BOARD OF TRUSTEES
STUDY SESSION
JULY 21, 2010
10:00 A.M.

WELLS FARGO PLACE
30 7TH STREET EAST
SAINT PAUL, MN

Please note: Committee/Board meeting times are tentative. Committee/Board meetings may begin up to 45 minutes earlier than the times listed below if the previous committee meeting concludes its business before the end of its allotted time slot.

Board of Trustees Study Session
Scott Thiss, Chair

(1) High Quality Learning Accountability Measure (pp. 1-20)

MINNESOTA STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Agenda Item Summary Sheet

Committee: Board of Trustees Study Session   **Date of Meeting:** July 21, 2010

Agenda Item: High Quality Learning Accountability Measure

☐ Proposed Policy Change	☐ Approvals Required by Policy	☐ Other Approvals	☐ Monitoring

☒ Information

Cite policy requirement, or explain why item is on the Board agenda:

The Board of Trustees will hold a study session to review alternative approaches to reporting on student learning and to determine an appropriate method for adding a measure of high quality learning to the Accountability Dashboard.

Scheduled Presenter(s):

Scott R. Olson, Interim Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs
Peter T. Ewell, Vice President, National Center for Higher Education Management Systems
Leslie K. Mercer, Associate Vice Chancellor for Research, Planning and Effectiveness
Craig Schoenecker, System Director for Research

Outline of Key Points/Policy Issues:

- High quality learning is the final measure on the Accountability Dashboard yet to be defined.
- Assessing learning outcomes is an emerging practice in higher education, but still relatively new and "a work in progress." Public systems in other states are taking a variety of approaches to reporting on learning outcomes.
- Staff propose that the initial high quality learning measure reported on the Accountability Dashboard be based on a survey of how system institutions are using learning outcome assessments to improve education and demonstrate accountability.

Background Information:

- Primary users of the Accountability Dashboard are the Board of Trustees, system stakeholders, administrators and faculty.
- The Accountability Dashboard was launched in June 2008 at http://www.mnscu.edu/board/accountability/index.html.

Peter T. Ewell

Peter Ewell is the Vice President at the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), a research and development center founded to improve the management effectiveness of colleges and universities. A member of the staff since 1981, Dr. Ewell's work focuses on assessing institutional effectiveness and the outcomes of college, and involves both research and direct consulting with institutions and state systems on collecting and using assessment information in planning, evaluation, and budgeting. He has directed many projects on this topic, including initiatives funded by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, the National Institute for Education, the Consortium for the Advancement of Private Higher Education, and The Pew Charitable Trusts, and is currently a principal partner in the Pew Forum on Undergraduate Learning. In addition, he has consulted with over 375 colleges and universities and twenty-four state systems of higher education on topics including assessment, program review, enrollment management, and student retention. He has also been actively involved in NCHEMS work on longitudinal student databases and other academic management information tools.

Dr. Ewell has authored six books and numerous articles on the topic of improving undergraduate instruction through the assessment of student outcomes. Among his publications are *The Self-Regarding Institution: Information for Excellence* and *Assessing Educational Outcomes*, both of which have been widely cited in the development of campus-based assessment programs. In addition, he has prepared commissioned papers for many agencies, including the Study Group on the Conditions of Excellence in American Higher Education (authors of the report *Involvement in Learning*), the Education Commission of the States, the National Governors' Association, the National Conference of State Legislators, and the National Center for Public Policy in Higher Education. Widely sought as a speaker on assessment, in 1985 he gave the keynote address for the first national conference on Assessment in American Higher Education, and has since spoken widely on this topic at both national and international conferences. In 1998 he led the design team for the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and currently chairs its Technical Advisory Panel.

Prior to joining NCHEMS, Dr. Ewell was Coordinator for Long-Range Planning at Governors State University. A graduate of Haverford College, he received his Ph.D. in Political Science from Yale University in 1976 and was on the faculty of the University of Chicago. In addition to consulting in higher education, Dr. Ewell has been involved in program evaluation, organizational development and strategic planning for a variety of non-profit and arts organizations including the National Endowment for the Arts and six state arts agencies. In 1981 he received the National Theater Association award for Theory and Criticism.

July, 2010

INFORMATION ITEM
High Quality Learning Accountability Measure

A measure of high quality learning is the last measure yet to be defined for the Board's Accountability Dashboard. The information below explores alternative approaches that could be implemented in the short term and over a longer period. A staff proposal for developing a dashboard measure is presented.

In a Board study session, Dr. Peter Ewell from the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems will lead a discussion about ways to approach a measure that will accomplish the goals of the dashboard.

BACKGROUND

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Accountability Dashboard was created in an environment that expects greater accountability from higher education. By publicly displaying performance on key outcomes on the dashboard, the system promotes both external accountability and internal continuous improvement. Primary users are the Board, system stakeholders and employees.

Ten performance measures for development and display on the dashboard were approved by the Board in November, 2007. In June, 2008, the dashboard was released with six measures fully developed and reported by strategic directions in the system strategic plan:
- Strategic Direction: Access and opportunity
    1. Percent change in enrollment
    2. Tuition and fees
- Strategic Direction: Quality programs and services
    3. Licensure exams pass rate
    4. Persistence and completion
- Strategic Direction: State and regional economic needs
    5. Related employment of graduates
- Strategic Direction: Innovation and efficiency
    6. Facilities condition index

Since the launch, a seventh measure, student engagement, has been added under the Quality Programs and Services heading.

In May, 2010, the Board heard a staff proposal to make three changes in the original dashboard plan:

- First, a planned partnership measure will be replaced with a measure of transfer credit acceptance to be reported under the Board's renamed Strategic Direction 1: Access, opportunity and success.
- Second, in place of a measure of innovation, which was determined to be unquantifiable, the dashboard will describe innovative practices but will not attempt to quantify them.
- Finally, the facilities condition index and a recently developed composite financial index will be reported under a new strategic direction in the 2010—2014 revised strategic plan: Sustain financial viability.

In the original plan for the dashboard, the Board specified that there would be a measure of high-quality learning to report the extent to which institutions are providing high- quality learning for students. It was recognized that the definition of this measure would be challenging, but the Board determined that including high quality learning in the dashboard design would keep attention on the need to define successful performance and be accountable. This measure, the last to be defined, will be created following discussion in the Board's study session.

Attachment A presents a mock-up of the dashboard which includes the recent changes in design.

GOALS FOR THE STUDY SESSION

The goals of the Board's study session are to examine the national picture in assessing and reporting learning outcomes and to discuss how Minnesota State Colleges and Universities might develop a measure of high quality learning for its Accountability Dashboard.

In the study session, the Board will have an opportunity to discuss approaches to reporting on high quality learning with Dr. Peter Ewell, Vice President at the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems. Dr. Ewell served as a consultant to the Board and staff in the initial development of the dashboard.

Two recent papers on the status of learning outcomes assessment nationally have been provided under separate cover as background for the study session:
- Peter T. Ewell, *Assessment, Accountability, and Improvement: Revisiting the Tension*, National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment, November, 2009.
- George Kuh and Stanley Ikenberry, *More Than You Think, Less Than We Need: Learning Outcomes Assessment in American Higher Education*, National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment, October, 2009.

Additional information to assist the Board in thinking specifically about alternative methods of adding a measure of high quality learning to the dashboard is presented below.

HIGH QUALITY LEARNING AND PURPOSES OF THE DASHBOARD

Student learning is the heart of higher education, and quality learning is vigorously pursued by higher education faculty and leaders. Quality learning results from many of the inputs and processes that the system and institutions traditionally pursue, such as hiring qualified, energetic

faculty, designing facilities that support learning, providing libraries and other learning resources, and developing up-to-date curricula.

Relatively recently—in perhaps the last 25 years—policymakers and the general public have escalated demands that institutions prove they provide a quality education. The expectation that institutions will be accountable for demonstrating the quality of their programs, especially through measured outcomes, continues to grow and shape both federal and state policies.

In response, through national higher education organizations, professional associations and individual institutions, there has been an explosion of efforts to assess student learning beyond traditional course grading. Assessments usually begin with formal and uniform statements about what students should be able to know or be able to do as a result of completing a course, major, or degree.

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities are part of this movement. For some system institutions, interest stems from external pressure through the regional accrediting association, the Higher Learning Commission, which added review of assessment practices to institutional approval criteria. Other projects are started by faculty and administrators who hope to improve instruction by examining student learning in consistent ways within a department or across an institution. As evidence of the importance placed on this issue, the 2010 winter meeting of chief academic officers focused on emerging assessment activities throughout the system.

Recognizing that faculty and academic leaders are responsible for teaching and learning and that pursuit of quality learning pervades institutional life, the Accountability Dashboard should report summary information that will inform the Board and other stakeholders at a policy or strategic level. Institutions will continue to rely on a broader and richer array of information to help improve the quality of the education they provide.

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING POTENTIAL DASHBOARD MEASURES

When he met with the Board in June, 2007, Dr. Peter Ewell suggested that governing boards should expect answers to the following questions on assessing student learning outcomes:
- Do institutions say what and how much students should learn? Where do they say it?
- What kinds of evidence do institutions collect about learning?
- Do institutions benchmark their performance?
- Is a structure of responsibility for assessment in place?
- How do institutions use assessment results?

In addition to addressing one or more of these questions, an ideal measure of high quality learning presented on the dashboard should meet the following criteria:
- Helps the Board, stakeholders and institutions judge progress and pursue continuous improvement by providing meaningful, relevant information to improve instruction and services.
- Promotes accountability by providing information that can be easily understood and evaluated by external stakeholders.

- Does not create negative incentives that undermine quality, access and other goals.
- Consistent with other measures, can be visually displayed as a dashboard dial that places institutions in three categories based on their performance: exceeds expectations, meets expectations, or needs attention.
- Recognizes differences in entering student populations that affect learning outcomes.
- Complements the two existing dashboard measures on quality programs: licensure exam pass rates and student engagement.
- Can be implemented relatively quickly.
- Feasible for institutions and the Office of the Chancellor in a challenging fiscal climate for taking on added work.

ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES

Since the Board assigned a measure of high quality learning to the dashboard, staff has examined approaches that would meet the above criteria. Because accountability for quality learning is a national challenge, new developments emerge every day. Solutions developed by national organizations, other state systems and individual institutions have been reviewed for ideas that could be adapted to the Accountability Dashboard.

For Board discussion, potential approaches that could be developed, some within a year and others that would require a longer time to reach fruition, are presented below. Dr. Ewell will provide his insights on how different strategies might add value and be applied in the Accountability Dashboard.

Potential Approaches for Implementation in 2011-2012

The following approaches could be implemented within one to two years.

■ **HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION EVALUATIONS**

Accreditation is a primary way in which institutions demonstrate that they meet quality standards in higher education. Minnesota's regional higher education accrediting agency, the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), requires institutions to provide "evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission."

To show compliance, institutions pursuing the traditional route to accreditation under the Program to Evaluate and Advance Quality (PEAQ) produce a self-study every 10 years. Evaluation teams visit the institution and prepare written reports for commission review prior to determining the institution's accreditation status. Institutions following the alternative Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) pursue a structured set of continuous improvement activities. Reaccreditation is awarded 7 years later, contingent on progress and evidence that the accreditation criteria are met.

Along with its decisions on continuing accreditation, the Higher Learning Commission provides written evaluation reports to institutions. Accreditation can be awarded without condition, but if problems are identified, the commission can require corrective action or progress reports.

Advantages as a dashboard measure

The HLC process provides an external review of each institution's assessment work.

Little or no additional effort on the part of institutions might be necessary to provide information to the Office of the Chancellor that could be presented on the dashboard. Accreditation decisions are readily available on the HLC website, including any requirements that institutions correct problems related to student learning and assessment. Until recently, accreditation reports were not provided to the Office of the Chancellor, but they are currently being gathered.

Disadvantages as a dashboard measure

Under normal circumstances, accreditation reviews occur only once every 7 or 10 years. HLC self-study and accreditation reports are narratives that would require significant work to summarize or translate into a quantitative measure. While it would be feasible to post the reports in their entirety, the HLC and some institutions believe that the improvement accreditation seeks to encourage would be damaged by public disclosure of accreditation reports.

Evaluations are dependent on how teams apply the evaluation criteria and are not comparable from institution to institution. In looking at institutions, the HLC examines the processes used to assess student learning and improve teaching, not actual student performance.

■ NARRATIVE REPORTS ON STUDENT LEARNING

In place of a quantitative measure, institutions could be asked to present evidence that students achieve high levels of learning in any format they choose. In addition to other information, material that institutions produce for HLC accreditation could be adapted for presentation on the dashboard.

Advantages as a dashboard measure

This approach could be implemented quickly with instructions to guide institution submissions. It would allow institutions to showcase their best practices and student successes and encourage other institutions to consider adopting successful strategies. The variety of assessments used at institutions, such as student portfolios and capstone projects, could be reflected in the reports.

Disadvantages as a dashboard measure

Information would not be presented in dial format and would not easily allow comparisons to peer institutions within or outside the system. Positive evidence is more likely to be presented than evidence that could reflect negatively on the institution, limiting public accountability for poor results in this section of the Accountability Dashboard.

■ ALUMNI SURVEYS

While individual institutions may occasionally ask alumni to evaluate their knowledge and skills, a systemwide survey could be administered on a periodic basis so that comparable results would be available. Questions regarding recent graduates' knowledge and skills could be incorporated into the existing Graduate Follow-Up survey on employment and post-graduation activities.

Advantages as a dashboard measure	*Disadvantages as a dashboard measure*
Although affected by individual perceptions, recent alumni are in positions to judge whether student learning meets their needs and expectations. Detailed surveys of alumni can help institutions identify areas of strength and areas to target for improvement. Survey results could be translated into an index and reported on a dashboard dial.	Developing a survey instrument and sample would be a significant project. While there are existing surveys that might allow limited comparison with results from other institutions, there are no widely used standard surveys.

■   NATIONAL AWARDS FOR ASSESSMENT

At least three national awards for institutions that achieve excellence in assessing student learning outcomes have been established:

- Council on Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) Award for Institutional Progress in Student Learning Outcomes. St. Olaf College and Capella University received awards this year.
- Association for General Learning and Liberal Studies (AGLS) Award for the Improvement of General Education: Exemplary Program Award.
- American College Personnel Association (ACPA) Emerging Best Practices in Assessment Awards.

Advantages as a dashboard measure	*Disadvantages as a dashboard measure*
Highlighting a national award on the dashboard would encourage institutions to excel and apply for national recognition.	Only a few awards are made nationally each year. This measure would not be capable of identifying poor performance. These awards recognize excellence in assessment rather than excellence in learning.

■   GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION ADMISSIONS EXAMS

Like the existing reporting of licensure pass rates, scores on the Graduate Record Exam, the Law School Admission Test, and other standardized tests already taken by graduates could be reported as evidence of student learning.

Advantages as a dashboard measure.	*Disadvantages as a dashboard measure.*
Students already take these tests, so no additional work would be required from students or institutions. Scores represent an independent measure of learning against national standards.	Test scores are available only for baccalaureate degree graduates. Few university graduates take these exams. State universities awarded bachelor's degrees to approximately 9,800 students in fiscal year 2008. Among graduates of all Minnesota institutions, about 4,100 take the GRE annually and 1,200 take the LSAT.[1]

---

[1] *Minnesota Measures, 2009 Report on Higher Education Performance*, Minnesota Office of Higher Education, May 2009.

■   **VOLUNTARY SYSTEM OF ACCOUNTABILITY (TESTS OF GENERAL COGNITIVE SKILLS)**

The Voluntary System of Accountability is an initiative of Association of Public and Land-grant Universities and the Association of State Colleges and Universities. Under the VSA, common data are reported by participating universities through the College Portraits website http://www.collegeportraits.org/. Goals of the project are to provide a tool for prospective students, provide common data to the public, and promote measurement of outcomes and other good practices.

In addition to other forms of data, a measure of learning outcomes is required in the VSA reporting template. Participating universities must administer one of the following tests of critical thinking, analytical reasoning and written communication to samples of freshmen and seniors:

- Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP)—includes an essay writing test and a multiple choice test measuring skills in analyzing arguments from written material,
- Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA)—includes a performance task that asks the student to address a hypothetical problem and a writing task that requires developing or critiquing an argument, or
- ETS® Proficiency Profile[2]—includes multiple choice questions on critical thinking and writing.

On the College Portraits, scores for the test selected are reported as the "value-added" between skills of entering freshmen and graduating seniors compared to expected improvements based on the academic profile of the entering students.

Nationally, 331 public universities participate in the VSA. In Minnesota, the seven state universities and the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities participate.

- Metropolitan State University and St. Cloud State University now report CLA score results on their College Portraits.
- Winona State University reports results on the CAAP.
- Southwest Minnesota State University has administered the CLA and will report results soon.
- Bemidji State University and Minnesota State University, Mankato will test students using the Proficiency Profile later this year.
- Minnesota State University Moorhead is evaluating which test to use.

Advantages as a dashboard measure

Since the state universities have already agreed to participate in the VSA, they would not incur additional work or costs if their VSA learning outcome measures were reported on the Accountability Dashboard. It may be possible to benchmark the learning gains to institutions that enroll students with similar academic ability as measured by their entering ACT or SAT scores. Testing for general cognitive skills

Disadvantages as a dashboard measure

The major disadvantage of the VSA measure is that it produces results only for the state universities. A similar project, the Voluntary Framework of Accountability, is being developed by the American Association of Community Colleges, but it will not be in place until at least 2012 (see below).

As institutions in the VSA gain experience,

---

[2] Formerly the Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress (MAPP)

that all college graduates should acquire is less complex than testing and reporting on skills that will vary by major.

questions have been raised about the validity of the learning outcome measurements reported. Critics question whether comparing scores from one sample set of entering students to a different set of seniors can be as accurate as a longitudinal study. Institutions report difficulty in recruiting students who are willing to take a voluntary test that does not affect their records. Once recruited, students do not always make the effort to perform at their best.

■   LEARNING OUTCOME ASSESSMENT PRACTICES AT SYSTEM INSTITUTIONS

Under High Quality Learning, the Accountability Dashboard could report a quantitative measure based on how institutions are using learning outcome assessment processes to improve learning.

Advantages as a dashboard measure

This approach would encourage institutions to continue developing their assessment programs. While the system could develop an instrument to identify existing practices, adapting a national survey developed by the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment would provide an opportunity to compare practices with similar institutions in other states. Dr. Ewell is affiliated with the Institute as Senior Scholar. **(See copy of survey on Page 16).**

Disadvantages as a dashboard measure

Like accreditation reviews, this approach focuses on accountability for processes used to assess student learning and improve instruction. It would not directly or indirectly measure student learning outcomes.

Potential Approaches for Implementation in 2013 and later

The following approaches would take longer than a year or two to develop and report on the dashboard.

■   NATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS FOR PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION (VSA/VFA)

As described above, the seven state universities participate in the Voluntary System of Accountability sponsored by the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities and the Association of State Colleges and Universities. The VSA requires participating institutions to test samples of entering students and graduating seniors on one of three authorized tests and to report the results. A similar initiative, the Voluntary Framework of Accountability, is being developed by the American Association of Community Colleges. VFA is currently in the design phase scheduled to be completed by Fall 2011. Colleges will begin participating in the VFA in 2012. Together, the VSA and VFA could potentially provide public accountability for learning in both universities and colleges.

Advantages as a dashboard measure	*Disadvantages as a dashboard measure*
If all institutions participate in their sector initiative, adapting measurements undertaken by the VSA and VFA to the Accountability Dashboard could be a cost-effective use of testing that already would be occurring in the system.	VSA is currently asking institutions to assess small numbers of volunteer students. The approach to measuring student learning that will be taken by the VFA is unknown.

■   **NEW LEADERSHIP ALLIANCE CERTIFICATION**

A non-profit organization, the New Leadership Alliance for Student Learning and Accountability, is developing a voluntary program to certify institutions that demonstrate excellence in assessing and producing student learning. External evaluators will judge each candidate's stated learning goals, benchmarked assessments, teaching and learning practices, public reporting and leadership. Now in pilot stages, implementation is scheduled for 2010-2011 or later.

Advantages as a dashboard measure	*Disadvantages as a dashboard measure*
Pursuing national certification would encourage institutions to adopt rigorous assessment and teaching practices that would be externally validated. Certification will focus on accountability for learning outcomes and result in a clear decision, unlike accreditation which encompasses many aspects of institutional operations and results in a narrative evaluation.	Certification might be appropriate for identifying institutions that "exceed expectations" but would not identify institutions that "meet expectations" or "need improvement" in achieving high quality learning. Costs of pursuing certification are unknown.

■   **TECHNICAL SKILL ATTAINMENT IN CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION**

Under the 2006 reauthorization of the Carl D. Perkins Vocational & Technical Education Act, secondary and post-secondary career and technical programs receiving these federal funds must assess students' attainment of technical skills. Minnesota State Colleges and Universities and the Minnesota Department of Education together are developing Minnesota's assessment system. Technical skill measures eventually will be developed for approximately 65 programs of study.

Starting with an evaluation of core and technical skills needed for each career area, state-approved assessments will be identified from existing third party instruments or developed. Colleges and school districts will be required to administer an approved assessment to career and technical education students or graduates and to report how many are "proficient" or "below proficient."

Advantages as a dashboard measure	*Disadvantages as a dashboard measure*
The Perkins technical skills assessment project is a significant initiative to identify and measure learning outcomes for career and	Five career pathways were chosen to initiate the process of identifying appropriate assessments in 2009, but the system will not

technical education. Scores will be available for many areas of study and could be converted to an index of performance that could be displayed on the Accountability Dashboard.

have assessments for all programs of study until 2013. Perkins assessments will address only career and technical programs in two-year colleges; graduates of other college programs and the state universities will not be reflected in assessment results.

■ STANDARDIZED TESTING OF GENERAL EDUCATION OR SKILLS

Over the next three years, students in Perkins-funded college career and technical programs will begin to take standardized tests to measure attainment of technical skills. State universities, as part of the VSA (above) have recently started administering one of three standardized tests on general intellectual development to small samples of entering students and graduating seniors. Independent of the VSA and the developing VFA, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities could require institutions to participate in a wider program of testing and reporting.

Assessments used in the VSA would be alternatives for measuring the general cognitive skills of university graduates, but there are other existing and emerging assessments that could be evaluated. One or more assessments of general skills suitable for two-year college graduates would need to be selected.

Advantages as a dashboard measure

Appropriately chosen tests would yield scores that could be presented in the Accountability Dashboard's dial format. Performance of students at Minnesota State Colleges and Universities could be compared to students graduating from other institutions. Testing might or might not yield information that institutions could use to diagnose strengths and weaknesses in order to improve their programs.

Disadvantages as a dashboard measure

Development of a standardized testing program would be a significant undertaking that would occur over several years with extensive faculty participation. At the outset, the system would need to identify the learning outcomes to be measured, select qualifying instruments, and determine if and how students will be sampled. Student motivation to perform will be an issue, unless students are required to pass. Ongoing costs of purchasing and administering the tests would need to be budgeted at the system or institution level.

■ APPLYING RUBRICS TO INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENTS OF LEARNING

Rubrics are standardized ways to categorize student performance on a task or assignment. Rubrics can be used to systemize and organize evaluations of writing samples, student portfolios, research projects, and demonstrations. Rubrics would be necessary to translate evaluations of student learning resulting from these valuable forms of assessment into a measure that could be reported as a dial on the Accountability Dashboard.

As interest in learning outcomes has grown, faculty in individual departments and in discipline-based organizations are developing rubrics that encourage a shared understanding of different levels of performance. National organizations have also led the way in creating rubrics. For

example, the American Association of Colleges and Universities LEAP (Liberal Education and America's Promise) initiative produced rubrics to measure liberal education outcomes, including knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world, general intellectual and practical skills, and personal and social responsibility.

New commercial products provide tools for managing the assessment data generated by rubrics so that it can be aggregated and shared.

Advantages as a dashboard measure	*Disadvantages as a dashboard measure*
Development of this approach could support institutional innovation in curriculum and assessment while providing a common framework for presenting student learning outcomes.	Applying uniform sets of rubrics to capture student learning across the system would be a long-term project. Faculty would need to be deeply involved in designing the assessment program, and faculty time would be devoted to carrying out student evaluations once a rubric-based program was in place.

ACCOUNTABILITY FOR LEARNING OUTCOMES IN OTHER STATES

Information on learning outcomes, particularly information that would allow the public and other stakeholders to compare institutions, is an unresolved issue for most statewide accountability initiatives. *Measuring Up*, one of the first efforts to grade states for their higher education performance, gave an "incomplete" to every state on measuring student learning in 2000 and again in 2008.[3]

A recent study of accountability reporting by 10 large state community college systems identified many measures on enrollments, student characteristics, financing, success rates, earned awards and employment. But the report also noted, "It is striking that student learning does not get more attention despite the many different output/outcome indicators that populate state performance accountability systems in the 10 states surveyed."[4] Learning-related measures used in these 10 large community college systems were licensure or certification exam pass rates (6 states), student satisfaction surveys on the quality of preparation received (3 states), employer satisfaction with career program graduates (3 states), student performance after transfer (3 states), and academic program accreditations (one state). Florida, which had required students to pass a general skills test after completing 60 or more credits, recently suspended the requirement due to budget problems.

Another recent study examined higher education accountability systems in all states and cited the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Accountability Dashboard as a model of clear

---

[3] *Measuring Up* 2000 and *Measuring Up 2008*, San Jose: The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education.

[4] Kevin J. Dougherty, Rachel Hare, and Rebecca S. Natow, *Performance Accountability Systems for Community Colleges: Lessons for the Voluntary Framework of Accountability for Community Colleges*, New York: Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University, November 2, 2009. States included: California, Florida, Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, and Texas.

reporting.[5] Following the overview report, the authors detailed the measures of learning employed to demonstrate accountability:

- Thirty-four states did not systematically report data on learning outcomes for public higher education institutions. In a few of these states, one or more individual institutions released test scores or other performance information.

- Florida and the State University of New York recently discontinued their statewide higher education assessments which had produced information on student learning. Florida had required students who reach 60 undergraduate credits to pass an academic skills test in order to continue. SUNY had developed an extensive assessment program across its institutions and programs.

- Kansas, Maryland, Ohio, Oklahoma, and Pennsylvania produce reports on learning in their public systems which are qualitative or report institution-specific outcomes.

- The University of Alaska system reports the percentages of programs in each institution that are judged to have adequately-defined learner outcomes and assessments.

- The University of California presents students' self-reported gains in thinking and writing (one of 93 accountability measures). The California State University system reports data on students who are ready for college-level work following remediation.

- Missouri public universities report scores on tests of general education and nationally normed major field tests, but the samples tested vary.

- The University System of Georgia requires students who do not qualify for an exemption to take an achievement test in writing and reading in order to graduate. Passing rates are reported by university.

- In Wyoming, the University of Wyoming reports CLA scores for freshmen and rising juniors, and the Wyoming Community College Commission reports system performance on the CAAP.

- The University of Texas reports CLA scores for freshmen and seniors by institution compared to average national and expected scores.

- Tennessee's performance-based funding system, which affects both universities and community colleges, includes a component that rewards test results on an approved general education assessment for samples of graduating students. Major field testing using national or approved institutional tests is another required direct measure of student

---

[5] Kevin Carey and Chad Aldeman, *Ready to Assemble: A Model State Higher Education Accountability System*, Washington, D.C.: Education Sector, 2008. A supplemental report describing state learning outcome measures and reporting was retrieved from http://www.educationsector.org/.

learning. Among other factors, the funding system also rewards institutions based on program accreditation and reviews, alumni and employer surveys, and use of assessment to improve learning. While the funding system takes the above factors into account, public reporting of institutional performance on individual measures is not the focus.

- South Dakota requires students in all public universities to achieve satisfactory performance on the CAAP in order to earn an Associate in Arts degree or to remain enrolled for their baccalaureate degree. System mean scores compared to national mean scores are reported on the system accountability report.

The University of Minnesota annual Plan, Performance, and Accountability Report includes descriptions of programs and services that contribute to educational excellence. Data on student satisfaction with the quality of the university's academic programs is presented in the report.

Several of the above examples are for higher education systems that include only community colleges or only four-year universities. One of the challenges for the Accountability Dashboard is to construct measures of high quality learning that are appropriate to both two and four-year institutions.

PROPOSAL FOR A HIGH QUALITY LEARNING MEASURE

Outcomes of the Board's study session will determine next steps in developing a measure of high quality learning for the dashboard.

After considering alternative approaches, staff propose that for the short term, a measure of high quality learning be based on the extent to which system institutions employ assessment to improve learning outcomes:
- The survey developed by the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA, see Page 16) would be the source of data for constructing a measure.
- Further work would be undertaken to determine which items in the survey would become part of the measure and how they would be used to classify the system and each institution as exceeds expectations, meets expectations, or needs attention. Results would likely be benchmarked to national averages compiled by the NILOA.
- The system would administer a version of the national survey to collect data on assessment practices from each college and university.

Since the field of learning outcomes assessment in higher education is evolving, the measure of high quality learning on the dashboard would be revisited at a future date.

National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment

The National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA) is asking senior academic officers at every accredited two- and four-year college and university in the US about their campus assessment practices. Please complete this short questionnaire about the kinds of tools and approaches your institution is using to assess student learning. We very much appreciate your help.

Student learning outcomes include general and specialized knowledge, skills, abilities, dispositions, and values that result from a program of study.

1 **Does your institution have a common set of student learning outcomes that applies to ALL undergraduate students?**
☐ Yes   ☐ No

2 **Have specific departments, schools, or majors at your institution spelled out intended learning goals or outcomes applicable to their own students?**

☐ Yes, ALL departments/schools have defined field-specific learning outcomes

☐ Yes, SELECTED departments/schools have defined field-specific learning outcomes

☐ No, individual departments/schools do not specify their own learning outcomes

3 **To what extent does your institution use the following approaches to assess undergraduate student learning outcomes? (Mark all that apply)**

	Not used ▼	Used by individual departments or units but not to represent the whole institution ▼	Used with valid samples to represent the whole institution ▼
a. General knowledge and skills measures (CLA, CAAP, MAPP, WorkKeys, etc.)	☐	☐	☐
b. Specialized or programmatic knowledge and skills measures (licensure exams, MCAT, Major Field Tests, etc.)	☐	☐	☐
c. Performance assessments *other than grades* (simulations, lab and other demonstrations, field experiences, portfolios, critiques, recitals, capstone projects)	☐	☐	☐
d. External expert judgments of student performance (simulations, lab and other demonstrations, field experiences, portfolios, critiques, recitals, capstone projects)	☐	☐	☐
e. National student surveys (NSSE, CCSSE, CSEQ, SSI, CIRP FS, CSS, YFCY, FYI, etc.)	☐	☐	☐
f. Locally developed student surveys	☐	☐	☐
g. Rubrics (published or locally developed) to assess student work	☐	☐	☐
h. Student portfolios (a purposeful collection of student work showcasing achievement of learning objectives)	☐	☐	☐
i. Student interviews or focus groups	☐	☐	☐
j. Alumni surveys	☐	☐	☐
k. Alumni interviews or focus groups	☐	☐	☐
l. Employer surveys	☐	☐	☐
m. Employer interviews or focus groups	☐	☐	☐
n. Other, if applicable (briefly describe):		☐	☐
o. Other, if applicable (briefly describe):		☐	☐
p. Other, if applicable (briefly describe):		☐	☐

4 **To what extent has your institution used student learning outcomes results for each of the following?**
(Mark one response for each item)

	Not at all	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
a. Preparing self-studies for institutional accreditation	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Preparing self-studies for program or specialized accreditation	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Revising undergraduate learning goals	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Articulating or aligning curriculum and learning outcomes across sectors (K-12 – community college – 4-year institution)	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Determining student readiness for college-level coursework	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. Determining student readiness for upper-division coursework (e.g., rising junior exams)	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. Encouraging adoption of 'best practices' in teaching, learning, and assessment from other institutions	☐	☐	☐	☐
h. Improving instructional performance (e.g., design faculty or staff development programs)	☐	☐	☐	☐
i. Evaluating faculty and staff performance for merit salary purposes	☐	☐	☐	☐
j. Evaluating faculty performance for promotion and tenure	☐	☐	☐	☐
k. Modifying general education curriculum	☐	☐	☐	☐
l. Evaluating departments, units and programs	☐	☐	☐	☐
m. Allocating resources to academic units	☐	☐	☐	☐
n. Allocating resources to student affairs units	☐	☐	☐	☐
o. Modifying student academic support services (e.g.,advising, tutoring, study skills)	☐	☐	☐	☐
p. Changing admissions policies and recruitment materials	☐	☐	☐	☐
q. Changing policies and practices related to transfer or articulation agreements	☐	☐	☐	☐
r. Improving physical environment for learning	☐	☐	☐	☐
s. Responding to calls for accountability and/or transparency	☐	☐	☐	☐
t. Informing strategic planning	☐	☐	☐	☐
u. Informing governing board about student and institutional performance	☐	☐	☐	☐
v. Reporting to the public	☐	☐	☐	☐
w. Other, if applicable (briefly describe):		☐	☐	☐
x. Other, if applicable (briefly describe):		☐	☐	☐
y. Other, if applicable (briefly describe):		☐	☐	☐

17

5 **How important are the following factors or forces in prompting your institution to assess student learning outcomes? (Mark one response for each item)**

	No importance	Minor importance	Moderate importance	High importance
a. National calls for accountability and/or transparency	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Institutional membership initiatives (e.g., VSA, U-CAN, AQIP, Transparency by Design, AAUDE)	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Governing board mandate	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Coordinating board mandate	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Regional accreditation	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. Specialized or program accreditation	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. Institutional commitment to improve undergraduate education (strategic priority, etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐
h. Faculty or staff interest in improving student learning	☐	☐	☐	☐
i. Other, if applicable (briefly describe):		☐	☐	☐
j. Other, if applicable (briefly describe):		☐	☐	☐
k. Other, if applicable (briefly describe):		☐	☐	☐

---

6 **Does your institution have a person or unit charged with coordinating or implementing student learning outcomes assessment campus-wide?**

☐ Yes   ☐ No

↓

If "yes," how many FTE are assigned to this unit?

[.   ]

7 **How will the current economic crisis affect your institution's efforts to assess student learning outcomes in the next 12 months? (Mark one response)**

☐ No effect

☐ Institutional support for assessment may be increased

☐ Institutional support for assessment may be reduced

☐ Institutional support for assessment may be eliminated

☐ Unsure about level of institutional support for assessment

8 **What would be most helpful to your institution to effectively assess student learning outcomes? (Mark no more than three of the following)**

☐ Greater faculty engagement

☐ Stronger support from the president and/or governing board

☐ Better tests or measures of student learning outcomes

☐ More information about policies and practices at other institutions

☐ More information about assessment tools and approaches

☐ Greater faculty or staff expertise in assessment methodology

☐ More financial resources (e.g., staff, budget)

☐ Other, if applicable (briefly describe):

9 If you wish, feel free to nominate up to three people or units at your institution that are doing good work in assessing student learning outcomes *and* have evidence about how the changes made have affected student learning. We would like to contact them to explain this project and obtain information about what they are doing. Please provide as much information as is conveniently possible.

Name:

College/School/Department/Program:

E-mail:

Name:

College/School/Department/Program:

E-mail:

Name:

College/School/Department/Program:

E-mail:

10 Please enter the name, title and e-mail of the person who completed this questionnaire:

Name:

Title:

E-mail:

11 May we contact you to obtain additional information about what your institution is doing in terms of student learning outcomes assessment?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

THANKS FOR YOUR HELP!

After completing the survey, please put it in the enclosed postage-paid envelope and deposit it in any U.S. Postal Service mailbox. Questions or comments? Contact the Project Manager Staci Provezis (sprovez2@illinois.edu), Stan Ikenberry (stanike@uiuc.edu), or George Kuh (kuh@indiana.edu). You can find out more about NILOA at www.LearningOutcomesAssessment.org. Copyright © 2009 Indiana University.

19

Attachment A

Current Design of the Accountability Dashboard