SYNOPSIS
COMMUNITY COLLEGE ASSESSMENT
Trudy W. Banta, Ed.

SECTION ONE – Jeffrey A. Seybert: “How to Initiate an Assessment Program”

Seybert, an authority in the field of assessment, briefly outlines how to get an assessment program started at a community college, providing ten separate steps and some advice.

SECTION TWO – Assessing Student Achievement of Generic Knowledge Skills


This task force asked the question, “Can standardized tests be useful in assessing sophomores’ skill?” A pilot study in Washington State examined the use of three tests and came to the conclusion that they are in fact not useful.


The authors ask, “How can community colleges come up with reliable assessments of student learning when their student population is in constant flux?” The authors, working with faculty and administrators at the College of DuPage, devised a way to use the six tests of the American College Test (ACT) Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency to assess what students learned during their years at this college. They describe their model and conclude that this approach can be used at two-year as well as four-year institutions.

3rd Essay – Gary R. Pike: “The Community College Student Experiences Questionnaire”

Pike asks, “Are there reliable measures available to assess the quality and quantity of student involvement that occurs at a community college?” He describes one measure – the Community College Student Experiences Questionnaire – and summarizes the results of studies that establish its validity and reveal the many ways it has been useful to faculty and administrators at community colleges.

4th Essay – Michelle L. Kalina / Anita Catlin: “The Effects of the Cross-Angelo Model of Classroom Assessment on Student Outcomes: A Study”

The authors describe classroom assessment techniques that can be used in community college classes to give teachers valuable feedback on what students are learning. According to their study, summarized in this article, these techniques also have other benefits, including improving student involvement and retention.

5th Essay – Sara M. Morris: “Assessing Employer Needs Through the Use of Focus Groups”

Morris asks, “What are employers looking for from community college graduates? What do they value in employees and what skills are needed?” This article describes an approach for gathering this critical information from local employers and using it to inform meaningful changes in stated outcomes for students and the curriculum.
6th Essay – “The Butler County Community College Individualized Student Assessment Pilot Project”

Speary asks, “How can we understand what individual students are learning?” Faculty at Butler County Community College undertook a pilot project to address this challenge, developing their own approach for using standardized rubrics to measure how well individual students have achieved a range of identifiable outcomes – from ability to engage in teamwork to critical thinking and more. Then they compiled the data from scoring individual students’ work to obtain information about curricular strengths and weaknesses.

7th Essay – Charles L. Van Middlesworth: “Assess Learning Communities”

Learning communities are especially challenging to assess because, as the author points out, they don’t “lend themselves to off-the-shelf assessment design.” For this reason, when the faculty at Metropolitan Community College District in Kansas City began to wonder whether students within a learning community learned as much as students taking the same course through conventional classroom methods, it was necessary to use a combination of standardized and faculty-developed approaches. This essay is a description of their multimethod approach.

SECTION THREE – Assessing Additional Elements of the Community College Mission


After an assessment team from Thomas Nelson Community College and Christopher Newport University had analyzed student transfer success from every conceivable angle, they were surprised and frustrated that they had come up with no findings that could be translated into concrete recommendations for improvement. They went back to the drawing board and came up with the Course-Based Model of Transfer Success, an easy-to-implement evaluation model that can provide faculty at both the sending and receiving colleges with comprehensive and relevant information about student transfer success.

2nd Essay – David H. Devier: “Corporate Partnership Student Assessment: The Owens Community College Experience”

Effective vocational and technical education often depends on the success of educational partnerships between community colleges and local employers. This article details how one college approaches the task of assessing the outcomes that emerge from student experiences in such partnerships.


One of the biggest challenges for community colleges is to graduate students who know how to write. While most faculty have a lot of experience assessing writing skills, as the faculty at Southwestern Michigan College discovered, structuring assessments that improve the teaching of writing is more complicated. Chaddock describes an approach that helped faculty identify and begin to address an important gap between the skills students acquired in developmental composition and those needed for success in more advanced courses.
SECTION FOUR – Assessing Institutional Effectiveness


For a number of years, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) has been providing four-year institutions with information on levels of student engagement in and satisfaction with their educational experience. Now there is a similar instrument for community colleges – the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE). Quimet summarizes the findings from a 2002 pilot test of the CCSSE in this article.

2nd Essay – Jeffrey A. Seybert: “Has the Time Come for National Benchmarking for Community Colleges?”

Seybert describes two national benchmarking initiatives designed to help community colleges compare their practices, outcomes, and productivity measures with those of peer institutions. One initiative focuses on collecting data related to instructional costs and productivity. The other involves developing a national database that will be accessible to any community college willing to share relevant information on a variety of instructional outcomes, continuing education, workforce development, and other core activities.


Bressler and Mahaffey describe one of the nation’s first systemwide models for measuring institutional effectiveness – a model that takes into account a broad range of core indicators that faculty could use to respond to accountability initiatives, accreditation demands, federal reporting requirements, and quality management initiatives.

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About the Editor

Trudy W. Banta is vice chancellor for planning and institutional improvement at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis and editor of the bimonthly Assessment Update: progress, Trends, and Practices in Higher Education. She has written or edited 10 published volumes on assessment, including Assessment Essentials, with Catherine Palomba (Jossey-Bass, 1999) and Building a Scholarship of Assessment (Jossey-Bass, 2002). Banta has been honored for her work by the National council on Measurement in Education, the American Association for Higher Education, the American Productivity and Quality Center, and the Association for Institutional Research.