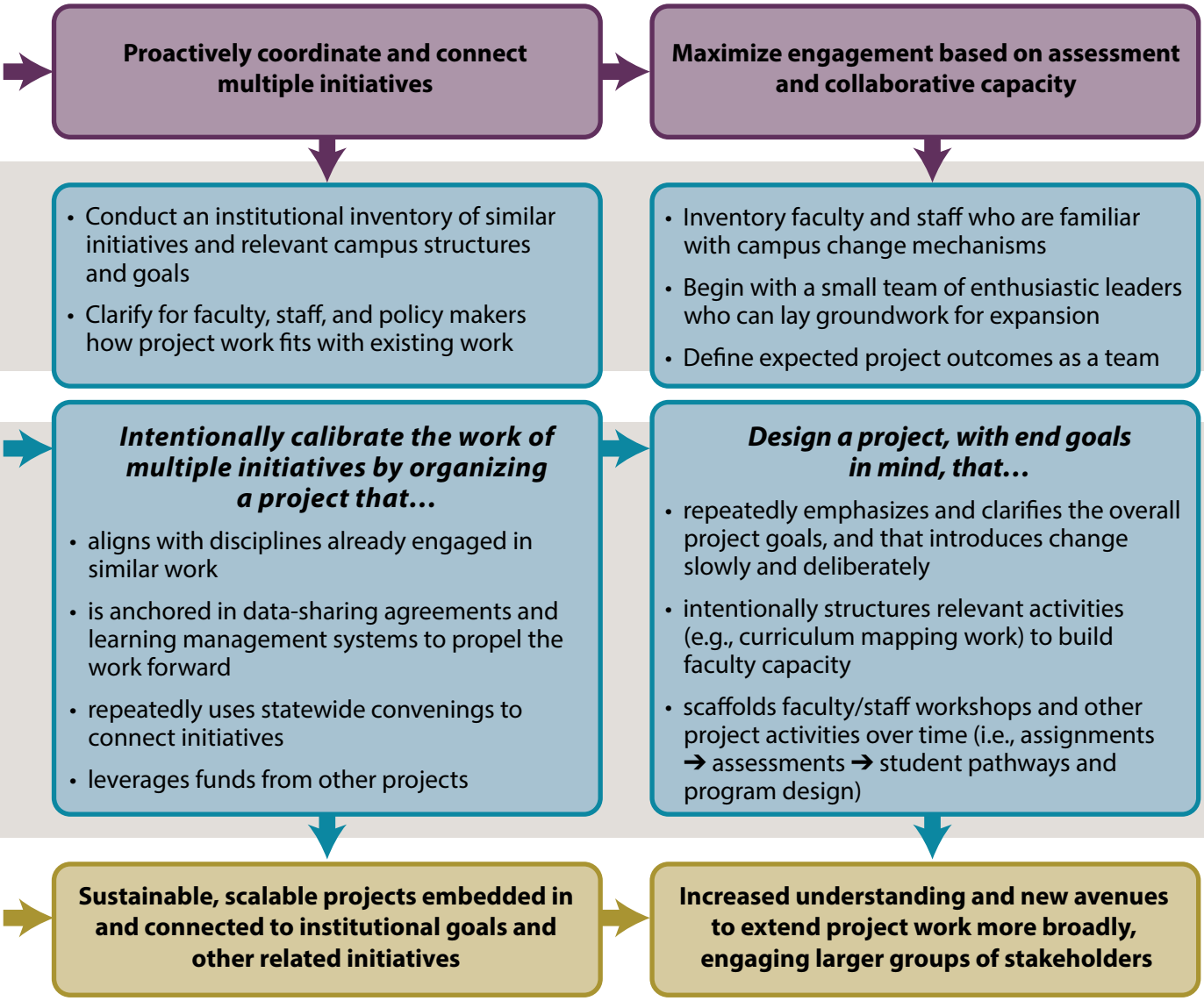
One of the key discoveries of the QC project was that, in different yet complementary ways, the DQP and the LEAP ELOs both encourage greater emphasis on actual student work that demonstrates what students can do with their learning. The project produced a rich array of practices and resources that may help others as they consider alternatives to credit accumulation and seat time as proxies for the learning all students—including transfer students—need to succeed.

FIGURE 1.

Campus Change Processes and Action Steps



for Advancing Transfer Student Success



CHAPTER 1

From "My Work" to "Our Work": Faculty Leadership and the Degree Qualifications Profile

If there are to be any major, lasting changes to the curriculum and to the way we assess student learning, faculty have to take responsibility for those changes. If student learning is to be central to student transfer—to address the needs and discover the talents of twenty-first-century learners—we need to envision a central role for faculty who teach as well as faculty who design the curriculum and its components. If higher education is to transition to a proficiency-based model[6]—in traditional, virtual, and hybrid classroom settings—faculty will need to collaborate across institutions and states to do the work. They will need to create new ways of working together, in sum, for larger educational progress.

As the QC project demonstrated, when faculty are involved as participants and as leaders in educational change initiatives, they can find creative solutions to problems. The initiative began with the intention to work with sets of colleagues and allies who were interested in exploring the Degree Qualification Profile's (DQP's) call for systemic change and finding ways to make that change real. Through working with the teams at the participating institutions, the QC project staff has concluded that an investment in faculty leadership and learning is in fact much overdue across all sectors of higher education. National and state practices over the past two decades have created stringent programs of austerity and privatization that are harming students and institutions, and resources and support for faculty leadership and innovation have been unduly restricted.

AAC&U has argued over the past several decades for the need to improve the quality of undergraduate learning. The QC project has provided the wherewithal to demonstrate how to engage faculty in systemic change at scale to improve student learning and increase degree attainment. While there assuredly are other improvements that higher education leaders need to make, this initiative demonstrated the need for the human element of learning produced and fostered in the relationship between students and teachers. Investment in that relationship is essential. As our national demographics change and increasing numbers of first-generation students and students from traditionally underserved groups come to college, there is greater need than ever to invest in educators' capacity to help all students learn.

> Be sure to keep faculty at the center of this work. They are responsible for the curriculum; their leadership and commitment are essential. Also, take time to build relationships and trust across participating campuses and systems.
>
> —California Final Report

Blue Ridge Community College Propositions

Engage faculty in assessment in ways that

- fit naturally and easily into what is already taking place in their classrooms;
- are not unduly burdensome;
- provide immediate feedback leading to a specific action for improvement on a small scale; and
- can still be aggregated to provide a bigger picture of the general education competencies as a whole.

—BRCC/James Madison Final Report

6 Proficiency-based: An approach to learning guided by or based on a set of student demonstrations of knowledge, understanding, and skill that satisfy the levels of mastery sufficient to justify the award of an academic degree.

The Important Roles of the Curriculum, Faculty, and the DQP

While a longstanding tradition in US education gives faculty formal authority over the curriculum, in practice, the majority of faculty members do not have authority over the curriculum as a whole. There are significant differences between authority over the curriculum in major programs, which is typically in the stewardship of departments, and authority over general education, which is typically vested in an institutional committee. From the outside, these different divisions of authority may not be clear. From the inside, authority over the curriculum is relative, contextual, and contingent. Departments individually may have some control over courses in sectors or segments of general education but not over general education as a whole, and departments have limited if any authority over developmental education. Full-time faculty may have no authority over new online ventures. In highly regulated public systems, faculty may have no authority over certain state-required courses or over transfer articulation programs for high-value majors. Furthermore, the majority of faculty members now are working on term contracts. This "new majority"[7] of contingent faculty rarely has any authority over the curriculum at all; in some cases they have no authority over their own courses.

Everything we know about transformational change indicates that it requires integrative, cross-functional, and multidimensional leadership and technical support of various kinds.

Where faculty do possess authority to change the curriculum, the authority is bounded. If projected changes to the curriculum in a program are small, limited to an individual academic department, then that department's faculty usually make the changes. Changes that would affect students beyond those majoring in the department generally require approval by an institution-wide committee as part of the shared governance process. In other words, on their own, unsupported, faculty cannot make large-scale curricular change. Everything we know about transformational change indicates that it requires integrative, cross-functional, and multidimensional leadership and technical support of various kinds. Transformational change to the curriculum happens when tenured and tenure-track faculty lead with support from, and in partnership with, other sectors of their campus communities (in some governance bodies, faculty on term contracts are gaining some stature and taking lead roles, but they are still rarely found in high-status positions). We cannot make progress without faculty, but we likewise cannot rely solely on faculty to make systemic changes.

Institutional and systemic change requires the leadership and support of senior administrators in particular. But there are additional requirements. Change will not be sustainable and resilient unless the resource and reward systems aid and abet it.[8]

Institutional structures themselves need to change to accommodate the conditions the new curriculum demands. In public systems, the institutional change must function in a systemic context. State-level policies and practices usually have to move to accommodate institutional changes. These are complex dynamics.

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7 See www.newfacultymajority.info/.

8 See John Tagg, "Why Does the Faculty Resist Change?" *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, January/February 2012, 6–15.

Enter the DQP. The DQP calls for nothing less than transformational curricular change and large-scale transitional movement. For the first time, the DQP articulates a set of learning outcomes that every student should have practiced in college. In addition, the DQP articulates levels and ways in which students can demonstrate their proficiency in each learning outcome area through work they have completed through the curriculum and cocurriculum, rather than advancing through their education based solely upon completing a set of specified courses with certain grades. Faculty leadership and participation is essential to successful implementation of the DQP—without the active involvement of faculty, change initiatives go nowhere. But how are campus and system leaders to engage the faculty in meaningful leadership and participation? Faculty are traditionally independent and have often acted as free agents within both the "traditional" campus tenure system and the new emergent, term contract faculty systems; the composition of the faculty itself is changing. The meaning of faculty leadership and participation is altogether different in institutions where increasing numbers of faculty work on term contracts, as is now the case in all sectors of higher education (see the Delphi Project on the Changing Faculty and Student Success: thechangingfaculty.org). Nonetheless, if the DQP is to help higher education students in the United States graduate prepared to succeed in the global environment in the twenty-first century, then all faculty members and educators need to be centrally involved.

How the QC Project Motivated Faculty to Participate: From "My Work" to "Our Work"

The QC project worked with a wide array of faculty who came from the two- and four-year institutions in the nine states. Campus and state participants struggled for much of the project with team formation and sense-making—figuring out what effective actions to take and where to find leverage points.

Midway through the project, successes began to emerge. Some of the faculty in the dyads discovered that they could recommend DQP-based changes to the curriculum that would result in improved learning conditions for transfer students. Some of the discoveries were straightforward in hindsight; some were quite surprising. Some offered new understandings of work that lies ahead should the partners continue their collaboration. None of the dyads could succeed in three years in bringing about transformational change in their institutions, but all of the dyads and the two statewide projects made progress—the first step in a transition to a proficiency model or pathway for student learning at the degree level. All of the dyads and states described next steps in a plan that they hope to carry out. All testified to the benefits of their collaboration, and all could see change coming.

> If the participating faculty have not had prior experience with collaboration or the use of learning outcomes, the DQP is unlikely to be seen as a useful tool. Using the DQP relies on earlier experiences that can prepare participants to see the value of the framework and to adapt it to their own use. Faculty need time to work together and develop a level of trust before they can cocreate or mesh expectations within a curriculum across institutional lines.
>
> —Utah Final Report

The QC project gave its leadership group an opportunity to discover (or rediscover) principles for faculty educational leadership.[9] For faculty to be fully engaged in this work, they must find motivation to lead and apply the skills of leadership in a context that may be new to them. Participants found it easy to suggest modifications to their own courses or programs based on the DQP. Many faculty have been working for years with learning outcomes and assessment practices in their own general education programs. But the DQP brings something different to the process. At the final project meeting, one participant from Wisconsin observed of the DQP that "it's specific—more specific than the LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes [ELOs]."

While the concept of proficiency in the achievement of student learning outcomes is not new, the DQP asks for a new understanding of learning at the level of the degree, and it calls for assessment of comprehensive, cumulative, and integrative learning. Faculty who have been active in AAC&U's LEAP initiative and familiar with the ELOs can and do gravitate to the next level of understanding that the DQP demands. Those who had not had these experiences needed time to experiment with the use of these conceptual tools and to build a level of understanding and trust in the value of this work. It is certainly true that at the outset most participants in the QC project had not thought about the particular modifications that the DQP might suggest even within their own courses or programs. "In Utah," observed one participant, "the ELOs made sense and were familiar to the participants. The DQP language was confusing. It took time and experience to map the DQP approach onto familiar curricular terrain." An Indiana participant agreed and elaborated: "Conversations about student learning and assessment frameworks take time and cannot be rushed."

The meaning of demonstrated learning at the degree level does present a significant conceptual challenge. Faculty understand the concept and can envision the value to students, but they cannot easily recommend changes to existing structures—it just isn't the way most institutions of higher education currently operate.

The meaning of demonstrated learning at the degree level does present a significant conceptual challenge. It is hard to build a coherent undergraduate curriculum that supports learning for a wide array of diverse students on the way to degree completion. Faculty understand the concept and can envision the value to students, but they cannot easily recommend changes to existing structures—it just isn't the way most institutions of higher education currently operate. The change appears unfeasible to newcomers, and as one participant at the final project meeting wrote, "it's important to acknowledge that some faculty may have a great deal of trouble engaging with the DQP." It is one thing for a faculty member to envision structural change across institutions that share students and quite another to figure out how to play a role in that work and motivate other colleagues to join this work. How does a given faculty member know who needs to be at the table for such discussions? How much can a single discipline (e.g., biology) within a dyad change in the context of the broader curriculum? How much can adjuncts change even one course? Who is responsible for change to general education in the institution? Can faculty

9 See Susan Albertine and R. J. Henry, "Quality in Undergraduate Education: A Collaborative Project," *Liberal Education* 90, no. 3 [2004]: 46–53; and Ronald J. Henry, ed., *Faculty Development for Student Achievement: The QUE Project* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2006).

change state transfer policy? The answer is generally that while some faculty can do some work to address questions like these some of the time, overarching structural success will require the involvement of additional stakeholders. Leaders in Kentucky reached a similar insight about the need for an array of dynamic leaders "who can translate this moving forward. So assembling your team is critical."

Through the QC project, we did make progress in organizing larger groups of stakeholders in each of the dyads and connecting those stakeholders to faculty. Each partnership was able to motivate its participants and to apply leadership skills in new contexts. In Virginia, for example, the Blue Ridge Community College/James Madison University dyad reported that they had already developed good interinstitutional relationships before joining the project. Through their work with the DQP, they found new angles for collaboration that strengthened interinstitutional ties and helped the participants to think systemically about the ways they could solve problems related to sharing data on student success. They learned that they needed to engage institutional research staff, data managers, and the commonwealth's attorney general as stakeholders. That last connection was particularly important, as without permission they could not share data across institutional boundaries, which would have seriously hindered their work on degree-level proficiencies.

In each dyad, the local project leaders found ways to motivate participants as they worked to envision and redesign various pieces and parts of the curriculum. Some partners were able to move plans toward implementation.

Faculty in the project discovered that they needed to think about general education, major program courses, and electives, as well as pre- and co-requisites.

Engaged Faculty Action

If the DQP's purpose is to assist faculty as they work to improve transfer student success and document that success through assessment, there are certain specific activities that participants need to identify and particular priorities that leaders need to organize and address.

Partners need to be motivated by an interest in questions that extend beyond the usual discourse about a particular discipline or profession. Faculty in the project discovered that they needed to think about general education, major program courses, and electives, as well as pre- and co-requisites. In Kentucky, for example, much of the QC project work initially centered on biology, with an emphasis on modifications to transfer agreements between institutions based on shared work with the DQP and Tuning, the latter through another Lumina sponsored project in Kentucky.[10] The Kentucky leaders were intent on aligning the work of disciplines across multiple institutions. Successes achieved across the community of biology faculty influenced state leaders to begin similar work with faculty from statistics, math, and developmental mathematics on developing learning outcomes, identifying high-impact practices (see sidebar, page 17) to engage students in learning, and

10 Tuning is the process of aligning expectations for student learning in a single discipline both within and across institutions; the process is closely aligned with the DQP. See http://www.luminafoundation.org/resources/roadmap-to-enhanced-student-learning.

setting levels of expected learning across the curriculum for quantitative reasoning that students will achieve as part of their general education.

This kind of comprehensive approach to the curriculum, spreading beyond single disciplines, is not easy to manage, as observers in Kentucky told us. The effort requires coordination—in this case accomplished through the Kentucky Council on Higher Education—as well as development of new conceptual frameworks. It requires institutional, interinstitutional, and systemic thinking to build interest among faculty who are accustomed to thinking first of their own disciplines.

As an example, several times during the project colleagues expressed concerns about the concept of key assignments that students carry from course to course. Determining what this work should be and how it should be assessed will be challenging to anyone who has been accustomed to thinking of the curriculum in discrete course units rather than as a whole. Yet many institutions are moving in this direction. Salt Lake Community College, in Utah, has motivated faculty to work with signature assignments that cross disciplinary lines and that are assessed for cumulative learning over time. The use of signature assignments to demonstrate proficiency is an advanced approach that takes time to understand and map onto a curriculum.

Partners need to understand the integral relationship between general education and the major. Both come together to make liberal education. This integration is envisioned in the DQP. The integrative vision of liberal education as presented in the DQP presents a considerable challenge because it asks for a structural approach to the curriculum that campuses admire but rarely achieve. The final report from Oregon observes that "a positive outcome derived from faculty engagement with the DQP and with AAC&U's LEAP initiative: some institutions are experiencing renewed faculty energy for substantiating the learning outcomes defined for students in their majors. While some debate does exist on what level of learning outcome is attained at the associate level versus the baccalaureate level, such discussion is healthy in ensuring the baccalaureate degree paradigms for the various majors are appropriately designed."

Partners need to be motivated by a shared interest in assessment and in structural approaches to assessment. Faculty need to hone their ability to engage colleagues both within a particular discipline and across an institution in the process of working together to design a course of study that is progressive and that can be assessed in a meaningful way. The DQP asks that the degree program include milestones that help students and educators evaluate progress as students move on different pathways toward their degrees. Any workable plan needs to envision a range of pathways that are articulated and assessed in milestone stages. As students move along their pathways, they need to be given opportunities to demonstrate and document their learning. Assessment at the institutional level is essential. It is also difficult, however, for most program faculty to approach assessment at the institutional level with a sense of authority and empowerment.

The greatest achievements in the Middlesex/UMass Lowell dyad resulted from their innovative project model, which involved assignment development with peer feedback based on curricular planning, including mapping LEAP VALUE Rubrics to the DQP. Faculty teams then assessed student artifacts based on the new assignments. Extensive faculty collaboration across institutions and within the four disciplines—biology, business, criminal justice, and psychology—produced positive results by focusing on curriculum, pedagogy and the quality of the cumulative assessment tasks required of students.

One of the greatest achievements of the Fitchburg/Mount Wachusett dyad was building a community of Assessment Scholars willing to work across the two institutions on civic engagement, information literacy, quantitative literacy and written communication. Assessment Scholars experimented with assessment tools by using modified and unmodified LEAP VALUE Rubrics and institutionally developed ones. Exploring together the results allowed for conversations about assessment to flow into curricular planning.

—Massachusetts Final Report

A robust partnership needs to share a comprehensive plan for achievement of DQP outcomes and assessment over time. Progress toward this comprehensive plan was made in some of the dyads, but much work lies ahead. The DQP calls for far-reaching change in stated educational practice to foster high-quality learning. These changes will not be accomplished through two- or three-year projects.

> Each community college has its unique campus culture of assessment. Paramount to any process of building a sustainable culture is the ongoing cultivation of faculty knowledge and skill regarding the language of assessment, its relative importance, and equipping faculty to communicate with one another about using the results for continuous change at the program and institutional level.
>
> —Massachusetts Final Report

Partners need to cultivate from the very start a willingness to study the educational and social environment or cultural context of an institution or a set of institutions. Faculty in the project found this attention to the cultural context highly motivating. QC partners found that they needed to carry out cultural self-study in order to find leverage points for change. Are both institutions prepared to create meaningful and navigable pathways toward more advanced educational attainment and preparation for their students' careers and life purpose? Do people care enough to invest time in this work? Participants need to recognize and understand that learning is a social process for faculty as well as for students.

The social and cultural rewards are not simply academic or intellectual. People need to feel rewarded by the process of collaboration and enjoy sharing ideas about how to educate and what to expect of a college graduate. The social dimensions of the work are critical to its success. As the final report from North Dakota concludes, "Although we've just only scratched the surface, the sharing of in-place teaching and learning strategies at North Dakota campuses has developed pride across the state and across our campuses. Learning about an example of the assessment of critical thinking at Dickinson State University, the focus on diversity across the [general education] program at United Tribes Technical College, and a sample of the use of e-portfolios at Valley City State has helped bridge the typical intercampus competition and has helped us build a culture of cross-state trust and awareness."

Partners need to trust each other well enough to deal with ambiguity and open questions. Large-scale transformational endeavors are complex. The shift toward meaningful engagement with students' development and integrated learning outcomes moves higher education into uncharted waters. Success requires that faculty participants and leaders cultivate an ability to manage uncertainty. They need to engage in perspective-taking across multiple vantage points. They need to navigate between a distant vision or point on the horizon and the ground on which they and their institutions are standing. There is a metacognitive challenge inherent in this work, as well as an emotional challenge. People need to feel safe and trusting if they are to engage in an open-ended change process that is fraught with ambiguity. A foundation of trust may be the basis for getting over some of the fears that faculty report. Because expertise in a field is a matter of faculty identity, many may worry that they do not have sufficient expertise in learning and assessment. But many faculty members experience a breakthrough when they realize that they carry more expertise than they thought and that they can rely on others who have different expertise in learning and assessment. Together, they can create something better. Faculty members don't have to do everything themselves, alone. This

> The DQP is not an easy framework with which to engage and more work needs to be done up front to help faculty and staff understand its utility, benefits, and what "problems" it helps resolve. It takes a dedicated group of faculty to own it, apply it to their institutional context in ways that are meaningful and scalable, and to then act as missionaries to spread the word with others on their campuses.
>
> —Wisconsin Final Report

realization produced relief across the QC change efforts and made the long-term view of transitional work more plausible.

Partners need to be confident that they can envision how students engage in cumulative, integrative learning over time. Faculty have no trouble understanding theories of learning and young adult development (though rarely do most faculty members study these things in their own graduate educations), but they have trouble envisioning matters of control, process, and responsibility. How to understand the collective impact of a curriculum? Who can be responsible for the process of assessing student learning in ways that transcend the individual course? Who can figure out how to guide students along the sometimes widely divergent pathways they take through college? Who is caring about the progress of first-generation students and others from groups traditionally underserved by higher education? These are daunting questions.

Consider these comments from the final California State University–Northridge report on the shared thematic pathway design for general education the university developed with Pierce College: "GE Paths has fostered the consolidation of faculty learning communities. The program has created a forum that intentionally connects faculty, thus enabling collaboration across different disciplines. Full-time and part-time faculty have found in GE Paths a medium to discuss pedagogy and research that extends beyond their departments and colleges. Furthermore, since the program collaborates with other programs across the university, it has increased connections among faculty. Partnership with Pierce College has also fostered communication between both institutions." Colleagues in Indiana, writing in the state's final report, took the following as a core principle: "All faculty voices are equally valued in conversations about student learning and how to assess it. All faculty generally care deeply about improving student learning."

Partners need to believe that in time institutions will change their endowment or reward structures to support such work as collaboration to implement the DQP and strengthen students' demonstrated learning. We could not address this enormous challenge within the scope of the QC project, but we can articulate it. Unless hiring, retention, promotion, tenure, and other reward processes change to include contributions to curricular change, institutional and systemic change, and degree-level student success, the work is going to remain marginal. Indiana colleagues underscored this point in their final report: "The work should culminate in products that are valued (e.g., scholarly presentations and publications). . . . Faculty need to be recognized for doing this work."

How the QC Project Addresses Challenges that Faculty Bring to the Table

The QC project moved beyond motivation and into action with faculty partners in the project. The dyads and statewide efforts opened a rich vein of discoveries about faculty engagement and leadership in practice. Project teams explored and articulated solutions to the institutional and systemic challenges that faculty face once they are engaged in transitional work on degree-level proficiencies. They broached new questions about resilience and sustainability in such large-scale efforts as

application of the DQP requires. What follows is a brief categorical summary of key learning in practice and insights from the project. A more thoroughly developed set of programmatic recommendations follows in chapter 3.

Curricular change. A metacognitive approach to the QC project and faculty learning within the project proved to be valuable. Proponents of highly engaged learning often recommend such an approach to pedagogy, no matter the learner.[11] The QC project attempted to use the equivalent of high-impact practices with the faculty participants (see sidebar). The project sought engaged and highly effective learning opportunities, those that would produce an effect on the learner's knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The QC project encouraged group collaboration at project sites, an activity that participants cited as a major positive outcome of the project. Participants and staff practiced intentional thinking about the process of learning in the project, which led to better-informed leadership decisions that were functional and practical on the ground. This work is serious and difficult. It led to a recommendation to scrap the term "faculty development" and talk instead about faculty engagement in terms that match how we discuss learning and sense making. A participant from Massachusetts observed, "Faculty are interested in adaptive change, while administrators may be more interested in technical change." Through the project, people began to shift emphasis to the capacity to make adaptive change in their use of the DQP, especially concerning assessment. This shift of emphasis became a leadership opportunity. Faculty from the California dyad partnership advised, "Start small and slow. Growth should be gradual."

The project underscored the utility of various conceptual tools to assist in the design of the educational experience. The DQP best serves as a tool when faculty understand how it connects to the use of the LEAP ELOs and VALUE rubrics.[12] It takes time, our colleagues in Utah reminded us, to map the DQP approach onto familiar curricular terrain. It appears more useful when it suggests conceptually how to make more of high-impact practices. Participants observed that campus leaders need to use some discernment as they introduce the DQP. The DQP may be more interesting to faculty after they have done more local work on assignments, courses, and assessment approaches such as rubrics for specific proficiencies. A number of dyads backed into the DQP, so to speak, after tackling specific assessment topics. Good leadership in practice means knowing when and how to use the DQP as a conversation starter or as an extender.

Faculty are invested, generally speaking, in the kind of engaged and integrative education described in the DQP, but they sometimes feel that institutional

High-Impact Practices

These practices typically require that students

- devote time and effort to purposeful tasks;
- interact with faculty and peers about substantive matters;
- work with others different than themselves;
- receive frequent feedback on their performance; and
- see how their learning works in on- and off-campus settings.

Such practices are most effective when students engage in multiple practices multiple times, as part of challenging, coherent academic pathways.

—Adapted from George Kuh, *High-Impact Educational Practices* (Washington, DC: AAC&U 2008)

11 See R. Keith Sawyer, ed., *The Cambridge Handbook of the Learning Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), especially the chapter by Allan Collins, "Cognitive Apprenticeship," 47–60.

12 The VALUE rubrics, developed through AAC&U's Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE) initiative, were designed to reflect progressively more sophisticated levels of demonstrated learning as students' learning developed over time for each of AAC&U's Essential Learning Outcomes. See http://www.aacu.org/value.

constraints block them from providing such an education. One dyad found that they were not successful in keeping their centers for teaching and learning engaged or their professional development offices involved in this integrative education work. For the work to be sustained, they observed, it is essential for these offices to understand the work and to be able to support it through associated workshops. Other structural constraints included scheduling and availability for cross-institutional meetings. It was often easier to pull new colleagues into the effort at the campus level than it was to draw more people across campuses. It may be easier to connect the DQP to general education redesign activities on a single campus than to make the redesign a joint effort of two campuses.

Leadership transitions continued to occur across the project, both on campuses and in systems. Faculty leaders sometimes moved into different work. Administrators sometimes moved on. As colleagues from Indiana observed, such transitions should be considered normative. The adaptive change that participants discovered through their work with the DQP is itself a strategy to help campus participants handle transitions in leadership.

New approaches to transfer. Engaged learning practices rely on activity and repeated application. Through the QC project, participants learned to use and apply the DQP adaptively through practice better than they did when approaching it theoretically, through abstractions. Faculty members, like students, usually learn best while doing work that matters to them. Faculty came to see the DQP learning statements and progressive learning framework as valuable when the project prompted meaningful interinstitutional and intrainstitutional collaboration. Once participants came to that understanding, the work of the project appeared to be feasible and achievable. Faculty care about transfer student outcomes and want to improve those outcomes. This is no abstraction—it is a challenge that requires systemic thinking and collaboration of the kind intended by the DQP. It is also a challenge that requires grounding and some grappling with language issues, especially related to assessment. We witnessed many instances of this challenge in the work of the dyads.

Faculty are invested, generally speaking, in the kind of engaged and integrative education described in the DQP, but they sometimes feel that institutional constraints block them from providing such an education.

Faculty teaching in institutions that share transfer students understand the need for guidance on approaches to equity and inclusion as a means to support the success of all students. Participants associated the emphasis on quality of learning with the use of equity-mindedness in the choice of goals, standards, and expectations. Faculty in the project endorsed the "focus on learning outcomes and the student in the DQP," as a colleague from California observed. The emphasis on student outcomes, and practical approaches to those outcomes, helped participants to envision improvement and ways to promote successful completion at the systemic level.

It is relatively easy to gather faculty across partner institutions and consider the progression of student learning in an area of study from a two-year institution to a four-year institution, imagining the progression as vertical within the "discipline." It is harder to envision horizontal components of the curriculum that emphasize broad, integrative knowledge and the application of intellectual skills or vertical integration of broad knowledge and skills that students should demonstrate over time as they progress toward degrees. The virtue of the DQP in

practice, as participants at J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College and Virginia Commonwealth University discovered, is that it encourages faculty to think of integrative and cumulative outcomes. But even so, development of better outcomes for transfer students requires time for faculty to learn adaptively and to succeed through collaboration.

Pedagogy. Many faculty think that they are addressing learning outcomes, proficiencies, or competencies when in fact they have not made these objectives explicit to their students. They may continue to use transmission models for instruction and rely on memorization and rote learning models for assessment, even when more integrative models are endorsed through shared governance. Moments of success in the project offered insights here as well. It is practical and effective to invite faculty members to acquire additional knowledge and skills and figure out how to use new tools and pedagogical approaches while addressing issues that matter to them in the context of their own institution and for the benefit of the students it serves. We learned that it is equally practical to encourage this kind of learning in partner institutions that share students and have grown to trust each other. The DQP can help institutions to stand by their culture and integrity and still collaborate.

The QC project demonstrated that group collaboration is essential. Committed leaders on the ground were able to integrate their efforts for both assessment and faculty leadership and learning. As participants began to pay attention to student transfer, they became more interested in multi-institutional and interinstitutional activity.

The changing faculty. Given the changing characteristics of the faculty and the often-cited instability of administrative leadership—with highly mobile faculty doing much of the teaching and frequent transitions among administrators—it is essential to address new questions concerning equity among a wide array of stakeholders and campus participants. We learned through the project that tenure-track faculty and non-tenure-track faculty can work together equitably and respectfully, and they can enrich their partnerships by including student affairs educators. While we recognize that institutions and shared governance bodies do not unfailingly support such collaboration, clearly it matters.

Putting it all together. The most significant outcomes of the QC project centered on collaboration and degree-level learning. The QC project demonstrated that group collaboration is essential. Committed leaders on the ground were able to integrate their efforts for both assessment and faculty leadership and learning. Cross-functional activity and boundary crossing occurred effectively on many project sites. As participants began to pay attention to student transfer, they became more interested in multi-institutional and interinstitutional activity. They began to think about the need to work with both tenure-track and non-tenure-track faculty if they wanted to build capacity for change. Project participation truly did facilitate the philosophical and conceptual move from "my students" to "our students," and to "our curriculum."

From a practical standpoint, the DQP provided a set of necessary and complementary tools for alignment. It framed the work of dyads and state partnerships and created a common ground, helping participants to understand the concept of degree-level outcomes and to recognize that these outcomes are important. Its emphasis on quality was critical. In the context of statewide access and completion agendas, participants recognized that quality has rhetorical and ethical value.

Over time, participants in the project came to regard the DQP as a living document. They wanted to have a hand in its further development.

Participants began to pay attention to integrative degree-level learning and demonstration of such learning via assignments and assessments—a significant achievement. It was apparent how much process matters: campus leaders needed to know how and when to introduce the DQP as a conversation starter, or after more local work on courses, programs, rubrics, and assignments.

Over time, participants in the project came to regard the DQP as a living document. They wanted to have a hand in its further development. They also began to realize and apply their discovery of ways that the DQP can help institutions stand by their culture and integrity and still collaborate with other institutions. These are outcomes that made a difference, often significant, to the QC participants. Many of these outcomes were not identified as project objectives, but they emerged as important achievements and discoveries nonetheless. The DQP can help all educators make the transition to proficiency frameworks for degrees. Even in the midst of making the transition, stronger, more engaging designs for our students can be built along with a far more hopeful future for higher education in our country.

CHAPTER 2

Assessment for Quality, Proficiency, and Transfer of Learning

Robust learning outcomes assessment is central to the successful implementation and use of the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP), and engaging faculty is essential to robust assessment. The Quality Collaboratives (QC) project was designed to bring faculty and administrative leaders together to explore the viability of the DQP as an assessment framework, and to bring faculty into the national discussion about the quality of higher education.

The DQP was developed, in part, to bring clarity and consistency to key constructs that define the purpose and the outcomes of higher education. By reducing some of the idiosyncrasies and ambiguity that typically surround assessment, the DQP and the QC project were designed to make assessment more *useful*. The DQP, for instance, makes the distinction between specialized knowledge and broad and integrative knowledge, which helps to clarify the difference between the assessment of focused content and the process by which different types of content are learned and connected. The DQP also identifies and defines the intellectual skills and competencies that transcend disciplinary boundaries—analytic inquiry, use of information resources, quantitative fluency, communication fluency, and engaging diverse perspectives.[13] The DQP makes the distinction between applied learning ("what graduates can do with what they know") and civic learning (the combination of "knowledge and commitment to action"). Finally, the DQP framework delineates the expected proficiencies associated with the developmental progression of learners at each degree level. The important work of the QC project was to determine whether this ambitious thinking could be translated into actionable change.

The DQP framework delineates the expected proficiencies associated with the developmental progression of learners at each degree level. The important work of the QC project was to determine whether this ambitious thinking could be translated into actionable change.

Charged with exploring the feasibility of an early draft of the DQP, QC institutions were not required to use any particular instrument or approach to assessment or to assess any particular outcome. Rather, they were encouraged to observe key assessment principles described in the DQP. QC teams were expected to focus on students' demonstration of their learning by drawing upon assignments embedded in the students' coursework. And, since the project was based on dyads of one four-year and one proximal two-year institution, QC dyad teams were expected to develop collaborative assessment processes that might be useful for guiding students' transfer. In other words, the teams were charged with exploring the possibility of replacing a transfer process based upon seat time with a transfer process based upon students' demonstration of key proficiencies.

13 A sixth intellectual skill, ethical reasoning, was added following the initial period of DQP beta testing.

Engaging Faculty in DQP Assessment — A Bumpy Road

At the heart of the QC project was a key principle espoused by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U)—the belief that an initiative to implement a tool with as much disruptive potential as the DQP must rely on the expertise of teaching faculty and build from existing work. Nonetheless, and not surprisingly, faculty who participated in this project from a variety of disciplines and institutions were often dubious about the purpose and value of assessment (see chapter 1 for more in-depth faculty engagement experiences). All of the QC teams reported that convincing faculty to use the DQP for assessment was difficult. Faculty questioned the purpose of the DQP. They questioned for whom the assessment was intended. They questioned how results might be used. Such questioning of new initiatives and change is well known, and faculty have come honestly to much of their skepticism, especially about assessment. Faculty have seen a parade of assessment initiatives come and go in which the results rarely trickle down to influence the classroom. Assessment reports may keep administrators busy, faculty understand, but from their own perspective, those reports do little to help them in their work. They take little responsibility for assessment results because often they have had little responsibility for producing the results being measured. For the most part, faculty believe teaching and assessment, especially at the institutional level, simply do not intersect most of the time.

Furthermore, "the DQP is not an easy framework with which to engage," as the Mount Wachusett Community College (MWCC)/ Fitchburg State University team reported, and as many of the other teams also found. Substantial work on the team's part was necessary to help faculty understand the DQP's "utility, benefits, and what *problems* it helps solve." As the Fitchburg team advised, "It takes a dedicated group of faculty to own it, apply it to their institutional context in ways that are meaningful and scalable, and to then act as missionaries to spread the word with others on their campuses."

At the heart of the QC project was the belief that an initiative to implement a tool with as much disruptive potential as the DQP must rely on the expertise of teaching faculty and build from existing work.

Many Ways Forward

Many QC team leaders noted the importance of approaching new projects cautiously and being wary of "initiative fatigue." As a consequence, some elected to save the introduction of the DQP until later in the project, after they had established the trust and the commitment necessary for quality assessment. The purpose of the DQP seemed particularly elusive at institutions that had already gone through the process of adopting AAC&U's LEAP ELOs. One project's leaders elected to stay with the ELOs, map their outcomes to the DQP after the fact, and then introduce the DQP for discussion. They referred to their strategy as a "stealth" approach to the DQP. In a similar vein, several teams used the DQP as a way to seed discussions about assessment and the growing press for national norms. Other teams, like J. Sargeant Reynolds and Virginia Commonwealth University, introduced the DQP as part of an exercise in which faculty joined in mapping their local outcomes to the DQP.

Ultimately, the DQP was most palatable in all the QC institutions when it was understood to be a framework that met or supported local outcomes, rather than

as a set of prescribed guidelines. Still, none of the QC teams, at the time of this writing, had successfully completed a test of the DQP—which is to say, assessed a sizable sample of student work, fully measured and mapped a set of scores to the DQP, or mapped a sample of local outcomes to the DQP benchmarks for the associate, baccalaureate, or master's degree levels. The assessment of proficiencies, as reported by all the QC teams, is a complex and formidable challenge regardless of how those proficiencies are defined. While the QC project did not produce completed processes of outcomes assessment measured in accordance with the DQP, there were other ways in which the project succeeded and yielded new insights on transfer and student success.

Meeting Faculty Where They Are

The first order of business, QC leaders reasoned, was to develop strategies in which assessment is understood to be *useful*. To that end, QC teams were largely successful.

Just as good teaching is about meeting students where they are, success in any campus change initiative is contingent upon meeting faculty where they are.

In Kentucky, the Council on Postsecondary Education developed a set of professional learning communities (PLCs), comprising faculty from both four-year and two-year institutions, first in biology and shortly thereafter in statistics, math, and developmental math. The biology PLC worked collaboratively to implement, as a first step, an online multiple-choice test that had effectively helped to facilitate transfer. However, through the QC and DQP framework, faculty soon realized the limitations of multiple choice tests for assessing both intellectual skills and content mastery. The biology faculty entered into a conversation with other faculty teaching in the general education program to collaborate on strengthening students' learning of the cross-cutting intellectual skills that were central to the general education program, and that they could not provide solely through biology courses and multiple choice tests.

Similarly, in Virginia, campus leaders refined existing database indicators that tracked students from Blue Ridge Community College who transferred to James Madison University. Though this may seem to be outside the parameters of the QC project, it was nonetheless a useful first step in refining transfer protocols and, in alignment with the spirit of the project, in bringing faculty together from both institutions to consider the implications of the variety of matriculation paths students take between the two institutions. Moreover, this effort helped move the newly established team toward deeper assessment—collaboratively looking directly at student work.

These efforts might seem modest, but they were not trivial. They illustrate a critical finding that emerged from the project. Just as good teaching is about meeting students where they are, success in any campus change initiative is contingent upon meeting faculty where they are. As the MWCC/Fitchburg QC team gleaned from their work, "Assessment priorities and expectations must begin with existing faculty work in their courses and assignments, and faculty must be given leadership and ownership responsibilities for developing the assessment processes and structures."

One of the most compelling examples of meeting faculty where they are emerged in the Indiana dyad (Ivy Tech Community College and Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis). This team employed a technique called dynamic criteria mapping.[14] Rather than start with a framework like the DQP, dynamic criteria mapping begins by focusing on samples of student work and engaging faculty in a discussion about the attributes of that work, both positive and negative. From that discussion a set of criteria or attributes emerged, and faculty shaped this into a draft rubric that reflected in language and construct their shared understanding. For the Indiana team, this dynamic criteria mapping process preceded introduction of the DQP, which the faculty ultimately determined to be valuable as a way to situate their work within the larger national discussion of learning outcomes assessment.

The University of Massachusetts Lowell/Middlesex Community College dyad succeeded in meeting faculty where they are by starting the project with disciplinary teams in biology, business, psychology, and criminal justice. Many faculty have a stronger affiliation with their disciplines than they do with their home institutions, so it made sense that these disciplinary "starting places," as the Lowell/Middlesex QC reported, were effective in "providing opportunities for contextualized, collaborative design and assessment work."

In the disciplinary collaboration, team leaders reported that "faculty quickly developed a shared understanding of the need to scaffold student development." This change in teaching behavior, the sequencing of assignments to correspond with the way students mature and learn, introduces an enlightened and novel way to teach that is a departure from the more common content- and teacher-centered approach to curriculum design. This expanded understanding of scaffolded student learning growth through attention to assignments surfaced in most QC dyads in one form or another.

All QC dyads praised the trust that emerged among faculty, and several reported that the increased respect between two- and four-year institutions' educators was perhaps the most valuable outcome of the initiative.

The Key: Collaboration and Assessment Design

While it was challenging to engage faculty in assessment in general, and assessment using the DQP in particular, all participants agreed that the rich collaborations that emerged were surprising and rewarding. All QC dyads praised the trust that emerged among faculty, and several reported that the increased respect between two- and four-year institutions' educators was perhaps the most valuable outcome of the initiative.

Most teams shared strategies that they discovered for fostering successful collaboration, and many found that disciplinary teams by virtue of natural affinity were a good starting place, as previously noted. Some of the teams recommended expanding the collaboration incrementally to include other disciplines or staff, such as librarians when the outcome of interest is information literacy, or student affairs educators when the outcomes involve out-of-class experiences.

One common denominator among the successful collaborations was time—time for teams to build trust, time to explore the targeted outcomes, time to

14 See Bob Broad, *What We Really Value: Beyond Rubrics in Teaching and Assessing Writing* (Provo, Utah: Utah State University Press, 2003).

consider assessment criteria or rubrics, and, most importantly, time to examine samples of student work or artifacts *together.* That practice, several teams reported, predicates a cultural shift. When faculty assess student work together, they deepen their understanding of the connections between student performance and the course assignment that prompted a learning artifact, and, ultimately, to the sequence of learning experiences leading up to the student's level of proficiency. That insight is the first step in the transformation of a workshop or series of workshops into the elusive context of a *culture of assessment* in which the activity of collaborative assessment is no longer viewed as additional work—it is, rather, a new way to engage in the work faculty have always done.

Over time, assessment work is invariably coupled with collaborative assignment design. The work of assignment design becomes, as illustrated by Kentucky's PLCs, a mindful sequencing of assignments, a progression that grows from first year to senior capstone. When criminal justice faculty in one of the Massachusetts dyads were dissatisfied with the results of their assessment of student quantitative literacy skills, they collectively decided to develop more opportunities for students to practice those skills "in different contexts across the curriculum." As assessment is viewed collectively over time, it can help faculty bring greater coherence to the curriculum. At the same time, faculty come to understand assessment as integral to good instructional design and good teaching practice in single courses as well as throughout a program or course of study. One team noted how they became increasingly "attuned to students' needs as well as to institutional intentions." From that seed can emerge new faculty leaders, a finding that will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

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Toward Deeper Assessment

It would be misleading to suggest that successes such as those described in the previous section happen magically when faculty are thrown into the same room. The QC leaders who facilitated this work were experts in assessment and professional development, and every success, large or small, was made possible because faculty leaders stepped up to meet the challenge. The road toward a true culture of assessment remains, at best, bumpy.

Some of the bumps are predictable. Faculty members who are new to assessment, for starters, tend to confuse grading with assessment, which is not surprising—the distinction is nuanced. Grading, to begin, is almost always done by faculty in isolation. It is idiosyncratic; it almost always reflects factors such as attendance, participation, test and quiz scores (almost none of which have undergone rigorous item analysis), and other attributes unique to each instructor's approach to teaching. Diligent faculty routinely revise their courses, certainly, but those revisions are rarely the result of a systematic analysis of grade distributions.

In contrast, assessment in the QC teams was performed collaboratively; moreover, it systematically shines a light on the students' learning experiences throughout the curriculum (and, ideally, on the cocurriculum), as well as on individual courses. Many QC faculty members refined and improved their

assignments to make them more effective and responsive to the learning goals of their classes, programs, and institutions. The portfolio assessment employed by the Utah team brought faculty together from multiple disciplines to assess work samples gathered from multiple disciplines. It was not uncommon for QC teams to report that faculty came to recognize and value how the national norms of the DQP and its emphasis on the entire degree applied across the disciplines and programs of their own institutions.

Most of the QC teams that engaged faculty in rubric calibration sessions used one of the sixteen AAC&U VALUE rubrics (available for free download at http://www.aacu.org/value-rubrics). Like the dynamic criteria mapping process (see above), the VALUE rubrics were designed by faculty for faculty to use in judging student work samples. Often QC teams found it valuable to make modifications or adaptions to the rubric, which is consistent with the development of the VALUE rubrics as general or metarubrics that could be adapted to institutional missions and programs. Some dyads found that the VALUE rubric performance descriptors provided more useful detail than the DQP descriptors for assessing student work. The Fitchburg QC team, for instance, stressed the importance of engaging faculty in rubric development, revision, and assessment. They noted the importance of coming to the point "where everyone is invested in the rubric and comfortable applying performance criteria to a set of student artifacts." Other QC teams used VALUE rubrics with no changes.

That leads to another important difference between assessment and grading. Grades are relative within and across courses. The most obvious example is when students are graded on a curve, but even when faculty don't grade on a curve, they grade in ways that are relative to their context. Faculty who teach first-year students don't use the same grading standard as faculty who teach graduate students. Assessment of proficiency, by contrast, is based on a fixed, agreed-upon standard. And though the consequences of high-stakes competency assessment certainly will have an impact upon the students and their work, faculty who assess proficiency are not focused primarily on assessing students for content mastery—students have already been graded by their instructors for that. They are holding samples of student work to an established and verifiable standard about the underlying skills and abilities of communication, analysis, problem solving, and ethical reasoning that allow students to use their content for a purpose. Because these standards (distinct from standardization) are utilized across disparate disciplines, assignments, and contexts, the verifiability of the standards is crucial. Verifiability is achieved not by rigorous statistical analysis (as is the case with most existing standardized assessments), but by the corroboration of experts—faculty who teach.

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The distinctions made here reflect a faculty-centered philosophy of assessment. As noted at the outset of this chapter, one goal of the QC initiative has been to bring the work of faculty—collectively—into the center of the business of establishing and judging quality and into the broader discussion about the value of education. It is why leaders of this project often cite the need for turning "my work" into "our work."

Building Faculty Consensus: The Heart of Quality Assessment

What does "our work" look like? How are faculty, notorious for their independence, brought into agreement about a quality standard? Most of the QC teams used *norming*. Norming involves the application of a set of criteria, such as a rubric, to score a student work sample and then a comparison and discussion of the scores. A well-facilitated norming session can demystify the qualities in student performance that faculty value and, in most cases, will result in a reasonable measure of agreement—interrater reliability.

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Many faculty are initially concerned that norming implies homogeneity, a flattening of the teaching profession to the lowest common denominator. The concern conflates standardization (i.e., a single or preferred answer), with high standards for performance that may look and sound different depending on disciplinary context and conventions. As faculty gain experience with norming and outcomes assessment, they usually come to understand that student learning, when measured by faculty using a vetted analytic rubric, benefits when faculty use a diversity of assignments, especially when those assignments have been mindfully designed to align with the learning dimensions of the rubric. Rubric use reveals not only the shared expectations for student learning, but also the differences that are expected based upon student areas of study or focus. As the University of Massachusetts Lowell/Middlesex Community College team found, "Assessment results are most likely to be used to improve learning when assessors include faculty/staff with direct responsibility for assignment/prompt design." They add that in their work they "*always* assumed faculty ownership of improved learning—either in terms of redesigning the assignment or in terms of providing students more opportunities during the semester to 'do' the kinds of tasks required of them in the cumulative assessment."

Three PLCs in Kentucky—statistics, math, and developmental math—were each presented with the same sample case analysis. They were introduced to a VALUE rubric and asked to score the case analysis to determine the level of quantitative literacy represented by the artifact. Each group met on a separate day. Nonetheless, with only a modest amount of norming, all three groups came to roughly similar ratings on the case analysis. And all three groups agreed that the assessment of quantitative literacy could be improved with changes to the rubric.

The consensus of experts among two-year and four-year faculty achieved through this exercise stands as proof of concept that outcomes assessment rather than seat time could be utilized to facilitate transfer, a larger goal of the QC initiative and reflective of the progressively higher levels of learning achievement articulated through the DQP.

Assessment as Faculty Development

When new to norming, invariably faculty want to know the year in school of the student. In proficiency assessment, however, the class standing of the student is irrelevant. The attributes of the performance are what matter. Does the performance meet expectations for the degree level? And are the expectations aligned

with the curriculum so that students can engage in necessary development of the performance levels expected?

Similarly, faculty new to norming want to know more about the assignment. But proficiency assessment works best when a faculty member's need to know the assignment is *temporarily* suspended. If the curriculum has been effectively aligned, taught, and learned, then the criteria for proficiency will have been internalized by the learner. Unfortunately, assessment rarely confirms this ideal. Much more common is the revelation that assignments do not align with assessment criteria.

Almost all QC teams that engaged in norming eventually came to the work of assignment design. As the Fitchburg team reported, "Particular attention must be given to supporting faculty in the development of appropriate assignments for assessment purposes." They volunteered an additional step, recommending that "before collecting artifacts for a particular assignment, it is recommended that the assessment team assess the assignment prompt itself to ensure it meets the assessment elements of the rubric." The Lowell and Middlesex team added another twist, encouraging faculty to build not just particular skills but also the "desired level of learning" into their assignments. Perhaps as a result of this sequence of activities, they suggested that "no blame for poor student performance was ever placed on the students in the two years of this project."

Norming encourages faculty reflection. Faculty come to see how their own judgment compares with those of their peers. They see how their judgment compares with specific criteria of the rubric. They reflect upon their own teaching, their own syllabi and curricula, and the extent to which their own assignments align with and support the goals and outcomes of their programs and institutions. Do I really teach critical thinking? Do I encourage students to examine their own assumptions? Do I teach students to integrate ideas and concepts learned in other courses? Should I? And if so, what strategies do others who teach in my discipline use to effectively address the criteria in a rubric? And how does my quality standard—my assessment—compare with that of my colleagues at my institution? With that of my colleagues at other institutions? Through the Multi-State Collaborative to Advance Learning Outcomes Assessment, a partnership between AAC&U, the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association, twelve states, and approximately one hundred two-year and four-year institutions, samples of authentic student work are being collected and scored using the VALUE rubrics to provide a picture of the nationwide landscape of learning based on shared faculty judgment about the quality of student learning across a diverse set of institutions and states. (See http://www.aacu.org/value/msc for details.)

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Engaging faculty with this type of questioning invariably provokes some degree of cognitive dissonance, a key ingredient in seeding change, improvement, and responsiveness in a profession buffeted by changes in student demographics and those students' purposes for learning, as well as by shifting economics and public expectations of higher education.

What State and Institutional Leaders Learned about Assessment

Faculty were not the only ones who learned from the QC project. Administrators, system-level leaders, and the authors of this report all learned much about how institutional change to enhance student transfer success can be facilitated. In addition to the lessons already presented—the difficulty of assessment, the need to provide faculty with safe spaces and time, the need to cultivate faculty leadership and assessment expertise, the central importance of good assignments, to name a few—many other lessons emerged.

Leaders from the University of Wisconsin system learned that well-structured assessment at the course and program level can and should be elevated to provide institutional assessment. Designing assessment to do double and triple duty not only saves time, it also obviates the need for expensive standardized instruments that don't provide feedback to students that might improve their learning and to faculty to help them to focus attention on the areas where they can enhance their teaching.

Well-structured assessment, Wisconsin participants noted, can effectively support "student- and learning-centered transfer evaluations." But this won't happen, they cautioned, without "the essential building blocks of robust assessment," adding that "without this foundation, the evaluation of transfer is based on inputs, not outputs."

The QC teams emphasized the need for cross-institutional processes that contribute to national norms and bring faculty voices — and some nuance — into the national discussion around student transfer success.

Leaders in the QC project became acutely aware of *initiative fatigue*. Even when projects hold great potential for improving faculty work and student learning, it is critical to integrate new initiatives such as QC and DQP with existing work. "More precisely," as the Wisconsin team volunteered, "it is important to align new initiatives with existing system or institutional goals."

To that end, several of the QC teams emphasized the need for cross-institutional processes that contribute to national norms and bring faculty voices—and some nuance—into the national discussion around student transfer success.

Summing Up

What emerged from the multipronged approach of the QC project was a set of principles that resonated across the participating campuses and states.

- Sometimes a stealth or indirect approach to adoption of new ways of working is surprisingly effective, and "backing into the DQP" proved to be important. Local ownership emerged on campuses that placed the DQP framework in the context of existing work, indirectly allowing the relevant actors to discover its usefulness for assessing learning within the critical scaffolded, intentional pathways that cross educational institutions and disciplines.
- Successful assessment usually emerged when team leaders met faculty where they were. Sustainability of assessment and collaboration across institutional boundaries requires faculty and administrative leadership to incorporate these processes into how they work with each other on a continuous basis.
- The work of assessment was valuable as an approach to faculty development. The activity of rubric norming proved to be particularly valuable. The

internal and cross-institutional conversations around student work and the VALUE rubrics helped establish shared expectations for the learning students need for transfer and success.

- Directly engaging faculty in assessment indeed emerged as the central challenge in this project, leading to successful strategies for achieving faculty ownership and collaboration.

In a policy world that, despite the claims to the contrary, continues to focus on the readily available outputs of access, completion, and cost, measures of quality and depth of student learning are critically needed. Policy discussions are not driven by simplistic measures, such as course completion and credit accumulation, because they help meet the needs expressed by employers and policy makers for better prepared graduates, but rather because we lack good data from broadly implemented assessment measures that demonstrate student learning in a way that reflects the level of performance that faculty, employers, and the public seek.

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Proficiency-based assessments that allow higher education to focus on the learning outcomes needed for academic and civic success (the ELOs); the levels of learning students should achieve as they progress through their educations (as framed by the DQP); shared agreement on how to solicit the desired levels of learning from students through well-crafted assignments and faculty-engaged assessment (VALUE rubrics and e-portfolios)—determining and implementing all of these is complex work. The QC project has provided a set of assessment tools, strategies, and practices that point the way forward for capturing quality indicators of learning and approaches that embed student learning assessment and improvement in the daily business of higher education.

CHAPTER 3

Distributed and Inclusive Faculty Leadership in and across Institutions

The Quality Collaboratives (QC) project took place during a time of significant transition in higher education, with significant implications for faculty and institutional leadership in relation to college curricula and student success. The outcomes of the project were influenced by major changes in the composition of faculties nationwide, in student enrollment patterns, in approaches to delivery of the curriculum, and in societal expectations and concerns about postsecondary graduates. The professoriate has almost reached the tipping point between baby boomers and the next generation, with an accompanying shift in the interests and goals of individual faculty members, even as institutions are relying more and more on contingent faculty whose expectations and connections to their institutions are often different from those of their tenure-track peers. At the same time, the composition of the student body has become ever more diverse in interests, backgrounds, and aspirations.

Changes in patterns of faculty and student participation have been accompanied by a growing recognition that improvement in student success measures—and institutional success measures—in the twenty-first century will require new forms of collaboration across institutions and disciplinary lines, new kinds of interactions with community partners, and new ways of generating and applying the knowledge to address the complex and "wicked problems"[15] that are shaping social, economic, and environmental conditions in today's world. As the authors argued in chapter 1, these changes will only be possible if colleges and universities undergo a significant culture change—from an emphasis on individual scholarly interests and individual courses to a focus on how faculty members can work together, through new communities of practice and learning, to create clear and navigable pathways to educational attainment. Those pathways must be accompanied by milestones for attainment, compelling educational experiences, and ways to demonstrate learning that engage students in reflection about their learning process. These milestones can lay out a path that students can follow, whether they enroll in multiple institutions or complete the bulk of their studies at a single institution.

There are tools that faculty can employ to design and implement more coherent and integrated approaches to a cumulative educational experience: frameworks such as the DQP that offer an overview of the entire educational experience; electronic portfolios that provide a framework for gathering, documenting, evaluating, and reflecting upon authentic student work; and rubrics that can be used to measure progressively more complex and competent attainment of key intellectual skills. The shift from individual faculty roles and accountability to

> It is important to start with a clear understanding of the local setting including the size and numbers of institutions, intercampus culture, political climate, higher education governance and leadership, state goals and priorities, the attitudes of policy makers and the general public towards the role and value of higher education.
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> —North Dakota Final Project Report

15 See Judith A. Ramaley, "The Changing Role of Higher Education: Learning to Deal with Wicked Problems," *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement* 18, no. 3 (2014): 1–21.

shared work and the cocreation of knowledge requires faculty to approach their core responsibilities in new ways. For some faculty members, this is a natural process. For others, it can be difficult to expand from courses as individual units of learning and instruction to sequences of experiences composed of coursework, experiential learning, and cocurricular efforts. These new learning models open up new options for working across disciplines and fields and make it possible for any member of a campus community to be both a teacher and a learner. These new interactions begin to blur the boundaries between an academic setting and the communities that surround it, both geographically and in cyberspace.

During the QC project, project leaders learned some important lessons about how to meaningfully engage faculty in designing whole educational pathways and in working together to evaluate student work. At the core, each of these key elements builds on the assumption that faculty members are first and foremost learners themselves and that the insights and relationships that emerge from learning in new ways can create the capacity and inclination for faculty to invite students to join them in the cocreation and application of knowledge. Collaboration and responsible use of knowledge are the core ingredients of a twenty-first-century education.

Selecting the Best Place to Start

The nine QC states presented significant differences in their policy and political environments, a range of institutional relationships and system governance structures, and several existing educational pathways and patterns of participation in education. They also offered distinct laboratories in which to study the development and implementation of curricular designs based on the cultural differences created by a mosaic of urban, suburban, and rural areas. The context of transfer and articulation between institutions was a well-traveled transition for these QC institutions that provided ample ways to explore the development of common expectations, goals, and milestones.

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The advice proposed in different QC final reports clearly reflected the kinds of curricular work and conversations already underway that formed a base of understanding and experience into which the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) framework could be slowly introduced. Common prior experiences mentioned were Tuning, participation in the activities related to AAC&U's LEAP States initiative,[16] or recent implementation of new statewide general education and transfer policies.

Critical to success in collaboration related to student transfer and cross-institutional cooperation is to begin where faculty members begin—in their own classrooms, with their own teaching experiences. It quickly became clear that institutions wishing to smooth the pathways toward a baccalaureate and

16 LEAP States are formal collaboratives, organized at the state or system level, that support large-scale collaboration, transformational change, and educational alignment to raise the quality of college learning within and across states. The initiative works with the LEAP framework of Essential Learning Outcomes, high-impact practices, and assessment for general and liberal education. See https://www.aacu.org/leap/states.

accommodate students' different pathways and swirling patterns of enrollment should look for a point of existing collaboration that had generated both a sense of shared commitment and responsibility and a level of trust among faculty colleagues, as well as confidence in each other's interests and expertise. This was particularly important when two- and four-year institutions shared the same students, either concurrently or sequentially through transfer.

Another especially productive place to begin collaboration is with the assignments given to students. The discussions that emerge from a focus on student work can help a group of faculty move from individual scholarly interests and courses to a collaborative environment in which the faculty begin to build educational experiences that transcend individual courses. Using examples of student work, a group of faculty can explore ways to achieve consensus about what kinds of work and experiences are most valuable and most likely to prepare students for the future. This concrete experience can then lead to more theoretical and comprehensive discussions about what it means to be educated and how to prepare graduates to use what they know in responsible, creative, and productive ways in partnership with other people who may have different perspectives and expertise.

> Don't start with the goal of common frameworks for assessment. Begin with our students' work or the assignments that are given students, and engage in dialogue to seek consensus about what's most valuable in that work or in the assignments. Next, shift to the issue of how we might design assignments to elicit a broader range of outcomes aligned with the DQP. Finally, consider common assessment tools to evaluate that learning. Assessment should follow from—not lead—conversations about student learning.
>
> —Indiana Final Report

The particular first step that brought faculty members together varied across the participating teams and states, from exploring a particular curricular focus such as civic learning and designing courses to address that theme (as at the University of Wisconsin–Oshkosh); to broader adoption of a particular high-impact practice (HIP) such as service learning; to the collaborative design and mapping of jointly offered programs and degrees. What mattered was that the particular focus built upon ongoing interests that were meaningful in each particular context.

Cultivating the Interests and Participation of Faculty Members

Every community, including every academic community, has thought leaders who shape the culture and attitudes of the members of that community. These key faculty members need not participate directly in curricular work, but it is important that they embrace the value of this effort and speak well of it. Where possible, some of these thought leaders should be recruited to join teams that are working on curricular development and integration along with a broader range of faculty members and interested staff. In addition, wherever possible, it is wise to link a project of this kind to an already established collaboration that has begun to build trust. In the absence of such institutional histories, it is best to start "small and simple and to look for good points of initial contact," according to the Virginia project team. The teams learned that it takes longer for a collaboration to gel in the absence of any meaningful prior experiences with working together.

To ensure that collaborative efforts to bring together faculty across disciplinary and institutional lines are valued and can be sustained over time, it is essential to recruit a broad cross section of faculty from both tenure-track and non-tenure-track ranks. For many institutions, the delivery of lower-division

Design assessment activities that provide explicit opportunities to engage with partner institutions and encourage faculty to engage in detailed assessment of student work using institutionally neutral tools such as the VALUE rubrics. Use assessment activities as an entrée to substantive, discipline-based consideration of shared curricular goals.

—Wisconsin Final Report

courses depends heavily upon fixed-term and adjunct faculty members. In addition, teams found it helpful to include other members of the campus community who share an interest in student success and scholarship. In instances where the starting point was a topic such as information literacy, the inclusion of librarians proved to be valuable, according to participants from Fitchburg and MWCC. Regardless of the focus of the initial collaboration, it was helpful to consider cocurricular experiences and to engage student affairs personnel as well.

Throughout the project, QC teams found it valuable to address faculty questions and concerns directly and often. There were several approaches to making the case for ongoing faculty conversations, ranging from appeals for the importance of clear student learning outcomes and assessments of learning as a component of institutional or special accreditation standards to interpretations of ways to implement policy directives set by state legislatures or system offices regarding transfer and articulation. In every case, the core of the appeal focused on what was beneficial for students.

Efforts to map, integrate, and assess student learning work best when they are embraced by campus administrators. Such support can incorporate authentic assessment as a standard instructional activity. Initial efforts at collaboration and the development of a shared understanding of educational goals and outcomes can lead to the development of a campus culture that rewards engaged, principled, and rigorous consideration of student achievement. Administrators can enhance and sustain this culture by recognizing the value of this activity in considerations of faculty promotion, renewal, and compensation policies.

Collaborations require attention to logistics that must be addressed if faculty members are to work together across campus lines or across units of an institution. The issues to consider include differences in academic schedules, distances to travel, variations in recordkeeping systems, and different approaches to the assessment of student work.

Collaborative Work Requires New Knowledge and Skill

QC teams observed that they learned best while examining student work, using tools such as the VALUE rubrics. These tools were familiar to many of the participants and could be applied in innovative ways to the work of designing assessments and redesigning existing courses to fit a new educational pathway concept.

The development of faculty leadership for this effort resembles the development of any other form of proficiency. Leadership requires experience—the development of the capacity and disposition to think strategically about how students learn, how faculty develop teaching expertise, and how to build effective working relationships with colleagues.

The knowledge and skill needed to look at the curriculum across time and to build a coherent model of learning cannot be acquired during what some call "drive by" workshops—one-off professional development programs that last only a day or two. Faculty development leaders rarely have the opportunity to offer extended training or a workable conceptual framework for designing courses

and curricula. During the QC project, it was clear that participating faculty learned what they needed to know while undertaking the work, just as most of their students do. It is unwise to start with abstractions or models—rather, these should be developed from the actual experience of documenting, examining, and evaluating student work. This approach grounds the exercise in a shared reality, a form of experiential learning framed by what faculty members care deeply about—namely, improving student learning through more effective approaches to teaching and assessment.

> Involve all affected constituencies (faculty at all levels, advisors, administrators with campus learning responsibilities) in as many levels of assessment as possible; identify a key issue and focus on it; apply principles of critical thinking in developing a plan (i.e., don't rush to the plan—build in time for doubt and flexibility if a direction doesn't work out). Assessment work is an ongoing, iterative process. Plan for the work to come in stages.
>
> —Indiana Final Report

Making Connections to Other Efforts

It can be helpful to draw momentum from related projects that address such issues as transfer and articulation, the use of high-impact practices, or new forms of assessment and documentation of learning such as the use of e-portfolios. By doing so, the work on transfer and articulation can support and expand efforts to work on existing campus and system priorities. By connecting the QC project to other institutional-level efforts to promote student success—for example, at the state level to introduce new transfer policies, general education block transfer, or workforce development; or at the national level in domains such as the accreditation standards for specialized accreditation or institutional accreditation—this work on joint design of expectations, learning objectives, documentation, and assessment of student work acquired additional value and meaning. Several states chose to conduct studies of how these various efforts fit together and reinforced each other or duplicated efforts.

Creating a Culture of Collaboration and Shared Purpose

In chapter 1, we made the case that faculty commitment to the creation of coherent and meaningful educational pathways is absolutely essential if we are to promote student success. It is not, however, sufficient. Without a supportive institutional context, the interests and leadership of faculty will usually be limited to what individual faculty members or their departmental colleagues can accomplish. Components of a supportive collaborative culture include the following:

1. **Endorsement and investment from senior leadership.** Any significant change in priorities and programs will require active and consistent financial and programmatic support from the senior administration of an institution. In the often complex and swirling environment of a college or university, "money talks." So do messages delivered in campus publications, in presidential speeches, and in the choices made by academic deans as they decide where to place their often limited discretionary funds. Without these kinds of tangible and intangible support, it will be difficult to gather a critical mass of faculty members willing to undertake the difficult work and the risks of developing pathways to degrees and a set of common expectations about what to expect of a college graduate. Without a supportive environment created by a blend of infrastructure and campus policy,

faculty influence will generally stop at the departmental level and not extend to the design and evaluation of learning across an entire degree.

2. Information, resources, and tools. Faculty require access to innovative and relevant research studies and information resources that they can apply as they seek to advance their own educational goals and respond to the interests and needs of their students. AAC&U has taken the lead in developing resources that can be applied in a variety of settings and a toolkit of approaches to interinstitutional collaboration that can offer a supportive context for creating educational pathways and experiences that will prepare graduates for a changing world.[17]

3. Partnerships. The approach to undergraduate and master's level education in the DQP is based upon the use of progressively more complex questions that require the integration of learning and the integration of knowledge across many domains to address these "wicked problems" and questions that play out both locally and globally. These big, messy issues, which lack simple answers, can best be articulated and approached in a local context through partnerships that bring together faculty and students from different fields who can work with community members to identify and analyze the issues, and then develop responses. There are many forms of civic and community engagement, ranging from specific, short-term projects and service-learning activities to long-term institutional collaborations intended to address emerging and difficult problems over many years with a succession of student participants and faculty contributors.

4. Scholarship. A collaborative culture can be developed and sustained by the identification of a specific number of themes and questions that bring faculty and students together to explore both the theoretical and practical aspects of addressing specific problems. The California State University–Northridge/Pierce Community College Paths, for example, which explore pressing issues such as human well-being in healthy environments, bring together discovery, learning, and the application of knowledge in meaningful ways. To do such work, however, institutions must change the way they recognize and reward faculty to recognize the value of cross-disciplinary scholarship, participation in curricular design and implementation, and campus and community engagement.

Big, messy issues, which lack simple answers, can best be articulated and approached in a local context through partnerships that bring together faculty and students from different fields who can work with community members to identify and analyze the issues, and then develop responses.

5. Infrastructure and policy. Historically, whenever colleges and universities have embraced reform efforts related to learning and teaching or sponsored research activities, they have put in place support units that assist faculty by managing the logistics of such work. If we are to create a culture of collaboration and shared responsibility and use these capacities to create new educational options, we must create an infrastructure that supports and encourages collaboration.

17 See AAC&U's Toolkit for examples of agendas, tools, strategies, and designs developed by the QC campus dyad teams and states: http://leap.aacu.org/toolkit/projects/quality-collaboratives.

Creating a Supportive Environment for Transfer and Curricular Change

Before launching widespread efforts to change the curriculum or transfer policies, it is helpful to take stock of the culture and context in which such efforts may unfold. What follows is a list of questions that may help institutional actors think about how to create a supportive environment for the development of new, integrative approaches to the curriculum as a whole and how to develop milestones to guide transfer and articulation policies and practices. These questions may prove useful as institutions explore the QC flowchart for multicampus collaboration that emerged from the project (see fig. 1, page 6). Some of these questions may be more useful than others, depending upon what recent changes in curricular design may have already taken place and what a campus community has learned from the experience of making those changes.

Before launching widespread efforts to change the curriculum or transfer policies, it is helpful to take stock of the culture and context in which such efforts may unfold.

- Are there competing visions or goals for your institution or for education overall in your state—or do you have reasonably shared goals and a common vision? In either case, how can you introduce your ideas as ways to enhance or clarify your institutional mission?
- Has your institution undertaken any other significant change projects recently? Are there some lessons from those experiences that you can bring to this new change effort? What worked well and what did not, and how did people respond to the earlier change efforts?
- Is your institutional or interinstitutional culture conducive to creating a collaborative culture and shared responsibility for the curriculum?
  - Do promotion and tenure or hiring guidelines and approaches to documenting faculty work recognize, validate, and encourage faculty behavior that supports the goals of the planned changes? Is there an infrastructure in place to support the kinds of interactions or activities that are required to support the planned changes?
  - Does your campus have a culture of inquiry or a culture of evidence that supports intentional, evidence-based change?
  - Do you have a way to learn from your experiences and to apply what you learn in productive ways?
  - What kinds of information and resources are available to you to guide your work?
  - Is budgeting linked in a meaningful way to planning, and are institutional goals clear and kept in mind when decisions are made about how to allocate resources?
  - Has your senior administration been in place for a while, or have you had a number of recent transitions and turnovers? Are further turnovers expected? If the president, chancellor, provost, or dean has recently joined the institution or recently assumed office, can you discern what he or she wishes to accomplish?

- In the case of transfer and articulation, have the relevant institutions worked together before, and have you established a level of collegial trust in the intentions and proficiencies of your current or potential partners? If not, where do you share some common concerns or experiences, and what project might you undertake to build a workable level of trust?
- Do you have a mechanism to manage the logistics of the collaboration, including the scheduling of meetings, the sharing of student data, and faculty learning opportunities that can create the capacity to work together effectively?

This is merely a list of things to consider. Some of these items may not be especially important in your environment. You may identify other issues of greater importance than the ones suggested here. State and campus leaders across the QC project found themselves asking these questions and finding the responses to be valuable for clarifying useful paths forward—involving faculty and administrators, at two-year and four-year institutions and on a statewide basis—to advance successful student transfer and institutional collaboration.

CHAPTER 4

A Way Forward: Quality Learning through LEAP, the Degree Qualifications Profile, and VALUE

The Quality Collaboratives (QC) project participants explored overarching frameworks for identifying, mapping, and implementing promising practices and strategies to help students—with the assistance of faculty, institutions, and policy makers—to transfer successfully and achieve high-quality degrees and credentials exhibiting the levels of learning articulated in the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP). Many of these promising practices and strategies fly in the face of previous approaches based on metrics such as performance on standardized tests of content knowledge, number of courses completed, time to degree, and job earnings after graduation (a metric currently gaining serious attention in the media and public discourse). However, the participating campuses and state participants in the QC project have demonstrated that by working together and building on what works for student transfer based on learning proficiency they can influence policy and affect the educational environment for positive change even in the face of oppositional factors. Consider the following examples:

The participating campuses and state participants in the QC project have demonstrated that by working together and building on what works for student transfer based on learning proficiency, they can influence policy and affect the educational environment.

- An Indiana legislative mandate, the result of collaboration between the state higher education commission office and faculty from across the state, created a common transferable general education core articulated in terms of outcomes and proficiencies that focuses on the quality of student learning.
- James Madison University and Blue Ridge Community College, in Virginia, gained permission from the commonwealth's Attorney General's office to share among their campus offices valuable student learning data to analyze successful student progress in ways that were previously prohibited.
- Wisconsin colleges and universities developed online and cross-campus degree programs based on outcomes and proficiencies.

The most comprehensive framework for quality liberal learning and the primary focus for the QC project was the DQP. The DQP squarely places the degree (associate, baccalaureate, and master's) at the center of demonstrated quality of learning for all graduates, asking decision makers inside higher education and beyond to think about what all students who receive these credentials actually know and can do with their education. Along with the companion LEAP ELOs, the DQP articulates not only the learning outcomes necessary for success in career and life, but also the types of assignments through which graduates can exhibit achievement of learning outcomes at expected levels of proficiency.

When first encountering the DQP, some observers, including faculty and other educators involved in the QC project, were hesitant or suspicious of this framework because it came from a source external to the campus or the state. However, once participants examined the DQP and became familiar with it, they began to appreciate how the DQP's framework and approach offered useful

There is a fundamental way in which we used policies as the outer limits of what we tried to do. Because of the complicated and comprehensive nature of California State University (and California Community Colleges) bureaucracy, we worked within existing structures. This approach, in turn, has allowed us to begin to advocate expansion across the two systems. Rather than attempting to do a complete revision of general education, we worked within the existing programs. The California State University–Northridge (CSUN) model has the distinct advantage of moving much more quickly. Using our approach, CSU Fullerton will begin a pathways project for their incoming first-time freshmen this fall. CSU Stanislaus is working on a similar project to ours with Modesto Community College. CSUN has also begun preliminary talks with CSU Channel Islands about a partnership between the two campuses and the community colleges (primarily Oxnard and Ventura) that transfer students to both campuses.

—Pierce College/California State University–Northridge Final Report

insights to guide thinking about the curriculum through projects and initiatives already underway on their respective campuses.

As the QC project progressed, four primary steps emerged that were central to creating transfer success for students:

- Start with what you envision at the end of the work (i.e., develop a logic model for collaboration).
- Determine what learning is needed to accomplish the desired ends of enhanced learning for a degree or similar credential.
- Determine what practices are likely to engage participants and help them progress toward the end.
- Ask how you will judge the results in order to measure success.

Each of the four components is discussed in more detail as we think about a way forward for enhancing student transfer and faculty and institutional collaboration.

A Logic for Collaboration: Start With the End in Mind

One of the biggest challenges to reforming current practice is that too often reformers begin with where they are, resulting in a narrow focus on how to tweak what currently exists in order to accomplish a new goal or end. Conversely, starting with a focus on the desired end often opens the work to untapped and unrecognized opportunities and possibilities, less constrained by past practice and more responsive to emerging needs. It may be that the desired end can be reached just by tweaking current practices, but even then, as a result of employing a backward design approach, participants will have a clearer conception of how current practices advance the desired end.

In the case of student transfer transitions, starting with what graduates need to know and be able to do allows faculty and other educators to determine shared expectations and map backwards to identify and articulate the scaffolded steps and actions that prepare students to reach the desired level of proficiency. In the process, it becomes clear that no single person, office, course, or program can prepare any single student to meet the knowledge and proficiency expectations encompassed by the degree. Mapping backwards, in other words, illustrates the underlying reality that educational structures organized on the basis of loosely coordinated individual pieces cannot deliver the desired educational outcomes at the levels of proficiency required for student success. Starting with the ends in mind helps to move the conversation from a primary focus on "my work" to a shared focus on "our work" and the means to effectively accomplish it. This is especially important for the creation of pathways that chart student options and lead to the desired learning outcomes.

This logic model strategy can be particularly effective for transfer. Through the QC project, California State University–Northridge (CSUN) and Pierce Community College faculty collaborated across their institutional boundaries to create shared Paths focused on "big questions" (e.g., aesthetics and culture, health

and wellness, global studies, and social justice paths; see http://www.csun.edu/undergraduate-studies/ge-paths). Students who start at Pierce have their progress noted on the Pierce transcript and can complete a minor (just as students starting at CSUN can) by taking additional upper-division courses after transfer, providing incentives for and recognition of the integrated path of study. The University of Wisconsin–Oshkosh and Fox Valley Technical College united faculty members from multiple disciplines around a curricular focus, discovering a new way to organize and design faculty development experiences. They built a shared understanding of civic learning informed by representatives of multiple disciplines. And in the University of Wisconsin Colleges Senate (the governance body of the UW Colleges) the recognition of service learning as a component of a liberal education at the associate degree level was quickly followed by the development of policies that led to a service-learning designator for new courses and modifications to existing courses across campuses.

Another University of Wisconsin dyad, UW–Waukesha and UW–Parkside, mapped the course competencies of all courses in the entire Bachelor of Applied Arts and Science (BAAS) degree program and created a "spidergraph"[18] to illustrate how students who enter the degree program make progress in relation to the DQP. The spidergraph allows students to assess their varying strengths and weaknesses within the DQP's five areas of learning. Students will be able to identify the courses in the areas of learning they will need to take in order to achieve the proficiencies they seek as part of their degree completion. This same spidergraph can then be used to identify proficiencies needed for specific career tracks or for other degree programs.

Since part of the QC project explored the complementarity of work across transfer partner campuses and the potential for state-level work to leverage the findings from the campus dyads to broader statewide policy and practice, we have also seen state-level engagement around the DQP, LEAP, and student transfer. Indiana's state Commission for Higher Education worked closely with the state legislature to ensure that general education legislation mandating a common transfer core incorporated student learning outcomes aligned with the LEAP ELOs and the DQP. The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia has mandated assessment of student learning for a long time, but it has recently begun supporting more interinstitutional workshops and convenings, working closely with a statewide Virginia Assessment Group and broadening the range of assessments used by campuses to measure and report student learning progress. Massachusetts's State Department of Higher Education, in conjunction with the governor's office, created a statewide vision for higher education, including intended student learning outcomes and measures of progress for all public institutions in the state. Utah convenes disciplinary statewide summits and an annual "What Is an Educated Person?" forum. And as alluded to in the above excerpt from the CSUN/Pierce College final report, the

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18 See http://www.uwp.edu/facultyandstaff/teachingcenter/upload/QC_presentation_Jan2014_BAAS-DQP-mappings_fin.pdf

> Accounting firms do not tend to hire graduates without basic substantive knowledge of accounting concepts, principles, and practices and the ability to apply this knowledge in routine contexts; but, when supervisors at accounting firms look across their new hires, they see differences in generic skills that tend to predict success on the job. To employers, individual differences in generic skills are more salient than individual differences in specialized knowledge, because new hires who stay hired tend to exhibit fairly homogeneous repertoires of accounting skills.
>
> — J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College/ Virginia Commonwealth University Final Report

California State University system office is actively supporting the dissemination of pathways for transfer success in conjunction with the state's community college system.

In each of these examples, a shared idea of what a student should know and be able to do at the end of a chosen educational path became the productive starting point for cross-campuses collaborations. These collaborations pursued different strategies to achieve similar results, whether they involved working within the limits of existing policies and structures (CSUN/Pierce), initiating system-wide change (UW–Oshkosh/ Fox Valley Tech), or creating new degree paths altogether (UW–Waukesha/UW–Parkside). Each example opened new opportunities on the faculty, institutional, and system levels for improving student learning proficiencies and creating more meaningful educational experiences.

Necessary Learning

The QC project confirmed that there was broad agreement about the learning outcomes needed for student success. Once QC participants realized that the new DQP encompassed the LEAP ELOs through its framework for all degrees or credentials, they were better able to view the DQP as part of their repertoire of resources for guiding campus work to enhance educational effectiveness.

QC participants did not restrict their exploration of necessary learning only to general education, but also worked with campus dyads to examine learning outcomes in the major, especially in locations that had participated in the Tuning process. Although most QC participants initially viewed the DQP as primarily pertaining to general education, the opportunity through the major allowed linkage of the DQP to disciplinary assessment, substantially broadening and deepening participants' appreciation of both the DQP and the LEAP ELOs.

Faculty from Salt Lake Community College (SLCC) and the University of Utah concentrated on transfer in the business major in their work as a dyad. Each institution had engaged in substantial individual work prior to their collaboration. The University of Utah had worked on developing clearer articulation of the business major in conjunction with a transfer policy set by the state Board of Regents and feedback from the business community. The Board of Regents' policy established statewide disciplinary meetings, held annually, at which all state higher education institutions articulated shared outcomes for business graduates and aligned courses for transfer from community colleges. SLCC had extensive experience with student use of e-portfolios to document and reflect on learning outcomes while completing designated courses for transfer. The QC project was able to bring together these two institutions' faculty to actually examine how their student learning expectations aligned. The dyad was able to establish a collaborative environment guided by the DQP and LEAP ELOs. Eventually the faculty began incorporating the VALUE rubrics and then e-portfolios as they developed a shared approach to assessing levels of student performance for transfer.

In Kentucky, the University of Louisville and Elizabethtown Community and Technical College concentrated on transfer within their biology departments. In the process, the biology faculty arrived at three key conclusions. First, faculty discovered that their Tuning work had been very successful in demonstrating that student learning in biology was equally strong regardless of whether the student completed coursework at the two-year or a four-year institution. But, second, they found that the biology Tuning process was not articulating all of the learning outcomes their students needed to achieve, and that general education was the logical place to collaborate to ensure that majors at both institutions engaged in the broader learning they needed to be prepared for transfer. And third, they found that the statewide Faculty Professional Learning Communities for faculty in the disciplines offered a valuable opportunity to develop shared learning expectations across the state based on faculty expertise.

The QC project moved beyond motivation and awareness to open up a rich vein of discoveries about faculty engagement and leadership in practice. The dyads explored and articulated solutions to the institutional and systemic challenges that faculty face when they engage in basing transfer on degree-level proficiencies. They broached new questions about resilience and sustainability in such large-scale efforts as application of the DQP required.

Across the QC states, the campus dyads and state leaders found that regardless of whether projects were focused primarily on general education or emerged from specific disciplinary efforts, faculty of all categories (tenured, tenure track, contingent, part time) brought valuable expertise to the work that was beneficial for making meaning out of the overall formal student learning process. Equally important, collaborations across single institutions, across the two- and four-year dyads, across individual states, and across the entire QC project were truly valuable in deepening faculty learning and advancing the local projects, regardless of the specific focus of those projects.

Engaging Practices

A third finding from the QC project revolved around determining which actions or practices faculty and others can take to enhance student transfer. In the swirling policy and media environment that characterized all of the project participant states, there was great pressure to reduce college costs for students, and a corollary trend to reduce reliance on traditional faculty, especially the core full-time faculty. And yet participants in the QC project demonstrated a variety of ways to actively engage faculty around student learning success, curriculum redesign, and meaningful assessment of student learning progress. Faculty are ready to engage with colleagues when it is clear that the purpose is to improve students' learning and their capacity as teachers to help students achieve desired learning outcomes.

Ivy Tech Community College and Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) engaged their faculties through dynamic

> The DQP provides an empirically supported, external framework against which local expectations for program-level learning outcomes can be compared. It can help faculty and administrators articulate expectations for student learning that were previously left implicit.
>
> —J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College/ Virginia Commonwealth University Final Report

criteria mapping to identify which student learning outcomes were important to them and then developed rubrics for measuring student progress, creating deeper investment and ownership among the faculty. Faculty from Middlesex Community College and the University of Massachusetts Lowell collaborated across several departments, discovering that when faculty evaluated student work using VALUE rubrics and then examined the assignment prompts, they realized the importance of creating assignments that actually asked students to produce the learning they were expecting. The assessment results helped faculty see that even by tweaking an existing assignment, they could improve the probability that students would demonstrate the expected learning.

J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College and Virginia Commonwealth University gathered three successive cohorts of faculty from their institutions. They concluded that the DQP provided an empirically supported external framework against which local expectations for program-level learning outcomes could be compared, and that it helped faculty and administrators articulate expectations for student learning that were previously left implicit. Too often unexamined assignments were the reason for lower-than-expected student performance, because faculty did not make explicit the learning they desired from students.

Oregon and North Dakota participated in the QC project at the statewide level. Through a series of statewide summits, Oregon brought together faculty and administrators from two- and four-year institutions around specific learning outcomes. These summits connected the work of the QC project with the DQP, the LEAP ELOs, and the Learning Outcomes and Assessment work led by the Oregon University System in preceding years. These connections offered faculty further opportunities to engage with each other and share assignments from appropriate courses they had taught. Faculty discussed the possibility of using the VALUE rubrics as tools for talking across disciplinary boundaries and the potential to revise assignments in ways that would improve the ability of students to deliver responses that better demonstrated their learning. North Dakota worked with all public and private institutions in the state, including tribal colleges, through a statewide General Education Council. Since North Dakota already had in place a statewide transfer policy based on course numbers, the council focused on adding a student learning and quality assurance focus to the general education transfer policy. In particular, the council placed a heavy emphasis on student work and how to assess student learning outcomes in ways that were useful to faculty.

Most QC project participants eventually came to see the DQP as a vehicle for raising important questions about faculty roles and the usefulness of assessment, and how the component parts of the student experience fit together to produce the qualities of a well-educated person in today's world.

Most QC project participants eventually came to see the DQP as a vehicle for raising important questions about faculty roles and the usefulness of assessment, and how the component parts of the student experience fit together to produce the qualities of a well-educated person in today's world. The work coming out of these inquiries, in turn, led to more powerful ways to assess and interpret learning and to the design of assignments that made meaningful connections between theory and practice and the skills needed to assimilate, interpret, and apply ideas and experiences to real-world "wicked problems."

Assessment of Learning

A key component of the QC project was exploration of ways to assess student learning beyond completion and earnings statistics that have little correlation to the types of learning, especially higher-order skills, that employers indicate they seek and faculty expect of graduates. For most institutions in the project, assessment reform remains a work in progress. Even in dyads where assessment was long established and thriving, team members developed new insights and appreciation of the need for multimodal approaches to assessing student learning across the range of outcomes needed for transfer.

Blue Ridge Community College and James Madison University have had a long-standing, successful transfer relationship, but they are limited in their ability to track transfer student information across the institutions, making it difficult to identify specific strengths and weaknesses in student preparation. The QC project prompted the cross-campus team to request that Virginia's Commonwealth Attorney General allow them to share previously restricted student data for assessment research. The DQP was then useful as one of a number of tools to support faculty development of assessment assignments and provide opportunities for reflection and examples of mapping and alignment of outcomes with the new data.

In Massachusetts, the state's Vision Plan prompted the public higher education community to join together across two- and four-year sectors to focus on direct assessment of student learning and sharing information from those assessments with the policy makers and citizens of the commonwealth. Fitchburg and MWCC selected four learning outcomes, brought together teams of faculty across their institutions, selected the LEAP VALUE rubrics for each outcome, conducted a norming process with faculty (see chapter 2), and scored student artifacts from classes, including transfer courses, in four selected disciplines.

No totally new models resulted as campuses engaged the DQP in transfer contexts, but there were many positive developments: new understandings of the benefits of collaboration, shared learning goals, and changes in policy based on the DQP's degree framework, as faculty and institutions moved from a narrower focus on specific current practice to a larger focus on shared actions.

No totally new models resulted as campuses engaged the DQP in transfer contexts, but there were many positive developments: new understandings of the benefits of collaboration, shared learning goals, and changes in policy based on the DQP's degree framework, as faculty and institutions moved from a narrower focus on specific current practice to a larger focus on shared actions. The flowchart that emerged from the QC project maps the core elements of cross-campus and cross-institutional collaboration for successful change initiatives, including student transfer.

Once education leaders understood the DQP, they could use it to create a conceptual framework within which to design and implement coherent and meaningful educational pathways, both within a single institution and between transfer institutions. This realization helped faculty and students focus on the expectations the DQP articulates for associate, baccalaureate, and master's degree graduates and how to acquire the knowledge, skills, and moral imagination required to live up to those expectations.

In sum, the QC project provides evidence that the DQP can be

- a tool for thinking about the curriculum as a whole and institutional expectations for graduates;
- a guide to develop coherent educational models within a pattern of swirling participation;
- a frame that allows faculty to experiment with designing and offering the high-impact practices that deepen learning;
- a framework that honors disciplinary designs and assertions, but also recognizes that real-world problems do not fall within neat disciplinary boundaries;
- a guide to thinking about how the different elements of the curriculum and the student experience come together;
- a framework for identifying core principles to guide the development of a culture of shared responsibility for student success; and
- a guide for models to track and reflect upon a student's progression toward the attainment of expected levels of learning for a degree recipient.

CONCLUSION

Quality Collaboratives, the Degree Qualifications Profile, and Transfer Transitions

The QC work was begun to test the usefulness of the DQP approach to students' educational success in the context of transfer and degree completion. Project leaders purposefully started with a diverse group of states and pairs of transfer institutions that already shared large numbers of transfer students. Often initial reactions to the DQP resembled, to some extent, the predictable resistance to any tool "delivered" from afar. Yet over time project experiences demonstrated that linking transfer to learning outcomes led participants back to the DQP and a recognition that the DQP was a useful tool for generating meaningful exploration and interpretation of campus and community experiences, values, and expectations. In this way, the threads of the QC project—assessment, faculty leadership, and policy—offered complementary insights into what it takes to generate interest and faculty involvement in curricular development and assessment, as well as institutional change and policy reform, in support of collaboration for student transfer.

In the final analysis, the QC project provided a new framework for student transfer success modeled on assessment of student work generated by assignments intentionally crafted to elicit the learning outcomes contained in the DQP and the LEAP ELOs; a framework that illustrates the power of bringing faculty and other educators from multiple campuses together to create educational learning pathways for students; and a framework that articulates how to move from individual course and credit approaches to an approach based on shared mission to help students achieve learning proficiency.

APPENDIX A

The Degree Qualifications Profile Overview

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

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 the 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

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.

*This chart summarizes Lumina Foundation's Degree Qualifications Profile, released in 2014. This edition 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/publications/The_Degree_Qualifications_Profile.pdf.

APPENDIX B

The LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes

Beginning in school, and continuing at successively higher levels across their college studies, students can prepare for both responsible citizenship and a global economy by achieving the Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs).

★ Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World

- Through study in the sciences and mathematics, social sciences, humanities, histories, languages, and the arts

Focused by engagement with big questions, both contemporary and enduring

★ Intellectual and Practical Skills, including

- Inquiry and analysis
- Critical and creative thinking
- Written and oral communication
- Quantitative literacy
- Information literacy
- Teamwork and problem solving

Practiced extensively, across the curriculum, in the context of progressively more challenging problems, projects, and standards for performance

★ Personal and Social Responsibility, including

- Civic knowledge and engagement—local and global
- Intercultural knowledge and competence
- Ethical reasoning and action
- Foundations and skills for lifelong learning

Anchored through active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges

★ Integrative and Applied Learning, including

- Synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies

Demonstrated through the application of knowledge, skills, and responsibilities to new settings and complex problems

NOTE: This listing was developed through a multiyear dialogue with employers and with hundreds of colleges and universities about needed goals for student learning; analysis of a long series of recommendations and reports from the business community; and analysis of the accreditation requirements for engineering, business, nursing, and teacher education. The findings are documented in previous publications of the Association of American Colleges and Universities: *College Learning for the New Global Century* (National Leadership Council for Liberal Education and America's Promise 2007) and *The LEAP Vision for Learning* (AAC&U 2011). For more information, see www.aacu.org/leap.

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About the Quality Collaboratives Project

Part of 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 QC 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.

About LEAP

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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