

# National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment

Making Learning Outcomes Usable & Transparent

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## About NILOA

**NILOA's mission is to champion and support efforts by colleges and universities to obtain, use and share evidence of student learning to strengthen student attainment and improve undergraduate education.**

- Founded three years ago, NILOA is based at the University of Illinois and Indiana University. Stan Ikenberry and George Kuh serve as co-principal investigators.
- Influential thought leaders, heads of national higher education associations, and academic leaders serve as members of the NILOA Advisory Panel and oversee our work.
- NILOA is currently supported by Lumina Foundation for Education, Carnegie Corporation of New York, and The Teagle Foundation.
- While NILOA has a strong record of accomplishment, it seeks to expand its impact going forward as much remains to do in order to realize the promise of student learning outcomes assessment as a means to improve student and institutional performance.

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## NILOA's Reach

**NILOA has become the leading resource on learning outcome assessment at the collegiate level. The primary communication link with campuses is through a rich, well-developed and continuously updated website and a monthly electronic Newsletter.**

- Each month over 5,000 individuals visit the NILOA website seeking information, tools, and other resources. In the last three months, 16,169 visitors reviewed 40,792 pages. One third of these are regular return visitors, but nearly two out of three are new to the site, and so the level of use is expanding. While most users come from the US, NILOA's reach extends to over 100 countries/territories. A majority of people come directly to us or come through a search engine, but others come from The Chronicle of Higher Education and Inside Higher Education. Most people start on our home page, and review our Occasional Papers, Reports, and Resources pages. The NILOA website continues to grow. Among the regular features are:
  - Networking opportunities with various groups focused on assessment
  - Information about curriculum mapping
  - Several exemplars of assessment handbooks
  - Networking opportunities with various groups focused on assessment.
- The NILOA newsletter alerts nearly 7,000 college presidents, provosts, institutional research directors and assessment professionals to new resources, best practices, and fresh thinking about assessment and related topics.
  - The monthly newsletter is the primary mechanism for announcing NILOA work.
  - *Viewpoints* offer informed perspectives on assessment challenges designed to stimulate conversations.
  - Featured Websites illustrate good approaches to communicate assessment activities and information. These institutions are announced in the newsletter and information is available on our website. Some institutions have listed their featured status on their own campus websites.
- NILOA has addressed the challenge of making learning outcomes visible and useful to the public. A *Transparency Framework* was created for institutions to use in advancing this work.
  - Some 3,000 individuals viewed the framework in the last six months and institutions are using the Framework to modify their websites.
  - The Voluntary Framework for Accountability being developed by the American Association of Community Colleges has adopted NILOA's *Transparency Framework*.
  - Among the institutions that are using the *Transparency Framework* on their own institutions websites, are IUPUI, Brigham Young University-Idaho, Point Loma Nazarene University, Indiana University School of Informatics, Kalamazoo College, and Central Michigan University.

## NILOA's Focus

NILOA is committed to creating and disseminating tools, resources and perspectives useful to campuses as they assemble and use evidence of student learning to improve academic performance and respond to calls for greater accountability to society.

- NILOA Research Reports provide the first systematic examination of assessment on a national scale in the last ten years.

*More Than You Think, Less Than We Need: Assessment in Higher Education*, reported findings from the first national study about learning outcomes assessment at two- and four-year institutions;

*Down and In: Assessment Practices at the Program Level* presents a national profile of learning outcomes assessment at the program level where improvements in teaching and learning must occur;

*Exploring the Landscape: What Institutional Websites Reveal About Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Activities*, summarizes the state of institutional web page transparency;

*Perspectives from Campus Leaders on the Current State of Student Learning Outcomes Assessment* shares the views of campus leaders and others on the current state of quality assessment; and

*Making Student Learning Evidence Transparent: The State of the Art* is a collection of four reports on aspects of how institutions make available their efforts to assess student learning on their websites.

- NILOA has engaged the nation's leading scholars and leaders to address challenging contemporary issues. A series of Occasional Papers examines the current state-of-the-art in assessing learning outcomes in American higher education. Twelve have been released to date on a broad range of topics:

Banta, T.W., Griffin, M., Flateby, T.L., & Kahn, S. (2009, December). *Three Promising Alternatives for Assessing College Students' Knowledge and Skills*.

Blaich, C.F., & Wise, K.S. (2011, January). *From Gathering to Using Assessment Results: Lessons from the Wabash National Study*.

Ewell, P. (2009, November). *Assessment, Accountability, and Improvement: Revisiting the Tension*.

Gold, L., Rhoades, G., Smith, M., & Kuh, G. (2011, May). *What Faculty Unions say About Student Learning Outcomes Assessment*.

Hutchings, P. (2010, April). *Opening Doors to Faculty Involvement in Assessment*.

Nunley, C., Bers, T., & Manning, T. (2011, July). *The Status of Learning Outcomes Assessment in Community Colleges*.

Prineas, M., & Cini, M. (2011, October). *Assessing Learning in Online Education: The Role of Technology in Improving Student Outcomes*.

Provezis, S. (2010, October). *Regional Accreditation and Student Learning Outcomes Assessment: Mapping the Territory*.

Schuh, J.H., & Gansemer-Topf, A.M. (2010, December). *The Role of Student Affairs in Student Learning Assessment*.

Swing, R.L., & Coogan, C.S. (2010, May). *Valuing Assessment: Cost-benefit Considerations*.

Volkwein, J.F. (2011, September). *Gaining Ground: The Role of Institutional Research in Assessing Student Outcomes and Demonstrating Institutional Effectiveness*.

Wellman, J.V. (2010, January). *Connecting the Dots Between Learning and Resources*.

- NILOA has commissioned short, informative pieces on the purpose and practical use of assessment geared to particular audiences. So far two have been released:

Hutchings, P. (2011, April). *What new faculty need to know about assessment*. (NILOA Assessment Brief: Faculty).

Bresciani, M. (2011, August). *Making assessment meaningful: What new student affairs professionals and those new to assessment need to know*. (NILOA Assessment Brief: Student Affairs).

- NILOA Examples of Good Assessment Practice feature colleges and universities that are using assessment data to improve the institutions and programs.

Jankowski, N. (2011, July). *Juniata College: Faculty Led Assessment*. (NILOA Example of Good Assessment Practice).

Jankowski, N. (2011, August). *Capella University: An Outcomes-Based Institution*. (NILOA Example of Good Assessment Practice).

Kinzie, J. (2011, August). *Colorado State University: Academic and Student Affairs Improvement*. (NILOA Example of Good Assessment Practice).

Provezis, S. (2011, July). *Augustana College: An Assessment Review Committee's Role in Engaging Faculty*. (NILOA Example of Good Assessment Practice).

## NILOA Presence

**NILOA is shaping and advancing the student learning outcomes agenda in American higher education at the national level through dialogue at national conferences of academic leaders and faculty members from public and independent colleges and universities, community colleges, state governing and planning boards, regional accrediting bodies and many others. Here is a sampling of where NILOA staff have presented or their work appeared:**

- At the annual meetings of American Association of University Professors, American Council on Education, American Association of State Colleges and Universities, American Evaluation Association, Assessment Institute, Association of American Colleges and Universities, Association for the Assessment of Learning in Higher Education, Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities, Association of Institutional Research, College Student Educators International, Council of Graduate Schools, National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development, Southern Education Foundation, State Higher Education Executive Officers, and Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education
- At meetings for several regional accreditation organizations, including Higher Learning Commission, New England Association for Schools and Colleges, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and Western Association of Schools and Colleges.
- In media outlets and journals, including *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Inside Higher Education*, *Higher Education Management and Policy*, *Assessment Update*, *University World News*, *Library Journal* and so on.
- In several college and universities websites which provide links to NILOA information, including Carleton College, Miami Dade College, Mohawk College, Oklahoma State University, St. Olaf College, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and many others.

## NILOA's Future

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**Much remains to be done. Looking to the future NILOA aspires to expand its impact through advocacy and capacity building. NILOA intends:**

- To take advantage of key leverage points by working with accreditors, major systems of public and private universities, and affinity groups such as the CIC (Big Ten universities) and others. Specifically,
  - o Accreditation: We will track initiatives underway by the Higher Learning Commission and Western Association of Colleges and Universities.
  - o Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC): Given the interest expressed in assessment by provosts at Big 10-member schools and the University of Chicago, NILOA is engaged in an initiative to examine assessment of undergraduate student learning and related quality assurance strategies currently in place at all 13 CIC-member universities.
- To assist and evaluate current transparency initiatives.
  - o NILOA is collaborating with American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) on its Voluntary Framework of Accountability (VFA). AACC has selected NILOA's Transparency Framework as a tool to be used as part of the VFA. This will present opportunities for NILOA to call attention to the DP in these conversations.
  - o NILOA is assessing the impact of the current VSA, including its impact on institutional behavior. We are in conversations with the New Alliance for Student Learning Accountability, and collaborate with APLU, AASCU, and other interested groups to develop and test a second generation reporting template. A distinctive feature of the template will be the "roll up" of program-level outcome results to assemble a more comprehensive and useful portrait of student performance at the institutional level.

**Successfully pursuing these opportunities requires that NILOA build on its accomplishments to date in advancing student learning outcomes assessment to insure that the gains in access are translated into student success and strengthened academic performance nationwide.**

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## NILOA Staff

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## NILOA Sponsors

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**Carnegie Corporation of New York**

**Lumina Foundation for Education**

**The Teagle Foundation**

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## National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment

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