

Accreditation and Evidence of Student Learning: Perspectives from NEASC

CHEA Summer Workshop

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Commission on Institutions of Higher Education

- Accredits 245 colleges and universities in New England and five countries abroad
- 23 commissioners; 8 staff members
- Compact geography; wide institutional diversity; preponderance of independent institutions
- Eleven Standards for Accreditation; revised in 2006

Commission's expectations about assessment have become more explicit over time

1992 Policy statement on institutional effectiveness

2006 Revised Standards



2007

New data forms to enhance reporting and analysis

An appropriate level of student success

The Commission's Standards expect:

- Learning goals for each program that include knowledge, intellectual, and academic skills, and methods of inquiry and, if relevant, creative abilities and values and/or specific career-preparation practices
- Goals for student learning that reflect the mission and character of the institution and general expectations of the larger academic community for the level of degree awarded and the field of study
- Goals for retention and graduation that reflect institutional purposes

A comprehensive approach to assessment

The Commission's Standards expect:

- A systematic, broad-based approach to assessment of student learning that focuses on educational improvement and understanding what and how students are learning
- An assessment approach that encompasses course, program, and institutional levels
- Use of assessment results to be a demonstrable factor in improving the learning opportunities and results for students
- Institutions to use variety of quantitative and qualitative methods

Appropriate public disclosure

The Commission's Standards expect:

- Institutions to publish statements of goals for students' education and the success of students in achieving those goals, including rates of retention and graduation and other measures of student success appropriate to institutional mission
- Institutions to have readily available valid documentation for statements and promises made regarding program excellence, learning outcomes, success in placement, and achievements of graduates and faculty



New data forms

The E-Series: Making Assessment More Explicit

Select and declare a basic approach to assessment and summarize the findings

The S-Series: Data Forms on Student Success

Report data on retention rates, graduation rates, and other measures of success appropriate to the institution's mission

Three levels of focus: institutional, degree-program, general education



Some Assumptions

- No single way to achieve the goal
- Greater regularity in reporting will benefit institutions, teams, Commission, general public
- Useful for the Commission to offer choices
- Goal is to stimulate greater coherence in institutional approaches and greater sharing among institutions
- Not every measure is appropriate for every institution.
- Peer comparisons and trends over time are important



The E-Series: Four Choices

Institutions choose one of the following four options:

- E1. Inventory of program assessment and specialized accreditation
- E2. Voluntary System of Accountability plus program review
- E3. Statement of claims for student achievement and provide supporting evidence
- E4. Comparison to peers on measures of student achievement and success

or design their own, in consultation with the Commission staff

Questions included in the E Series

- Have formal learning outcomes been established?
- Where are these outcomes published?
- Other than GPA, what evidence is used to determine student achievement?
- How and by whom is the evidence interpreted?
- How are findings used? What changes have been made as a result of using the data?
- When was the most recent program review conducted? How did it incorporate an "external perspective? When is the next review?

Questions about specialized accreditation

- What accreditations are currently held?
- When was the most recent review? The next review?
- What issues were identified during that review?
- What performance indicators are required?

Questions about peer comparisons

- What is the institution's level of achievement?
- What is the peer group?
- What is the peers' level of achievement?
- What changes have been made or are anticipated as a result of the comparison?

Institutional examples

From a public comprehensive university:

- specialized accreditation when available
- capstones, portfolios, performance-based; e.g. weekly TV weathercasts by meterology students
- changes in admissions standards, curriculum, instruction

From a polytechnic institute:

- 3rd year interactive society-technology project; 50% are completed overseas
- 4th year major qualifying project completed for private sector labs

More institutional examples

From a religiously-affiliated institution:

- senior seminars to reflect on relationship between academic study and personal development
- highlighted need for greater attention to academic advising and diversity issues
- strengthened commitment to core, inc. Philosophy

From a business school:

- Coaching for Leadership and Teamwork project
- trained volunteer coaches assess team activity and offer individual mentoring to 1st and 3rd year students
- includes student self-assessment and reflection paper

Grant-funded collaborative projects

Seven highly selective liberal arts colleges:

- focus on how students make educational decisions, and engage academically, socially, and personally
- students interviewing other students about their experiences inside and outside the classroom
- faculty/student research projects and publications

Three Catholic colleges:

- assess how effectively undergraduates acquire and refine moral, ethical, civic, and spiritual values
- identify relevant curricular and co-curricular activities
- analyze NSSE and other assessment data

The S-Series: Data Forms on Student Success

- \$1. Retention and Graduation Rates
- S2. Other measures of student achievement and success
- S3. Licensure Passage and Job Placement Rates
- S4. Completion and placement rates for shortterm vocational programs

Each asks for information about the most recent year, one and two years prior, and goals for the future.

All institutions complete S1 and S2; some complete S3 and S4, as relevant to institutional mission.

Retention and Graduation Rates

IPEDS undergraduate retention and graduation rates as well as other undergraduate retention and graduation rates used by the institution

Includes space to report:

- Graduate retention and graduation rates
- Course completion, retention, and graduation rates for distance education
- Course completion, retention, and graduation rates for branch campuses and additional instructional locations

Institutions are asked to supply definitions and methodologies for all but the IPEDS data.



Other Measures of Success

As defined by institutional mission



Includes space to report student success as defined by:

- Pursuing higher degrees
- Pursuing mission-related paths
- Working in fields for which they were not explicitly prepared
- Pursuing other mission-explicit achievements

Institutions are asked to supply definitions and methodologies

Some institutional examples

From a research university:

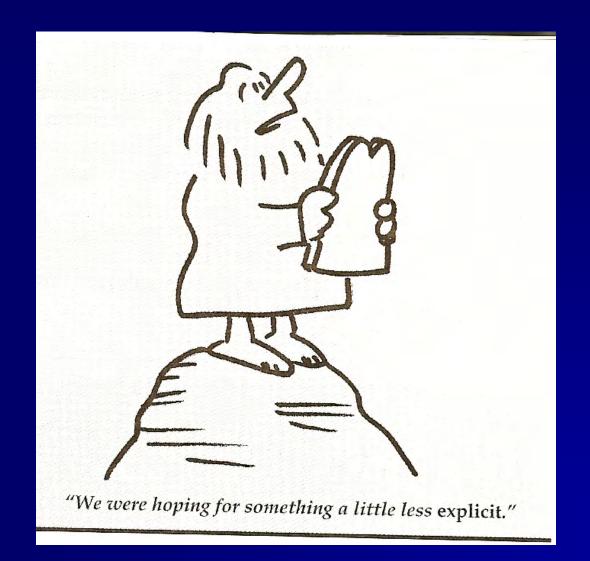
- % graduates attending 1st choice graduate school
- Peace Corps Small College & University ranking
- Number of graduates winning major awards/ fellowships

From an engineering school:

Number of graduates who are founder or cofounder of a new corporation

From a school of music:

Number of graduates who "earn a living" from their music



Using the data forms to foster improvement

- Start early so the data can be collected, analyzed, and used by those engaged in the self-study/report preparation process.
- Reflect on the findings what and how are students learning? Have we developed the capacity to collect and use important data about student achievement?
- Adopt commitments about improvements to assessment efforts and student success.



Questions, comments, insights ...

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