"Using Classroom Information to Assess the Newly Approved "gtPathways Competencies"

September 30, 2016

Information Packet

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1. VALUE Rubrics

1.1 Introduction

In 2007, the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) launched Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE), a component project of AAC&U’s Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) initiative that is rooted in a philosophy of learning assessment that privileges the authentic assessment of student work and the development of shared understandings of student learning outcomes over the administration of standardized tests to sample groups of students.

Through the VALUE project, teams of faculty and other academic and student affairs professionals from all sectors of higher education across the United States gathered, analyzed, and synthesized institutional-level rubrics (and related materials) for sixteen specific areas of learning directly related to the LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes:

- Civic engagement
- Creative thinking
- Critical thinking
- Ethical reasoning
- Foundations and skills for lifelong learning
- Information literacy
- Inquiry and analysis
- Integrative and applied learning
- Intercultural knowledge and competence
- Oral communication
- Problem solving
- Quantitative literacy
- Reading
- Teamwork
- Written communication
- Global learning

The LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes represent a consensus among educators and employers about the kinds of learning students need as preparation for successful participation in civic life and the global economy.

Since the initial release of the rubrics in 2009, thousands of campuses and individuals in the United States and around the world have used the VALUE rubrics in various ways to meet student learning and assessment needs in their departments, programs, or institutions. Entire university systems and multistate consortia of campuses have adopted the LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes and the VALUE rubrics as recommended guides for measuring student learning.

Those using the VALUE rubrics have been reporting on their experiences. One of the recurring themes in this campus feedback is that the rubrics provide a means of engaging faculty and other educational professionals from multiple disciplines and divisions in a common conversation about the respective contributions of each to the enhancement of student learning with respect to specified outcomes. In a sense, the rubrics have facilitated the creation of bridges for many faculty, enabling them to see their individual work as part of a shared endeavor among colleagues that leads to their students’ attainment of degrees—degrees that represent demonstrated achievement at a high level of quality.
1.2 Q&A

Q1: How were the VALUE rubrics developed, and by whom?
A: The VALUE rubrics were developed by teams comprised of faculty members, academic and student affairs professionals, and other experts from public and private, two-year and four-year higher education institutions across the United States.

Q2: Are the VALUE rubrics valid and reliable?
A: Yes. The development process itself established the face and use validity of the VALUE rubrics, which was confirmed by the adoption and use of the rubrics on more than three thousand campuses since the fall of 2010. Campus-level calibration analyses have consistently demonstrated high levels of agreement among evaluators. In addition, a national reliability study and several consortia of campuses have achieved acceptable levels of reliability in projects focused on one or more of the rubrics.

Q3: Do the performance-level numbers in the VALUE rubrics represent year in college (e.g., 1=freshman, 2=sophomore, etc.) or grades (e.g., 4=A, 3=B, etc.)?
A: The numerical scores do not represent years or grades. The development teams indicated that “4” represents the level of achievement expected for a student to be awarded a baccalaureate degree, whereas “1” reflects the level of performance the rubric developers found among entering students in their own classrooms. “2” and “3” represent intermediate milestones that indicate students are moving toward more complex and sophisticated demonstrations of learning. Community colleges often use “2” and “3” as expected levels of achievement for associate-level degrees and for transfer, although in practice their students often exhibit higher levels of achievement in various rubric areas.

Q4: How do the VALUE rubrics fit within the national accountability frameworks associated with accreditation requirements?
A: The VALUE rubrics have been embraced by all the regional accrediting bodies as one acceptable approach for institutions to use in assessing student learning. The rubrics represent an alternative to standardized testing, providing more robust and nuanced information on areas of strength and weakness in student learning and across a wider range of outcomes than are addressed by the most commonly used standardized tests—the ETS Proficiency Profile, the Collegiate Learning Assessment, and the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency. Moreover, the rubrics align with faculty and employer expectations for what college graduates should exhibit.

Q5: How are the VALUE rubrics being used on campuses?
A: The VALUE rubrics are being used for multiple purposes. They are being used for summative assessment of the learning required for graduation and accreditation, for example, and for both formative and summative assessment of student learning for program achievement and progress - both within individual disciplines and across general education programs. At the level of the individual course, modified rubrics are being used for grading.

Q6: Can I use the VALUE rubrics in grading student work?
A: The VALUE rubrics were not developed as grading rubrics. They were developed as “meta-rubrics” to be used at the institutional or programmatic levels in order to assess student learning overall and over time, not for specific assignments. The rubrics can be translated into grading rubrics for specific courses, using the same criteria or dimensions for learning, but the performance descriptors would need to be modified to reflect the course content and assignments being examined, while still preserving the dimensions of learning in the original rubric. However, modifications should be considered carefully; the more modifications made to a VALUE rubric, the more difficult it becomes for the institution to place its findings within a broader national context.
1.3 Unmodified vs. Modified Rubrics

Why adopt AAC&U LEAP VALUE rubrics *without* modification? Chris Duke, Ph.D., Assessment, Accreditation, and Institutional Effectiveness

When discussing the LEAP VALUE rubrics for general education outcomes assessment, the AAC&U allows and even encourages institutions to customize and modify the rubrics for use locally. Certainly, I believe when presented with an instrument like the LEAP VALUE rubric for Critical Thinking there is a natural, inherent tendency of faculty and educational institutions to add their perspective or to research that construct in order to create a “better” rubric or to establish “our institution’s definition” of critical thinking (because critical thinking may be defined in *many* different ways). At the moment however, I believe it is important to resist that tendency. I believe revising the LEAP VALUE rubrics is unlikely to add significant value to the institutional assessment effort, will expend valuable time and effort better spent on other aspects of implementation, may nullify the benefits of using the LEAP Value rubrics, and will complicate future efforts at inter-institutional collaboration regarding use of the rubrics.

First, the robust process engaged by the AAC&U to create the LEAP VALUE Rubrics is well documented; revising that work is not likely to add significant value to the institutional assessment effort. The work began with, essentially, a rather comprehensive meta-analysis of local campus rubrics related to the respective outcomes. The research process established the validity of the rubrics’ measurement of the constructs, and reliability testing was conducted. Taking the time and effort to modify the rubrics likely will not break new ground; it is quite likely that the consideration given to the research and development process originally has addressed issues or suggestions that local faculty may consider. In short, revising the rubrics locally would be “re-creating the wheel” just as much as developing new rubrics would be. Certainly the research effort would likely be insightful, but the end product likely would not be markedly different or necessarily an improvement; any minor gains will be offset by the time invested. Exacerbating that issue is that beginning the revision process may open a Pandora’s Box of sorts; many of the constructs may be interpreted a variety of ways; revising the rubrics could be an endless process for an institution. Locally, institutions may better invest time in developing and facilitating a robust process for the application of the rubrics and the continuous improvement effort that follows the results.

Second, expending institutional time and effort to modify the LEAP VALUE rubrics may nullify the benefits of adopting the rubrics in the first place. Initially, modifying the criterion, dimensions, or descriptors of one of the LEAP VALUE rubrics potentially compromises the integrity of the rubric in regards to its validity and reliability. All of the prior research on the rubrics conducted by the AAC&U projects is dependent upon and assumes the rubrics as they are written. Derivatives of the rubric benefit from that research and, to some extent, leverage the validity and reliability. However, even semantic changes theoretically require additional effort to re-establish the validity and reliability of the new rubric; substantive changes to the rubrics, criteria, or levels certainly compromise the validity and reliability. Further, modifying the rubrics would, in the same manner, nullify the broad acceptance that the LEAP VALUE rubrics have achieved; that would not be an advantage revised rubrics would maintain.

Third, and perhaps most importantly, modifying a LEAP VALUE rubric complicates any future potential for inter-institutional collaboration or for comparing local results to comparable institutions. The rubrics, as originally designed and developed, offer higher education institutions an opportunity for collaboration and comparison regarding general education outcomes assessment. However, that potential for collaboration and comparison is largely dependent upon and/or greatly enhanced by the commonality of AAC&U VALUE rubrics. Two institutions implementing the Critical Thinking VALUE rubric will be using the same framing language and criterion that provide a common starting point for discussion. That commonality breaks down incrementally with each modification made to the rubric.
2. Calibration

**Process:** The calibration process begins with a close reading of the rubric to identify any ambiguities in phrasing or wording. Participants are asked to review each part of the rubric carefully, identifying areas for discussion and raising specific questions. During the calibration session, participants are asked to discuss the questions raised and come to agreement on how the rubric’s language should be interpreted for the purposes of practice scoring.

Once the entire rubric has been reviewed, participants are given a sample of student work to read and score. It is critical that each participant supports his or her decision to assign a particular score with specific references to the work sample provided. Practice scoring is typically done one criterion (or row) at a time. After each row has been scored, the scores are reviewed to determine the degree to which consensus has been reached. It is the responsibility of the session facilitator to ask participants to explain their reasoning and offer evidence to support their scores. For example, a faculty member who gave the work sample a “2” on a particular criterion should be asked to identify places in the work sample that support that decision. Next, a participant who assigned a “1” should be asked to provide similar rationale. Following discussion of each criterion (or row), participants may be given the opportunity to change their scores.

The goal of calibration is not to achieve convergence on a single score; rather, the goal is to identify the two scores around which the majority clusters. This clustering indicates a common understanding of the rubric’s application. It is ideal to score at least two practice work samples for calibration before moving on to actual scoring.

**Benefits:** In addition to providing peace of mind that the scores on student work will not be wildly divergent, the process of calibration is beneficial in a number of other ways. First, calibration is a starting point for beginning to develop sound inter-rater reliability. The opportunity to review and reflect on the rubric as an instrument is a valuable and necessary first step toward obtaining sufficient reliability estimates. Campuses that have undertaken inter-rater reliability analyses have consistently obtained high inter-rater scores. It is important to note, however, that in every instance in which campuses have reported such positive results, actual scoring had been preceded by a calibration session—highlighting the essential nature of this step.

Second, calibration provides the opportunity for faculty members to engage in a conversation across disciplines about learning outcomes that span their individual courses and disciplinary content areas. Campus experience with rubric calibration has shown that faculty members from very different fields can talk inclusively about shared standards for student learning. As AAC&U’s national inter-rater reliability study demonstrated, there is typically very little divergence in scores across a range of disciplines—natural sciences, social sciences, humanities, and applied and professional programs. Though content varies significantly, what students do with that content can provide a source of commonality.

Finally, the calibration process often leads to productive conversations about assignment design. As faculty and other campus practitioners review existing artifacts of student work alongside articulated standards for outcomes—critical thinking, say, or integrative learning—questions are raised about the components of a good assignment.

**Examples:** At Daemen College, the calibration process began with faculty submission of ungraded student assignments from their courses. Next, a random sample of this student work was evaluated by faculty members from across the college who had been invited to participate in the session. The rubric was then calibrated, or “normed,” and the results were discussed.

As part of the Writing Assessment Project at Texas A&M University, approximately thirty faculty members participated in a daylong calibration session during which they used the VALUE rubric for written communication in order to score student papers. Each paper was scored by two faculty members, with a third becoming involved whenever the two initial scorers did not reach approximate agreement—a process that achieves the desired levels of inter-rater reliability.
3. Signature Assignments

3.1 Why use signature assignments?

Increasingly, as they use VALUE rubrics either for formative assessment of student learning or in reporting for accreditation and accountability purposes, campuses have begun to establish signature assignments. A signature assignment is an assignment, task, activity, project or exam purposefully created or modified to collect evidence for specific learning outcomes at either the institutional or the programmatic level. The purpose of such assignments is to create visible areas within the curriculum—and even within the co-curriculum—where student work is expected to exemplify particular levels of competency for particular learning outcomes. The creation of a signature assignment is an opportunity for faculty members to focus intentionally on learning experiences that are specifically intended to address one or more learning outcomes.

Common features

- Require students to demonstrate and apply their proficiency in one or more key learning outcomes. This often means synthesizing, analyzing, and applying cumulative knowledge and skills through problem- or inquiry-based assignments or projects.
- Invite students to produce meaningful examples of their learning that document their progress and culminating skills and abilities.
- Are used to assess outcomes at the programmatic level, providing a valuable resource for evaluation and institutional change.
- Work well when they are course-embedded
- Are often designed collaboratively by faculty members within a department or across disciplines, or by faculty members working with student affairs professionals.
- Can be generic in task, problem, case or project to allow for contextualization in different disciplines or course contexts.
- Demonstrate a real-world, not theoretical, application of disciplinary knowledge.
- Can provide comparable assessment data across multiple courses and disciplines taught by various faculty using varied pedagogy.

When creating signature assignments, faculty members and other campus educators are encouraged to think carefully and creatively about the assignment’s intended outcome(s) and about the best ways to prompt students’ application of the outcome(s) to knowledge areas appropriate to the course. To help ensure that the assignment is both effective and meaningful, the following four questions should be used to guide the development process.

- **Q1: What particular dimension(s) of the outcome is the assignment intended to address?** Those developing signature assignments should spend time reviewing the criteria articulated in the rubric that will be used to score the assignment. The review process can be done individually, but a group review to parse criteria can help expose ambiguities and promote collaborative thinking.

- **Q2: How should students be guided to use the material in order to meet the outcome criteria?** Signature assignments should enable students to do something with what they have learned, beyond recounting material in organized and factual ways. Particular attention should be paid to the use of action verbs within the assignments—e.g., “synthesize,” “demonstrate,” “integrate,” and “apply.”

- **Q3: Is the assignment intended to meet more than one outcome?** This is a deceptively simple, but nonetheless crucial, consideration. If the assignment will be used to evaluate student competency in both critical thinking and writing, for example, then components of each learning outcome will need to be taken into consideration when developing the assignment.
Q4: What types of learning experiences and associated assignments will be most helpful in allowing students to demonstrate their learning on a particular outcome? As faculty members and other campus educators adopt and amend existing assignments, time should be spent thinking critically about how best to engage students with their learning, and about the role of assignments in prodding students to think in new ways. Creativity among faculty and staff is a critical resource for assignment construction and development.

The faculty have reported several benefits of aligning assignments and rubrics. It led them to view assessment as a means to improve instruction and learning—rather than as a task imposed on the faculty. For faculty members who had initially criticized the rubrics as overly vague, the process demonstrated that it is possible to adapt the language of rubrics to the needs of specific disciplines, courses, and assignments. The process also demonstrated the necessary linkage between assignment and product.

Suggested Design Process for Signature Assignments
1. Faculty identify the learning outcomes to be assessed
2. Faculty review current embedded course work that could be used as a signature assignment. It may be helpful to use the AAC&U Value Rubrics to guide discussion and examination of potential signature assignments.
3. Faculty determine if a new assignment will need to be developed for use as a signature assignment.
4. Faculty agree upon the nature and major components and guidelines for the signature assignment, such as the type of the assignment.

Assignment map (five signature assignments utilized across the program)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Outcome</th>
<th>Course 1</th>
<th>Course 2</th>
<th>Course 3</th>
<th>Course 4</th>
<th>Course 5</th>
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<td>Critical Thinking</td>
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<td>Assignments 3 and 4</td>
<td>Assignment 2</td>
<td>Assignment 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Written Communication</td>
<td>Assignment 2</td>
<td>Assignment 1</td>
<td>Assignment 2</td>
<td>Assignment 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Civic Development</td>
<td>Assignment 1</td>
<td>Assignment 1</td>
<td>Assignment 3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethical Reasoning</td>
<td>Assignment 1</td>
<td>Assignment 3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Integrative Learning</td>
<td>Assignment 4</td>
<td>Assignment 5</td>
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Example of signature assignments based on the VALUE rubric for creative thinking

Overview: You are to select a contemporary issue in health (other area could be substituted) and develop a point of view regarding this issue. Then, create a social media campaign to educate a specific population and persuade them of your point of view. Materials may include text, photographs, video, etc.

OPTION 1
Write a proposal for your project. In this proposal you will
- identify the issue or problem, your point of view, and the population/target audience;
- describe your approach to the issue;
- discuss your approach and its advantages relative to other approaches that have been taken to the issue.

OPTION 2
Write an Implementation Plan for your project. In this plan you will
- describe in detail how you will get your message across to your audience; your description may include story boarding, choice of media, samples of images, video and text, etc.
- specify needed resources.

3.2. Online Resources

Presentation:
- Developing Effective Signature Assignments: Lessons from the DQP This presentation makes connections between the provision of signature assignments and the assessment and intentional achievement of student learning outcomes. Specific assignment examples are provided and the application of rubrics and curricular mapping are discussed. Author: Peter Ewell
- Using “Signature” or “Key” Assignments for Program-level Assessment This presentation provides information about using assignments for program-level assessment. Authors: The University of Hawaii at Manoa Assessment Office: Marlene Lowe and Monica Stitt-Bergh

Website:
- University of Texas’ Signature Course Essentials Sample Documents This website offers a bank of resources, rubrics, and sample assignments organized by learning outcome. Authors: University of Texas at Austin, School of Undergraduate Studies
- NILOA Assignment Library This website will assemble a library of assignment templates aligned to the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) proficiencies.

Guidelines
- Salt Lake Community College Implementing Critical Thinking with Signature Assignments Guide provides a comprehensive look at operationalizing critical thinking and the implementation of signature assignments: http://www.slcc.edu/assessment/docs/Critical%20Thinking%20Assignments%20Guidebook%20Rev%201-3.pdf
- Salt Lake Community College Guidelines for creating critical thinking signature assignments: [http://cms.slcc.edu/assessment/docs/CT_Introduction_Pages_and_Instructions/Step%202%20-%20Identify%20or%20Create%20a%20Signature%20Assignment.pdf](http://cms.slcc.edu/assessment/docs/CT_Introduction_Pages_and_Instructions/Step%202%20-%20Identify%20or%20Create%20a%20Signature%20Assignment.pdf)
- California State University Northridge Ed.D. program signature assignment guidelines: [https://admin.sp.uta.edu/business/irp/UEP/Rubric_SignatureAssignment.doc](https://admin.sp.uta.edu/business/irp/UEP/Rubric_SignatureAssignment.doc)
- Tarleton State University on-campus workshop on signature assignments handout presented by Mary Allen: [https://admin.sp.uta.edu/business/irp/UEP/SigAssignmentHandout-Cascade.rtf](https://admin.sp.uta.edu/business/irp/UEP/SigAssignmentHandout-Cascade.rtf)
- Salt Lake Community College signature assignment planning template: [https://admin.sp.uta.edu/business/irp/UEP/Forms%20and%20Templates%20-%20Signature%20Assignment%20Planning%20Template.docx](https://admin.sp.uta.edu/business/irp/UEP/Forms%20and%20Templates%20-%20Signature%20Assignment%20Planning%20Template.docx)

Examples
- UT Austin sample assignments and rubrics: [https://www.utexas.edu/ugs/sig/plan/samples](https://www.utexas.edu/ugs/sig/plan/samples)
- Research webliography assignment to demonstrate outcomes of a bilingual teacher candidate seminar course: [http://edweb.sdsu.edu/NCATE/CCTC%20Reports/Bilingual%20Authorization/PLC960ESA.pdf](http://edweb.sdsu.edu/NCATE/CCTC%20Reports/Bilingual%20Authorization/PLC960ESA.pdf)
- Case study project to demonstrate outcomes for an education course focused on individuals with exceptional needs: [https://sites.google.com/site/5016lmu2013/signature-assignment](https://sites.google.com/site/5016lmu2013/signature-assignment)
- Maricopa County Community College District cultural diversity in education signature assignment guidelines: [https://admin.sp.uta.edu/business/irp/UEP/230%20Project%201.doc](https://admin.sp.uta.edu/business/irp/UEP/230%20Project%201.doc)
- Northern Arizona University Art Education syllabus including signature assignment guidelines and evaluation rubric: [https://admin.sp.uta.edu/business/irp/UEP/ARE_308_Signature_Assignment.doc](https://admin.sp.uta.edu/business/irp/UEP/ARE_308_Signature_Assignment.doc)
- California State University Sacramento Psychology of Instruction course signature assignment guidelines and a checklist for students: [https://admin.sp.uta.edu/business/irp/UEP/signature%20assignment%20checklist.doc](https://admin.sp.uta.edu/business/irp/UEP/signature%20assignment%20checklist.doc)
4. Using Results for Improvement

Faculty Development

At campuses that have implemented rubric-based assessment, faculty members have engaged in conversations about student learning across varied areas of the curriculum and cocurriculum. An important outcome of these conversations has been the realization of a new outlet for engaging in productive faculty development. Even as faculty have discussions about rubrics, they are also having broad discussions about what matters in terms of learning outcomes, pedagogy, assessment, and student learning in general.

Teaching and Learning

Example 1: Lewis University has used the VALUE rubrics to make improvements in the College of Business. Rubric data were used to identify problem areas, and specific goals for improvement have been set with respect to each area assessed. For critical thinking, the business faculty developed and implemented a three-year plan that includes fifteen specific activities designed to improve student achievement in this especially challenging area.

Example 2: St. Olaf College has been highlighted by AAC&U for its work with the LEAP initiative on its use of assessment to deepen learning and to establish a culture of shared purpose.

Psychology faculty examined a variety of evidence such as course sequences, course evaluations, senior surveys, and student feedback to inform curriculum revisions. The psychology department applied for and received funding to bring assessment consultants to campus. Changes made based on the senior survey and course-embedded assessment findings included altering course sequences, increasing and altering major advising, and developing an introductory course to psychology for psychology majors.

The religion department wanted to know if their students were writing at a desired level, and so the faculty gathered a random collection of student essays, and had a faculty panel rate them. A report was generated from the rating that outlined where students demonstrated or fell short on the outcomes in question. Areas where students fell short were used to refocus teaching and also to rethink the sequence of courses and assignments within courses so as to better reinforce the desired outcomes and help students improve.
5. Assessment across Institutions

The VALUE rubrics provide faculty members with a common language and a common set of reference points for comparing performance expectations across courses, programs, and institutions. At the same time, they provide students with a statement of what learning is expected of them as they progress toward their respective degrees or credentials.

Campus Consortia: Several cross-campus consortia have used the VALUE rubrics to examine student learning on their respective campuses. The South Metropolitan Higher Education Consortium in Chicago encompasses twelve campuses—two-year and four-year, public and private—that share a swirl of students who take courses at multiple institutions. After discussing and testing the VALUE rubric for writing, the members of the consortium determined that the **development of a common assignment** would facilitate students’ cross-campus work by creating shared expectations for preparation and, thereby, increasing the likelihood that students would be able to transition successfully. In the fall of 2012, to calibrate student achievement across the campuses, all twelve members of the consortium implemented a common assignment for use in required writing courses.

**Common writing assignment**

After reading the article provided, write two paragraphs.

- In your first paragraph, discuss the author’s argument. What evidence does the author provide to support his argument? What position is he responding to? Cite examples from the text to support your answer.
- In the second paragraph, either identify the author’s strongest claim and explain why it is strong, or identify the weakest claim and explain why it is weak. Use examples from the article to illustrate your point.
- After you have written your paragraphs, proofread and make appropriate revisions. This assignment is to be completed for both of the following readings:
  - “What You Eat is Your Business” by Radley Balko
  - “We, the Public, Place the Best Athletes on Pedestals” by William Moller

Multistate Initiatives:

1. The Multi-State Collaborative (MSC) to Advance Learning Outcomes Assessment

The MSC seeks to create a scalable way to assess essential knowledge and skills (things like written communication, quantitative literacy, and critical thinking) based on **actual student coursework** scored by faculty using standard rubrics. **Not standardized tests. Not surveys.** The work students produce for their course assignments. **Authentic** evidence of student learning resulting from their work in college.

The initiative uses the VALUE rubrics to score samples of student work from participating institutions. Select faculty from these institutions attend an in-person scorer training workshop, led by AAC&U, prior to scoring. “The MSC is designed to produce valid data summarizing faculty judgments of students’ own work, and also seeks to aggregate results in a way that allows for benchmarking across institutions and states. The primary goal of the initiative is to provide assessment data that will allow faculty and institution leaders to assess—and improve—the levels of student achievement on a set of cross-cutting outcomes important for all disciplines.” (SHEEO Website)
The pilot study focused on three learning outcomes: Written Communication, Quantitative Literacy, and Critical Thinking. In that initial year, 176 faculty scored over 7,200 student artifacts and included 76 institutions. The study showed that student papers from different assignments—rather than standardized tests, indirect surveys, or common assignments—can be used to produce valid data for comparison between institutions and to improve teaching within an institution. More specifically, the pilot successfully demonstrated that:

- A wide array of institutions can develop sampling plans to provide reliable samples of student work from across a variety of departments and that demonstrate achievement of key cross-cutting learning outcomes.

- Faculty can effectively use common rubrics to evaluate student work products—even those produced for courses outside their areas of expertise.

- Following training, faculty members can produce reliable results using a rubric-based assessment approach. More than one-third of the student work products were double-scored to establish inter-rater reliability evidence.

- Faculty report that the VALUE rubrics used in the study do encompass key elements of each learning outcome studied, and were very useful for assessing student work and for improving assignments.

- A Web-based platform can create an easily usable framework for uploading student work products and facilitating their assessment.

- Significant numbers of students nearing degree completion at two-year institutions demonstrated high or very high levels of achievement on key outcomes.

- Selected Findings on Critical Thinking: Consistent with other national studies, many students who had earned at least 75 percent of credits toward their degrees still are not achieving high levels of important critical thinking skills.

- Selected Findings on Written Communication: Nearly 50 percent of work products collected from two-year institutions were scored either “3” or “4” on “content development” in writing. About one-third of work products collected from two-year institutions were scored “3” or “4” on demonstrating the use of “sources and evidence” in writing.

- Selected Findings on Quantitative Literacy: Far more student work products collected in both two-year and four-year institutions were rated “3” or “4” on students’ “calculation” skills than were rated similarly on students’ ability to “make judgments and draw appropriate conclusions based on quantitative analysis of data.” Less than half of work products at four-year institutions and about one-third of work products at two-year institutions were rated “3” or “4” on this dimension of quantitative reasoning.

Building on the pilot’s success, the project has expanded to include 12 states and over a hundred institutions this year. The demonstration year also added a fourth (optional) learning outcome, civic engagement, and grew the number of calibrated scorers closer to a couple hundred faculty. One of the most promising benefits of the MSC has been the conversations it has started on campuses all across the country. The process of identifying which assignment might yield appropriate samples of student work to demonstrate the learning outcomes and looking at how faculty at other institutions scored this work has generated rich discussions about assignment design—e.g., exploring questions such as, “what are we asking our students to do?” “are we providing enough guidance?” “does this prompt elicit the types of outcomes we are hoping students will achieve?” “The calls are mounting daily for higher education to be able to show what students can successfully do with their learning,” said AAC&U President Carol Geary Schneider. “The VALUE Multi-State Collaborative is a very important step toward focusing assessment on the best evidence of all: the work students produce in the course of their college studies.
2. The WICHE Interstate Passport Initiative

With its Interstate Passport Initiative, the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) seeks to improve graduation rates, shorten time to degree, and save students’ time and money with a new framework for transfer based on student learning outcomes. The Interstate Passport Initiative brought together faculty from 2- and 4-year colleges and universities from multiple states in the Western region to design a better way to help students who want to transfer to a new school.

The first step was to develop a consensus set of learning outcomes in nine knowledge and skill areas that map to AAC&U’s LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes: oral communication, written communication, quantitative literacy, creative expression, human cultures, natural sciences, human society and the individual, critical thinking, and teamwork and value systems. The idea is that this set of outcomes will become the new currency for block transfer of lower-division general education.

With funding from the U.S. Department of Education, through its First in the World grant program, one aspect of the current phase of the project is concerned with engaging faculty at partner institutions to examine the types of evidence that are being used to determine student achievement of the outcomes and, therefore, eligibility for transfer.

As described on the project website, “the goal is to expand faculty understanding and choices of critical assignments in designated courses and to share ideas in competency assessment among institutions.” Much like the initial years of the MSC, the current phase of the Interstate Passport project is about laying the groundwork and proving the model for learning outcomes to become the new currency for transfer and comparisons between institutions.