Making Assessment Matter:
How Not to Let Your Data Die on the Vine

Jo Michelle Beld
Professor of Political Science
Vice President for Mission

2014
Assessment Institute
NILOA’s mission is to discover and disseminate effective use of assessment data to strengthen undergraduate education and support institutions in their assessment efforts.
NILOA Track Sessions

Monday:

- Using Assessment Results to Improve Student Learning: A View from the Field (12:45 – 1:45 p.m.)

- Scaffolding Student Learning Through Assignment Design (2:00 – 3:00 p.m.)

- Our Five Stages of Assessment: From Denial to Celebration Through Faculty Development (3:15 – 4:15 p.m.)

- Relief from Initiative Fatigue: Bringing It All Together (4:30 – 5:30 p.m.)
NILOA Track Sessions

Tuesday:

- Implementing the Degree Qualifications Profile: What We’ve Learned and Where We’re Going (10:15 – 11:15 a.m.)

- Degree Qualifications Profile: A Look to the Future (11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.)

- Transparency of Assessment Results: Communicating Broadly (2:00 – 3:00 p.m.)

- Tenure and the Position of Director of Assessment (DOA) (3:15 – 4:15 p.m.)
DQP COVER

THE DEGREE QUALIFICATIONS PROFILE

A learning-centered framework for what college graduates should know and be able to do to earn the associate, bachelor's or master's degree.

Lumina Foundations
DQP/Tuning Coaches

• To advance and accelerate campus initiatives to enhance student learning, NILOA has assembled a group of DQP/Tuning Coaches who are available to help colleges and universities with their improvement efforts.

• DQP/Tuning Coaches are available for a one-day campus visit at no cost to the host institution. A member of the group will be paired with the requesting institution based on a match of interests, intended outcomes and expertise.

• Go to www.degreeprofile.org for more information.
To advance campus work with the DQP, NILOA is making available an online library of high-quality, peer-reviewed assignments linked to DQP outcomes.

This interactive library will build on and further stimulate institutional efforts already underway, engaging faculty at the grassroots level in ways that make a difference in the classroom.

Go to [www.assignmentlibrary.org](http://www.assignmentlibrary.org) for more information and to view the assignments.
Agenda

Conceptual frameworks

Program-level practices

Institutional-level practices
Frameworks

Utilization-focused assessment (Patton, 2008):

Focus on **intended uses** by **intended users**
Frameworks

Backward design
(Wiggins & McTighe, 2005):

“Beginning with the end in mind”
Frameworks

Traditional assessment design:

Choose an assessment instrument

Gather and summarize evidence

Send a report to someone
Frameworks

Backward assessment design:

1. Identify intended uses
2. Locate the learning
3. Choose assessment approach
Program-level

Studio Art

History

Statistics
Program-level

Studio Art

- Engaged students in designing senior exhibit evaluation form
- Revised requirements for the major
- Refocused common foundation-level courses
Program-level

% “exemplary” or “satisfactory” ability to…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Soph seminars</th>
<th>Senior seminars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify historiographical debates</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use historiography to develop argument</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Built in consultation with reference librarians
- Collaborated with Director of Writing on grading rubrics
Program-level

Statistics

• Collaboratively designed final exam question and grading rubric in Stats 270 to examine interpretation and communication of results; two faculty graded essays

• Instructor adjusted teaching to address identified weaknesses

• Instructor benefited from mentoring by senior faculty

Results indicated weakness in three areas:
1. Communicating log-log-transformed results effectively (mean: 2.40 of 5)
2. Identifying the correct P-value for model comparisons (mean: 2.47 of 5)
3. Communicating a summary of the interaction results (mean: 2.52 of 5)
Program-level

Uses in individual courses:

• Setting content priorities
• Revising/expanding assignments
• Enhancing “scaffolding”
• Piloting or testing innovations/changes
• Affirming current practices
Program-level

Uses in the program as a whole:

- Strengthening program coherence
- Conveying expectations
- Supporting new faculty
- Revising program requirements
- Extending productive pedagogies
- Affirming current practices
Program-level

Supporting program-level use

• Ask for action plans, not data
• Limit the assessment agenda
• Provide time for analysis and response
• Flag opportunities to cite results (position requests, grant applications)
• Affirm assessment in faculty rewards
Institutional-level

Believe it or not…

No one really wants to talk about assessment results!
Institutional-level

Because this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item wording or description</th>
<th>Variable name</th>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Response options</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. During the current school year, about how often have you done the following?</td>
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<tr>
<td>a. Asked questions or contributed to course discussions in other ways</td>
<td>adequate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4,228</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.44 **</td>
<td>-14</td>
<td>3.39</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>516</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1,555</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>42,400</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>2.32 **</td>
<td>.13</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1,032</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2,966</td>
<td>28</td>
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<td>-.15</td>
<td>2.99 ***</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Very often</td>
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<td>53</td>
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<td>58</td>
<td>6,037</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>90,022</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>2.53 *</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>2.34 ***</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in</td>
<td>drafts</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>769</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>38,115</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.44 **</td>
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<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>1,483</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>4,063</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>68,023</td>
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<td>2.32 **</td>
<td>.13</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>-.15</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Very often</td>
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<td>15</td>
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<td>2.34 ***</td>
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<td>c. Came to class without completing readings or assignments</td>
<td>unprepared</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Very often</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>498</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10,634</td>
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<td>2.85</td>
<td>2.95 **</td>
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<td>Often</td>
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<td>1,305</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>2,285</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>6,499</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>107,769</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>734</td>
<td>19</td>
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<td>2.45</td>
<td>2.32 **</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>2.42</td>
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<tr>
<td>d. Attended an art exhibit, play or other arts performance (dance, music, etc.)</td>
<td>attendant</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>404</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1,894</td>
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<td>72,752</td>
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<td>2.53 *</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>2.34 ***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Institutional-level

...is like this!
Institutional-level

When what we really want is this.
Institutional-level

So how do we get there?

Distill

Blend

Clarify

Pair

Share
**Institutional-level Distill:**

**NSSE 2013 Snapshot**

**St. Olaf College**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engagement Indicators</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Engagement Indicator</th>
<th>Your students compared with Peer Group</th>
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<td>First-year</td>
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<td>Engagements</td>
<td>High-Order Learning (HO)</td>
<td>△</td>
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<td>Reflective &amp; Integrative Learning (RI)</td>
<td>△</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Learning Strategies (LS)</td>
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<td>—</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quantitative Reasoning (QR)</td>
<td>△</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Challenge</td>
<td>Learning with Peers</td>
<td>Collaborative Learning (CL)</td>
<td>△</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discussions with Diverse Others (DD)</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experiences with Faculty</td>
<td>Student-Faculty Interaction (SF)</td>
<td>—</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Effective Teaching Practices (ET)</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Campus</td>
<td>Quality of Interactions (QI)</td>
<td>△</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Institutional-level

Distill:

Percentage of seniors reporting that college experiences helped them “quite a bit” or very much:

- Thinking critically: 96%
- Recognizing your personal strengths, limitations, and interests: 93%
- Solving problems: 93%
- Connecting information and ideas from different sources or experiences: 92%
- Drawing on knowledge from different subjects or fields to understand a topic: 91%

- Interacting effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds: 64%
- Understanding and responding to global systems: 64%
- Creating, understanding, or performing artistic works: 60%
- Working to make a difference in the local community: 59%
- Understanding and expressing ideas in more than one language: 51%
Institutional-level

Blend:

**NSSE:**
Only 56% of seniors say St. Olaf contributed sufficiently to QR proficiencies

**GE assessment:**
Only 69% of student work samples judged “proficient” or “exemplary”

**HEDS Alumni:**
Only 80% of alums say St. Olaf contributed sufficiently to QR proficiencies

*Need for college-wide quantitative reasoning initiative??*
Institutional Reports by Outcome or Topic

Consistent with its “utilization-focused” approach to assessment, the Office of Institutional Research and Evaluation prepares reports that integrate assessment findings from a variety of sources around specific outcomes or topics. These thematic reports can help individual faculty members, committees, task forces, departments and programs, and other units of the College use assessment findings to inform and improve their work.

Please note: Some reports on this page are only accessible to those with St. Olaf usernames and passwords. This is because they include assessment findings governed by restrictive inter-institutional confidentiality provisions that limit the sharing of results to internal audiences only. Other assessment projects permitting public sharing of aggregate results are available on our Institutional Results by Instrument page. Please contact the Office of Institutional Research and Evaluation if you are interested in reviewing any of these reports but are unable to access them.

Reports concerning specific learning outcomes or curriculum areas

Writing proficiencies and experiences at St. Olaf (November 2013)
WR requirement completion and course availability (June 2014)
Critical thinking (January 2012)
Oral communication (June 2013)
Research proficiency (May 2013)
Research proficiency – supplementary information (May 2013)
Involvement in undergraduate research (August 2011)
Quantitative reasoning (June 2013)
Institutional-level

Clarify:

Early fall review of assessment findings from previous spring

Board Academic Affairs

Inst Research & Evaluation

Provost and Dean's Council

Assessment Subcomm

Curriculum Committee
Institutional-level

Pair:

The Student Life Committee is launching an academic honesty initiative this year.

The Research Practices Survey has information about how students understand plagiarism...
Institutional-level

Share:

HEDS Research Practices Survey Results and Reports

The HEDS Research Practices Survey (RPS) was administered to half of the first-year class (Class of 2017) at the beginning and end of the 2013-14 academic year, and also administered to half of the senior class in Spring 2014. Among the first-years, 81% of those invited to participate did so before or during Week One, and 57% did so in the spring semester. Among the invited seniors, 67% participated.

RPS results show that students’ familiarity with research terms and strategies, and ability to evaluate sources, improve substantially over the course of the first year of college, and for the most part, continue to improve through the remainder of their undergraduate experience. However, the proportion of students demonstrating proficiency or reporting “information-literate” practices varied with the type of proficiency or practice.

Changes in students’ research practices during college

- Selected RPS comparisons – Beginning of college through senior year – St. Olaf and other selective colleges
- Complete RPS results – Beginning of college through senior year – St. Olaf only

Complete results by cohort

- Spring semester 2014 senior RPS results for St. Olaf and other selective colleges
- Spring semester 2014 first-year RPS results for St. Olaf and other selective colleges
- Pre-fall 2013 incoming first-year RPS results for St. Olaf and other selective colleges
Institutional-level

Utilization-focused assessment:

• Distill key findings
• Blend data from different sources
• Clarify meaning through deliberation
• Pair results with issues and actions
• Share results and reports publicly
NILOA Transparency Framework: 
Assessment use

• Targeted to audience
• Focused on improvement
• Stated clearly
• Posted prominently
• Updated regularly