National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment

January 2014

Knowing What Students Know and Can Do
The Current State of Student Learning Outcomes Assessment in U.S. Colleges and Universities

George D. Kuh, Natasha Jankowski, Stanley O. Ikenberry, & Jillian Kinzie

nowledge accountability connection self-reflection edu   nicate listen learn access quality innovation success
ngenuity intellect curiosity challenge create achiev   ction understand communicate listen learn access
uality innovation success ingenuity intellect curi   connection understand communicate listen learn
ccess quality innovation success ingenuity self-refl   knowledge accountability connection self-reflection
ducate action understand communicate curiosity ch   f-reflection curiosity challenge create achievement
onnection self-reflection knowledge accountability   derstand communicate listen learn access quality
nnovation success ingenuity intellect curiosit   llect curiosity challenge create achievement
nowledge accountability connection self-refle   ty challenge create achievement connection
elf-reflection understand communicate listen   communicate listen learn action understand
ommunicate listen learn access quality inno   knowledge accountability connection access
uality self-reflection curiosity challenge   ngenuity self-reflection educate action
nderstand intellect knowledge accounta   wledge accountability connection self-
eflection educate action understand com   intellect curiosity challenge connection
nowledge accountability connection self-   ess quality innovation success ingenuity
hallenge create achievement conne   derstand communicate listen learn
ccess quality action create achieve   en learn access quality innovation
uccess educate action communicat   e educate innovation success self-
eflection knowledge accountability   on understand communicate listen
earn access quality innovation success ingenuity intellect access quality innovation success self-reflection curiosity challenge create achievement
onnection self-reflection understand educate action understand communicate listen learn action understand communicate listen learn access
uality innovation success ingenuity curiosity challenge create achievement connection self-reflection understand communicate listen learn

Contents

This document is a full version of the NILOA 2013 national survey of provosts. The abridged version of this report is available here: http://www.learningoutcomeassessment.org/knowingwhatstudentsknowandcando.html

Executive Summary

Assessment of student learning continues to climb higher on the national agenda. There are multiple reasons for this, including persistent prods from external bodies such as accrediting and governmental entities and institutions recognizing they need more and better evidence of student accomplishment.

What do we know about what colleges and universities in the U.S do to gather and use evidence about what undergraduate students learn during college? Provosts (or their designates) from 1,202 regionally accredited, undergraduate-degree-granting, two- and four-year, public, private, and for-profit institutions in the U.S. (43% response rate) helped us answer this question by responding to a national survey conducted by the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA) in the spring and summer of 2013. The questionnaire asked about the institution's current assessment activities and how student learning outcomes evidence is being used.

Major Findings

- **Stated learning outcome goals and expectations for students are now the norm in American higher education.** In 2013, about 84% of all colleges and universities had adopted stated learning outcomes for all their undergraduates, an increase of 10% from 2009.

- **The prime driver of assessment remains the same: expectations of regional and program or specialized accrediting agencies.** At the same time, internal drivers including program review and process improvement have become increasingly important.

- **There is significantly more assessment activity now than a few years ago.** The average number of assessment tools or approaches used by colleges and universities in 2013 is five, two more than the average number of three in 2009.

- **The range of tools and measures to assess student learning has expanded significantly.** National surveys remain popular (85% of all schools use them), but there has been a large increase in use of rubrics, portfolios and other classroom-based assessments as well.

- **Meeting accreditation expectations heads the list for how assessment evidence is used, but internal use by campuses is growing and is considered *far more important* than external use.** Provosts consider classroom-based assessments to be of greatest institutional value as they capture student performance in the contexts where teaching and learning occur – course and program-embedded experiences. Ironically, while governing board expectations that the institution collect student learning outcomes data are greater today, sharing this information with the board is not as common a use as compared with other uses.

- **Institutions more frequently report assessment results internally than to external audiences.** Assessment results are reported most frequently on campus in faculty meetings or retreats. Only about a third (35%) of campuses makes publicly available assessment results on their Web sites or in publications.

- **Provosts perceive there is substantial support for assessment on their campus.** Nearly three quarters report either "very much" or "quite a bit" of support for assessment activity on their campus though the reward system does not always recognize such work.

- **In general, institutional selectivity is negatively related to assessment activity.** For almost every category of assessment activity, the more selective an institution's admissions standards, the less likely it is to employ various assessment approaches or use the results.

- **Faculty are the key to moving the assessment work forward.** Provosts rate faculty ownership and involvement as top priorities to further the assessment agenda.

Implications

The results point to five areas that require immediate attention by institutional leaders, faculty and staff members, assessment professionals, and governing boards.

1. More faculty involvement is essential.

If there is one matter on which almost everyone agrees – administrators, rank-and-file faculty members, and assessment scholars – it is that faculty involvement in assessment and improvement is essential to both improve teaching and learning and enhance institutional effectiveness.

2. Sustaining the recent progress of institutional assessment work must be a priority.

Leadership turnover and constrained resources threaten continued support for assessment, which makes it critical that faculty and staff embed assessment into their core activities.

3. Colleges and universities must use assessment results more effectively.

Although more assessment evidence is available, its use is not nearly as pervasive as it must be to guide institutional actions that will improve student outcomes. Key to such an effort is integrating assessment work into the institution's governance and organizational structures.

4. Governing boards must make student learning a high, continuing priority.

The board should request regularly reports of student learning outcomes and examples of productive use so that the board is confident that the internal academic quality controls of the institution are operating effectively.

5. Colleges and universities must cultivate an institutional culture that values gathering and using student outcomes data as an integral tool for fostering student success and increasing institutional effectiveness as contrasted with a compliance exercise.

The goal is to get everyone - faculty, administrators, staff and the governing board - to see that assessing outcomes and using evidence for ongoing improvement is not just or primarily a contrived response to the demands of people outside the institution.

Conclusion

The factors inducing more institutional effort devoted to student learning outcomes assessment have remained relatively stable over the last four years. At the same time, understanding what students know and can do is no longer driven exclusively – or even primarily – by external forces, especially if accreditation is viewed as a hybrid combination of self-imposed external oversight. Today, accreditation is joined by campus motives to improve student learning, to evaluate the effectiveness of current practice, and to heed presidential and governing board interests. This leads us to conclude that *assessment of student learning has turned the corner in that the work is no longer primarily an act of compliance, but rather is motivated by a more appropriate balance of compliance and an institutional desire to improve.*

Indeed, colleges and universities themselves have every reason to take ownership of assessment of student learning and to use that evidence wisely and productively. If this improvement-oriented impulse reflected in the results of this survey becomes more deeply rooted in campus cultures, what may well follow is more purposeful use of evidence of student learning outcomes in decision making which, in turn, could enhance the academic quality and institutional effectiveness in American higher education.

Knowing What Students Know and Can Do

The Current State of Student Learning Outcomes Assessment
in U.S. Colleges and Universities

George D. Kuh, Natasha Jankowski, Stanley O. Ikenberry, & Jillian Kinzie

Context

Assessment of student learning continues to climb higher on the national agenda. There are multiple reasons for this, including the early and persistent prods from external bodies such as accrediting and governmental entities and more recently from institutions that recognize they need more and better evidence of student accomplishment. In 2006, the Spellings Commission embodied the external voice by proclaiming:

> We are disturbed by evidence that the quality of student learning at U.S. colleges and universities is inadequate and, in some cases, declining… Colleges and universities must become more transparent about cost, price, and student success outcomes, and must willingly share this information with students and families (U.S. Department of Education, 2006, pp. 3-4).

Not surprisingly the tone of the Commission's final report was somber. Were students learning what they needed to know? Were college graduates prepared to survive and thrive after college? And what were the implications for the nation's economy and the future of the democracy? It came as no shock when the Commission recommended that "*postsecondary education institutions should measure and report meaningful student learning outcomes* (p. 28)."

Now -- eight years later and under a different administration – Congress once again is poised to consider reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. The challenges have not abated. If anything, certain concerns have intensified, including angst over rising college costs and questions of academic quality and the need for greater and more equitable access. Employers, policy makers, and governmental officials all agree that the nation needs more students from increasingly diverse backgrounds to succeed and achieve at higher levels -- all of this while at the same time containing and reducing college costs. The traditional arbiters of quality assurance -- regional and specialized program accreditation organizations -- are caught in the middle and under fire from critics, magnifying the external pressure felt by campuses.

On the other hand, as this report will show, the impetus for gauging what students know and can do is no longer just an external mandate, but increasingly is motivated by people responsible for the final product – faculty, staff and institutional leaders. Various trends and factors begin to explain what is behind this shift.

College students are more mobile and now can obtain credentials and degrees from an increasing number of providers. More than half of all college graduates have attended more than one institution. Nearly half of all students take at least one course on-line. Both public and independent colleges and universities report enrollment shortfalls and other forms of financial stress. If students fail to succeed, campus enrollments sag which compounds the pressure on already over-

> *The impetus for gauging what students know and can do is no longer just an external mandate, but increasingly is motivated by people responsible for the final product – faculty, staff and institutional leaders.*

stretched institutional budgets. And so, for the broad sweep of American higher education, knowing what students know and enhancing student success while containing costs is crucial to institutional health and sustainability. Because of these challenges and the many others that campuses deal with on a daily basis, it is now essential that institutions systematically collect and use data about what is happening to students to inform decision making.

There is some evidence in this report that this is happening, albeit at a slow, tedious pace.

For example, one thing that has changed over the last decade is that we now know more about what institutions are doing to document and improve student learning outcomes. Ten years ago, the kinds of information presented in this report were not available. As will become plain later, substantial headway has been made in the past few years as to the numbers and kinds of approaches being used by campuses to assess student learning, with a welcome discernible shift toward the use of multiple measures and classroom-based approaches.

What is the Current State of Student Learning Outcomes Assessment?

What do we know about what colleges and universities in the U.S are doing to gather and use evidence about what undergraduate students learn during college? Provosts (or their designates) from 1,202 regionally accredited, undergraduate-degree-granting, two- and four-year, public, private, and for-profit institutions in the U.S., a 43% response rate, helped us answer this question by responding to a national survey conducted by the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA) in the spring and summer of 2013. The questionnaire asked about the institution's current assessment activities and how student learning outcomes evidence is being used.

The responses reflect a range of assessment activities. Some institutions were well advanced in their assessment efforts while others were just getting involved in this important work. Taken together, what provosts told us underscores the need for meaningful measures that:

- are not overly expensive or time consuming to implement;

- provide actionable information for guiding decision-making and curricular change; and

- leverage and share what people from different corners of the institution are discovering about student attainment in order to improve teaching and student learning.

In this sense, the survey results suggest that the kinds of student learning assessment approaches that matter most to provosts and the campuses they serve are not activities that respond primarily to the interests of government or accreditors, but rather those efforts that yield meaningful, nuanced information that both document student accomplishment and inform decision-making at all levels.

NILOA conducted a similar survey in 2009 (Kuh & Ikenberry, 2009). Of the schools responding in 2013, 725 also completed the 2009 survey, which allows us to estimate the nature of the changes that have occurred. Appropriate

Learning outcomes assessment is key to addressing both affordability and access issues.

(provost from a master's institution)

statistical methods were used to determine whether differences in assessment activities existed between different types of institutions or different accreditation regions as well as between the two survey administrations in 2009 and 2013.[1] The following narrative highlights statistically significant results as well as common patterns or similarities in institutional assessment activity across time or between different types of institutions and accreditation regions.

In addition, we invited provosts to comment about their hopes, worries, positive outcomes, and assistance needed to move their institution's assessment work forward. More than 83% (1,003) did so, which in itself says something about where student learning outcomes assessment falls on the institutional agenda.

Stated Learning Outcomes Are Now the Norm

Clearly articulated learning outcomes are important in determining whether students know and can do what an institution promises and what employers and policy makers expect. The vast majority of colleges and universities have set forth with varying degrees of specificity learning outcomes that apply to all their undergraduates, regardless of majors.

- Some 84% of institutions reported they had common learning outcomes for all their students, up from 74% four years ago.

- Moreover, four in ten institutions reported that the learning outcomes of all their various academic programs *were aligned with* the institution's stated learning outcomes for all students (Figure 1). This level of alignment suggests more careful attention to integrating assessment activities on campus.

Clearly articulated learning outcomes are important in determining whether students know and can do what an institution promises and what employers and policy makers expect.
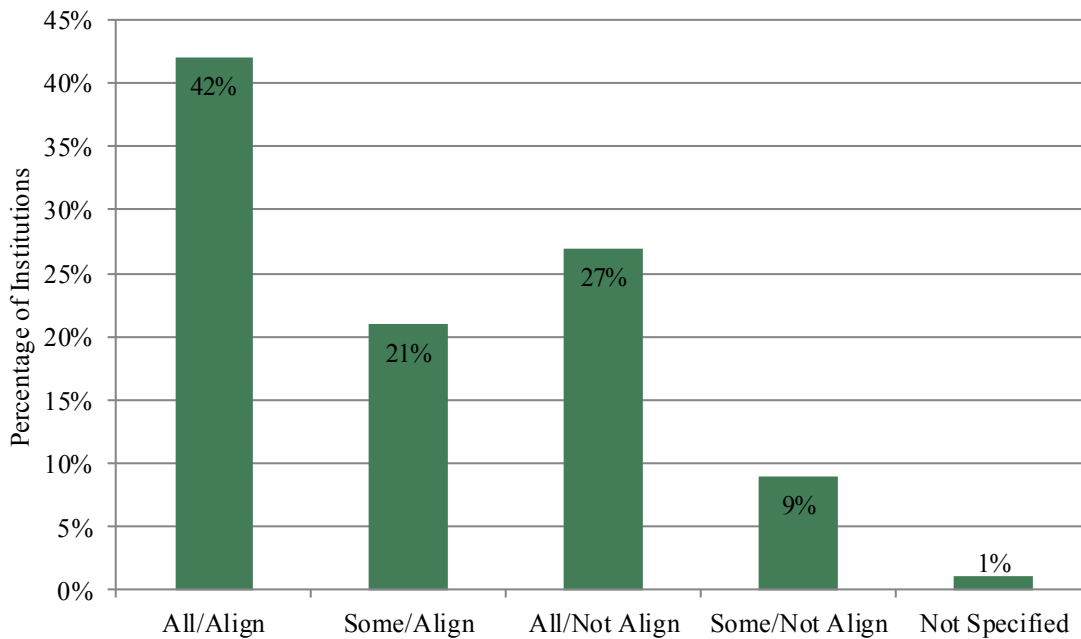
Figure 1. Percentage of institutions with program outcomes and their alignment to institution-level outcomes.

---

[1] Appendix A contains additional information about the survey administration and analysis. The questions asked on the survey can be seen here: http://www.learningoutcomeassessment.org/knowingwhatstudentsknowandcando.html

The degree of articulated program-to-institution learning outcomes varies among institutions. For example, fewer doctoral-granting institutions (27 %) reported having departmental learning outcomes aligned with institutional learning outcomes compared with about half (49%) of all other institutions, perhaps reflecting the challenges of increased scale and complexity that characterize these campuses.[2] Still, overall, more attention is being given to articulating and aligning learning goals within and across a campus.

Assessment Drivers

A variety of forces prompt institutions to gather information about student learning (Figure 2). Regional and specialized/program accreditation remain the prime drivers of assessment work. But internal motives are also very important, including an institutional commitment to improve and a desire by faculty and staff to gain a clearer understanding of student learning outcomes. Presidents and governing boards are asking for evidence of student learning in relation to the overall effectiveness and value of current practice.

Accreditation aside (which is a creature of the academy created to insure colleges and universities focused on quality and improvement), much of the impetus for understanding what students know and can do is manifested in internal impulses emanating from faculty, presidents, and boards. Pressure from governments, statewide coordinating boards, national calls for more accountability, and state or federal mandates – these external forces remain, but they now appear less influential in prompting the work than internal drivers. We take this to be good news.

Presidents and governing boards are asking for evidence of student learning in relation to the overall effectiveness and value of current practice.
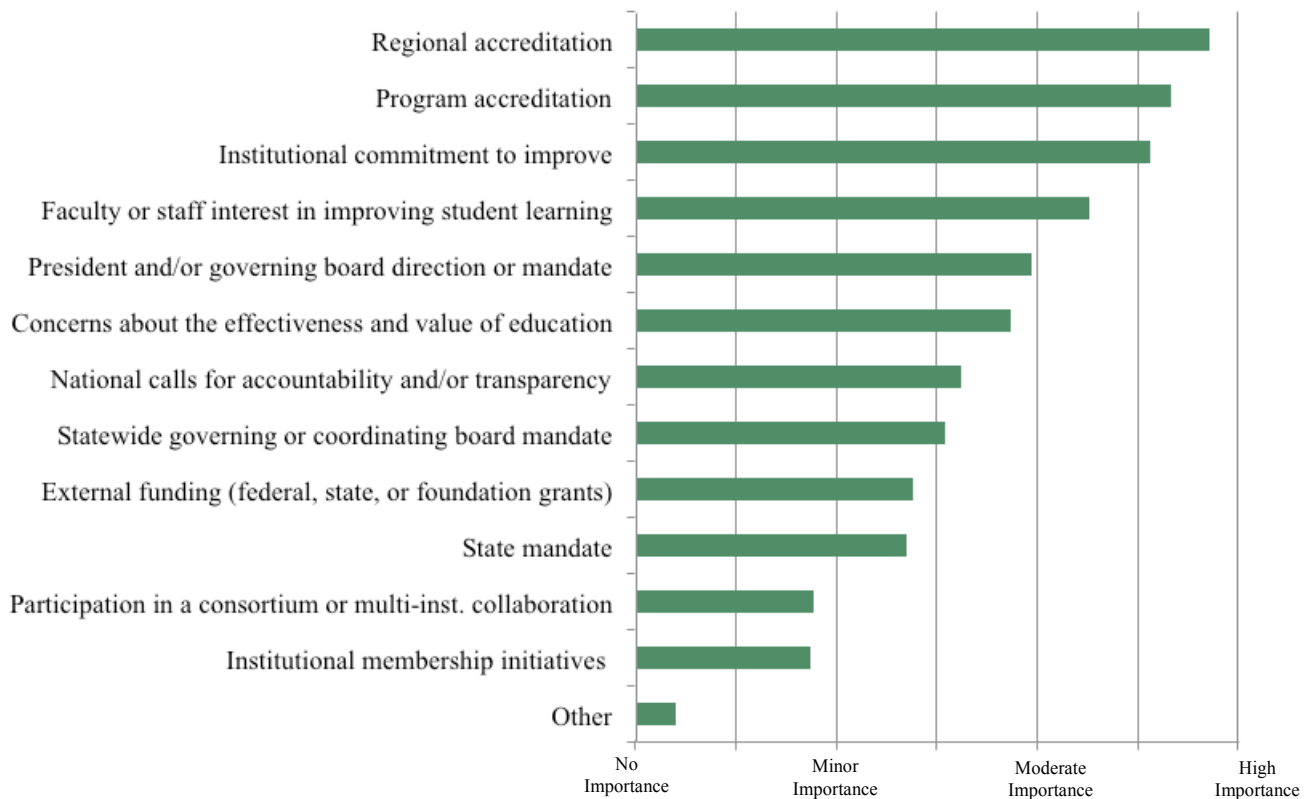
Figure 2. Importance of factors or forces that prompt student learning outcomes assessment.

---

[2] Please see appendix B for data tables by institutional type.

The impetus for assessing student learning tends to vary among public and independent colleges and universities (Figure 3). Not surprisingly, compared with their independent counterparts, more public and for-profit institutions report pressure to assess student learning from a statewide coordinating or governing board, state mandates, or other external pressures. Noteworthy is that an "institutional commitment to improve" is a somewhat more important incentive for assessment work in for-profit higher education institutions compared with the not-for-profit public/private sectors. These patterns are consistent with those seen in 2009, though the influence of governing boards has increased which may reflect increased awareness of governing boards in attending to matters of educational quality (Association of Governing Boards, 2010; Ewell, 2006; 2012). The influence of institutional membership initiatives has decreased somewhat across public, private, and for-profit institutions (Figure 4).
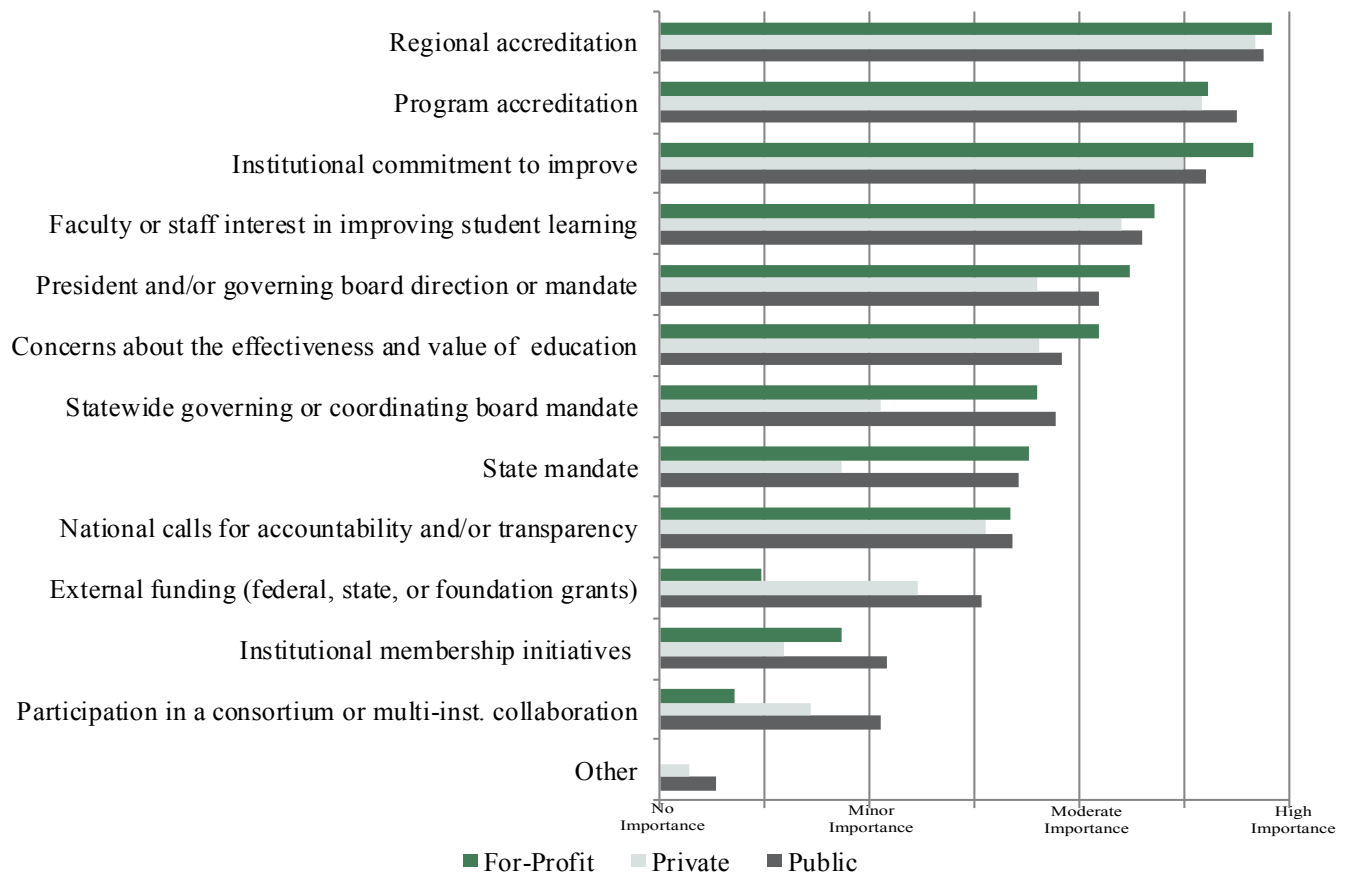
Figure 3. Importance of factors or forces that prompt student learning outcomes assessment by institutional control.
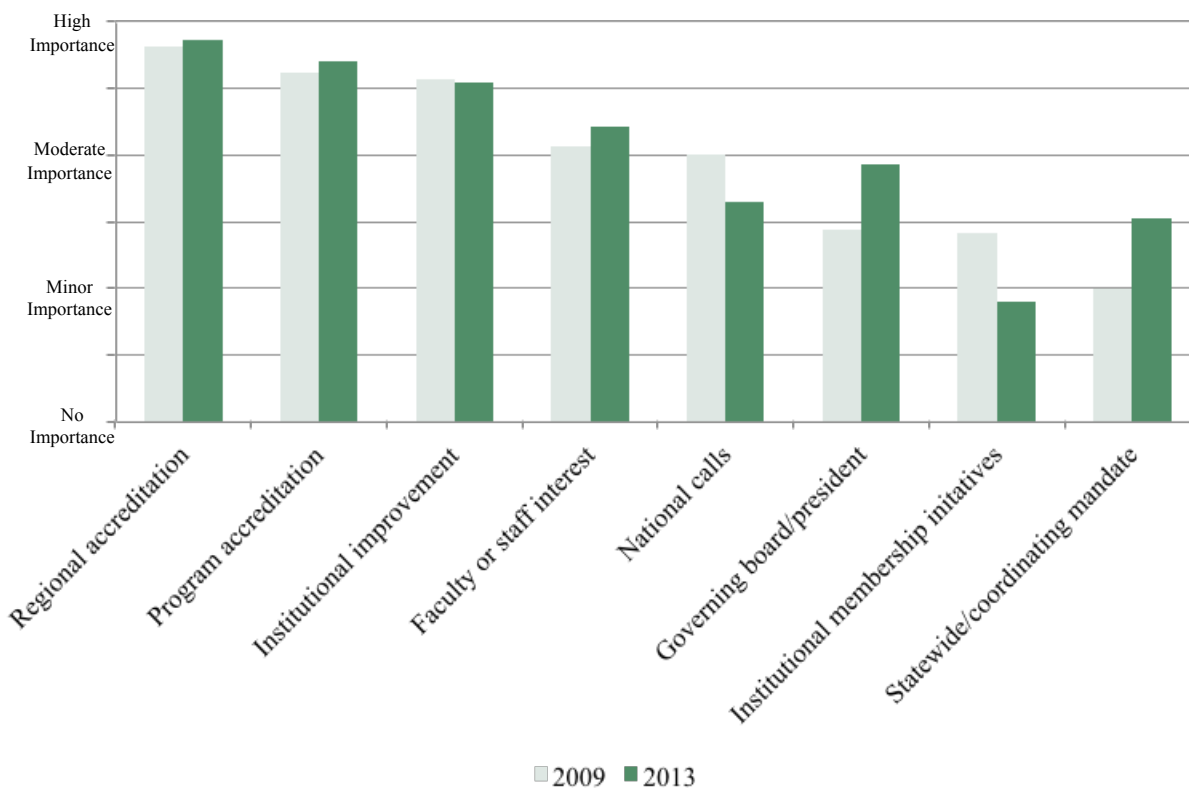
Figure 4. Relative importance of factors or forces that prompt student learning outcomes assessment in 2009 and 2013.

- More associate degree-granting institutions indicated assessment was influenced by presidential and board intervention and by state mandates and external funding opportunities than other campuses (Figure 5).

- Doctoral institutions tended to give a higher weight to institutional membership initiatives driving assessment, such as the Voluntary System of Accountability.

Regardless of institutional type, improving student learning and institutional effectiveness seem to be the most important, consequential drivers of assessment practice.
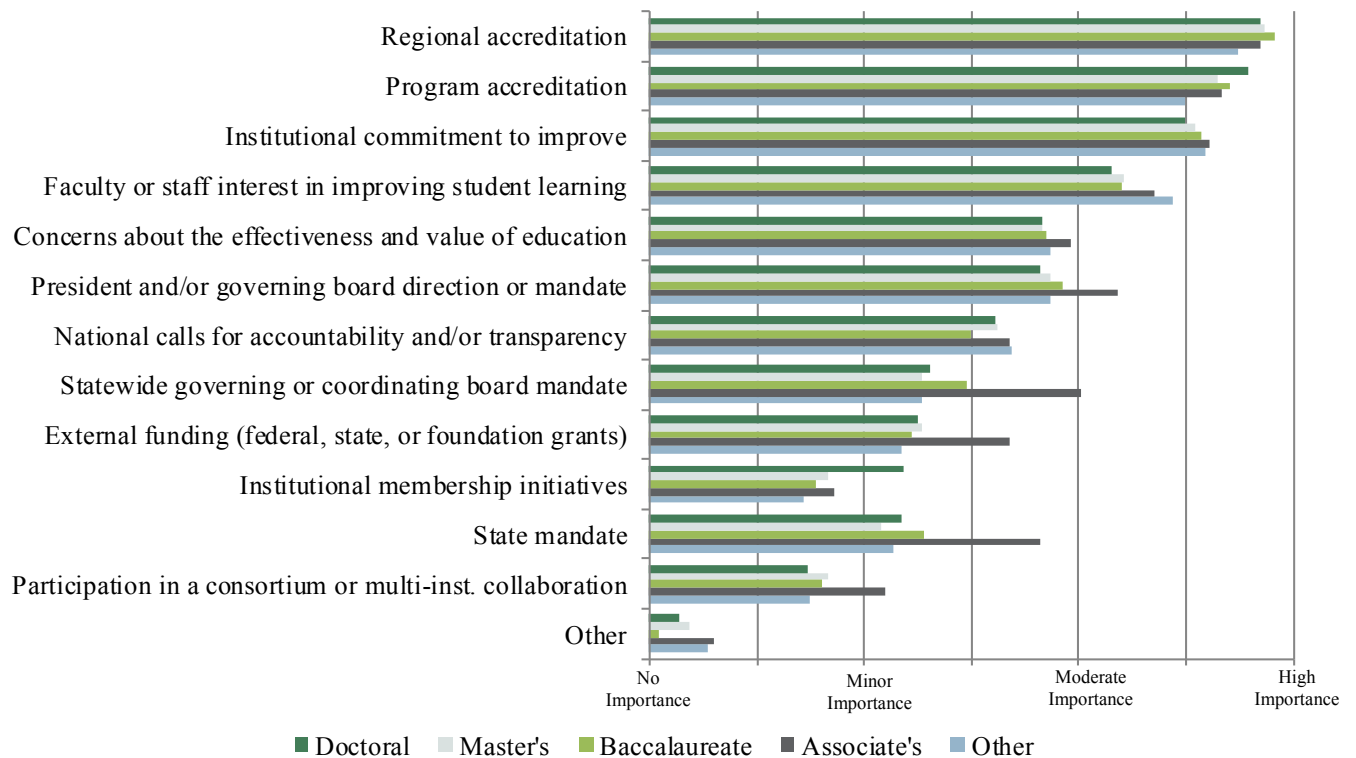
Figure 5. Importance of factors or forces that prompt student learning outcomes assessment by degree level offered.

Most Institutions Use Multiple Measures to Assess Learning

Experts generally agree that no single assessment tool or approach can adequately represent collegiate level student learning. Fortunately, there are many more assessment tools and approaches available today than a decade ago (Borden & Kernel, 2013), and American colleges and universities are using them more frequently (Figure 6).

- Among the more commonly used assessment tools are national student surveys (85%), rubrics (69%), and classroom-based assessments that are aggregated or "rolled up" in some manner to represent student learning outcomes at the institution level (66%).

- Classroom-based assessment, national student surveys, and rubrics in this order are the top three "*most valuable or important*" approaches for assessing undergraduate student learning outcomes.

That classroom-based assessment and rubrics are considered among the most valuable for institution level assessment underscores the shift toward using measures that capture student performance in the contexts where teaching and learning occur – course and program-embedded experiences. These data are then "rolled-up" to the institution level and aggregated to represent undergraduate student learning outcomes. Just a few years ago, institutions were searching for examples of the analytical and data presentation steps that would enable them to array course- and program-level outcomes in this manner.
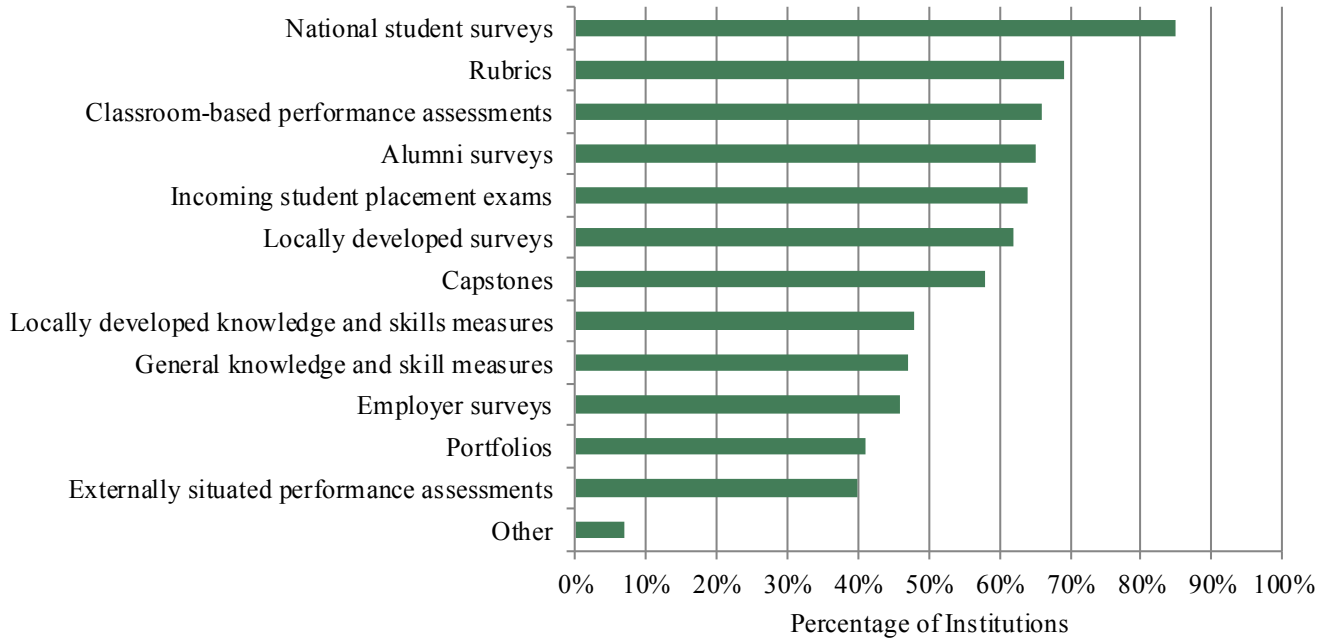
Figure 6. Percentage of institutions employing different assessment approaches at the institution level to represent undergraduate student learning.

- Almost every type of approach to assessing student learning is being used more frequently in 2013 than in 2009.

While more is not always better, this trend is another marker of the shift toward institutional improvement as a driver of assessment. While all types of measure are being used more often (Figure 7), the most striking changes were the increased use of rubrics, portfolios, external performance assessment (such as internship and service learning) and employer surveys.
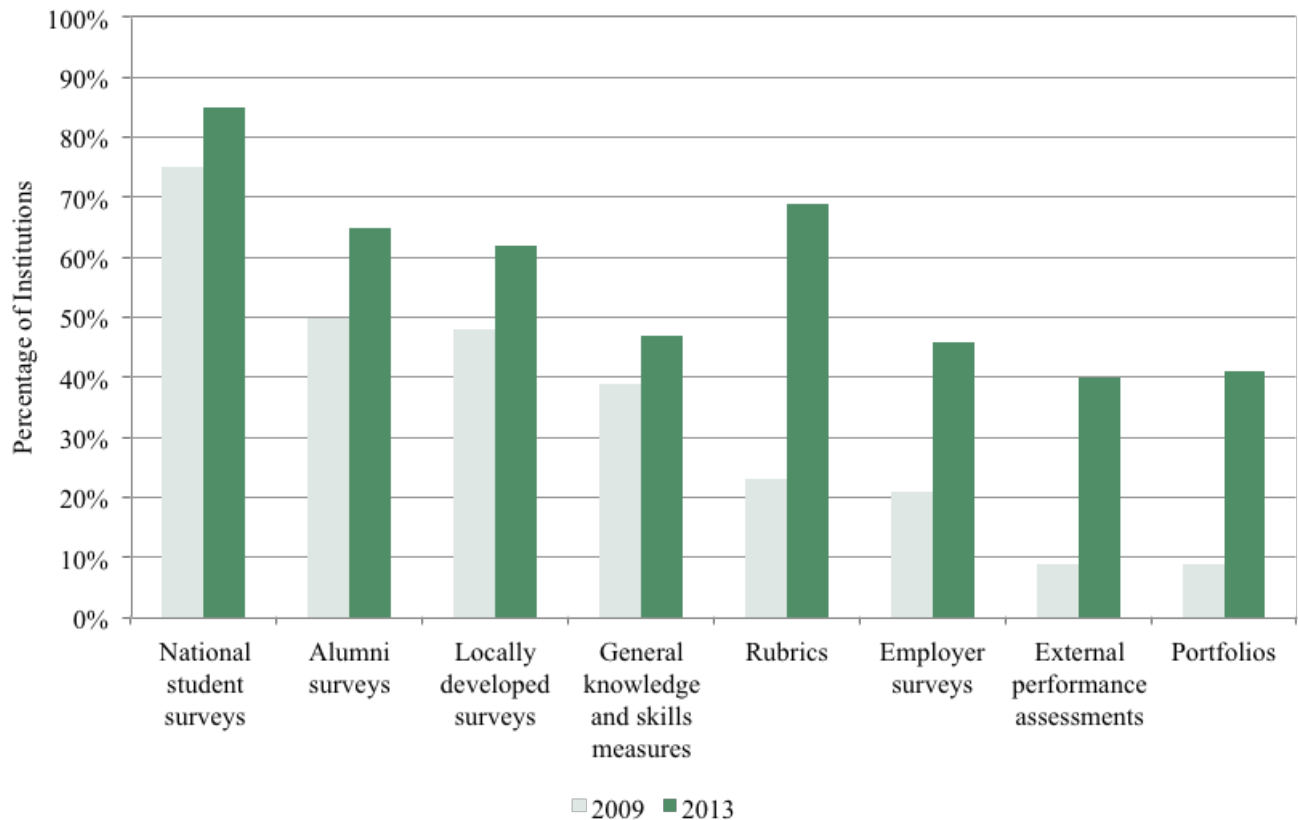
Figure 7. Use of selected assessment approaches in 2009 and 2013.

- Compared with the not-for-profit sector, fewer for-profit institutions employed national student surveys. However, more for-profit schools used rubrics and classroom-based performance assessments, such as simulations, comprehensive exams, and critiques.[3] In fact, all of the for-profit institutions that responded to the survey reported using rubrics.

- Public universities less frequently used portfolios, capstone projects/courses, and information from alumni compared with their private and for-profit counterparts.

Assessment approaches also vary by institution type (Figure 8):

- More associate-degree granting institutions used incoming student placement exams and information from employers, but were *least likely* to use alumni surveys and capstone projects.

- Doctoral institutions were more likely to use national student surveys perhaps because they are easier to administer across large numbers of students; they were *least likely* to use externally situated performance assessments, portfolios, locally developed measures, rubrics, and classroom-based assessments.

---

[3] Appendix B contains tabulated results of assessment approaches by institutional control.

- Special mission colleges, such as tribal colleges, favored such assessment approaches as classroom-based assessments, portfolios, alumni surveys, locally developed surveys, and externally situated assessments such as internships or other community-based projects.
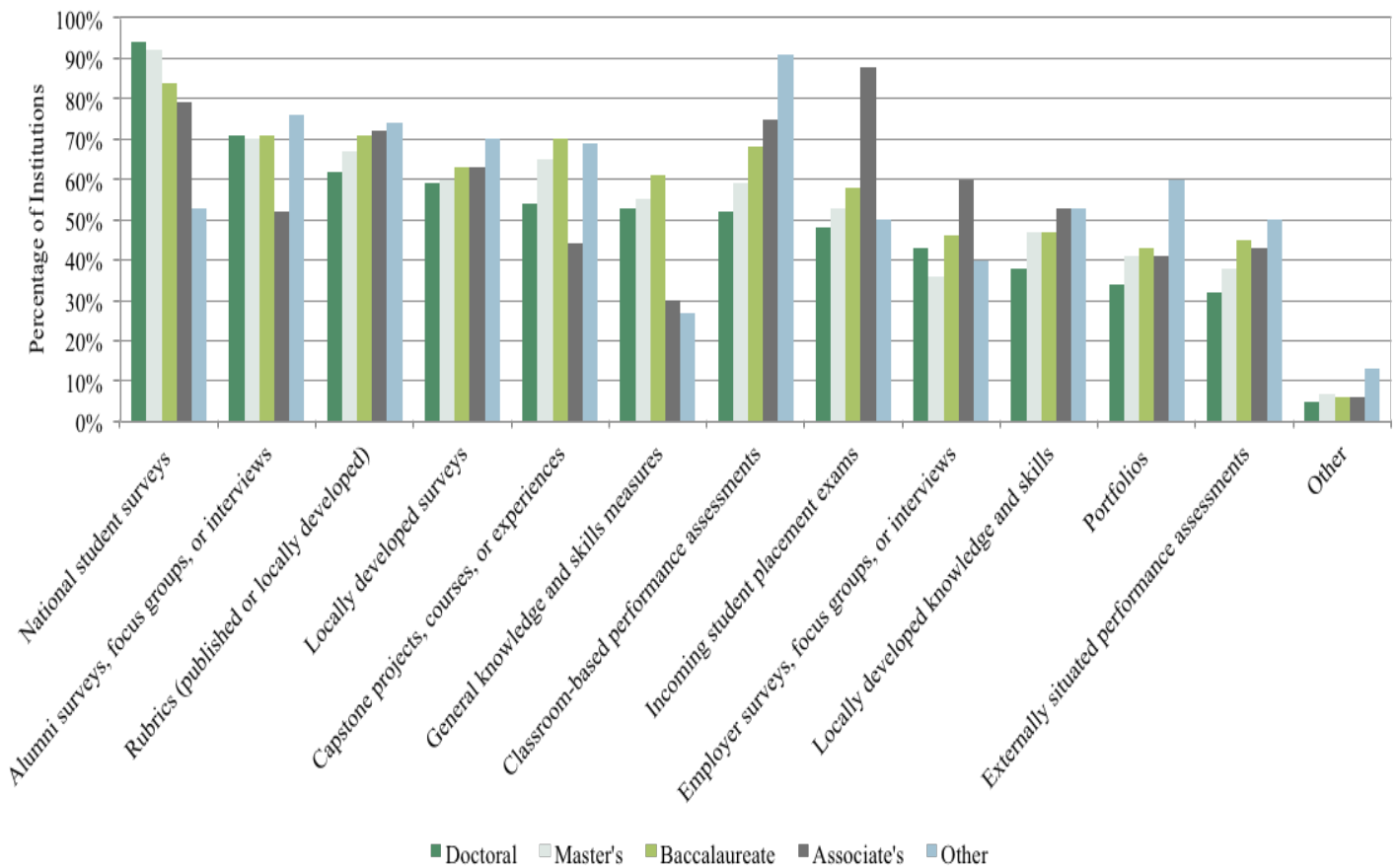

Figure 8. Percentage of assessment approaches used by institutional type.

Use of Assessment Results Is Growing

Gathering information about student accomplishment can be an empty exercise if the data are not used in meaningful and productive ways. One of the most encouraging findings from this study is that reports of *institutional use of assessment evidence* are up in every single category (Figure 9).

- Complying with regional and program accreditation expectations is the most frequent use, as was the case in 2009.

- At the same time, nine of ten institutions today use student learning outcomes data in program reviews, either institution-wide (62%) or for some programs (29%).

- Institutions also report frequently using assessment evidence for other improvement-related tasks, such as curriculum modification, strategic planning, policy development, benchmarking, and faculty development – all encouraging signs (Figure 10).
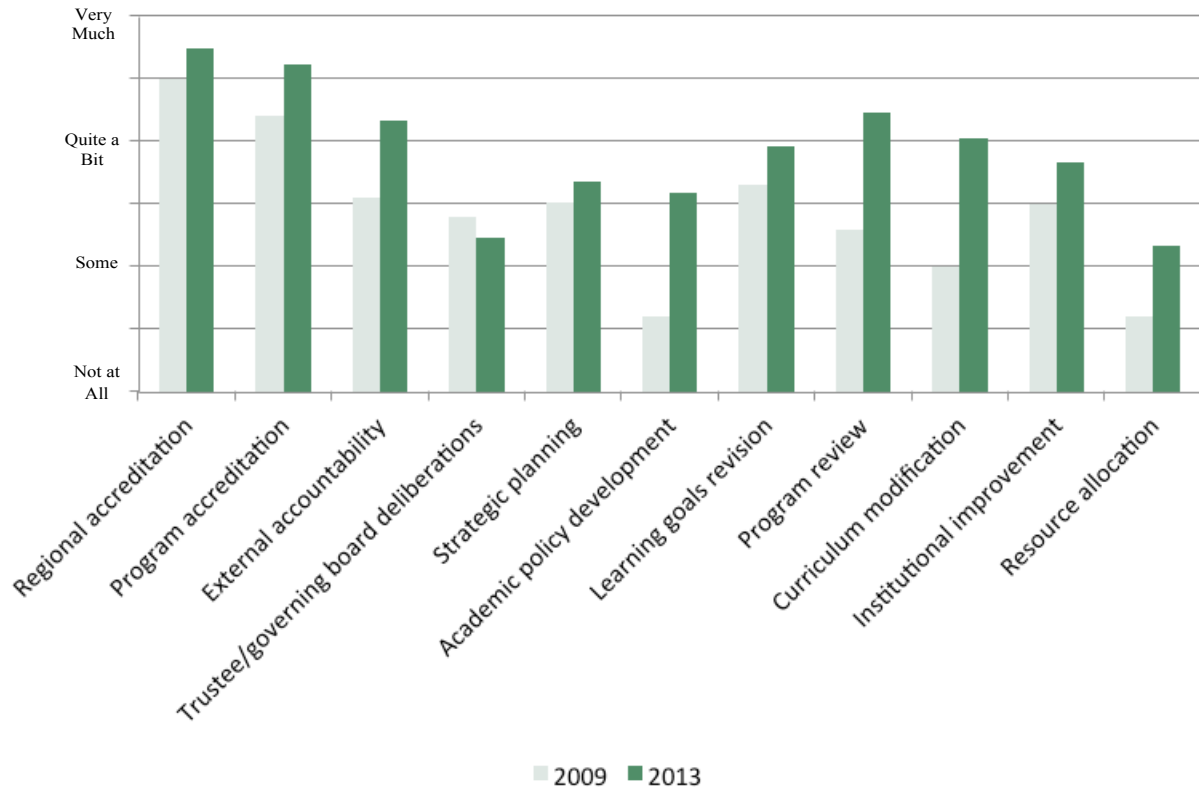
Figure 9. Comparison of uses of assessment results in 2009 and 2013.
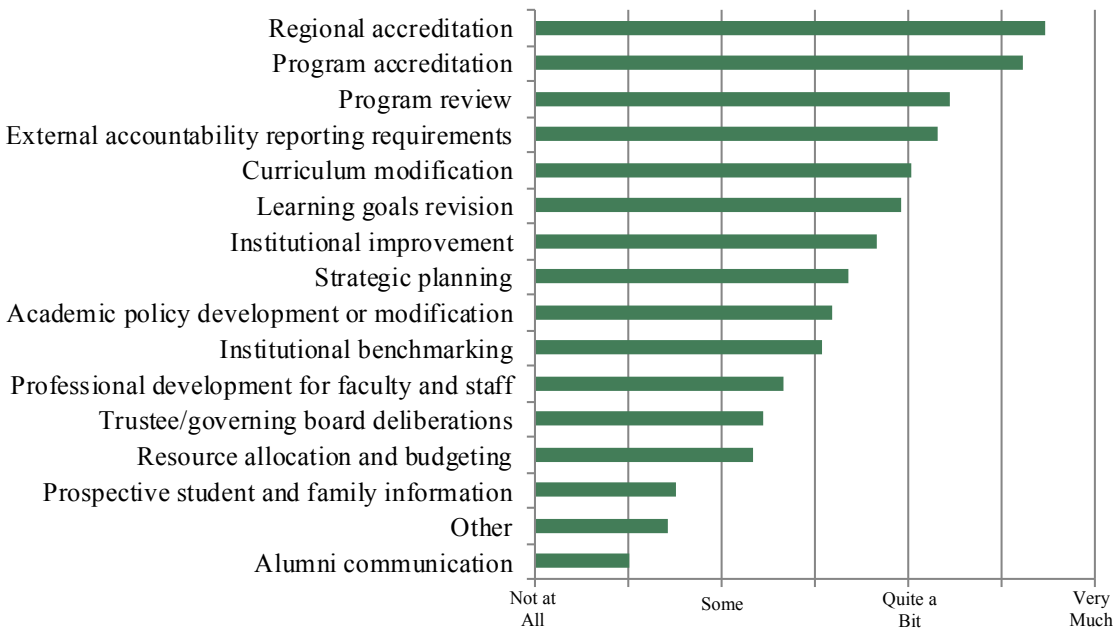

Figure 10. Extent to which assessment results are used for various purposes.

Figure 11 confirms that assessment results are more often used to guide changes in policy and practice at the course or department/program level than at the college or institutional levels. As some have observed (Banta & Blaich, 2011; Suskie, 2009), broad, institution-wide measures – be they tests, survey results or other approaches to assessment – may be less actionable than evidence of student learning closer to the course, program and college.
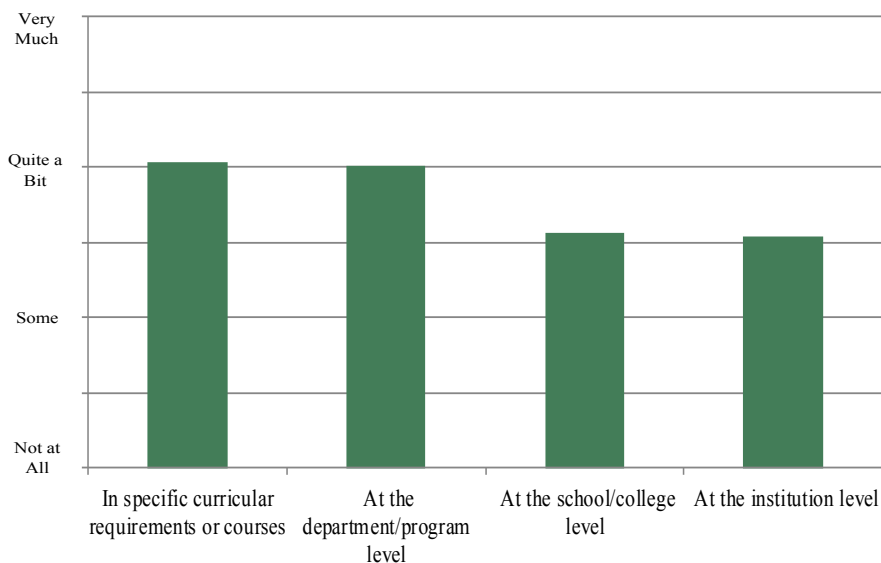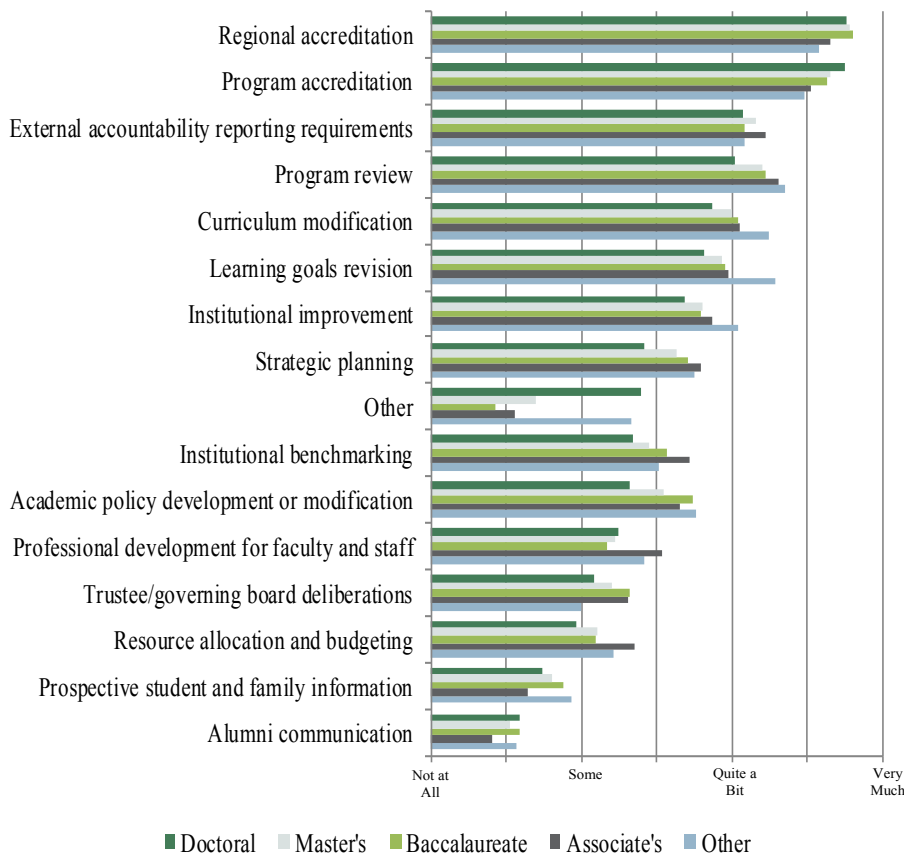

Figure 11. Extent to which changes are made based on assessment results by level within the institution.

For-profit and public institutions were *more likely* to indicate external accountability reporting requirements than private institutions as uses of assessment. In addition, for-profit institutions were *more likely* than not-for-profit institutions to use assessment results in trustee or governing board deliberations, strategic planning, institutional benchmarking, and curriculum modification.[4] This pattern of student outcomes use is not surprising, given the market sensitivity of these institutions and shareholders' expectations for data-driven decision making that insures a reasonable return on their investment.

Once faculty are collecting useful information, that information is being used to make changes to try to improve student learning… Sharing examples of faculty using results within disciplines, programs, and courses would drive the institutional work of assessment forward.

(provost from a community college)

---

[4] Data about institutional control and uses of assessment results are presented in Appendix B.

Figure 12. Use of assessment results by institutional type.

While most institutions reported frequent use of results for accreditation, different types of institutions tend to use assessment results for different purposes (Figure 12).

- Associate degree granting institutions were *more likely* than other institutional types to use assessment results in strategic planning, resource allocation, professional development, and institutional benchmarking, all of which are directly tied to decision making and monitoring institutional and performance.

- Other institutions such as special mission colleges were *more likely* to use results internally for institutional improvement, curriculum modification, and learning goals revision.

- Doctoral degree granting institutions were *least likely* to use assessment results for academic policy development or modification.

The information presented thus far -- especially the data displayed in Figures 2, 9, and 10 -- warrants further consideration. Although provosts were asked to report the extent of use of various assessment results (Figure 10), they also reported that assessment results are more often used to change policies, programs and practices closer to the scene of the action -- the course level rather than the institution level (Figure 11). This makes sense if the primary purpose of assessment is to improve student attainment. Assessment effort needs to be expended where teaching and

Assessment results are more often used to change policies, programs and practices closer to the scene of the action -- the course level rather than the institution level.

learning occur – in classrooms, laboratories, studios, and so forth – and where evidence can be applied in actionable ways. At the same time, the results of this grassroots work can and should inform institutional strategic planning and trustee discussions and decision making.

Ironically, while governing boards are important drivers of assessment work (Figure 2), the frequency with which assessment results are shared with trustees and regents appears to have decreased slightly since 2009 – the only use to decrease (Figure 9).

In short, it appears that over the past few years, institutions are using learning outcomes findings to a greater extent, and more so internally in terms of largest area of growth, for institutional improvement purposes and to the extent that trend continues it bodes well for the future (Figure 9).

Communicating Assessment Results on Campus and Beyond

One of the criticisms of postsecondary education is that too little information about the student experience and other aspects of institutional performance is available to faculty and staff or to the general public. The results of this study suggest that this concern is being addressed, as about 90% of all colleges and universities are providing at least some information about student learning outcomes assessment on their websites or in publications. However, only about 35% are sharing the results of the assessments and just 8% offer information about whether the assessment data had any impact on policy or practice.

- The most effective means for communicating assessment results *within the institution* were presentations of assessment findings at faculty meetings or retreats (73%) and through the work of assessment committees (65%) (Figure 13).

Over the past few years, institutions are using learning outcomes findings to a greater extent, and more so internally in terms of largest area of growth, for institutional improvement purposes.
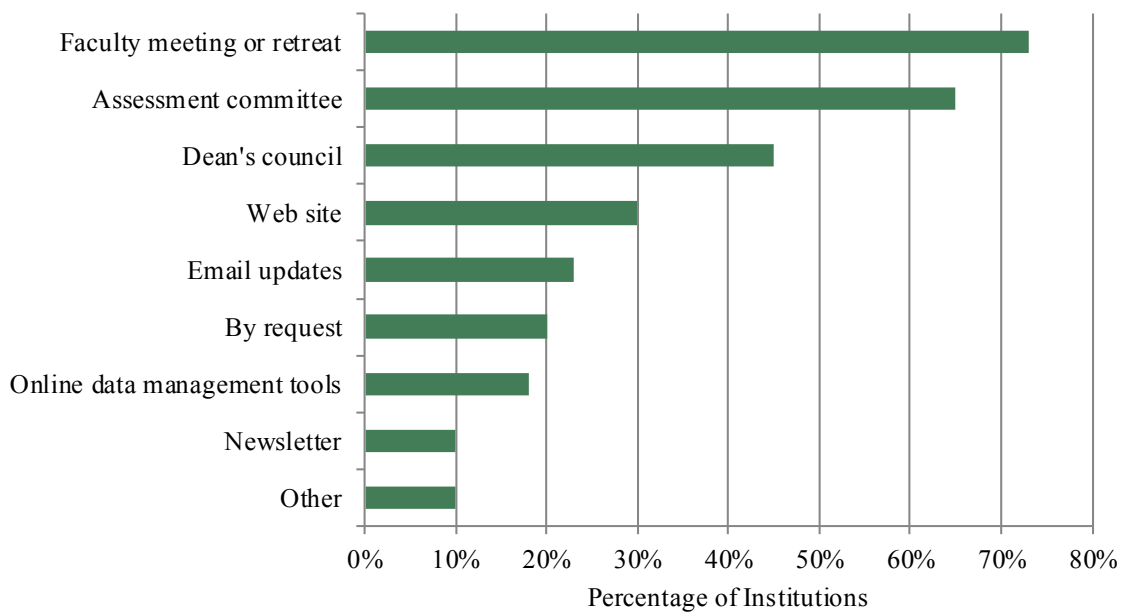

Figure 13. Percentage of institutions reporting approach as the most effective means for sharing assessment results within the institution.

Different types of institutions favored different internal communication methods that, on the surface, seem to be a function of institutional size and organizational complexity.

- More public institutions than private and for-profit schools said website and email updates were effective while for-profit institutions favored assessment committees (Figure 14).

Legend: ■ For-Profit ■ Private ■ Public

X-axis: Percentage of Institutions (0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%)

Categories: Faculty meeting or retreat, Assessment committee, Dean's council, Web site, Email updates, Online data management tools, By request, Newsletter, Other
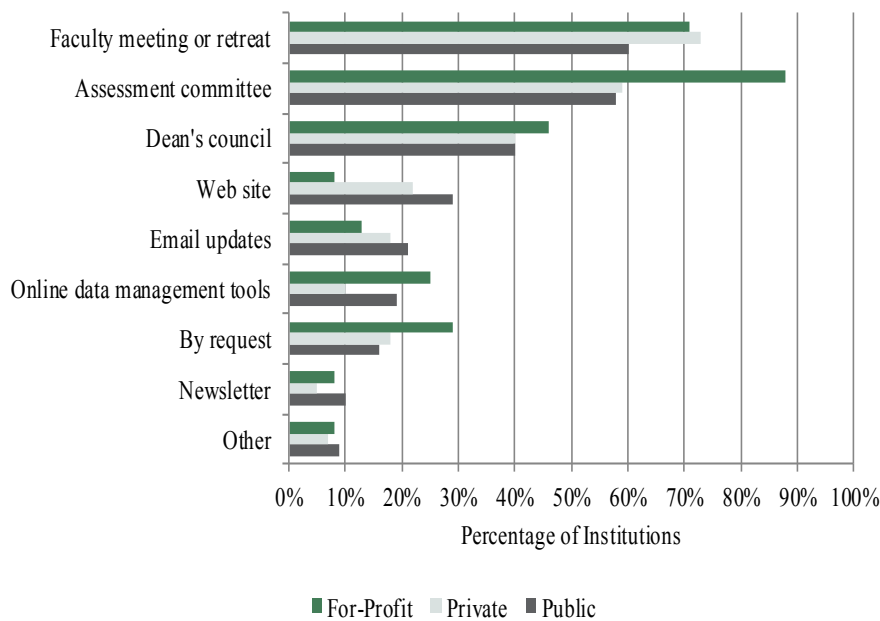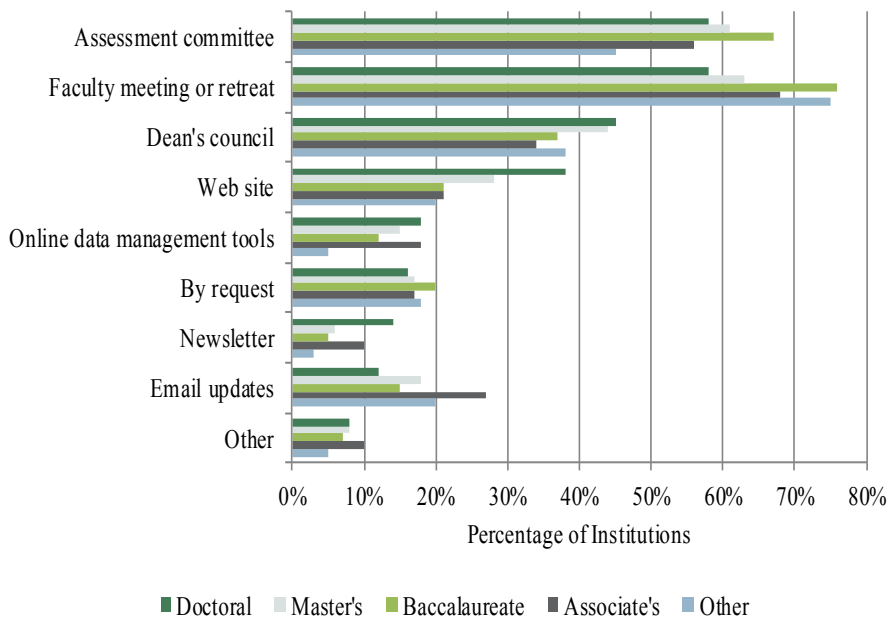
Figure 14. Percentage of institutions reporting approach as the most effective means for sharing assessment results within the institution by institutional control.

- Baccalaureate institutions more so than other schools reported assessment committee and faculty meetings were effective means of internal communication (Figure 15),

- Associate degree granting institutions tended to prefer email updates, which may be a more efficacious way for those types of schools to communicate with part-time faculty and others who may not have campus offices or mail drops.

- Doctoral institutions favored websites and dean's council reports perhaps reflecting the scale and complexity of these academic institutions or a focus on administrative communication flows of assessment information.

---

[5] Appendix B provides tabulated responses for the internal communication approaches by accreditation region.

Figure 15. Percentage of institutions reporting approach as the most effective means for sharing assessment results within the institution by institutional type.

The communication approaches deemed effective by institutions in the various accreditation regions were quite similar, with a few exceptions.

- WASC, HLC and Middle States schools were *more likely* to indicate assessment committees as effective means to report assessment results internally.

- SACS institutions were *more likely* to favor dean's council and email updates. [5]

How are assessment activity and evidence of student learning outcomes communicated *beyond the campus*?

- The most commonly shared assessment information with external audiences is the institution's student learning outcomes statements (Figure 16).

- While assessment results are available on some campuses, information about *how the data are being used* on campus lags.

We have been working on student learning outcomes at the course level for years, but we still struggle with ways to share our successes within our institution.

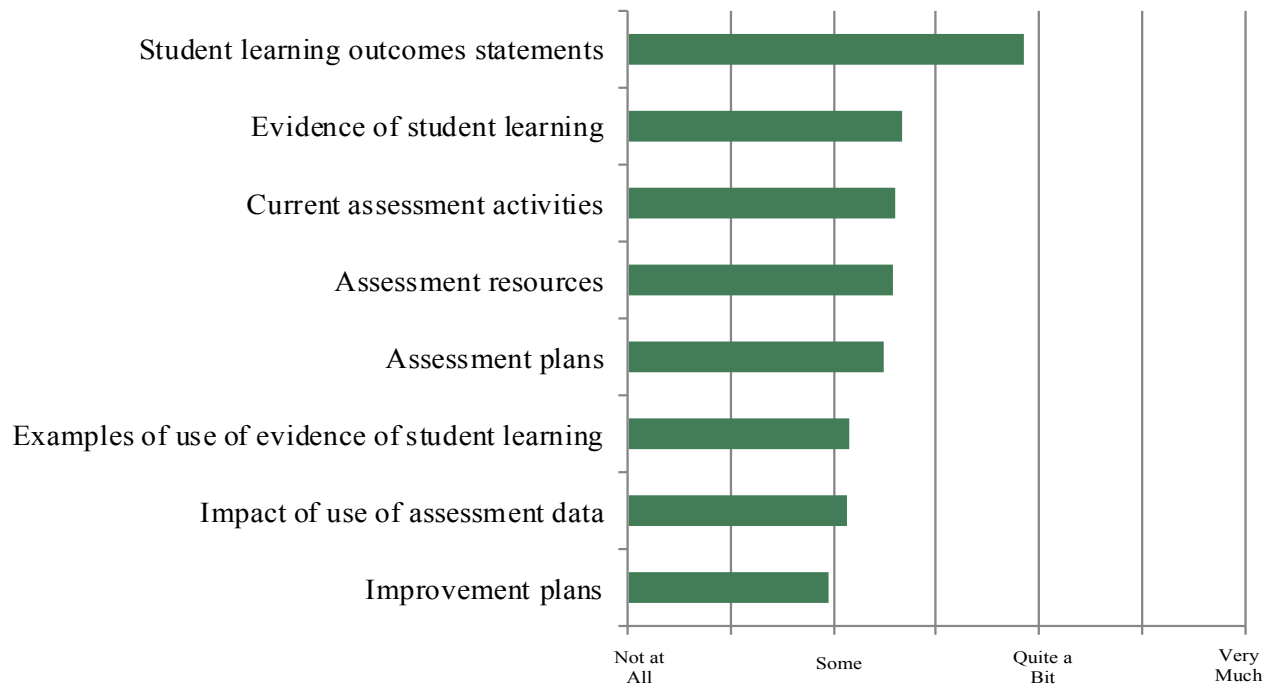*(provost at a baccalaureate institution)*

Figure 16. Extent to which assessment information is publicly available.

- For-profit institutions were *less likely* to publically report their current assessment activities and resources

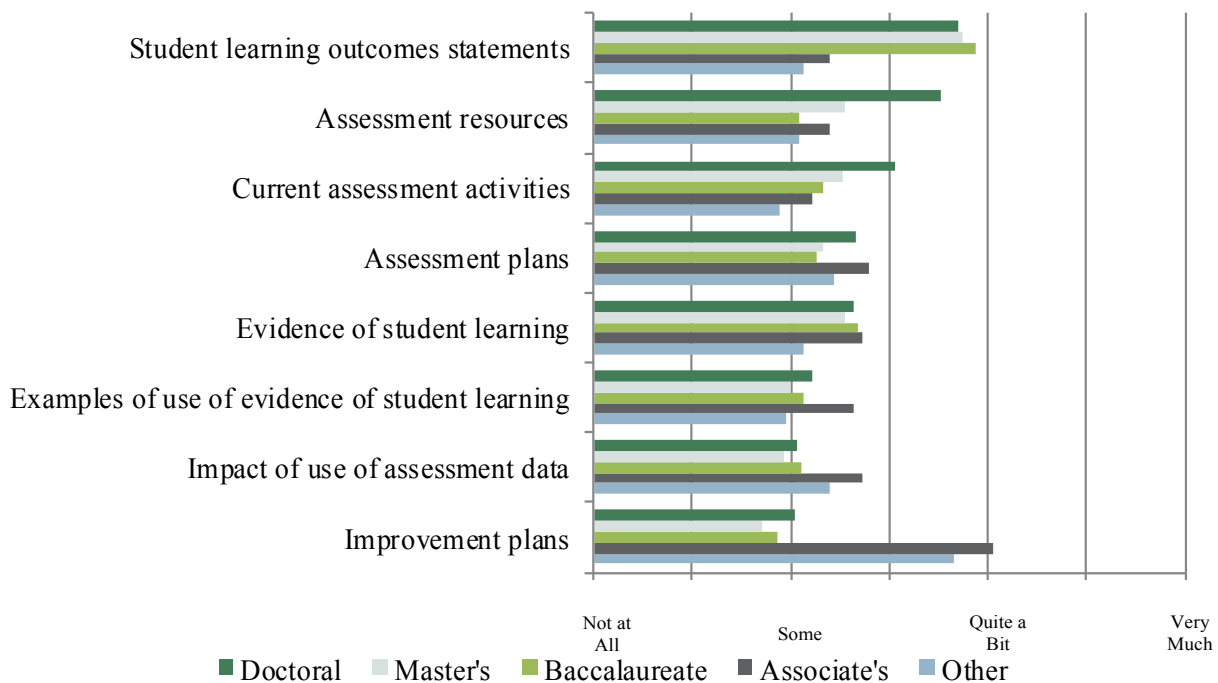Doctoral   Master's   Baccalaureate   Associate's   Other

Figure 17. Extent to which assessment information is publicly available by institutional type.

Public institutions – which are expected or even legally required to be transparent in most matters -- are *more likely* to report assessment information

except for how they were using the results and their impact on institutional policies and practices.[6]

Only a few differences were found in terms of publicly sharing assessment information by institutional type.

- Associate degree-granting institutions and other special mission institutions were more likely to report improvement plans and information on what was being done with assessment results (Figure 17).

- Doctoral institutions were more likely to report the resources devoted to assessment and current assessment activity.

While most institutions are communicating something about their assessment work, much more can be done to become transparent in this important area of institutional performance.

Structural and Organizational Support for Assessment

Most provosts (71%) reported that student learning outcomes assessment had substantial ("very much" and "quite a bit") support from their institution's current organization and governance structures (Figure 18).
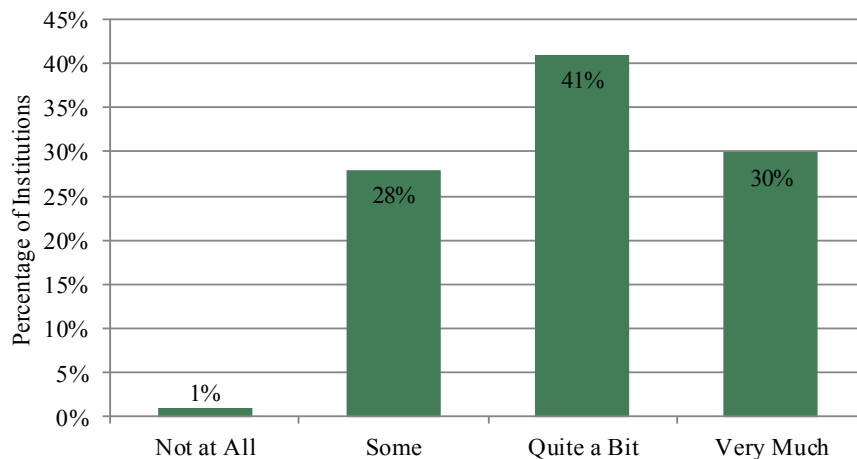

Figure 18. Percentage of institutions regarding range of supportiveness of organizational and governance structure.

While organizational support for assessment was substantial across the board, it was strongest at for-profit institutions and associate institutions.

Overall, as Figure 19 indicates the most important and essential elements supporting assessment were:

- institutional policy/statements about assessing undergraduate learning;
- faculty engagement and involvement in assessment;
- existence of an assessment committee;
  institutional research and/or assessment office capacity for assessment work, and
- availability of professional staff dedicated to assessment.

While most institutions are communicating something about their assessment work, much more can be done to become transparent in this important area of institutional performance.

---

[6] Appendix B presents data about public reporting by institutional control.
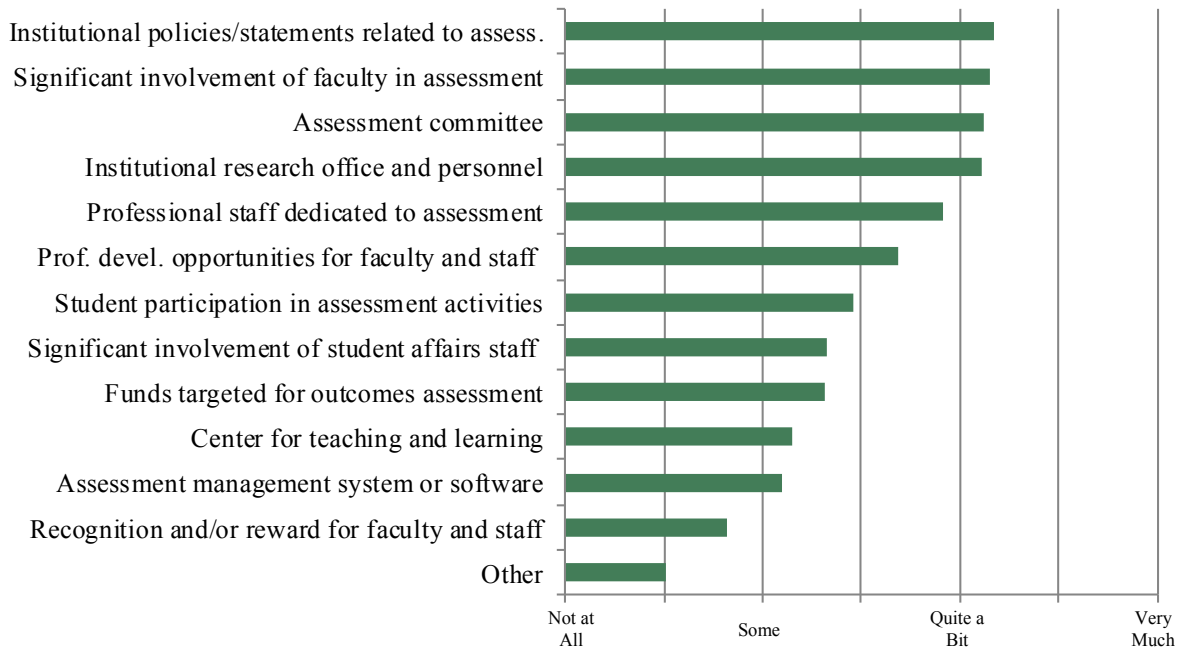
Figure 19. Extent to which above institutional structures and conditions support assessment activities.

While assessment committees and institutional policies related to assessment were important across all institutional types, some differences exist by institutional type (Figure 20) and control:

- Public institutions indicated faculty and staff professional development activities were supportive elements.

- Private institutions indicated the teaching and learning centers were less supportive of assessment activities.

- Public and for-profit institutions found assessment management system and recognition or rewards for faculty and staff involvement in assessment to be more supportive of assessment activities. [8]

---

[8] Appendix B contains data for supportive organizational elements by institutional control.
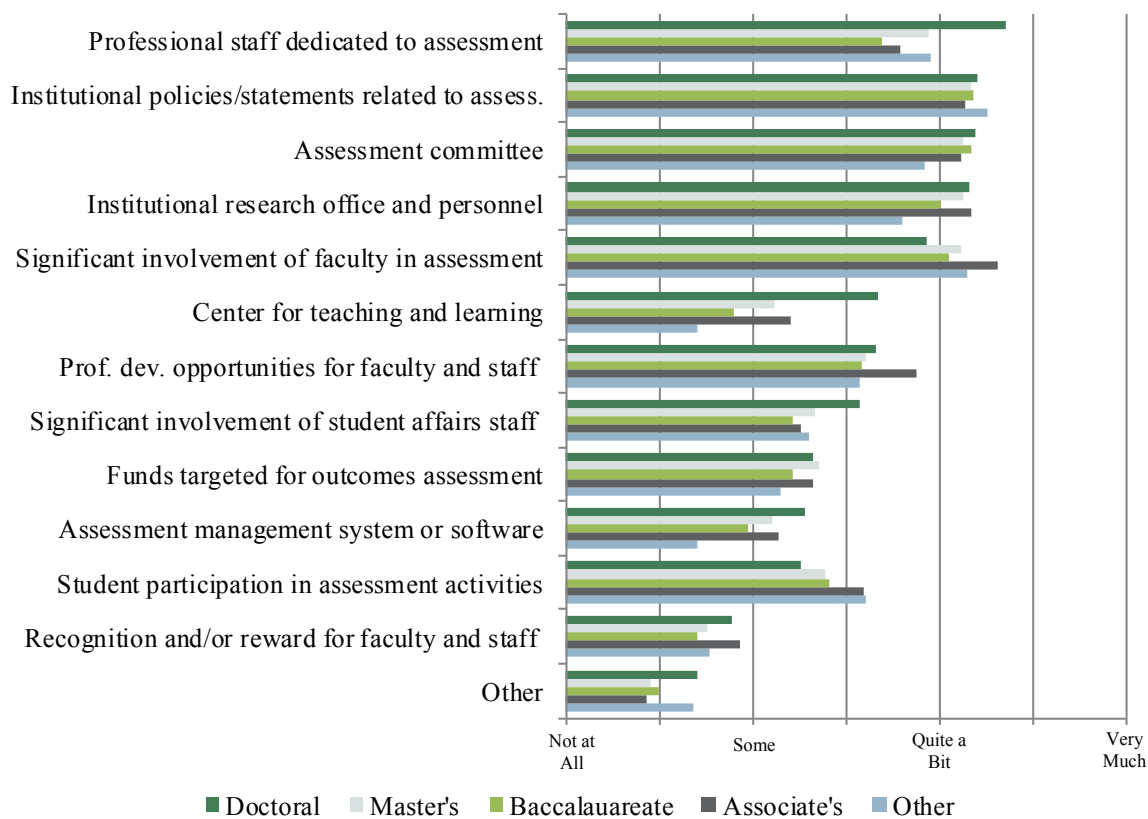
Figure 20. Institutional structures and conditions that support assessment activities by institutional type.

- Associate degree-granting institutions indicated professional development opportunities for faculty and staff and significant faculty involvement as more supportive than other institutional types.

- Doctoral institutions were *more likely* to stress that teaching and learning centers, professional staff dedicated to assessment, and significant involvement of student affairs staff in assessment were supportive features of assessment work.

Overall, student affairs staff involvement in assessment was not rated as highly in terms of support for assessment activities. This could reflect of lack of integrated assessment activities on campus and may suggest a useful topic for greater partnership.

Minor differences existed across the accreditation regions with regard to the kinds of structures and conditions respondents considered supportive of assessment (Figure 21):

- WASC and SACS member schools were *more likely* to indicate that institutional policies and statements about assessing undergraduate learning were supportive.

- HLC schools were *more likely* to report assessment committees were supportive.

- SACS schools were *more likely* to note the importance of an institutional research office and necessary personnel were supportive.

- WASC schools were *more likely* to say funds targeted for outcomes assessment were supportive.
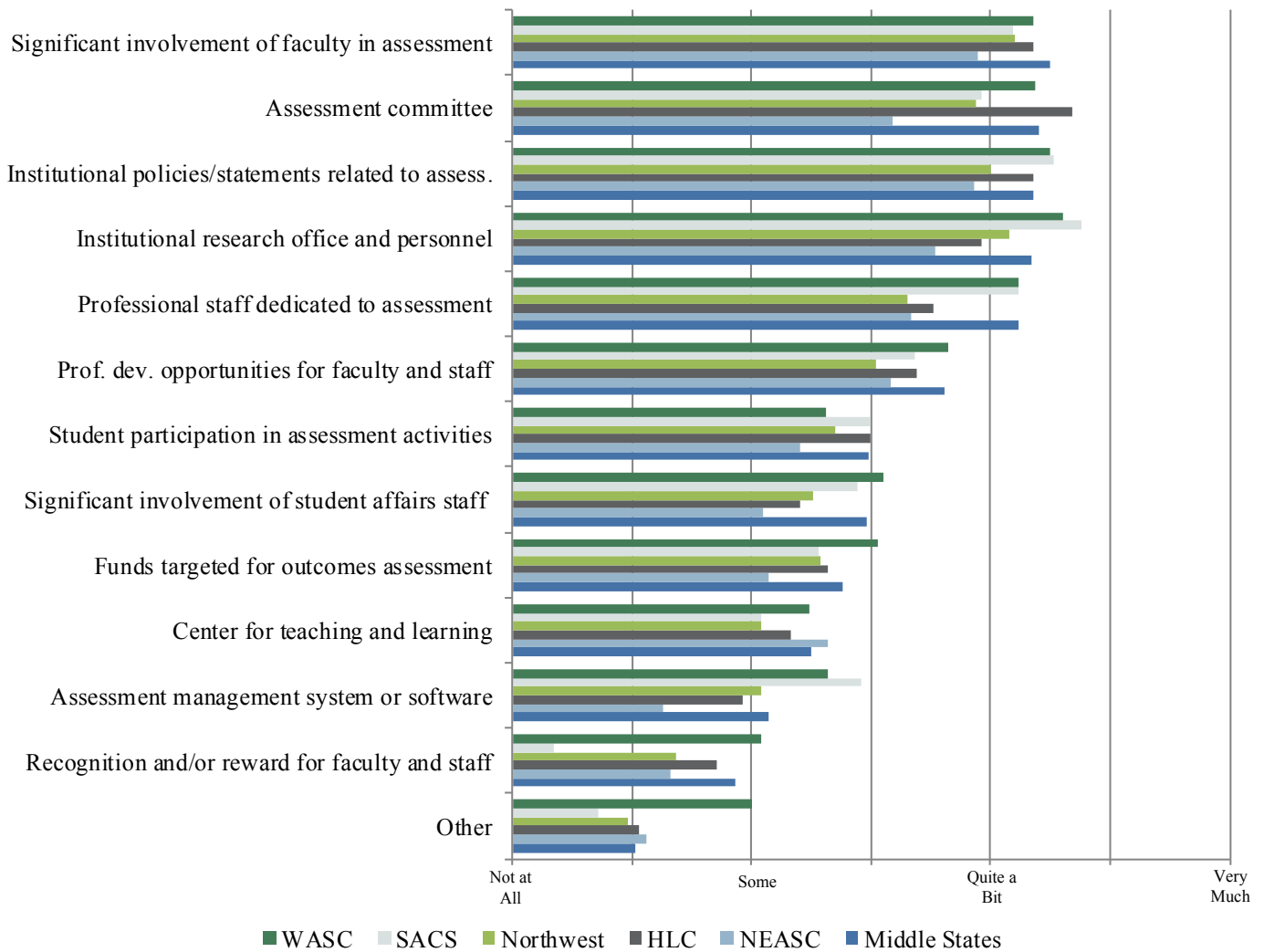

Figure 21. Institutional structures and conditions that support assessment activities by accreditation region.

- Middle States, SACS, and WASC schools were *more likely* than HLC, NEASC, and Northwest institutions to view professional assessment staff and significant involvement of student affairs staff as supportive of assessment activities.

- WASC schools were *more likely* than SACS schools to indicate recognition or rewards for faculty and staff involvement in assessment were supportive.

While organizational structures and institutional governance may be more or less congenial to assessing student learning, provosts identified specific ways

assessment work could be advanced at their institution. Priorities have shifted in some ways from 2013; while faculty engagement remains key, less important than in 2009 are better assessment measures. In 2013, provosts said the following were most important (Figure 22):

- more professional development for faculty (64%)

- more faculty using the results (63%), and

- additional financial or staff resources (56%).

Whether assessment tools have improved is not clear. What is clear is that as reported earlier, such authentic learning measures as rubrics and other classroom-based assessments are being used more often to represent institutional level learning. It is also plain that provosts recognize that if student learning outcomes assessment is to contribute to institutional improvement, the results must be embraced and used by more faculty members, which has direct implications for faculty development, as the provosts' priorities indicate.
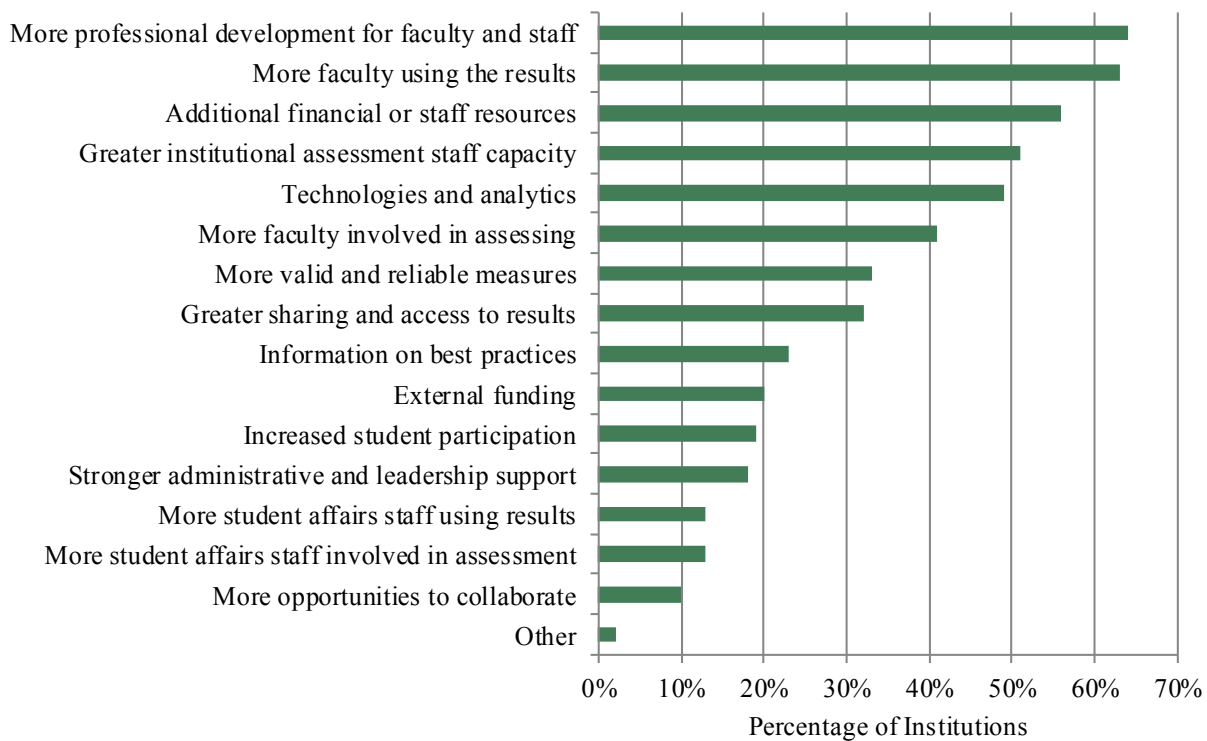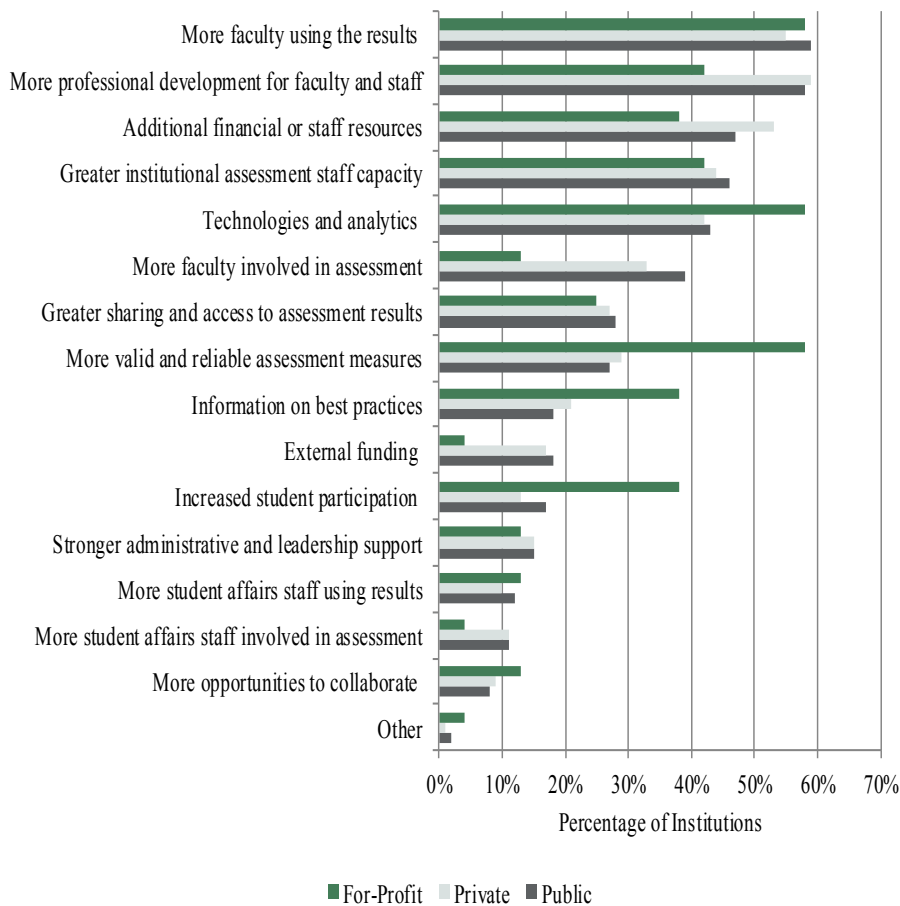

Figure 22. Percentage of institutions indicating priority need for advancing assessment work.

Figure 23. Percentage of institutions indicating priority need for advancing assessment work by institutional control.

By a significant margin, for-profit institutions said they needed:

- more valid and reliable measures of student learning,
- greater student participation in assessment,
- more information about best practices, and
- access to technologies that would aggregate assessment data (Figure 23).

Public institutions reported needing:

- more faculty involved in assessment,
- increased use of the results, and
- more professional development for faculty and staff.

Private institutions, many of which are relatively small and have few if any professional staff dedicated to student learning outcomes assessment, reported their greatest need was for additional financial and staff resources.

Many faculty struggle with determining how to conduct a proper assessment and then how to use the results, and many of the disciplinary meetings are very broad and not specific in this regard.

(provost from master's institution)
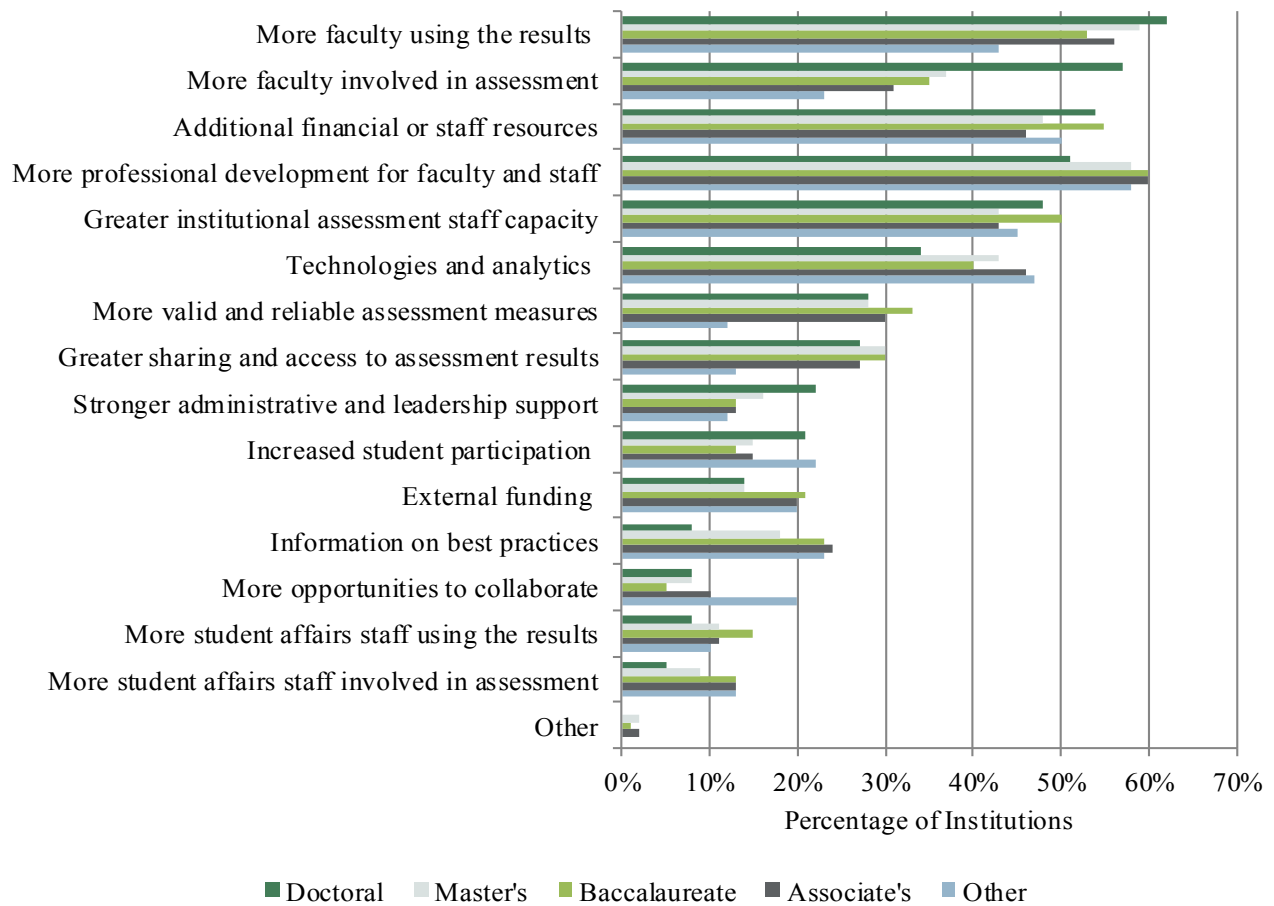
Figure 24. Percentage of institutions indicating priority need for advancing assessment work by institutional type.

The biggest challenges to advancing assessment work reported by doctoral institutions were:

- the need for more faculty use of the results of assessment,
- more faculty involved in assessment, and
- stronger administrative and leadership support.

Baccalaureate institutions said they needed:

- more student affairs staff using the results of assessment,
- more valid and reliable assessment measures, and
- greater institutional assessment staff capacity (Figure 24).
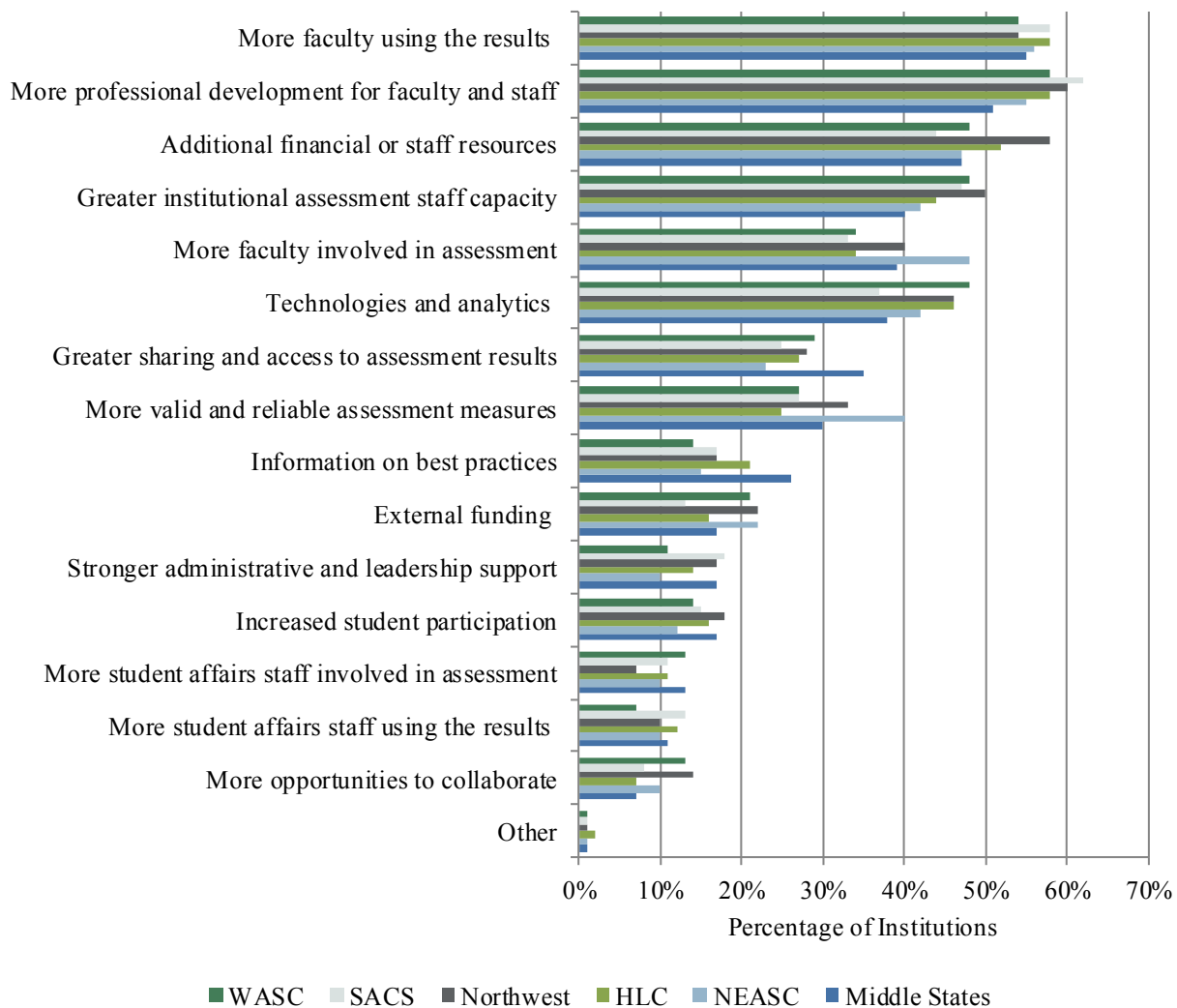
Figure 25. Percentage of institutions indicating priority need for advancing assessment work by accreditation region.

There were only a few differences among accreditation regions (Figure 25).

- NEASC member institutions tended to stress the need for more valid and reliable assessment measures of student learning and the need for more faculty involved in assessment.

- Institutions in the Northwest stressed the need for greater institutional assessment staff capacity and additional financial or staff resources.

- SACS institutions emphasized the need for more professional development for faculty, stronger administrative and leadership support, and more student affairs involvement in assessments.

Institutional Selectivity

In general, institutional selectivity is negatively related to assessment activity. For almost every category of assessment activity, the more selective an institution's admissions standards, the less likely it is to employ various assessment approaches or use the results. For example, more selective institutions are less likely to:

- have student learning outcomes statements that apply to all students
- use assessment for external accountability reporting requirements
- use assessment results for strategic planning
- change curricular requirements or courses as a result of assessment
- consider regional or program accreditation as an important reason for doing assessment.

Why selectivity should be associated with less assessment activity is not clear, although a recent survey conducted by the Association of American University (AAU) research universities suggested increased attention to assessment issues by these institutions.[9]

In Their Own Words: What Provosts Say about the State of Assessment on Their Campus

We posed several open-ended questions to provosts to learn more about student learning outcomes assessment work on their campus:

1. What are you *most hopeful* about in terms of assessing student learning at your institution?

2. What are you *worried* about in terms of assessing student learning at your institutions?

3. What is the *most positive outcome* of your institution level student learning assessment activities?

4. With what *issues or topics* regarding assessing student learning does your campus need assistance?

A surprising number (1,003 to be exact) took the additional time to comment. Subsequent reports from NILOA will summarize in more detail what provosts said about these topics. Here are selected highlights representing the handful of themes that emerged from an analysis of what they shared.

What provosts were worried about and hopeful for assessment varied widely. Some respondents mentioned longstanding concerns that have been discussed in the assessment literature for decades, such as:

- external mandates stretching already constrained resources and dominating institutional conversations (which reinforces a compliance as contrasted with an improvement agenda);
- assessment work being under resourced and staff being overloaded;
- the questionable adequacy of assessment tools to measure outcomes the institution deems important;
- the worry by some faculty that assessment results will be used in performance reviews; and
- insufficient use of assessment data to guide curricular reform and enhanced teaching and learning.

With so many competing demands on faculty time, assessment needs to be sustainable and manageable. For that to happen it needs to be useful .

(provost from a doctoral institution)

---

[9] See Appendix B for tables of institutional responses by institutional selectivity.

At the same time, *the majority of provosts were optimistic about potentially promising but in many instances unrealized goals.* Many respondents remained hopeful that their campus would find ways to use the results of student learning outcomes assessments to both meet the needs of accreditors and to guide campus strategic planning, resource allocation, curricular revision, and various initiatives to improve teaching and learning. Some respondents expressed optimism about new sources of funding, the creation of a new assessment committee, or increased staffing. Others wrote about concrete institutional accomplishments, such as embedding assessment practices into regular program review, creation of a joint assessment and center for teaching and learning office which functions collectively to enhance assessment efforts, winning of national awards for assessment work, increased faculty ownership and buy-in, and recognition from regional accreditors on the growth and sustainability of institution assessment efforts. But some of these same provosts expressed *worries* about sustaining the assessment work currently underway over the long term, in part because of anticipated faculty and administrative turnover which often is a harbinger of different priorities.

Dozens of chief academic officers expressed confidence that *their institutions had turned a corner and are embracing assessment in new, positive ways.* They identified campus and program-level leadership and growing faculty engagement, hinting at a cultural shift which at least acknowledges if not completely embraces the value of student learning outcomes assessment. Most signaled in one way or another that for student learning outcomes assessment to take root and help enhance teaching, learning and institutional effectiveness, such a cultural change was essential to mobilize a critical mass of faculty and staff from various units on the campus to establish the structures and processes to implement, support, and sustain the assessment program institution wide.

As suggested by this brief overview, provosts' views about the state of assessment were decidedly mixed. Some of this variance is due, we suspect, to how long and to what extent the institution had a systematic student learning outcomes assessment program in place. For example, on some campuses, achieving initial buy-in by faculty and staff for the assessment agenda remains a primary concern.

Taken together, however, provosts' comments lend additional clarity to what is needed to advance the gathering and productive use of assessment results. The following priorities for campus action were those mentioned most frequently, many of which echo and amplify the survey results reported earlier:

- **Using assessment results more effectively.** Institutions need advice about how to gather actionable data and how to internally communicate the results and their implications so that the evidence can guide improvement and strategic planning.

- **Learning about established promising practices.** Institutions need examples of good assessment work at the program-level such as discipline-specific examples and assessing general education outcomes, and how to "roll up" program assessment results to the institution level to represent student learning.

- **Finding resources for additional staff and technology.** Institutions need enough support staff and the appropriate technology to understand the return on investment of assessment in order to justify the time and resources needed to support assessment efforts.

Initiative overload is a very real problem. Shrinking state funding compounds this by reducing staff and increasing administrative requirements at the same time.

(provost from a public institution)

- **Developing better outcomes assessment tools responsive to campus priorities and stated learning outcomes.** Institutions need assistance in designing and using rubrics (specifically norming practices) and other authentic measures of learning and representing this kind of evidence in scorecards and benchmarking exercises.

- **Involving more faculty.** Faculty involvement remains a critical factor and institutions need to find ways to recognize and reward faculty who do this work to increase buy-in and encourage more instructors and staff to take part in professional development activities and assessment efforts.

- **Integrating assessment work with the core teaching and learning functions.** Institutions need examples for how assessment of authentic student learning can be built into the everyday work of the faculty and student affairs staff as well as program reviews, and governance.

- **Communicating the merit and worth of assessment.** Institutions need to find and employ effective ways to articulate the value of student learning outcomes assessment, how the institution is using assessment activities and their results to improve teaching and learning and strategic planning, and how decisions based in part on assessment data resulted in improved student learning and faculty teaching effectiveness.

Implications

Compared with 2009, today more institutions are using multiple measures and a wider variety of tools to assess student learning outcomes. Four years ago, the typical college or university used an average of three different assessment approaches at the undergraduate level. In 2013, the average number was five. That schools are using more measures is not surprising. More institutions have established student learning outcomes at the institution-level and more programs have aligned their outcomes with the institution's goals, all of which could prompt the use of more measures. Another reason is that colleges and universities increasingly realize they must use multiple measures to more adequately capture the range and depth of undergraduate student learning and personal development (Astin, 2013). In addition, the increase also responds to concerns raised by accreditors regarding the need for direct and indirect measures. What is surprising is the increase of the *types of measures* used by institutions at the institution-level. For example, the use of rubrics, classroom-based assessment, and portfolios have all jumped substantially since 2009, and provosts generally agreed that these kinds of measures have the most institutional value.

The sharp increase in using rubrics is almost certainly a function in part of the large number of institutions adapting the AAC&U VALUE rubrics for local use (http://www.aacu.org/value/casestudies/index.cfm) and initiatives that promote rubrics use and other classroom-based authentic learning assessment tools. For example, a recent SHEEO led nine-state collaborative to measure student learning strives to evaluate student work in a way that faculty, institutions, and states can use to assess student learning. The collaboration seeks to utilize faculty-developed rubrics that will be aggregated across similar institutions for potential benchmarking, thus providing both institutional examples of rolling up of assessment results and cross-state examples (http://www.sheeo.org/news/press-releases/sheeo-leads-nine-state-collaborative-measure-college-student-learning

Another classroom-level assessment development is the availability of enhanced technology that makes it possible to aggregate classroom-based assessment and

Once faculty see the value of this work, they can understand how to modify the work they are already doing… Faculty perception needs to shift to include assessment as part of their responsibility, as opposed to an external imposition or add on. The only way to do that is for assessment to provide information that leads to change within the curriculum.

(provost at a public institution)

rubric results to create an institution-level outcome (Ariovich & Richman, 2013). However, provosts did not rate data management systems or software as supportive of assessment work to the same degree as many other institutional features or conditions. Whether this is a function of the actual utility of these technologies or lack of familiarity with them to understand their value is not known.

The results point to five areas that require immediate attention by institutional leaders, faculty and staff members, and assessment professionals.

First and foremost, attention needs to be directed to involving more faculty in meaningful ways in collecting student learning outcomes data and using the results.

Recall that provosts' top two priorities for advancing assessment work on their campus were more professional development for faculty members and more faculty using the results. Indeed, if there is one matter on which almost everyone agrees – administrators, rank-and-file faculty members, and assessment scholars – it is that faculty involvement in assessment and improvement is essential to both improve teaching and learning and enhance institutional effectiveness. While faculty routinely "assess" their students' learning through papers, tests, other tasks, the nature of student work is not always closely aligned with stated course, program or institutional outcomes. Teaching and learning centers can make an important contribution to the assessment agenda by offering workshops and consultations that help faculty design classroom-based assignments that both address the respective faculty member's interest in determining whether his or her students are learning what is intended as well as provide evidence about student learning that can be used to represent institutional effectiveness.

Another promising faculty development approach is to situate assessment as a curricular review function, either in the context of the disciplines or the general education program. A template such as the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) (Lumina Foundation, 2011) can be used to guide a curricular mapping process for either the general education program or individual major fields to determine which outcomes are being addressed sufficiently in terms of breadth and depth and which need more attention. The key to using such an exercise to full advantage is to emphasize the essential role of assignments in inducing students to demonstrate what they know and can do and to use this information to document whether students are, indeed, achieving the levels of proficiencies stipulated by the institution and their major field (Ewell, 2013). Doing so returns the responsibility for determining whether students are learning what the institution promises to the faculty where it belongs.

Second, sustaining the recent progress of institutional assessment work must be a priority.

In their responses to the open-ended question, provosts mentioned a concern about leadership turnover and the resulting potential shift in institutional priorities that often occur when new administrators take office. Finding ways to embed assessment within the core work of faculty and staff is increasingly crucial. Such observations point to the need for cultural change to embrace and see assessment as a valued and valuable activity supported, and to an extent led, by institutional leaders but also owned by every unit and department.

At the same time, one size does not fit all. What an institution needs to advance assessment work will surely vary in some ways that differ from the aggregated prioritized needs reported by provosts, depending on the campus context and the stage at which an institution is in implementing its assessment program.

Finding ways to embed assessment within the core work of faculty and staff is increasingly crucial.

Third -- and most important to institutional improvement -- is making assessment useful and productive.

Most institutions still need to find ways to use student learning outcomes results more effectively to improve teaching and learning. Although using assessment evidence appears to be increasing, it is not nearly as pervasive as it must be to guide institutional actions that will improve student outcomes. This is by far the most disappointing finding from the 2013 survey.

To enhance student accomplishment, an institutional assessment program must purposefully focus on questions and issues that are central to attaining the institution's educational mission and will produce actionable evidence. Key to such an effort is integrating assessment work into the institution's governance and organizational structures. For example, assessment activities and results should be used to inform faculty and staff development programs sponsored by teaching and learning centers. It is also important that assessment work at every level – classroom, program and institution –be recognized and rewarded, two institutional features that were not viewed by the majority of provosts as particularly supportive of student learning outcomes assessment.

Another area that needs attention on many campuses is to capture evidence of student learning that occurs outside of the classroom, laboratory, and studio. Student affairs professionals, librarians and others who have ongoing contact with students can add important perspectives to an assessment program, especially for interpreting and using the results and generating ideas for policies and practices that could enhance student performance. Equally important, the professional organizations of both groups are very interested in their members collaborating with their faculty colleagues on this important work. Students themselves should be regularly asked to help interpret assessment results and offer ideas to improve their learning.

Fourth, governing boards must make student learning a high, continuing priority.

On some campuses, governing board members have been coached to shy away from questions of academic quality because the issues are too complex and beyond the board's expertise. Moreover, assessing student learning is what faculty members do, not the board. Granted, gathering and using evidence of student learning is a complex undertaking and faculty and academic leaders are rightfully the daily arbiters of academic quality. Too often, however, the results of assessments of student learning outcomes do not lead to action (Kuh & Ikenberry, 2009). The board should expect that instances and examples of productive use of assessment be presented in an understandable, coherent way sufficient to enable the board to be confident that the internal academic quality controls of the institution are operating effectively. In addition, governing boards can encourage and support the president and other institutional leaders to make sure these issues are given proper priority on an already crowded institutional agenda (Klein-Collins, Ikenberry, & Kuh, 2014).

Finally, colleges and universities must cultivate an institutional culture that values gathering and using student outcomes data as an integral tool for fostering student success and increasing institutional effectiveness as contrasted with a compliance exercise.

The goal is to get everyone - faculty, administrators and staff - to see that assessing outcomes and using evidence for ongoing improvement is not just or primarily a contrived response to the demands of people outside the

It is also important that assessment work at every level – classroom, program and institution –be recognized and rewarded.

institution. Rather, assessment must be viewed and undertaken as a continuous improvement process yielding actionable information for faculty and staff as well as institutional leaders. A key element of this culture bending work is to better explain and communicate to specific audiences the assessment work underway and the value of the work. Provosts noted the values of sharing stories of effective use of assessment results internally that help showcase faculty involvement and generate as well as sustain interest in assessment. One provost from an associate degree-granting institution told us:

> The value of assessment lies not in the program or an individual course that is assessed, but in understanding that the real benefit of outcomes mastery is adequate preparation for success at the next level. This means changing how we work – how classes are scheduled, how we advise, how we develop programs and revise courses – everything is different for us with learning in mind. That's the value [of the assessment] conversation we need to share internally and externally.

Some institutions appear to be well along in bending their cultures toward these ends, but much is yet to be done.

Last Word

At most colleges and universities in the U.S., more assessment activity is underway now than ever before. A broader range of instruments and approaches is being applied to document student progress, and the use of this evidence appears to be increasing, albeit at a snail's pace. The numbers and capacity of assessment professionals have grown dramatically. Some campuses are more advanced in this work than others, which is to be expected given the scale, complexity and diversity of the enterprise. Much of what has been accomplished is relatively recent, and much of it in response to external entities.

At the same time, the responses from chief academic officers to NILOA's 2013 survey indicate that the push to understand what students know and can do is no longer driven exclusively – or even primarily – by external forces, especially if accreditation is viewed as a hybrid combination of self-imposed external oversight. Today, accreditation (which remains the prime driver of assessment activity) is joined by campus motives to improve, to assess effectiveness of current practice, and to heed presidential and governing board interests. Indeed, colleges and universities themselves have every reason to take ownership of assessment of student learning and use that evidence wisely and productively. This leads us to conclude that *assessment of student learning has turned the corner in that the work is no longer primarily an act of compliance, but rather is motivated by a more appropriate balance of compliance and an institutional desire to improve.*

All this suggests that American higher education may be on the verge of an inflection point where what follows is a more purposeful use of evidence of student learning outcomes in decision making which, in turn, has the potential to enhance academic quality and institutional effectiveness. To realize this promise sooner than later, colleges and universities must complete the transition from a culture of compliance to a culture of evidence based decision-making in which key decisions and policies are informed and evaluated by the ultimate yardstick: a measurable, positive impact on student learning and success.

Colleges and universities must evolve from a culture of compliance to a culture of evidence-based decision making.

References

Association of Governing Boards (2010). *How boards oversee educational quality: A report on a survey on boards and the assessment of student learning.* Washington, DC: Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges.

Ariovich, L. & Richman, W.A. (2013, October). A*ll-in-one: Combining grading, course, program, and general education outcomes assessment.* (Occasional Paper No. 19). Urbana, IL: University of Illinois and Indiana University, National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment.

Astin, A.W. (2013, September 3). The promise and peril of outcomes assessment. *The Chronicle of Higher Education.* http://chronicle.com/article/The-PromisePeril-of/141337/?cid=cr&utm_source=cr&utm_medium=en

Banta, T.W. & Blaich, C. (2011). Closing the assessment loop. *Change, 43*(1), 22-27.

Borden, V.M.H. & Kernel, B. (2013). *Measuring quality in higher education: An Inventory of Instruments, Tools and Resources.* Retrieved from http://apps.airweb.org/surveys/Default.aspx

College Division of Barron's Education Series (Ed.). (2012). *Barron's profiles of American colleges*: *2013* (30th ed.). Hauppauge, NY: Barron's Educational Series, Inc.

Ewell, P.T. (2006). *Making the grade: How boards can ensure academic quality.* Washington, DC: Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges.

Ewell, P. T. (2012). *Making the grade: How boards can ensure academic quality.* (2nd ed.). Washington, DC: Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges.

Ewell, P.T. (2013). *The Lumina Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP): Implications for assessment.* (Occasional Paper No.16). Urbana, IL: University of Illinois and Indiana University, National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment.

Klein-Collins, R., Ikenbery, S.O., & Kuh, G.D. (2014). Competency-based education: What the board needs to know. *Trusteeship, 22*(1), 28-33.

Kuh, G.D. & Ikenberry, S.O. (2009). *More than you think, less than we need: Learning outcome assessment in American higher education.* Urbana, IL: National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment.

Lumina Foundation. (2011). *The Degree Qualifications Profile.* Indianapolis, IN: Author.

Suskie, L. (2009). *Assessing student learning: A common sense guide* (2nd edition). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

U.S. Department of Education, *A test of leadership: Charting the future of U.S. Higher Education.* Washington, D.C., 2006.

This document is a full version of the NILOA 2013 national survey of provosts. The abridged version of this report is available here: http://www.learningoutcomeassessment.org/knowingwhatstudentsknowandcando.html

Appendix A

Data Collection and Analysis

The 2013 NILOA national survey of chief academic officers was conducted by the Center for Survey Research at Indiana University between April and September, 2013. The sample included provosts or chief academic officers at the 2,781 regionally accredited, undergraduate degree-granting institutions listed in the Higher Education Directory. A total of 1,202 institutions completed the survey for a response rate of 43%.

The survey was administered primarily online, with the initial invitation followed by three email reminders; a paper copy of the questionnaire was mailed to those who had not completed the survey after the third email reminder. Web-based completions were the most common by far, with 87% of respondents using this mode. Membership organizations such as the American Council on Education (ACE), Council of Independent Colleges (CIC), Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), along with some other affinity groups helped to publicize the survey.

Many of the questions were used previously in the NILOA 2009 questionnaire. Other questions were revised or added, informed by changing practices in the field and input from NILOA's National Advisory Panel, a select group of assessment experts, and a small group of chief academic officers convened during the January, 2013 Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) meeting. The final 2013 version included additional questions on awareness of and use of the Degree Qualification Profile, organizational and governance structures that support gathering and using assessment information, and internal and external communication of assessment results to various audiences.[10]

The characteristics of participating colleges and universities in terms of control (not-for-profit public and private, for-profit) type (doctoral, master's, baccalaureate, associate's, and other), and regional accreditation were generally similar to the national profile except for overrepresentation of master's institutions and underrepresentation of baccalaureate institutions. We speculate that the over-representation of master's institutions may be due in part to their participation in various initiatives sponsored or encouraged by state systems, state policy mandates, and organizational membership initiatives such as the Voluntary System of Accountability.

Table 1A

Institutional Type: 2013 Participating Institutions Compared with National Profile

Type	2013	Current National (C.N.)
Doctoral	11%	10%
Master's	40%	23%
Baccalaureate	13%	23%
Associate's	31%	38%
Other	5%	6%

Table 2A

Institutional Control: 2013 Participating Institutions Compared with National Profile

Control	2013	C. N.
Public	55%	56%
Private	43%	40%
Private For-Profit	2%	4%

---

[10] A copy of the 2013 survey may be viewed here: http://www.learningoutcomeassessment.org/knowingwhatstudentsknowandcando.html

Table 3A

Regional Accreditation: 2013 Participating Institutions Compared with National Profile

Regional Accreditation	2013	C. N.
Middle States	16%	17%
NEASC	8%	7%
HLC	38%	35%
Northwest	6%	5%
SACS	24%	27%
WASC	8%	9%

As with the 2009 survey, we asked respondents to identify their position within the institution if they were not the provost who was originally invited to complete it. Table 4A shows that about three quarters of the time the provost or someone in the provost's office completed the questionnaire. Also, 61 respondents identified themselves as interim to their position and an additional 30 identified that this was their first year in office.

Table 4A

Survey 2013 Respondents by Position

Position	%	N
Provost/CAO (including 136 assistant/associate provost)	74%	N = 883
Director of Assessment (or person responsible for assessment)	18%	N = 223
Dean (or assistant/associate dean)	8%	N = 96

Additional data were merged with the survey results from several sources, such as Carnegie classification, accreditation group, control, mission, size, and student demographics from IPEDS and *Barron's Profiles of American Colleges* selectivity indicators. An initial review was conducted of frequency distributions, and where appropriate, means for all items for all participants. Frequency tables were also produced for Carnegie, accreditation, and sector groups. Questionnaire items 1, 2, 3, 5, 13, 14, 15 and 16 were analyzed using the cross tabs procedure in SPSS (21) which yielded chi-square tables that identified statistically significant differences. These results were further analyzed to determine whether selected responses differed across of institutions with different characteristics: *Carnegie designation, control, regional accreditation* and *selectivity.*

Items 6, 8, 10, 11 and 12 have interval scales and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to identify statistically significant differences between various groupings of institutions. A post-hoc test with a Bonferroni correction was applied to control for an inflated type-I error rate since so many post-hoc tests were run. Statistically significant results were those at the .05 level or below.

Finally, the responses to items 4, and 17-20 open-ended responses were reviewed by two NILOA researchers. Broad codes were then developed in conversation about the general reading of the responses. Each reader, in relation to the assessment literature on needs and effective practices, developed a list of potential thematic groupings of the responses (including items such as general education, faculty engagement, use of results, etc.) These codes were used as a guide to a second reading and further coding, analysis and iterative reclassification of responses until a final set of themes and codes was outlined for each open-ended response item.

Supplemental Data Tables

This appendix contains supplemental data tables for items mentioned but not graphically displayed in the body of the report.

Table 1B

Alignment of department outcomes with institution learning outcomes by institutional type.

	Doctoral	Master's	Baccalaureate	Associate's	Other
Yes, all and aligned	27%	39%	51%	48%	57%
Yes, some and aligned	16%	19%	22%	23%	13%
Yes, all/but may not align	48%	31%	18%	20%	22%
Yes, some/but may not align	8%	10%	10%	8%	6%
No	1%	1%	0%	1%	2%

Table 2B

Institution-level assessments used to represent undergraduate student learning by institutional control.

	Public	Private	For-Profit
Incoming student placement exams (ACCUPLACER, COMPASS, locally developed exams)	76%	47%	70%
National student surveys (NSSE, CCSSE, UCUES, CIRP, etc.)	86%	86%	36%
Locally developed surveys	60%	63%	57%
General knowledge and skills measures (CLA, CAAP, ETS PP, etc.)	47%	46%	41%
Locally developed knowledge and skills measures	48%	48%	50%
Classroom-based performance assessments such as simulations, comprehensive exams, critiques, etc.	65%	66%	91%
Externally situated performance assessments such as internships or other community-based projects	39%	42%	46%
Portfolios (a purposeful collection of student work showcasing achievement of learning objectives)	37%	46%	48%
Capstone projects (including senior theses), courses, or experiences	47%	72%	78%
Rubrics (published or locally developed)	66%	72%	100%
Alumni surveys, focus groups, or interviews	58%	73%	83%
Employer surveys, focus groups, or interviews	50%	38%	78%
Other	7%	7%	9%

Written in responses for the "other" category included general education, faculty evaluations, certification or licensure exams, and major field tests.

Table 3B

Extent to which student learning assessment results are used for various purposes by institutional control.

	Public	Private	For-Profit
Regional accreditation	3.71	3.77	3.76
Program accreditation	3.61	3.62	3.74
External accountability reporting requirements	3.24	3.02	3.52
Program review	3.24	3.2	3.4
Curriculum modification	2.98	3.04	3.48
Learning goals revision	2.93	2.97	3.36
Institutional improvement	2.83	2.8	3.12
Strategic planning	2.71	2.6	3.2
Institutional benchmarking	2.57	2.47	3.04
Academic policy development or modification	2.54	2.65	3
Professional development for faculty and staff	2.41	2.2	2.75
Trustee/governing board deliberations	2.24	2.19	2.75
Resource allocation and budgeting	2.24	2.07	2.39
Other	1.69	1.8	1.5
Prospective student and family information	1.67	1.88	1.74
Alumni communication	1.47	1.55	1.68

Response options include: N/A (not shown), Not at all, Some, Quite a bit, Very much.

Written in responses for the "other" category included new program development or program specific benchmarking.

Table 4B

Most effective means for sharing assessment results within the institution by regional accreditation.

	Middle States	NEASC	HLC	Northwest	SACS	WASC
Assessment committee	67%	50%	65%	53%	47%	59%
Faculty meeting	63%	69%	66%	63%	66%	69%
Dean's council	38%	39%	34%	39%	51%	34%
Web site	30%	17%	29%	32%	21%	21%
Email updates	17%	21%	20%	14%	25%	17%
Online data management	14%	4%	15%	19%	19%	17%
By request	13%	20%	16%	24%	21%	15%
Newsletter	11%	4%	10%	5%	4%	9%
Other	11%	9%	7%	7%	6%	10%

Written in responses for the "other" category included annual assessment reports, blogs, administrative retreat, and annual assessment day activities.

Table 5B

Publicly available assessment information by institutional control.

	Public	Private	For-Profit
Student learning outcomes statements	3	2.83	2.88
Assessment resources	2.47	2.1	1.92
Assessment plans	2.42	2.02	2.04
Current assessment activities	2.42	2.17	1.92
Evidence of student learning	2.39	2.25	2.24
Examples of use of evidence of student learning	2.15	1.99	2.2
Impact of use of assessment data	2.14	1.95	2.24
Improvement plans	2.09	1.8	2

Response option range includes: Not at all, Some, Quite a bit, Very much.

Appendix B cont.

Table 6B

Extent institutional organization and governance structure(s) support student learning outcomes assessment by institutional type.

	Middle States	NEASC	HLC	Northwest	SACS	WASC
Organization governance structure and support	3.01	2.78	3.00	2.83	3.07	3.01

Response option range includes: Not at all, Some, Quite a bit, Very much.

Table 7B

Extent institutional organization and governance structure(s) support student learning outcomes assessment by institutional control.

	Public	Private	For-Profit
Organization governance structure and support	3.03	2.93	3.48

Response option range includes: Not at all, Some, Quite a bit, Very much.

Table 8B

Extent institutional structures, resources and features support assessment activities by institutional control.

	Public	Private	For-Profit
Institutional policies/statements related to assessing undergraduate learning	3.16	3.17	3.44
Assessment committee	3.14	3.11	3.32
Institutional research office and personnel	3.15	3.06	3.08
Professional staff dedicated to assessment	2.94	2.86	3.36
Professional development opportunities for faculty and staff on assessment	2.82	2.54	2.64
Center for teaching and learning	2.28	1.99	2.50
Significant involvement of faculty in assessment	3.16	3.11	3.52
Significant involvement of student affairs staff in assessment	2.33	2.32	2.24
Student participation in assessment activities	2.50	2.40	2.56
Funds targeted for outcomes assessment	2.36	2.26	2.36
Assessment management system or software	2.24	1.92	2.32
Recognition and/or reward for faculty and staff involvement in assessment activities	1.92	1.69	1.91
Other	1.54	1.46	1.38

Response option range includes: Not at all, Some, Quite a bit, Very much.

Written in responses for the "other" category included support of administration through programming and training, consultants, involvement of students in assessment efforts, faculty stipends, and accreditation workshops or training on assessment.

Appendix B cont.

Table 9B

Uses of assessment results by institutional selectivity.

Use	Special or not identified	Less competitive and Non competitive	Competitive and competitive+	Very Competitive and Very Competitive+	Highly Competitive and Highly Competitive+	Most Competitive
Regional accreditation	3.68	3.71	3.83	3.79	3.77	3.68
Program accreditation	3.57	3.68	3.68	3.65	3.52	3.44
External accountability reporting requirements	3.22	3.17	3.24	2.94	2.96	2.93
Trustee/ governing board deliberations	2.29	2.25	2.21	2.13	2.14	2.17
Strategic planning	2.78	2.78	2.69	2.50	2.36	2.33
Institutional benchmarking	2.67	2.60	2.49	2.41	2.33	2.22
Academic policy development or modification	2.66	2.55	2.60	2.46	2.53	2.47
Learning goals revision	3.00	2.98	2.98	2.89	2.83	2.65
Program review	3.30	3.20	3.27	3.18	2.97	2.74
Curriculum modification	3.07	3.10	2.97	2.98	2.98	2.65
Institutional improvement	2.86	2.85	2.89	2.72	2.63	2.51
Resource allocation and budgeting	2.29	2.25	2.11	2.01	2.00	1.91
Professional development for faculty and staff	2.46	2.41	2.22	2.25	2.08	2.08
Alumni communication	1.44	1.53	1.51	1.57	1.56	1.68
Prospective student and family information	1.71	1.65	1.80	1.82	1.98	1.83
Other	1.65	1.33	1.33	2.00	3.00	4.00

Table 10B

Assessment approaches used by institutional selectivity.

	Special or not identified	Less competitive and non competitive	Competitive and competitive+	Very competitive and Very competitive +	Highly Competitive and highly competitive +	Most Competitive
Incoming student placement exams (ACCUPLACER, COMPASS, locally developed exams)	76%	73%	59%	50%	32%	18%
National student surveys (NSSE, CCSSE, UCUES, CIRP, etc.)	76%	84%	90%	97%	93%	76%
Locally developed surveys	65%	59%	57%	60%	60%	66%
General knowledge and skills measures (CLA, CAAP, ETS PP, etc.)	35%	51%	63%	50%	36%	30%
Locally developed knowledge and skills measures	54%	46%	45%	40%	41%	47%
Classroom-based performance assessments such as simulations, comprehensive exams, critiques, etc.	75%	61%	64%	59%	42%	60%
Externally situated performance assessments such as internships or other community-based projects	44%	40%	43%	32%	32%	27%
Portfolios (a purposeful collection of student work showcasing achievement of learning objectives)	44%	44%	40%	35%	38%	44%
Capstone projects (including senior theses), courses, or experiences	54%	55%	62%	62%	66%	67%
Rubrics (published or locally developed)	72%	70%	68%	63%	70%	63%
Alumni surveys, focus groups, or interviews	61%	67%	65%	66%	76%	70%
Employer surveys, focus groups, or interviews	54%	55%	42%	32%	28%	31%
Other	8%	11%	5%	2%	17%	6%

Table 11B

Extent to which changes were made using assessment results by level, by institutional selectivity.

	Special or not identified	Less competitive and Non competitive	Competitive and competitive+	Very Competitive and Very Competitive+	Highly Competitive and Highly Competitive+	Most Competitive
At the institution level	2.56	2.57	2.57	2.46	2.45	2.36
At the school/ college level	2.55	2.67	2.58	2.61	2.58	2.31
At the department/ program level	3.00	3.03	3.06	2.98	3.02	2.67
In specific curricular requirements or courses	3.02	3.11	3.10	2.98	3.03	2.58

Table 12B

Factors or forces prompting institutions to assess student learning by institutional selectivity.

	Special or not identified	Less competitive and Non competitive	Competitive and competitive+	Very Competitive and Very Competitive+	Highly Competitive and Highly Competitive+	Mostly Competitive
Faculty or staff interest in improving student learning	3.32	3.31	3.19	3.24	3.03	3.25
Institutional commitment to improve	3.59	3.57	3.54	3.56	3.51	3.44
President and/ or governing board direction or mandate	3.15	3.02	2.89	2.74	2.75	2.73
Statewide governing or coordinating board mandate	2.88	2.57	2.45	2.11	2.16	1.42
State mandate	2.69	2.46	2.21	2.03	1.79	1.39
Regional accreditation	3.84	3.85	3.92	3.90	3.75	3.68
Program accreditation	3.66	3.77	3.72	3.72	3.46	3.09
Participation in a consortium or multi-institution collaboration	2.01	1.90	1.73	1.85	1.82	2.08
External funding (federal, state, or foundation grants)	2.56	2.42	2.22	2.14	2.39	2.44
National calls for accountability and/ or transparency	2.67	2.68	2.61	2.58	2.50	2.24
Concerns about the effectiveness and value of postsecondary education	2.94	2.94	2.82	2.85	2.70	2.69
Institutional membership initiatives (e.g., VSA, U-CAN, Transparency by Design, AAUDE, VFA)	1.83	2.12	1.85	1.87	1.75	1.69
Other	1.28	1.04	1.15	1.23	1.43	1.00

Appendix B cont.

Table 13B

Institutions that have learning outcomes statements that apply to all graduates by institutional selectivity.

	Special or not identified	Less competitive and non competitive	Competitive and competitive+	Very competitive and Very competitive +	Highly Competitive and highly competitive +	Most Competitive
Percent with learning outcome statements	85%	85%	84%	83%	87%	67%

NILOA National Advisory Panel

Joseph Alutto
Provost
The Ohio State University

Trudy W. Banta
Professor
Indiana University-Purdue University
Indianapolis

Wallace Boston
President and CEO
American Public University System

Molly Corbett Broad
President
American Council on Education

Judith Eaton
President
Council for Higher Education Accreditation

Richard Ekman
President
Council of Independent Colleges

Mildred Garcia
President
California State University -
Fullerton

Susan Johnston
Executive Vice President
Association of Governing Boards

Stephen Jordan
President
Metropolitan State University - Denver

Mary Kalantzis
Dean, College of Education
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Paul Lingenfelter
President
State Higher Education Executive Officers

George Mehaffy
Vice President
Academic Leadership and Change
American Association of State Colleges and
Universities

Charlene Nunley
Program Director
Doctoral Program in Community College
Policy and Administration
University of Maryland University College

Kent Phillippe
Associate Vice President, Research and
Student Success
American Association of Community Colleges

Randy Swing
Executive Director
Association for Institutional Research

Carol Geary Schneider
President
Association of American Colleges and
Universities

Michael Tanner
Chief Academic Officer/Vice President
Association of Public and Land-grant
Universities

Belle Wheelan
President
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

Ralph Wolff
President
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

Ex-Officio Members

Timothy Reese Cain
Associate Professor
University of Georgia

Peter Ewell
Vice President
National Center for Higher Education
Management Systems

Stanley Ikenberry
President Emeritus and Regent Professor
University of Illinois

George Kuh
Director, National Institute for Learning
Outcomes Assessment
Adjunct Professor, University of Illinois
Urbana-Champaign
Chancellor's Professor Emeritus, Indiana
University

Jillian Kinzie
Senior Scholar, NILOA; Associate Director,
Indiana University

NILOA Mission

NILOA's primary objective is to discover and disseminate ways that academic programs and institutions can productively use assessment data internally to inform and strengthen undergraduate education, and externally to communicate with policy makers, families and other stakeholders.

Comments and questions about this paper should be sent to njankow2@illinois.edu.

About NILOA

- The National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA) was established in December 2008.

- NILOA is co-located at the University of Illinois and Indiana University.

- The NILOA website contains free assessment resources and can be found at http://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/.

- The NILOA research team has scanned institutional websites, surveyed chief academic officers, and commissioned a series of occasional papers.

- One of the co-principal NILOA investigators, George Kuh, founded the National Survey for Student Engagement (NSSE).

- The other co-principal investigator for NILOA, Stanley Ikenberry, was president of the University of Illinois from 1979 to 1995 and of the American Council of Education from 1996 to 2001.

NILOA Staff

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT

Stanley Ikenberry, *Co-Principal Investigator*

George Kuh, *Co-Principal Investigator and Director*

Peter Ewell, *Senior Scholar*

Jillian Kinzie, *Senior Scholar*

Pat Hutchings, *Senior Scholar*

Timothy Reese Cain, *Senior Scholar*

Paul Lingenfelter, *Senior Scholar*

Natasha Jankowski, *Assistant Director and Research Analyst*

Robert Dumas, *Research Analyst*

Katie Schultz, *Research Analyst*

Carrie Allen, *Research Analyst*

Jelena Pokimica, *Research Analyst*

NILOA Sponsors

Lumina Foundation for Education

The Teagle Foundation

University of Illinois, College of Education

National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment