Eliciting—and Assessing—
Our Students’ Best Work

University of Michigan
Provost’s Seminar on Teaching
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Our Students’ Best Work:
A Framework for Accountability
Worthy of Our Mission

A Statement of the AAC&U Board of Directors (second edition, 2008)

A Framework for Assessment

★ Essential Aims – Leading to Outcomes
★ High Impact/High Effort Learning Practices
★ Assessments That Focus and Deepen Learning

Setting the Context for Approaches to Assessment

Changing Designs for College Learning

The Nineteenth Century College
A Common Core Curriculum
(All learning is “general and liberal education”)

The Twentieth Century University
Breadth + Depth
(Breadth = General Studies; Depth = Majors; “liberal education” becomes synonymous with “general education”)

The Twenty-First Century Academy

A Curriculum in Transition: Rethinking educational purposes and practices to better prepare for
• the knowledge explosion
• global interdependence
• innovation in the workplace
• diverse democracy
Preparing Students for Complexity and Change: The Essential Learning Outcomes

- Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World
- Intellectual and Practical Skills
- Personal and Social Responsibility
- Integrative and Applied Learning

The New Themes in College Learning

- Goals Across the Curriculum, Rather than Course by Course
- Capabilities Developed Over Time
  - e.g., Analytical and Research Skills
  - Intercultural Knowledge and Fluency
  - Transferable Learning

The New Themes in College Learning, cont.

- Integrative Learning—Across the Curriculum
  - General Education and Majors
  - Liberal Arts and Professional Fields
  - Academic Learning and Field-Based Learning
  - Cornerstone to Capstone

Three Common Approaches to Assessment of Learning Gains

- Surveys and Student Self-Reports
- Standardized National Tests
  - Multiple Choice
  - Performance Tasks
    - e.g., The Collegiate Learning Assessment
- Persistence and Completion

The Changing Goals for Student Learning Imply Changes in the Way We Assess Learning

- Course Grades Do Not Track Cumulative Progress
- We—and Policy Leaders—Want to Know What Students Are Gaining, Over Time

What AAC&U Recommends—In “Our Students’ Best Work”

- Design Local Versions of Aims and Outcomes
- Anchor Assessment in the Curriculum
  - Milestone and Capstone Assignments
- Use Rubrics to Assess (Sample)
  - Students’ Progress Over Time
Colleges and Universities Have Developed Local Versions of the Essential Learning Outcomes

by George D. Kuh

High Impact Practices

- First-Year Seminars and Experiences
- Common Intellectual Experiences
- Learning Communities
- Writing-Intensive Courses
- Collaborative Assignments and Projects
- “Science as Science Is Done”/Undergraduate Research
- Diversity/Global Learning
- Service Learning, Community-Based Learning
- Internships
- Capstone Courses and Projects

Outcomes of High Impact Practices for Underserved Students: A Review of the Literature
Lynn Swaner and Jayne Brownell
(Forthcoming AAC&U report, 2009)

AAC&U’s VALUE Project

- Anchors Assessments in Students’ Own Work (Research, Projects, Service, Capstones, etc)
- Provides VALUE Rubrics, keyed to the Essential Learning Outcomes
- Shows What Students Can Do With Their Knowledge

What VALUE Adds

- Students—and Faculty—Know What’s Expected
- Projects Are Part of Courses Students Have to Take
- The Assessment Projects “Count”
- Faculty Can See What Works—and Not
- Work Is Sampled for Public Reporting on Students’ Learning Gains
When the Curriculum is Focused, Assessment Itself Can Become a High Impact Practice

The Proof is in the Portfolio – and Institutions That Are Rich in High Impact Practices Are Poised to Lead the Way

Students Need to Know that Their Best Work is Expected And Their Best Work is the Most Important Evidence We Have About How Well They Are Using Their Time in College