Assessment: A Fundamental Responsibility

The colleges and universities whose assessment examples follow have jointly issued an important statement on assessment in higher education. The statement reaffirms the fundamental responsibility of colleges and universities to assess the effectiveness of their programs, looking not only at the content students learn but at the habits of mind they develop, and looking at longer-term impact as well as shorter-term achievement.

The statement is endorsed by nearly 100 public and private colleges and universities and includes examples of assessment activities at several institutions. It was prepared by a task force convened by the Consortium on Financing Higher Education (COFHE), an organization focused on quality in undergraduate education. Signatories include all COFHE members plus many other public and private institutions, ranging from small liberal arts colleges to large research universities.

For a copy of the Statement on Assessment, please go to http://www.assessmentstatement.org. The website includes examples of assessment activities and the complete list of endorsing schools.
Agnes Scott College began implementing its Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), in 2004. This included evaluating the benefits of linking Living and Learning Communities (LLCs) to interdisciplinary First Year Seminars (FYS), which are required of all incoming first-year students. The project compares academic performance, active and collaborative learning, and satisfaction and retention between students in LLCs with those not in such communities. The project makes use of institutional data, select data from national surveys, focus groups with first year students, and faculty evaluation of student writing in FYS courses.

The information collected as a result of this project has allowed the College to make several changes to the curriculum, including expanding the LLCs to the entire first year class. Agnes Scott used information from the analysis of FYS papers to refine the goals of the Seminar program to reflect the importance of FYS as an introduction to college; this led the College to rethink the sequence of FYS and the other required first year course, English 110 (The Craft of Writing). This project has also prompted changes at individual and departmental levels, with most faculty reporting that evaluating FYS writing assignments has allowed them to begin to develop a common language about student writing that transcends discipline, to be more objective about the student writing they see in their own FYS courses, and to make greater use of the pedagogical tools available to them on campus.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Alma College

**Alma College:** Through a Teagle Foundation grant, Alma College is collaborating with five other private liberal arts colleges in a value-added assessment of student development in writing, critical-thinking, and civic engagement. The study conducted direct assessments of student papers to evaluate writing (AY2006) and critical thinking (AY2007). Papers meeting specified criteria were collected from general education courses at all six schools. The papers were read in a blind study by representative faculty from each school. Grading faculty did not know which school contributed the paper. Each paper was read and scored by two faculty members using a consistent rubric. Student learning was measured by comparing the average rating on first year papers to those of juniors or seniors, and then comparing those differences with those of other schools as well as against student admissions criteria, the NSSE, and the CLA. The third year (AY2008) of assessment activities focused upon civic engagement using primarily indirect measures such as the College Senior Survey (CSS), senior focus groups and alumni surveys. For AY2009, the study will complete the longitudinal assessment through another paper collection from seniors to measure development of writing and critical thinking skills. Because of their direct involvement, faculty are highly engaged in the study and the process has validity for them.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Austin College

Austin College’s Strategic Plan (2005-2010) refers frequently to its diverse student body and commitment to international experience. Austin first examined items on the NSSE (National Survey of Student Experience) that pertain to openness to diversity both on campus and abroad. For example, some questions ask how frequently students experience diverse perspectives in class discussion have “serious discussion with students who differ from them in race or ethnicity,” or serious discussion with students who differ from them “in religious beliefs, political opinion or personal values.” Other questions ask the extent to which students perceive the institution as encouraging “contact among students from different economic, social and racial backgrounds.” The College has comparisons for two cohorts of first year and senior students as well as longitudinal data from one recent graduating class. Comparisons can be made of students’ responses to those of students from a peer group similar to Austin in size and mission, a larger group of peers in its Carnegie classification, and the entire national sample. These data illustrate clear evidence of greater openness to diversity on campus and internationally. In order to further study effects of international experience, the College administered the CCAI (Cross Cultural Adaptability Inventory) to close to 200 students examining scores on the inventory in relation to international travel experience. Austin found significant correlations between experience with both international January terms and study abroad and subscale scores on emotional resilience, flexibility and openness, and perceptual acuity. The College is now collecting pre-departure and post-return data on the CCAI for students who study abroad.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Barnard College

Barnard College implemented revisions to its general education requirements for the class entering in fall 2000, replacing the existing distribution model with a more highly defined format called the Nine Ways of Knowing. From the outset, the aim was to compare student understanding of the new requirements to student views of the former system (e.g., on clarity, purpose, satisfaction), and to examine certain changes in the pattern of course selection by students associated with the new curricular requirements.

To these ends, a four year study of graduating seniors was undertaken, designed to obtain their perspectives on the requirements to which they were subject; the first two classes were the last under the earlier requirements and the second two classes were those which graduated under the Nine Ways of Knowing. The study was based on small focus groups of seniors interviewed by a retired Barnard faculty member in Sociology or one of the class deans. The second component of the assessment involved a transcript analysis conducted by the Registrar to ascertain whether certain patterns of course-taking changed in the transition to the new requirements. For example, the new requirements specify that all students must take a literature course, and encourage students to complete the requirement in the foreign language they use to fulfill another element of the Nine Ways of Knowing. The transcript analysis will show whether the change has affected the number of students who continue to the literature-level of study in that foreign language.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Berea College

Berea College assesses the educational goals of its general education curriculum and majors, its labor program, and service-learning. Students are required to take a common core of five general education courses emphasizing writing, diversity, scientific inquiry, and religion. The final course of the core is a capstone seminar on global issues. First year students are required to take two writing intensive courses culminating in a substantial research paper. They are also required to take a common writing exam that is used to identify students needing additional support in writing. In the capstone course, seniors are required to complete an independent research project.

The educational goals of the individual majors are evaluated by each academic department using various methods including assessment of student writing, presentations, performances, and other discipline related skills. Students assess their achievement of learning outcomes in the general studies core courses. The College uses the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and student satisfaction surveys to monitor student experience. In addition, yearly topical inquires ask senior students to reflect on Berea's unique institutional commitments such as the value of service to the Appalachian region and beyond, labor in a Work College setting, inter-racial education, and environmental sustainability.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Bowdoin College

**Bowdoin College:** Similar to many liberal arts colleges, Bowdoin has been working on ways to assess the writing abilities of its students. One of the strengths of small liberal arts colleges that the College often touts is the quality of the teaching of writing and the multiple opportunities given students to learn to write in their chosen disciplines. Given this, it has been a high priority for Bowdoin to assess the opportunities to write that are available to students in College courses and to assess their strengths as writers. A group of faculty met in the summer of 2008 to evaluate a sample of student papers written for a variety of courses taken in the first two years at Bowdoin. Through the examination of these papers, Bowdoin’s goal was to develop a rubric – a set of expectations – for student writing at the end of the sophomore year that could be applied across disciplines. Bowdoin’s rubric addresses three clusters of skills in which students are expected to demonstrate: 1) Competence (a facility with basic elements of grammar and style sufficient to lend readability to an academic essay); 2) Rigor (the ability both to establish an argument and to develop it consistently and progressively throughout an essay), and 3) Reach (evidence of insight beyond an expected or obvious level, and the ability to make such an insight at least somewhat central to the essay). Bowdoin is at the initial stages of getting feedback on the rubric and will hopefully pilot it in a small number of departments. The ultimate goal would be for faculty in each department to use the rubric to evaluate the writing of students who declare majors in their department at the end of students' sophomore year. The purpose for doing the assessment at this point is that departments could modify their curriculum to address the writing needs of their majors prior to their senior year when many may want to do independent studies or honors projects.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Brown University

**Brown University:** In 2007, a Task Force on Undergraduate Education was convened at Brown to review the undergraduate academic programs. The report of the Task Force, *The Curriculum at Forty: A Plan for Strengthening the Undergraduate Experience at Brown* was issued in September of 2008. The Task Force convened several sub-committees and benefitted from substantial input from faculty, students, alumni, parents, and others. The recommendations of the Task Force included strengthening of undergraduate advising programs; periodic reviews of all undergraduate concentrations that include an examination of each concentration’s mission and outcomes; a renewed focus on writing competency; and a restatement of the principles and expectations of liberal learning that guide the academic program at Brown. Since the completion of the work of the task force an external review of the undergraduate writing program has been concluded, new advising programs have been launched that create new opportunities for contact between faculty and students in the residence halls, and concentration reviews have begun.

In addition to this process, Brown regularly participates in a number of multi-institution surveys and completes internal studies to continuously measure the effectiveness of Brown’s open curriculum in providing undergraduates with a broad liberal education that equips them with the skills and knowledge that they will need for the broadest possible range of post-graduate professional pursuits and for lives as citizens of an increasingly global community.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

California Institute of Technology

The California Institute of Technology has a long tradition of sponsoring a biennial Student-Faculty Conference, which provides an opportunity for undergraduates and faculty to discuss current academic and student life issues with the goal of “improving the quality of learning at Caltech.” In recent years, it has been a one-day event that is primarily organized by the undergraduate Academics and Research Committee with support from faculty, Student Affairs, and the Provost’s Office. On the day of the conference the faculty is asked to excuse students from classes so that they are able to attend.

The last conference discussed reports from the several student and faculty subcommittees, including committees that looked at Caltech’s honor code, undergraduate research, and undergraduate core curriculum. In addition, there were committees formed around specific academic disciplines such as mathematics, electrical engineering, and biology. These committees collected data, conducted surveys, or analyzed student behavior to understand how effective these programs are at educating the Caltech students. With this past conference, the Academics and Research Committee also conducted an analysis of the follow-up to the suggestions and recommendations from the Conference.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Carleton College

**Carleton College**: To meet the College’s portfolio requirement, students at the end of their sophomore year must submit three to five papers demonstrating their ability to write effectively in different rhetorical and disciplinary contexts. The papers must be "authenticated" by instructors, who certify that the papers were written for their classes and indicate if they have since been revised. Finally, students write reflective essays about their writing to introduce the portfolios. Each portfolio must represent at least two of the college's four curricular divisions (Arts and Literature, Humanities, Social Sciences, and Mathematics/Natural Sciences) and must include at least one paper from the student's "Writing Requirement" course. Together, the papers must also demonstrate their author's mastery of each of several key writing skills—the ability to report on observation, to analyze complex information, to provide interpretation, to use and document sources, and to articulate and support a thesis-driven argument.

In addition to assessing the student's success in these areas, faculty readers also provide feedback on the quality of writing. Each portfolio is rated on whether it "rarely," "usually," or "consistently" demonstrates attention to audience and purpose, clarity of prose, clear organization, effective use of evidence, distinctive voice, appropriate diction, and control of error. During assessment, faculty readers assign one of three scores to every writing portfolio: "pass," "exemplary," or "needs work." Evaluating the portfolios, a task Carleton assigns to a volunteer group of "faculty readers," also provides opportunity for faculty development.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Carnegie Mellon University

Carnegie Mellon University has adopted innovative, data-driven approaches to learning outcomes assessment in every college at the university. Such initiatives have greatly increased in the last decade, and include:

- increasing the number and range of project or capstone classes which help students consolidate both content knowledge and practical skills;
- testing cognitively-based online courses designed to increase student and faculty engagement and to provide continuous feedback on progress to students and instructors;
- testing novel instructional tools to improve student achievement;
- taking a new approach to teaching and assessing academic writing and communications skills; and expanding support for and systematic evaluation of independent student research projects (individual and team-based).

Recognizing that some of these diverse and largely successful projects were little known or recognized outside of the particular department or college, the university leadership has formed an educational assessment working group to bring greater coordination across programs and campuses. This group includes representatives from all colleges and is charged with expanding instructor awareness and systematic use of best practices across disciplines and supporting an outcomes-based approach to curriculum development.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

**Colby College**

**Colby College**: In preparation for its 2007 reaccreditation by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), Colby embarked on a faculty-led process of evaluating the transitions of its students into and out of college. In addition to an exhaustive study of the available quantitative data, an important part of this process included qualitative analyses of periodic interviews with a sub-set of students in a longitudinal fashion as they progress through their four years here. This annual process of multiple faculty-directed interviews was initiated at Colby, in a coordinated fashion with six other liberal arts institutions, under the auspices of the New England Consortium on Assessment and Student Learning (NECASL) in 2006. These interviews with the Class of 2010 will continue through the year following graduation.

In response to the NEASC recommendations that emerged from Colby’s reaccreditation, the faculty established three curricular planning working groups charged with broad-based evaluation, assessment, and proposed enhancements in the areas of student engagement, communication skills, and curricular oversight. The college also created the new position of Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs to oversee and coordinate the efforts of the working groups and provide leadership in implementing their recommendations.

In addition to assessing student learning outcomes in this fashion, guidelines for the regular periodic external reviews of academic department at Colby have been revised to require clearly articulated learning goals and methods of assessment by the departments in their courses and in the self-studies they provide to the referees.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

College of Wooster

The College of Wooster: Since 1948, a senior project, “Independent Study” has been the culmination of a Wooster Education. All students at The College of Wooster are required to complete a faculty-mentored research project in one of 36 academic programs or in a self-designed major. The liberal arts program, including both the general education curriculum as well as the discipline-specific curricula, is designed to prepare students for this significant at least year-long undertaking. Often students present the results of their research at professional meetings in their discipline, publish results in peer-reviewed journals or in creative periodicals, or continue their research in graduate school. Although Independent Study is the culmination of a Wooster Education, it is the stepping stone to the process of lifelong learning upon graduation from the College.

Given the nature of Independent Study at the College, most academic departments and interdisciplinary programs have chosen to assess their majors through Independent Study. Both the written thesis and the process of maturation into an independent researcher are assessed. Thesis development, experimental design and reflection, revision, and independence of mind are critical to the process of Independent Study. The final thesis should display evidence of creative and critical thinking, disciplinary knowledge, appropriate written and oral communication, as well as other abilities and skills important within the discipline and necessary to engage in lifelong learning. These goals are assessed systematically, findings are documented, and improvements are made in a continual cycle of assessment at The College of Wooster.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Colorado College

**Colorado College:** One notable aspect of the College's multifaceted assessment program is the process for assessing the First Year Experience (FYE) course. An end-of-course survey covers academic quality and classroom experiences as well as other topics, and it is refined annually. The Institutional Research Office produces summary and analytic documents, including qualitative and quantitative reports showing how well the program as a whole is meeting program goals, as well as a customized report for each FYE professor. The customized reports allow FYE professors to compare their individual results to those of others teaching FYE courses in the same division and more broadly across the College, and to determine how better to meet the goals of FYE: to engage, challenge, and support entering students. First Year Experience professors also attend an annual workshop led by seasoned FYE professors, students, and experts in the study of teaching and learning. Professors revise their FYE courses following the workshop and the cycle begins anew. Since the development of the FYE assessment process, evidence suggests that courses are meeting FYE goals more successfully than before. For example, of 73 FYE goal-related survey findings, 45 (62%) showed improved student rating between 2006 and 2007.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Dartmouth College

**Dartmouth College:** As an effort to assess and improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning, Dartmouth College's Arts and Sciences and Thayer School of Engineering developed a course assessment tool. At the end of each term, undergraduate students are asked to respond to questions relating to the overall quality of each course, how intellectually engaged they were in the course and the level of clarity and organization of the class. In addition, the students are asked to comment on the individual instructor in regards to the overall effectiveness of his or her teaching, the clarity with which he or she explains central concepts, and his or her availability outside of class. In some cases individual departments or professors ask department or course-specific questions in the evaluation form, to which the students also respond. Once the course evaluation information is collected and analyzed, individual faculty members can access this information and use the feedback to improve their teaching and/or refine their course for future offerings. The department or program chair can access this information to help assess the departmental or program curriculum and to interpret the impact of curricular changes. The Divisional Deans can access this information to gauge overall student satisfaction with teaching at Dartmouth and provide professional development and mentorship opportunities to faculty that they advise.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Denison University

At Denison University, the primary location for the assessment of student learning is at the departmental level. Dennison chose the major as its primary context because “liberal education outcomes . . . reach their highest level of cultivation in the context of the student’s area of specialization or major field(s).” (The Art & Science of Assessing General Education outcomes: A Practical Guide, Leskes and Wright, AAC&U, 2005). Each department has developed an assessment plan and submits a yearly assessment report. Department assessment coordinators catalyze and manage the departmental program and ensure that reporting to the university assessment committee is done on an annual basis. Department assessment plans must minimally include the following: the departmental mission statement and goals of the program, a description of the contexts in which assessment takes place (e.g., capstone seminars, comprehensive exams, portfolios), a description of the instruments used to measure outcomes, a description of the context(s) for discussion and analysis of the information obtained from the measures, and an account of the mechanism(s) for factoring the information back into program improvement. The Assessment Committee provides responses to departmental reports, with advice and recommendations on the plan, the measures, the analyses of the data gathered, and the feedback process for program improvement.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Duke University

**Duke University:** To assess the effectiveness of learning goals in individual courses, Duke University’s Trinity College of Arts and Sciences uses a two-form course evaluation tool, modified from an evaluation tool produced by the IDEA Center of Manhattan, Kansas. At semester’s end, students are asked not only to comment on standard course evaluation questions (e.g., quality of instruction, degree of difficulty), but also to rank the extent to which the course contributed to several higher-order learning outcomes (e.g., “learning to conduct inquiry through methods in the field,” “developing writing skills,” etc.). Course instructors are asked independently to rank the relative importance of this same set of higher-order learning outcomes from their perspective. This two-form system thus provides a direct measure of how well the instructor’s learning goals match students’ self-assessment of their own progress on these measures.

The primary point of feedback on learning outcomes assessment is the individual instructor, who can through the two-form mechanism assess how well he or she is meeting higher-order learning expectations from the students’ point of view. Additionally, this information may be used by departments to determine how well the departmental expectations for its majors are met (as articulated in departmental mission statements and learning objectives). This departmental level of analysis and feedback is not yet fully implemented at Duke, but deans now routinely use these data to evaluate courses’ and programs’ strategic interests (e.g., particularly large majors, new cross-disciplinary programs, innovative courses).
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Franklin and Marshall College

Franklin & Marshall College participates in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) each year. Question 7g asks students whether they have done or plan to do an independent study or self-designed major. In 2008, 31% of first-year students and 54% of seniors answered yes, indicating that a substantial number of additional students are encouraged to undertake this positive learning experience. (Longitudinal results reinforce this fact.) In peer colleges, the corresponding percentages were 21% for first-years and 38% for seniors, and for the all-NSSE-participants group they were 22% and 27%. The growth in participation is greater at F&M than at either comparison group.

On the other hand, NSSE (question 7f) data suggested one reason our study abroad rates were low: in 2003, 59% of first-years as compared to 31% of seniors indicated that they have studied abroad or plan to, implying a loss of nearly half. The College made some changes to the procedures for students to study abroad and worked with faculty to advise students of the benefits of such an experience. In our 2008 results, 74% of first-years and 51% of seniors responded affirmatively in this area, showing both higher interest and a senior/first-year ratio much closer to that of the selected peer group (first-years at 78% and seniors at 59%). Franklin & Marshall’s longitudinal data reinforce that substantial improvements have occurred in this area.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Furman University

Furman University recently undertook a revision of the curriculum for the first time in 35 years. The decision was influenced by an examination of several years of data from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). The data revealed differences in the level of student engagement between Furman students and peer institutions in the first year which diminished by the senior year. This study led to a proposal for a revised first year experience which became the keystone of a new curriculum.

The new curriculum includes a significant emphasis on assessment, particularly in the First Year Seminar program. This includes a faculty assessment of the effectiveness of the seminars, in-class student evaluations of the experience and – most important – a portfolio assessment of students' written work in writing-intensive seminars.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Gettysburg College

Gettysburg College adopted a Student Learning Assessment Plan in response to a revised academic curriculum. The Plan is fairly comprehensive and includes periodic departmental self-studies with external reviews and multiple methods of assessing student learning. Student achievements are measured at the instructor, department and institutional levels. Two committees have been established to monitor and guide these efforts. One concerned with student learning within the academic curriculum, another with co-curricular learning. Ultimately the Committee on Institutional Effectiveness, the parent committee, has final responsibility to insure valuable feedback that confirms outcomes and redirects effort for greater effectiveness.

Students are expected to illustrate their proficiency in several fundamental areas: Multiple Inquiries, Integrative Thinking, Effective Communication, Local and Global Citizenship, and Collaboration and Teamwork. Assessment activities are systematic and deliberate ranging from pre- and post-tests, review of student work as they progress over their four years, observations, national and local surveys, senior capstones, to more traditional activities.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Georgetown

Georgetown University is dedicated to building a culture of inquiry around teaching and learning. A culture of inquiry transmits an institutional commitment to asking the question: How do we know that our students are acquiring the knowledge, skills, and sensibilities in the way we hope and expect? To address this question, Georgetown College funded a curriculum renewal project where over a period of four years, 16 departments initiated efforts to assess the goals of their curriculum and revise accordingly.

In 2007-08 Georgetown developed an Assessment Portal (http://assessment.georgetown.edu/index.html) as a resource for faculty and departments. It features three of the curriculum renewal departments -- Biology, German, Sociology -- which have extended or initiated comprehensive assessments of their curricula to improve student learning. In addition to these and other internal examples of assessment, this first effort at broad dissemination of assessment information also includes institutional data from major national surveys on student learning, tools and techniques for practical assessment, and examples from other universities. The Portal is expected to grow rapidly in the years ahead to support and advance the university's culture of inquiry.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Grinnell College

**Grinnell College**: One of the hallmarks of a Grinnell College education is the opportunity for a student to pursue academic interests that go beyond the traditional course and classroom. In 2002 the faculty approved a campus-wide program of Mentored Advanced Projects (MAP). To qualify for a MAP, a student proposes a project of discovery or creation that a) builds on prior course work, b) demands an integrated application of skills and knowledge to a new project, and c) will generate planned scholarly products that can be potentially shared with an audience beyond Grinnell College.

Indicators of the success of the program include publications, conference presentations, and undergraduate awards resulting from our students’ MAP work ([http://www.grinnell.edu/offices/dean/MAP/awards/](http://www.grinnell.edu/offices/dean/MAP/awards/)). Additionally, at the completion of each MAP the sponsoring faculty member fills out an evaluation of student work. The MAP assessment instrument is based on a “stages” theory of epistemological development in college-age students.

Initial findings point to a positive correlation between students’ self-ratings of enhanced leadership skills (via senior survey data) and faculty members’ evaluations of students’ intellectual initiative and agility. Interviews with faculty members and surveys of students have provided additional insight. In response to these assessments there have been changes to enhance the MAP program, especially to streamline the application procedures and to ensure students are prepared for the advanced nature of the project.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Hamilton College

Hamilton College, through a grant from the Mellon Foundation, has undertaken a series of research initiatives in the assessment of liberal arts education. Research has been conducted by a part-time director, Sociology Professor Dan Chambliss, a number of faculty working groups, scores of student research assistants, and several outside consultants. There are a number of components to the research, but the primary ones were a panel study and a writing study. The panel study used an interview protocol to track 100 randomly sampled students from the Class of 2005 on a wide variety of issues about their experience at Hamilton College. The writing study utilized an archive of several thousand student papers, collected over a five-year period, from a wide variety of classes and students. Outside evaluators read and evaluated the collection of papers, with the goal to understand, through an objective evaluation scheme, the extent to which our students' writing actually improves (or does not) during their time at Hamilton, and on what criteria it improves (or not).

While the Mellon Assessment Project has been the cornerstone of Hamilton’s assessment program, the College is diversifying its assessment portfolio through current participation in other national studies on learning outcomes including the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education and a Teagle Foundation-funded study on assessing undergraduate outcomes within disciplinary contexts.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Hampden-Sydney College

Hampden-Sydney College: For 30 years, the Rhetoric Program at Hampden-Sydney College has focused on developing students' writing skills. Rhetoric courses emphasize written communication of concepts and information. The College has enjoyed considerable success in ensuring that a Hampden-Sydney College graduate knows how to communicate effectively, articulately, and persuasively.

In addition to the writing requirements associated with the Rhetoric Program, the students also write in virtually every other course they take at the College, with faculty emphasizing the same lessons in proper writing technique as covered in Rhetoric classes. Also, as a graduation requirement, all students must pass the Rhetoric Proficiency Exam (RPE), a test not linked to any particular class. The RPE is a timed essay in which students write, in the three hours allowed, a well-crafted essay that is effective in support of a clear thesis. Using a holistic rubric that was developed and fine-tuned by the Rhetoric Program staff, two independent readers score the essays. This system provides regular feedback to the program staff on the effectiveness of instruction in Rhetoric, as well as on the scoring of the RPEs by both those faculty who teach Rhetoric and those who do not.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Hampshire College

Hampshire College engages in assessment (and the improvement of student learning) through a systematic and systemic approach that combines data from: homegrown and national/comparative instruments, mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative analyses), multiple levels (student level, institutional level, school level), multiple stages (inputs, experiences, and outcomes), and with a range of methodologies (comparative, value-added, longitudinal). We participate in the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Experiences, regularly administer NSSE and CIRP, and have participated in the CLA and the CSEQ/XQ. We have developed rubric-based approaches to evaluating college writing and analytic writing in capstone theses. All Hampshire students prepare a first-year and a second/third-year portfolio of their work, which is evaluated by a two-person faculty committee. Hampshire's first-year program requires students to make satisfactory progress on a series of learning goals, as determined by the student's advisor. Hampshire has led three Teagle Foundation-funded assessment collaboratives, including a current project to comparatively evaluate the senior thesis at six liberal arts colleges.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Harvard University

**Harvard University:** The Harvard Writing Study combines a pre- and post- exam with a student survey to examine the development of undergraduates' writing skills. The study assesses the extent to which students' skills have improved after 1, 2 or 3 years at Harvard by comparing the performance of students on their incoming writing entrance exams with an analogous exam administered later in their university career. Measured writing skills include organization, argument, style and grammar. Analysis focuses on factors that may correlate with writing skills, including demographic characteristics (e.g., parent's education and income), academic profile (e.g., SAT scores), academic experience (e.g., major/concentration and GPA), and extracurricular activities.

The Peer Instruction approach, developed by Harvard Professor Eric Mazur and now used at many colleges and universities, encourages small group discussion within large lectures and employs clickers, flashcards or some other device to gauge how well students are grasping material during lectures (Crouch and Mazur, 2001). Using this approach, students respond independently to multiple-choice questions posed by professors regarding the lecture material. Students have an opportunity to discuss the questions with their peers and submit revised responses. Professors can use this method to determine how much additional explanation and discussion is required. Peer Instruction used in physics courses enhances conceptual reasoning and quantitative problem solving skills, according to standardized physics tests (i.e., Force Concept Inventory and Mechanics Baseline Test), course examinations, and responses to the in-class questions (Crouch and Mazur, 2001).
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Harvey Mudd College

**Harvey Mudd College:** Data collected from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) have been used by faculty, college administrators and researchers for institutional assessment and improvement. For purposes of contextualizing and analyzing data from the study, and how the information relates to an HMC education, the Office of Institutional Research at HMC examined the College’s progress on five themes of its strategic plan, *HMC 2020: Envisioning the Future:*

1. Innovation, Leadership, and Impact, Especially in Engineering, Science and Mathematics
2. Focus on Experiential and Interdisciplinary Learning
3. Unsurpassed Excellence and Diversity at All Levels
4. Nurturing and Developing the Whole Person
5. Global Engagement and Informed Contributions to Society

Harvey Mudd recognized that these five initiatives within the College’s strategic plan are closely aligned with the five Benchmarks of Educational Effectiveness defined by NSSE:

1. Level of academic challenge
2. Active and collaborative learning
3. Student-faculty interaction
4. Enriching educational experiences
5. Supportive campus environment

Additional data analyses were conducted to illustrate how HMC students’ results within each Benchmark were, in fact, also a reflection of HMC’s institutional priorities, and reflect progress toward their achievement, as defined by the College’s ambitious strategic plan.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Haverford College

Haverford College: Approximately every 10 years, Haverford College academic departments engage in a rigorous external review. Following an extensive self-analysis that incorporates feedback from majors, minors, and alumni, a visiting team of scholars reviews the self study, meets with the Department, senior academic administrators, and students, and tours the facilities. The team’s evaluation report and recommendations often are the basis for curricular changes or tenure-line requests that are implemented though the College’s Educational Policy Committee. The external review process is crucial to ongoing curricular and faculty development.

Reflective departmental self-study also feeds College-wide assessment and planning. In 2005-2006, every academic department undertook careful self-analysis, and was challenged by a newly created Faculty Committee on Academic Enrichment (FCAE) to create the sharpest, deepest, and most engaging undergraduate curriculum in their discipline. FCAE synthesized these visions into the Blueprint for Haverford’s Future, an ambitious plan to enhance collaborative scholarly work between faculty and students that involves expansion of the faculty by 25-30%. The Blueprint was endorsed by the Board of Managers in 2008, and plans are underway to implement the Blueprint’s recommendations within 5-7 years. The work of FCAE remains ongoing and iterative, as new opportunities and challenges face curricula and departments.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Hendrix College

**Hendrix College**: Two major curricular events created a move toward revitalization of the College's assessment of its academic program during the 2004-2005 academic year. The first is that the Hendrix's new curriculum and new calendar, first implemented in the 2002-2003 academic year, was successfully underway and ready for evaluation. The second is that the first cycle of external program reviews for all departments concluded in the 2003-2004 academic year.

The Office of Academic Affairs linked the assessment of the new curriculum with the second cycle of external program reviews for all departments. Changes in the second cycle of external program reviews made to accommodate this new linkage included: (1) Language ensuring that the external review process includes evaluation of the appropriate student assessment plans. (2) Language ensuring that external reviewers have expertise in evaluating student assessment plans. (3) Inclusion of the general education curriculum into the external review process.

Other changes included: (1) The move from an internally developed assessment survey to the National Survey of Student Engagement. (2) The creation of an annual assessment report for departments. The report is modified annually to encourage departments to develop assessment cycles supporting incremental improvements.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Hope College

Hope College’s mission is, in part, to provide “academic and co-curricular programs of recognized excellence …” One element of recognized excellence is academic rigor. Hope has assessed academic rigor by collecting data from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) since 2003. Hope students were initially not reporting academic engagement at a level that was satisfactory to the college, particularly with respect to number of hours spent studying per week. The college took several steps to respond to this finding, including: a) a faculty meeting to identify ways to increase the college's rigor; b) a brain-storming session by the Deans' Council, which resulted in specific action items designed to increase rigor; c) a workshop for department chairs to share both difficulties and best practices related to academic rigor; and d) campus-wide distribution of strategies (generated by the faculty) to increase intellectual engagement. The result of these efforts is that the percentage of first-year students reporting that they spent only 10 hours a week or less on academic work dropped from 38% in 2003 to 21% in 2007 and 29% in 2008. The percentage of senior students reporting that they spent only 10 hours a week or less on academic work dropped from 39% in 2003 to 22% in 2008.
Kenyon College

Kenyon College. In order to foster and improve student learning across the liberal arts and sciences, Kenyon faculty review and discuss a wide variety of student assignments and projects to assess the achievement of key learning goals.

These discussions, held yearly by each department, focus both on the general education goals put forth in the college mission statement, as applied to all students taking courses in the department, and on the discipline-specific learning goals articulated by departments and programs for their majors. Faculty are asked to:

1) articulate the learning goals addressed in their courses,
2) describe assignments on which students can demonstrate achievement relative to those goals,
3) characterize typical student work on those assignments,
4) compare typical achievement with desired achievement, and
5) identify ways to alter courses, assignments, curricula, and pedagogy in order to improve student attainment of those learning goals.

Reports of these discussions are forwarded to a faculty committee on resource allocation and assessment. The committee reviews these reports, identifying common themes and longitudinal trends in the results of these assessment exercises. A summary of this review process is subsequently reported to the faculty. The committee, which also advises the academic administration on budget priorities and faculty/staffing issues, can bring findings from assessment into consideration during those deliberations.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Lawrence University

Lawrence University: One of the main goals of the Lawrence Freshman Studies program is to introduce students to the conventions of academic writing. To chart progress toward this goal, the University periodically collects papers written at different points in this two-term course. Faculty are asked to score these papers according to a set of criteria focusing on argumentation, organization, and style. The project has been conducted four times and each time the results helped identify students’ strengths and weaknesses while also creating opportunities for faculty discussion across a wide range of disciplines. Lawrence hopes to use this project as the basis for an ongoing discussion of effective teaching throughout the curriculum.

Individualized learning is another defining feature of the curriculum. Lawrence University recently joined The College of Wooster and Williams College in a two-year project, funded by the Teagle Foundation, to develop and test a method for the formative and summative assessment of tutorial education. Although there is general agreement that tutorials in liberal arts subjects support students’ abilities to think creatively and independently, there are no current methods to assess these outcomes. Lawrence faculty and administrators will develop a shared assessment model for student work at all stages of the tutorial.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Lewis & Clark College

Lewis & Clark College: Since 2004, academic departments have been responsible for including in their annual reports a set of learning outcomes that they expect graduating seniors to have achieved and their evaluation of how well these goals were accomplished. Departments have considerable flexibility in developing methods appropriate to their discipline for defining and measuring outcomes, but are required to relate these outcomes to the broader purposes of an education in the liberal arts. The most frequent practice is for departments to use a capstone course or experience as the basis for assessing learning outcomes. This may take the form of a senior thesis, a recital or performance, or a visual art project. Other instruments used by some departments include comprehensive oral proficiency tests, and adaptations of standardized subject tests such as the GRE. The assessments conducted by departments are compared with items from the annual senior survey in which graduating students report their perceptions about the extent to which academic skills in the area of communication, writing, quantitative and scientific understanding, and information literacy have been enhanced by their education. The College has recently undertaken an analysis comparing results from the senior survey to answers from the same respondents five and ten years later to a set of similar items included on an alumni survey. Information from these various sources is providing departments and review committees an opportunity each year to evaluate the relevance of the curriculum to the longer term career aspirations of Lewis & Clark graduates.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

MIT: The Dean for Undergraduate Education (DUE) is charged with promoting education across the Institute. DUE has two funds (D'Arbeloff and Alumni) to support cross-cutting educational innovation. The D'Arbeloff fund is used to support interdisciplinary educational innovation often involving several departments and many faculty. The Alumni Fund supports smaller scale innovations by a single faculty member. Resources from both funds are accessible by faculty in all schools. The underlying idea is that the funds will support innovations that the departments might not want to support since they don't know the effectiveness of the innovation. Thus it is critically important to assess the impact and value of the proposal. All proposals to the funds must outline how they will undertake assessment. In the case of the D'Arbeloff fund, ten percent of the proposal award is set aside for professionals in the Teaching and Learning Lab to work with the faculty to develop appropriate assessment tools. For the Alumni Fund, the faculty are all asked to report at an annual workshop for MIT faculty and representatives of the sponsoring alumni classes.

These arrangements build assessment into the work from the beginning and have been instrumental in persuading departments to pick up the innovations when the DUE funds ended. This happens after one or two years depending on the proposal. The Physics course Teaching Enabled Active Learning (TEAL) was funded this way. Pre- and post-exams that tested conceptual knowledge showed significantly better results compared with traditional methods of teaching freshman physics.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

McDaniel College

**McDaniel College’s** Academic Assessment Committee (AAC) has established a regular program of assessment for its general education program (Integrated Study in the Liberal Arts). Each year, the General Education Assessment Subcommittee will assess two or three goals within one of the four broad learning Outcomes for general education: (a) Critical Thinking, (b) Creative Expression and Problem Solving, (c) Communication, (d) Global Citizenship. Adhering to guidelines prepared by the AAC and supported by the faculty, the Subcommittee will select a variety of direct and indirect measures to assess these goals. They will prepare a year-end report summarizing these findings that identifies areas of weakness as well as strengths so that the faculty may make informed changes to meet the goals of the general education curriculum. The Subcommittee’s reports will enable the AAC to monitor and foster continuing faculty assessment of the general education curriculum and to prepare its comprehensive fifth-year report.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Michigan State University

**Michigan State University**: Academic governance endorsed a set of institutional learning goals and constituted the University Committee on Liberal Learning to serve as stewards of the goals. The committee focused on delineating learning outcomes, formulating ways of creating coherence and transparency across all aspects of the curriculum and co-curriculum, assessing learning outcomes, and communicating outcomes to the university community. The goals focus on students’ abilities to integrate discipline-based knowledge within a liberal arts context; make informed decisions that reflect humane, social, ethical, and aesthetic values; utilize a variety of media to communicate effectively; comprehend global and cultural diversity; reason using scientific and quantitative knowledge; critically analyze information using multiple methods; and become effective citizens of local, national, and global communities. Faculty developed and implemented assessment instruments for Quantitative and Scientific Reasoning and, based on newly designed rubrics, pre-post test information has been gathered in first year writing courses. The remaining four learning goals will be the focus of work over the next four years. The Liberal Learning Goals have been mapped to data from the National Survey of Student Engagement and to a series of longitudinal surveys conducted by MSU Residence Life. Survey results provide a better understanding of student behaviors and the extent to which students gain the knowledge, attitudes and skills associated with the institutional learning goals. Importantly, these data provide valuable information that will drive curricular change.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Monmouth College

Monmouth College: During the 2007-08 academic year, academic departments elected to move to an annual conversation model from a 5-year reporting model for assessing student-learning in their majors. The departmental focus is balanced with the utilization of assessment tools such as NSSE and CLA which provide an overview of student-learning for the institution as a whole.

The new approach requires departments, interdisciplinary programs, and general education areas to meet each year to discuss: 1) goals of the major, program, or area and how those support the college-wide student learning goals, 2) evidence of student learning in the major, program, or area; and 3) an initiative for the next year to improve student learning.

In the first year, department conversations focused on goals and provided an opportunity for faculty who were appointed since the student-learning goals were adopted to discuss them with departmental colleagues. A significant benefit of the first year conversations was to broaden and strengthen understanding of student-learning goals and the faculty commitment to them.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Moravian College

Moravian College: Writing-across-the-Curriculum (WAC) is a curricular initiative that is embodied primarily in two required courses: a first year, cross-disciplinary writing course (Writing 100) and a writing-intensive (WI) course in each student's major. A study was designed to examine one learning outcome for Writing 100 courses and one learning outcome for all writing-intensive courses in the humanities division. Data were analyzed and the findings were disseminated. Although the sample size of Writing 100 was small, the assessment showed that students in Writing 100 tended to write solely for the teacher as evaluator, rather than writing for varying genres and audiences, which is an expected outcome of all Writing 100 courses. The director of WAC addressed this concern in annual faculty workshops for Writing 100.

The students in the WI courses were more successful in their ability to "analyze the needs and expectations of an audience for the writing in common to the discipline and effectively address them in the student's own writing." The WAC director discussed these findings and focused on related pedagogical strategies in the faculty development workshop.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Muhlenberg College

**Muhlenberg College**: With the support of a Teagle Foundation consortium grant, Muhlenberg is assessing the role of capstone experiences and student-faculty research in fostering intellectual growth and intentional learning, specifically in the senior year. The College defines intentional learners as being self aware and self directed. They recognize multiple perspectives; can make connections and apply skills and information in a range of contexts. Muhlenberg offers capstone experiences, such as seminars, mentored research and independent study, to most students. However, capstone opportunities are not a requirement across the curriculum.

The project involves the collecting and analyzing of student work, survey results, and focus group/interview data. A faculty group then compares students who had Capstone experiences and those who did not. Students from various majors submit essays reflecting on and giving examples of their educational experiences at Muhlenberg. Faculty members from across the college score these essays using rubrics designed to assess students’ ability to identify and connect multiple perspectives, critically evaluate information and concepts, and create new knowledge and representations. The faculty group shares the results of this research with colleagues, so that it can inform deliberations about curriculum development and revision at both the program and institutional level.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Northwestern University

Northwestern University: In 2001, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation awarded Northwestern a grant to enhance, evaluate, and refine a program designed to minimize the barriers many students face in the study of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). The Gateway Science Workshop (GSW) program, as it is known, has since served more than 4,000 students in five disciplines, spawned a for-credit mentorship training program, consistently received exceptionally high reviews from diverse stakeholders, and repeatedly shown increases in course retention and grades among student participants.

Originally begun in 1997 as a small pilot program in Northwestern’s Biology department, the GSW program has grown dramatically over its lifetime. The program now serves some 700 students a year, many of whom participate in more than one workshop during the year. The program runs in conjunction with 9 course sequences in the five disciplines, with approximately 100 trained facilitators each running a group, and 17 “senior facilitators” (second-year facilitators who take on leadership responsibilities) helping coach facilitators and assisting with program logistics.

Administered through Northwestern’s Searle Center for Teaching Excellence, GSW has demonstrated success on a number of fronts. Student, facilitator, and faculty ratings of their own experience have been consistently high since GSW’s inception. Even more critical to the program’s mission are the encouraging retention and grade outcomes of student participants, particularly for underrepresented students. In Biology and Chemistry, for example, students participating between 2001 and 2005 on average received higher final grades than did non-participants, with even higher gains recorded among minority-group students. Further, majority-group students participating between 2001 and 2004 were 2.4 times more likely to be retained in the course sequence than were majority-group student who did not participate. And minority-group participants were 2.8 times more likely to be retained than were non-participating minority-group students.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Oberlin College

Oberlin College has a standing Assessment Committee consisting of faculty from Arts and Sciences and the Conservatory of Music, administrators and students. Using workshops and face-to-face meetings with each department, Oberlin has successfully engaged the faculty in developing and assessing departmental learning goals using both indirect (e.g. surveys) and direct (e.g. portfolios, rubrics) measures. Each department reports annually to the Dean on their activities and results. The members of the Assessment Committee respond to each department, offering suggestions for improvements when necessary. The primary tasks of the Committee are to facilitate assessment and educate the wider community on benefits and practices.

After reviewing several years of departmental results, the Assessment Committee believes that those results can be used to also assess general education. In A&S there is a high level of congruence between departmental and institutional goals. In addition to synthesizing the departmental assessment results, the Assessment Committee will work with committees overseeing specific requirements such as quantitative and writing proficiencies. Representatives of those committees will work with instructors teaching courses that satisfy those proficiencies and review samples of student work in the context of the goals of those requirements rather than those of the individual courses.
Oglethorpe University

Oglethorpe University: To assess achievement of the university’s general education goals, all students must complete a portfolio and oral presentation. In each semester of attendance every student is enrolled in a class level-specific section of the interdisciplinary Core curriculum. In the spring semester each student writes a paper addressing a common question selected by the faculty which is designed to elicit understanding and accurate articulation of the main objectives for the Core course. The paper provides an assessment of written communication skills, ability to read and evaluate evidence, and critical thinking skills. Upon graduation every student has four papers in his or her portfolio that have been evaluated for understanding and application of the learning objectives for the course, quality of writing style, and critical reading/thinking/ evaluation skills. In addition, every student in every section of each Core course makes an oral presentation to the class based on the paper topic selected that year for the portfolio. The presentations are scored with a rubric focused on efficiency, accurateness, and persuasiveness. The rubrics are behaviorally anchored, and inter-rater agreement is calculated. The collected portfolio papers and the oral presentations are used to assess overall achievement of the goals during an assessment workshop attended by all faculty at the end of each spring semester.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Pennsylvania State University

The Pennsylvania State University Faculty Senate approved in April 2008 a change in the General Education program involving first year students. This revision makes the program more responsive to first year student needs through two goals: to engage students in learning and orient them to the scholarly community from the outset of their undergraduate studies in a way that will bridge to later experiences in their chosen majors; and to facilitate students’ adjustment to the high expectations, demanding workload, increased liberties, and other aspects of the transition to college life. Each college at the University Park campus and each of the other 19 Penn State campuses will submit First Year Engagement Plans for one-time review and approval by a special committee appointed by the Chair of the Senate and the Vice President for Undergraduate Education. These plans must outline goals and objectives and the means for assessing how the goals and objectives will be met. It is expected that in five years the Senate, in consultation with the office of the Vice President for Undergraduate Education, will review the extent to which plans have been implemented and assess their effectiveness in achieving the stated goals based on assessment data.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Pitzer College

Pitzer College has implemented a comprehensive review program to, specifically, examine the educational goals of each departmental Field Group to facilitate efforts in maintaining academic excellence and to allow professional peer reviews to assess and improve student learning outcomes. The first year of each comprehensive review begins with a Field Group's Self Study, followed in the second year by a campus visit by an external review team comprising members from peer or aspirant institutions, and concludes in the third year with field group's response to the review team report. This three-year process asks Field Groups to examine: issues pertaining to the educational objectives for their major, the disciplinary educational objectives as it relates to the College's objectives, proposed curricular changes, the link between their curriculum and developments within their discipline or interdisciplinary field, and student learning outcomes.

In addition, the capstone in a Pitzer education is a senior thesis, project, exhibit or seminar which draws on their four years of experience at the College and requires them to distill their community experience as it relates to the College's educational objectives. We also document the number of student awards, scholarships, and participation in study abroad and community internship programs. Finally, Pitzer College administers surveys to Freshmen, Sophomores, Seniors and Alumni asking them directly whether Pitzer has adequately provided the environment and services to promote student learning.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Pomona College

Pomona College recognizes and applauds the diversity of learning that takes place across its curriculum and accepts the difficulty of identifying goals for student learning that could be meaningfully applied to every discipline. With this pluralistic model in mind, the College regularly asks departments to define and redefine their own goals and to implement their own mechanisms for measuring progress toward achieving those goals. At the end of each academic year, the departments submit reports on steps taken in this direction, noting in particular any modifications made to the curriculum in response to verifiable deficiencies in student learning. The administration supports these departmentally-driven processes in a number of ways. Pomona has long since established a regular cycle of departmental self-studies that include external review by teams of experts in the relevant field. More recently the College has brought on a consultant to work with individual departments to help them in the transition to more learning based goals and systems of evaluation. Pomona has also fostered the development of senior exercises in every department, exercises that can not only demonstrate a student’s mastery of the intellectual content and tools of the discipline but allow for comparisons, both within a particular student cohort and over time.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Princeton University

Princeton University: For 85 years, the senior thesis has been the capstone of a Princeton education. All Princeton seniors undertake a substantial independent research project, supervised by a faculty member. While the typical thesis is a written report based on scholarly investigation or scientific experimentation, some students produce creative theses, such as novels, plays, or dance performances.

The thesis presumes that, through the foundational work of general education and the focused study of departmental concentration, undergraduates develop the capacity to engage in independent study in their chosen fields. Students meet regularly with their faculty advisers throughout the senior year as they plan and execute their thesis projects. The resulting thesis typically undergoes several drafts, each with the benefit of faculty feedback. The final product is then assessed independently by multiple readers, who provide extensive comments.

What is most important, thesis-writers and faculty members agree, is less the specific learning of the subject matter covered in the thesis than the contribution of the thesis to the central goals of a Princeton education, the development of traits that augur well for future success, no matter what one’s professional and civic commitments. These include: mental discipline; independence of mind and judgment; the capacity to focus and pursue a subject in depth; the ability to design and execute a large, complex project; the skills of analysis, synthesis, and clear, economical writing; and the self-confidence that grows from mastering a difficult challenge. The senior thesis demonstrates whether these goals have in fact been met.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Reed College

Reed College begins its assessment efforts in the freshman humanities course, the foundation of the Reed education, and its seven paper conferences throughout the year in which each student meets individually with his or her conference leader to discuss the student’s strategies, strengths, and weaknesses in making written arguments.

Another significant assessment is the Junior Qualifying Examination, part of the Reed curriculum since 1918, which is designed to test students’ general knowledge of their field and readiness to undertake the senior thesis project. It serves as a diagnostic aid in identifying weaknesses in a student’s preparation for advanced study, assists the student in unifying his or her knowledge, and provides academic departments feedback on program effectiveness.

A Senior Thesis is required of all seniors and has been a feature at Reed since its founding. The thesis is a yearlong course and process in which the student chooses a topic and an adviser, creates a research plan and bibliography, and undertakes the lengthy process of original research and writing or creative expression. Most students meet weekly with advisers.

At the conclusion of the second semester, the thesis is defended in front of an interdisciplinary committee of four faculty members in a two-hour oral examination.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey

Rutgers University has revolutionized the structure of undergraduate education on its New Brunswick campus. The undergraduate liberal arts colleges on this campus have been consolidated into a new School of Arts and Sciences, and learning goals for a new core curriculum have been established. The new core curriculum itself is a living enterprise, under continuous review and development.

A new Office of Undergraduate Education works in conjunction with the Office of Student Affairs to enhance and enrich our students’ learning and development. Rutgers has created learning communities, first-year experiences, and new small enrollment seminars to bring the meaning and value of studying at a research university to students as soon as possible in their educational experience at the university.

Existing organizational entities, notably the Office of Institutional Research and Academic Planning, the Office of Organizational Development and Leadership, and the Center for Teaching Advancement and Assessment Research, coordinate efforts, and provide support and expertise across the university for planning, assessment and organizational management. A position in teaching and assessment has been created and a learning outcome assessment structure was implemented to share best practices in learning outcomes assessment, provide resources and coordination across schools and departments, and offer insight and assistance in planning assessment strategy.
Sarah Lawrence College periodically participates in the National Survey on Student Engagement to measure and benchmark the aspects of engagement that correlate with positive student learning outcomes. In the coming year, Sarah Lawrence will develop a direct assessment technique, combined with NSSE data, for determining the effectiveness of its donning (faculty advising) function as it relates to student learning objectives and engagement outcomes, and the moral, ethical, cognitive, physical and emotional development of its students.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Sewanee: The University of the South

Sewanee: The University of the South assesses learning outcomes in the academic major via the Comprehensive Exam. Comprehensive Exams are intensive, department-designed capstone experiences that are required of all students for graduation. They typically comprise one or more written exams followed by an oral exam before a panel of faculty from the major department. In the Arts, production and evaluation of creative pieces, perhaps with an oral component, are often used. All members of a department or program participate in the preparation and administration of the Comprehensive Exam.

For the General Education Program, Sewanee has articulated nine learning outcomes that form the core of a liberal arts education. Assessment of these learning outcomes occurs in every course that fulfills a General Distribution Requirement using course-embedded assessment tools. These tools are designed and scored by individual departments or faculty members, enabling the tools to be tailored to the style and content of each course.

Supporting continued enhancement of teaching effectiveness at Sewanee are several programs that provide funding and other resources for pedagogical innovation. Among these are the Center for Teaching, the Center for Liberal Education and Community Engagement, and the Fund for Innovative Teaching and Learning.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Skidmore College

Skidmore College first fostered a culture of assessment in departments some ten years ago, beginning with goals for learning at each level. Believing that faculty in their disciplines can best determine the goals and methods of assessing student learning, Skidmore’s faculty use both direct and indirect measures as they consider what students are learning and whether changes in curriculum or pedagogy are called for. Departments are charged to answer the questions: What is it your students should learn? How do you convey those goals? How do you know what and where they are learning? And finally: What can you do to help your students learn more?

The departments' answers to these questions consistently reflect liberal arts values. To cite just one example, after launching a new curriculum for the major, Biology developed a new assessment plan. It includes an exit exam on content, and also a sampling of lab reports and oral presentations to gauge "scientific thinking," writing, speaking and critical thinking skills. Other departments may meet as a whole to discuss their seniors' capstone work; gather information from alumni on long-range learning; or assess learning in specific courses or contexts.

Overarching learning goals and assessments in the college are also underway.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Smith College

Smith College approved a strategic plan in 2007 based on a core commitment to strengthen student capacities within the College’s open curriculum. Specifically, Smith students will develop the ability to think critically and analytically and to convey knowledge; they will develop a historical and comparative perspective; and they will become informed global citizens. Smith’s integration of these capacities includes a commitment to holistic assessment of student achievement.

In developing these capacities, Smith relied on the experiences of alumnae regularly gathered through a survey conducted through a consortium of selective institutions. Ten years after graduation, Smith alumnae were asked about the areas of intellectual development that were important to them in their lives after college. The selected capacities were driven by the areas alumnae cited as most important. More than two-thirds of Smith alumnae thought it was very important to write effectively, to communicate orally, to acquire new skills on one’s own, to understand oneself, and to synthesize and integrate ideas and information. The College carefully chose 10-year-out alumnae, well into the career and life-building phases of their lives when the lifelong effects of a liberal arts education are maturing. This feedback was an important driver of the development of the capacities around which Smith will be building its curricular plans in the coming years.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Southwestern University

**Southwestern University**: Based on assessment results, the Education Department at the University identified problems of the beginning teacher as a crucial need area with high priority and developed the "Semester of Support" (S.O.S) program in 1986. For teachers certified through the Southwestern University teacher education program, S.O.S. provides support during their first year of teaching in the following ways:

- A one-day workshop on campus, to be held near mid-semester, designed to allow beginning teachers to share ideas and common problems, to confer with faculty, and to share experiences with students in the teacher preparation program. Nominal stipends help defray the cost of attendance.
- Telephone conferences with appropriate faculty to give assistance as requested.
- Personal visits by faculty members if the need is great and/or the distance is not prohibitive.
- Access to the resources and equipment—on a check-out basis—of the Southwestern University Education Department.

Assessment data have been used throughout its operation to improve the teacher education program and include:

- Development of a relationship with a very diverse elementary school in East Austin where students now do their pre-student teaching field work during the junior year. This change was enacted based on reports from beginning teachers that they were not receiving adequate experience with students in diverse settings.
- Infusion of the curriculum with more Special Education topics since teachers who did not certify in Special Education were still expected to work with special needs students and did not feel confident in the area.
- Development of plans to more intentionally and actively address the topics of working with parents, classroom management, and technology which teachers reported as areas of concern.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Spelman College

Spelman College recently expanded its longstanding First Year Writing Portfolio into a multimedia documentation of student achievement – the Spelman Electronic Portfolio (SpEl.Folio). SpEl.Folio develops students' ability to think critically about the connections among their intellectual, professional, and personal lives. Each student creates a dynamic web-based composition representing her diverse goals, achievements, and reflections. In this way, students construct and demonstrate their development as lifelong learners. SpEl.Folios enable assessment on multiple levels: self-assessment by students, course and major-based assessment, and institutional assessment of designated learning objectives.

Imbedded initially in the First Year Experience, the SpEl.Folio includes samples of writing from first year classes, as well as from prompts developed by the Comprehensive Writing Program. Portfolio scoring is done by a jury of trained readers from across various departments at Spelman, as well as expert readers from other schools including Emory University. Each portfolio is read by at least two jury members and is assigned an evaluation of "Exemplary," "Pass" or "Resubmit." An assessment of "Resubmit" means that the author will need additional support in one or more area(s) in order to be prepared for her upper-level writing and critical-thinking work. Each student whose Writing Portfolio receives an assessment of "Resubmit" also receives information designed especially for her, specifying workshops to attend and at least one visit to a Writing Center tutor.

Planning is underway for SpEl.Folio assessments of other learning outcomes, including those from the core curriculum and within the major. Each department is developing capstone demonstrations of student learning (often a senior thesis) that will become part of the student's portfolio.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

College of St. Benedict and St. John’s University

The College of Saint Benedict and Saint John’s University share a completely integrated curriculum. Therefore, assessment and evaluation of student learning is a joint endeavor. The College of Saint Benedict and Saint John’s University have an institutionalized system of assessment, including a faculty governance committee charged with oversight of assessment. This faculty committee oversees all student outcomes learning assessment plans in general education and discipline courses. Each academic department or program has a faculty assessment coordinator. Evidence that the institutions are gathering and using assessment data effectively include regular participation, interpretation, and utilization of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) surveys; recent revision of the common curriculum to include measurable embedded learning goals for every course in the curriculum; current development, by the faculty, of measurable, universal goals for study abroad programs; and significant organizational changes that have shifted the purposes, processes, participation, and the results of assessment from a place where assessment was episodic, not terribly informative or useful and mostly resisted, to a place where assessment is now constant, nearly systemic, mostly accepted, and used increasingly for data-informed decision making at all levels.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

St. Olaf College

St. Olaf College has used the Research Practices Survey to assess the information literacy of first-year students. The survey examines attitudes, beliefs and knowledge regarding academic research. Two cohorts of St. Olaf students (’09, ’10) have completed the survey at the beginning of their first year of college; the second of these cohorts completed the survey again at the end of their first year. By examining the differences in responses on the pre- and post-test, faculty and staff can see areas in which students need more instruction and evaluate the effectiveness of teaching practices. The results are shared broadly, but librarians and faculty teaching in the first-year writing program are especially interested. Proficiency in using research to support critical inquiry, including the ability to identify, evaluate, analyze, synthesize, and document appropriate sources, is an intended learning outcome of our first-year writing program.

From our efforts to date, we learned that even after a year of college experience, our first-year students struggle with distinguishing scholarly from non-scholarly sources, constructing search strategies and launching their research process with sufficient lead time. Each of these results has led to programmatic changes in the library. Instruction has included a greater emphasis on characterizing sources and search strategies and smaller, focused library research sessions are offered in lieu of an all-inclusive session at the beginning of the term. Research Practices Survey results are also incorporated in our faculty development program for instructors of first-year writing.

This instrument is an online 15-minute questionnaire designed in an inter-institutional project led by librarians, classroom faculty, assessment professionals and information technology staff at Carleton and St. Olaf Colleges. In 2008 administration of the survey was transferred to the Higher Education Data Sharing (HEDS) Consortium and about forty institutions nationwide are now making use of the survey. Participating institutions are provided with data for their own students and data for all schools administering the survey.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Stanford University

Stanford University has multiple assessment programs and projects ranging from discipline-specific assessment to program and department assessment. Here are two examples.

The Language Center offers instruction in 14 languages, as well as 30 Less Commonly Taught Languages. All undergraduates are required to achieve an Intermediate Mid-level of oral proficiency in the cognate languages (e.g., French) and Novice High in the non-cognate languages (e.g., Chinese). Similar standards are set for reading and writing. These proficiency levels are based on the national scale called the Foreign Service Institute/American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages scale. Since 1996, oral assessments have been performed to determine a pre- and post-language acquisition proficiency. As of Spring 2008, writing is also evaluated.

The Program in Writing and Rhetoric’s (PWR) mission is to create and sustain a culture of writing for all undergraduates. As a basic tool for communicating ideas and expanding on discourse, writing is a fundamental skill necessary to our students’ future success, irrespective of course of study. The first two courses taken in freshman and sophomore year focus on analysis and research-based argumentation, and writing, research and oral/multimedia presentation, respectively. The third component provides specialized direction by providing support in the context of a student’s chosen major. A five-year longitudinal study of PWR conducted from 2001-2006 laid the groundwork for this assessment activity through the collection of writing samples, interviews and surveys. A current study will focus on a pre- and post-evaluation of writing samples from first and second year courses. Subsequently, students will be followed through upper division writing courses and beyond to track further writing development. Their work will be assessed via a grading rubric and results will inform further curriculum development.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Swarthmore College

**Swarthmore College**: A significant portion (roughly one third) of Swarthmore students engages with the Honors Program. The program’s emphases on rigor, content, collaboration, and independent learning, make it the purest manifestation of the College’s mission. Participation entails both a mode of preparation and a final scrutiny by external examiners. To prepare, small groups of dedicated and accomplished students work with each other and their professor to explore a subject, or to advance a research topic in an independent study experience. At the end of the senior year, students are examined in four subjects, three in a major and one in a minor (or four related subjects in a special interdisciplinary major), by scholars external to the College. Evaluating the written examinations they set, orals they administer personally, and often a 10-12 page portfolio paper in each of the subjects, the External Examiners constitute an exceptional assessment mechanism, not only of individual students, but of Swarthmore’s academic program as a whole. (The External Examiners are responsible for assigning the only college-sponsored graduation honorifics.) At the end of the Honors examination process, departments normally meet with the examiners to solicit feedback about the performance of their students, and also about their programs more generally, which benefits “Course” (non-honors) students as well.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Syracuse University

**Syracuse University**: The assessment of student learning has long been and continues to be a major institutional focus. Within each school/college, this effort is led by an assessment coordinator, with the active involvement of faculty. The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) provides centralized coordination and support.

Our assessment cycle consists of multiple stages. All academic programs develop clear statements of student learning outcomes that are consistent with the institutional and school/college missions and are widely accepted as important in the discipline. Direct methods for gathering information about student learning are identified; these are supported by indirect methods of assessment. Both forms of evidence of student learning useful for decision making are collected, analyzed, and summarized. Based on these assessment results, faculty document what has been learned, suggest and implement changes to improve student learning, and develop plans for assessing the effectiveness of the changes. The impact of these changes on student learning is assessed in subsequent assessment cycles.

OIRA has developed a series of templates and guidelines to assist academic units in gathering, reporting, and using feedback effectively to enhance student learning. OIRA staff meet at least annually with each school college assessment coordinator to provide feedback on the program's assessment plan and its implementation. To date, almost all programs have established learning outcomes, many have assessment methods and are collecting data, and some have a sustainable process that uses assessment results to make changes that enhance student learning.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Trinity College

**Trinity College:** Trinity College is implementing a program to identify learning expectations for students and faculty and to measure students’ success in reaching those expectations. Approaches to assessment are designed to guide improvement in our curriculum, pedagogy, and residential environment. A major focus of assessment is on 10 Learning Goals that define the College’s General Education Curriculum. Trinity College wishes to measure a student’s learning both within the classroom and the broader campus community, and is examining how the Learning Goals are achieved through coursework and various other collegiate programs (athletics, study abroad, internships, etc).

As part of the assessment of these goals, the College is currently undertaking a Curricular Mapping project. Faculty and students are being asked to align their courses with particular Learning Goals. This exercise allows the College to identify where faculty and students view the greatest overlap between coursework and specific learning goals and where more alignment needs to occur. A core learning goal is effective writing, and the College has implemented a writing program and assessment that begins in the first year and culminates with a writing intensive course within each student’s major and a senior capstone.

Assessment programs are being established for each of the major areas of study, for the study abroad experience, internships, athletics, and various other curricular and co-curricular programs. A liberal arts education is more than in-class pedagogy, and Trinity College aspires to measure and improve the effectiveness of the total collegiate experience.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Trinity University

Trinity University: In the summer of 2008, Trinity initiated a project for improving information literacy skills for all students. The project was selected and approved based on various assessment results, including responses on the First Year Information Literacy in the Liberal Arts Assessment (FYILLAA). This instrument was designed by librarians, faculty, institutional research staff, and academic technologists from a group of selective liberal arts institutions and was conducted through the Gould Library at Carleton College. The FYILLAA was administered to first year students at Trinity and other similar institutions in the fall and spring of the 2006-2007 academic year. Results indicated that Trinity students lagged behind their peers at similar institutions in information literacy skills and thus a five year plan of workshops and course redevelopment was designed.

The success of the project in achieving its goals is being evaluated by means of the Research Practices Survey (the successor to the FYILLAA), embedded assignments in courses, pre and post comparisons of writing samples from first year and senior students, and sessions for faculty and staff members participating in the project to discuss results with others. During each year of the project, participants are developing documentation of best practices, based on assessment results, for enhancing information literacy throughout the undergraduate and graduate experience.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

University of California, Berkeley

The University of California, Berkeley launched the Undergraduate Student Learning Initiative (USLI) in Fall 2007 at the request of the Academic Senate Divisional Council. This campus-wide initiative is designed to support departments in establishing educational goals and evaluation procedures for all undergraduate programs. As a result of the initiative, faculty and students will have a shared understanding of the purpose of the major and what graduating seniors are expected to know or to be able to do at the end of their course of study. The initiative is in keeping with the fundamental principle at Berkeley that the evaluation of student achievement should be locally defined, discipline specific, and faculty driven. A joint Academic Senate-Administration Faculty Advisory Committee provides shared oversight for the initiative. Ongoing workshops and consultations are being held to assist departments in defining learning goals and identifying appropriate direct assessment procedures at the program level with a focus on papers, projects, exams, and capstone experiences. Each department will publicly post statements of their approaches on their website, which will be linked from a centrally managed gateway site. Departments will continue to own these statements, which will also be reviewed as a regular part of the campus's Academic Program Review process. This department-based approach is now being emulated on a system-wide basis.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

University of Pennsylvania

The University of Pennsylvania: From 1999 to 2006, the College of Arts and Sciences at University of Pennsylvania conducted an experiment to examine the effects of its general education requirement on the educational programs that students construct for themselves. Designed to explore simultaneously several possible new components for the curriculum, the study was a true experiment in which samples of freshmen in the classes entering in 2000 through 2004 were randomly selected to fulfill requirements substantially different from the College’s standard general education requirement. The faculty evaluation committee gathered data about the students' experiences through multiple methods including interviews, focus groups, surveys, and analyses of student records and course evaluations. Although few significant differences were found in the experiences of students in the Pilot Curriculum when compared to those completing the standard requirements, the study informed the faculty of the College as they implemented a new curriculum for the incoming class of 2010 and beyond. For a copy of the final report of the Pilot Curriculum Evaluation Committee and other information about the study, please visit http://www.sas.upenn.edu/ugrad/curriculum_review/index.html.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

University of Puget Sound

University of Puget Sound regularly assesses effectiveness of a new core curriculum introduced in 2003, and an initiative in conjunction with the Center for Writing, Learning, and Teaching focusing on development of writing skills across the curriculum.

The core curriculum is the product of several years of intense faculty discussion about the distinctive nature of a liberal arts education within the developing context of interdisciplinary knowledge. The core curriculum is informed by a continuing assessment of its effectiveness obtained from annual surveys of freshmen and seniors; focus groups of graduating seniors; faculty analysis of student writing; baseline transcript analyses; Center for Writing, Learning, and Teaching writing assessments; and Curriculum Committee assessments. Consistent with the goals of the curriculum, findings emerging from assessment of the core demonstrate that students are exhibiting greater growth in their abilities to think logically, analytically, and independently; communicate clearly and effectively; and learn independently.

Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) has been assessed on an ongoing basis for the past 10 years, with an assessment team charged with ongoing evaluation of the assessment methodology and making minor changes to the study design as needed. Results show that students are better writers when they graduate than they were as freshman, based on a blind assessment conducted by faculty across the disciplines. In the most recent study, WAC added student focus groups, which produced strong feedback from students about growing progressively better as writers as a result of faculty attention, intellectual maturation, and development in their writing processes.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

University of Rochester

University of Rochester: All students in the College must complete the Primary Writing Requirement. This is most commonly done by completing WRT 105, which is taught primarily by graduate students from several disciplines. The College Writing Program regularly assesses these instructors and undergraduates in these courses.

The Program requires all incoming instructors to complete a writing pedagogy course, to participate in a teaching practicum during their first two semesters teaching, and to meet the Program’s expectations for ongoing assessment. Directors work with a small group of new instructors for guided reviews and discussion of each new instructor's responses to students’ rough drafts and grades on final drafts. Regular classroom observation by experienced mentors, completion of mid-semester and semester-end student evaluations, instructor self-assessments, and regular consultation with the directors of the program provide instructors with ample feedback and guidance.

In 2005, the Writing Program began a long-term formal assessment of student essays from the primary writing courses. The Program reviewed more than 100 final papers from the previous semester and assessed them along several specified criteria. Early results suggested that students were developing an understanding of college argument structure, but had not adequately shifted from the high school report mode of presenting other views to the more sophisticated method of using arguments to find the best answer or explanation. This finding resulted in greater emphasis in instructor training on strategies for teaching students to further engage and evaluate sources and to develop and respond to counter-arguments.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

University of Virginia

The University of Virginia has developed a pilot program that enables faculty members to use everyday tasks—grading student work and providing feedback to students—to collect assessment data. Faculty in five schools employ an interactive rubric software program that facilitates grading and feedback for students; at the same time, the program captures and organizes the data for assessment purposes. By using rubrics to articulate clear expectations for student learning and to evaluate student work, and by linking those rubrics to program learning outcomes, faculty grading serves as a natural mechanism for assessment and for determining student strengths and weaknesses. The software shows how well students, in the aggregate, perform according to criteria reflected in the rubrics. Faculty can analyze data to address more specific questions, such as inter-rater reliability, longitudinal student achievement, and performance of sub-groups. Faculty participating in the pilot reported that their use of the software improved teaching, grading and assessment.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

University of Wisconsin-Madison

The University of Wisconsin-Madison: In the mid-1990s, Wisconsin implemented a set of general education requirements for all undergraduates. Component requirements are in communications, quantitative reasoning, ethnic studies and disciplinary breadth. These requirements have been explicitly aligned with the Essential Learning Outcomes that were developed in the LEAP project of the Association of American Colleges and Universities. Regular evaluation of the effectiveness of the general education requirements is conducted under the auspices of the Undergraduate General Education Committee and long-term assessment plans: the first plan was adopted in 2000, and a renewed plan was adopted in 2008. Recent findings demonstrate that students have a significantly higher ability to communicate orally and in writing after taking one of the "Communications A" courses. Students taking more than one such course achieved significantly higher gains, compared to a student taking just one. Students taking ESL versions of Communications A courses showed communication skills equal to native speakers. The Communications A study provided an opportunity to compare and calibrate across the various courses that satisfy the Communications A requirement. Similarly, students show significantly higher quantitative skills after taking a "Quantitative Reasoning A" course, and significantly stronger mathematical reasoning skills after taking a "Quantitative Reasoning B" course. Findings are useful in identifying both aspects of the general education program that are working, and those that need improvement.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Vanderbilt University

**Vanderbilt University**: In the fall of 2005, the College of Arts and Science launched its new liberal arts requirements, AXLE (Achieving Excellence in Liberal Education). The curriculum consists of a first-year writing seminar, 100- and 200-level writing courses, thirteen courses distributed across six areas of inquiry (Humanities & Creative Arts, International Cultures, History & Culture of the United States, Mathematics & Natural Sciences, Social & Behavioral Sciences, and Perspectives), and the major. The aim is for each student to demonstrate (1) breadth of knowledge, (2) excellence in writing skills, (3) an understanding of diverse modes of thinking and of evaluating information, and (4) a global and historical perspective of human experience. Assessment begins in earnest in 2008-09, the inaugural class's senior year. The first learning outcome will be assessed with surveys and registrar data; the second outcome will be assessed by having a sample of final papers from 100-level writing course evaluated by a panel of faculty members using a writing-skills rubric and by surveying faculty who teach advanced writing courses; the third and fourth outcomes will be assessed longitudinally by having a sample of students complete an essay exercise in their first year and again in their third or fourth year; the third outcome will also be assessed with surveys of alumni.

Learning outcomes are also assessed in all undergraduate majors on a regular basis. All programs use at least some direct assessment methods, such as comprehensive exams, capstone experiences, and independent evaluations of student works (these evaluations are conducted by committees of program faculty using rubrics specific to the program); in addition, various indirect methods, such as course grades, program completion rates, and research participation, are used by many programs. Results of these assessments have led to revisions of courses and curricula, and to other program improvements.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Vassar College

Vassar College’s primary assessment project is the “Course Tagging Exercise,” measuring student exposure to specific learning goals and curricular content areas Vassar considers essential to a liberal arts education. The project lays a foundation for future direct assessment of student learning.

Faculty first developed two lists: the central learning outcomes Vassar intends for its graduates, and the core curricular topics to which liberally educated students should have exposure. Faculty tagged each course they taught with the three learning outcomes and the three curricular contents most represented in the course. By studying the “tags” for the courses taken by each graduate (2007), the College illuminated levels of student exposure both to primary learning outcomes and to central curricular content areas.

Vassar graduates elected coursework that provided broad exposure to desired contents and outcomes. This was true across majors in each academic division and across most descriptive characteristics (gender, ethnic background, etc.). Levels of exposure vary and some exceptions appear, suggesting aspects of Vassar’s advising and academic program that may warrant further study and enhancement.

The College intends eventually to link tagging data with measured student learning outcomes using results from the Teagle-supported Wabash National Study project. This should illuminate connections between students’ curricular choices and learning outcomes.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Washington University in St. Louis

Washington University in St. Louis. Since 1998, the University has administered a General Education Assessment (literacy; numeracy; critical thinking), which focuses on:

First Year Students - Each Fall, first year students are assessed as part of their English composition class. Until 2006, literacy and numeracy were assessed separately. Since 2007, the students have been presented with a prompt that combines both assessment goals. Essays are collected and reviewed by trained assistants during the summer. Results are being tabulated and compared to junior/senior assessment results.

Juniors/Seniors - Following a prompt that combines literacy and numeracy, students write a general assessment essay in the English Argumentation class on a day assigned. Most students across all schools are taking this class, which results in a credible sample. This approach avoids self selection and requires minimum efforts by students. The essays are collected, reviewed, and tabulated over the summer. Results are discussed with the Assessment Committee and curricular adjustments are made as needed.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Wellesley College

Wellesley College: In collaboration with six other liberal arts colleges, Wellesley has received funding from the Teagle Foundation for a panel study of the class of 2010. The study focuses on how college students make the transition from high school to college; it will help the College better understand how students make decisions about their academic program and how they adjust to living in a residential college. The first phase of the project was specifically about the first two years of college life, but it now includes study away and transitions after college. The study is unique in using trained students to interview students. The results of this project are being used by faculty and staff at Wellesley to develop and improve programs to support students, both academically and socially.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Whittier College

Whittier College: In 2005, faculty implemented a revised general education curriculum (Liberal Education Program), which focuses on four themes: Community, Communication, Cultural Perspectives, and Connections. Two practices that are central to the Liberal Education Program are critical thinking (the development of the skills and methods necessary for systematic investigation—i.e. the ability to define, analyze, and synthesize using a variety of methods and technologies) and the practical application of knowledge. The ability to accomplish this is demonstrated in a capstone experience referred to as the “Paper in the Major” which usually occurs in a senior capstone course, culminating in the requirement of a Senior Presentation. In communicating to the campus community the results of a project or activity, the student demonstrates the ability to translate skills and knowledge to domains and problems new to the student.

The presentation of the paper in the major provides an opportunity to assess communication skills, and the integration and application of knowledge—the hallmarks of a liberal education. It can also demonstrate to the entire community (both internal and external) creative possibilities. The audience for Senior Presentations is not just an individual class, but the wider campus community. Presentations are publicized on campus through flyers, the campus newspaper, press releases to local newspapers, the college website, admissions materials, alumni publications, and other appropriate venues. Students especially are encouraged to attend Senior Presentations, with the hope that they are empowered and inspired by their senior peers and see the value of the Liberal Education Program.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Williams College

Williams College, for 20 years, had offered a small number of courses in a tutorial format, in which a faculty member meets weekly with pairs of students, one of which presents a paper or problem set, the other critiques it, and the professor then moderates a discussion between the two.

The College analyzed data from its course evaluation questionnaire, which showed that students' evaluations of the "quality of instruction" and "educational value" in tutorials were significantly higher (p<.05) than those of non-tutorials. Students also indicated that tutorials on average required more work than other courses.

Even after controlling for enrollment size and professor experience, tutorials still outperformed other types of classes -- the format itself appeared integral to students' more favorable evaluations of their educational experience.

Further analysis distilled the effects of the tutorial format even further by identifying matched pairs of courses taught by the same faculty member with roughly the same enrollment, in which one was a tutorial and the other a seminar or lecture. The instructor's tutorial course outscored his or her non-tutorial course in 91% of the matched cases on the key questions of "quality of instruction" and "overall educational value."

Based on this analysis, the College decided to invest significantly more resources in providing tutorial courses and to make more of them open to first-years and sophomores so that they could apply the skills learned in tutorials to the remainder of their undergraduate experience. As a result, the number of tutorial offerings nearly tripled since 2001. By 2008, 57% of graduates had taken at least one tutorial - an increase of 22 percentage points.
Examples of Assessment by Institution

Yale University

Yale University: In fall 2005, Yale began implementation of broad changes in its undergraduate curriculum, including a new requirement that student complete two writing courses (which can be fulfilled in courses across the disciplines). At the same time, Yale is expanding tutorial assistance through the Writing Center and other sources of support for students.

Yale is collecting portfolios of student writing from a stratified random sample of juniors and seniors. The University will review the students’ portfolios to assess certain aspects of writing in the Yale College curriculum. In addition, Yale will conduct a brief survey of experiences with writing among students from all current classes.

The project will test at least two hypotheses: first, even among students who enter Yale with very high verbal SAT scores, an early course focused on writing has a demonstrable effect on improving writing quality. Second, the new requirement for two writing courses, combined with the expansion of support services such as writing tutorials, fosters a campus culture in which students are more likely to share their writing with others for feedback before submitting it for courses.