



*Advancing a Massachusetts
Culture of Assessment*



Assessing Student Learning Outcomes Within and Across the Disciplines

**Regional Conference
on Assessment in
Higher Education**

Thursday, November 17, 2011
8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Greenfield Community College
Greenfield, MA

AMCOA Team Members

Pamela Annas, Associate Dean, College of Liberal Arts, University of Massachusetts Boston

Kristina Bendikas, Associate Dean for Assessment and Planning, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts

Gaelan Benway, Associate Professor of Sociology, Quinsigamond Community College

William Berry, Associate Professor, Language and Literature Department, Cape Cod Community College

Neal Bruss, Associate Professor, English Department, University of Massachusetts Boston

Ann Caso, Associate Director of Institutional Research, Framingham State University

Barb Chalfonte, Senior Research Analyst, Institutional Research, Springfield Technical Community College

Susan Chang, Director of Assessment, Framingham State University

Christopher Cratsley, Interim Director of Assessment, Fitchburg State University

Thomas Curley, Dean of Humanities, Berkshire Community College

Neal DeChillo, Associate Provost and Dean, College of Health and Human Services, Salem State University

Melissa Fama, Vice President of Academic Affairs, Mount Wachusett Community College

Kate Finnegan, Professor of Education, Greenfield Community College

James Gubbins, Assistant Professor, Interdisciplinary Studies and Faculty Fellow in Assessment, Salem State University

Wendy Haynes, Associate Professor and Coordinator of the MPA Program, Co-Chair of NEASC Steering Committee, Bridgewater State University

Lois Hetland, Faculty, Art Education, Massachusetts College of Art and Design

Peter Johnston, Dean of Academic Advising and Assessment, Massasoit Community College

Elizabeth Johnston-O'Connor, Director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness, Cape Cod Community College

Kathy Keenan, Associate Vice President for Planning and Research, Massachusetts College of Art and Design

Nina Keery, Professor of English, MassBay Community College

Susan Keith, Associate Professor of English and the English Department Chair, Massasoit Community College

Terri Kinstle, Associate Professor of Psychology, Holyoke Community College

Donna Kuizenga, Special Assistant to the Provost, University of Massachusetts Boston

David Langston, Professor of English/Communications, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts

Paul Laverty, Professor of Mathematics, Mount Wachusett Community College

David Leavitt, Director of Institutional Research, Bunker Hill Community College

Carol Lerch, Assistant Vice President of Assessment and Planning, Worcester State University

Charlotte Mandell, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, University of Massachusetts Lowell

Elise Martin, Associate Dean of Assessment, Middlesex Community College

Timothy McLaughlin, Chair of the English Department; Co-chair of Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Program (SLOAP), Bunker Hill Community College

Linda Meccouri, Professional Development Coordinator; Professor, Multi Media Technology, Springfield Technical Community College

Maureen Melvin Sowa, Professor of History, Division of Social and Behavioral Sciences, Bristol Community College

Brenda Mercomes, Academic Affairs Vice-President, Roxbury Community College

Javad Moulai, STEM Division Faculty Member, Roxbury Community College

Bonnie Orcutt, Professor of Economics and Chair, Liberal Arts and Sciences Curriculum, Worcester State University

Richard Panofsky, Assistant Chancellor for Institutional Research & Assessment, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth

Richard Parkin, Assistant Vice President/Academic Affairs, Springfield Technical Community College

Mark Patrick, Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs, Massachusetts Maritime Academy

Lisa Plantefaber, Associate Dean, Institutional Research and Assessment, Westfield State University

Charles Prescott, Assistant Professor of English, Berkshire Community College

Benjamin Railton, Associate Professor of English, Coordinator of American Studies, Fitchburg State University

Judy Raper, Director of Student Development, Greenfield Community College

Yves Salomon-Fernandez, Dean of Institutional Planning, Research and Assessment, MassBay Community College

John Savage, Faculty, Science, Middlesex Community College

Nancy Schoenfeld, Dean of Human Services & Science, Quinsigamond Community College

Dawne Spangler, Director of the Center for Teaching, Learning and Assessment, North Shore Community College

Martha Stassen, Assistant Provost, Assessment & Educational Effectiveness, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Susan Taylor, Professor, Mount Wachusett Community College

Judy Turcotte, Director of Planning and Assessment, Holyoke Community College

Suzanne Van Wert, Professor of English, Northern Essex Community College

Laura Ventimiglia, Dean for Academic Assessment, Curriculum, and Special Programs, North Shore Community College

Michael Vieira, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, Bristol Community College

Ellen Wentland, Assistant Dean of Educational Effectiveness, Northern Essex Community College

Marcellette Williams, Senior Vice President, Academic Affairs, Student Affairs & International Relations, University of Massachusetts President's Office

Amanda Woods, Professor, Science and Mathematics Department, Massachusetts Maritime Academy

Michael Young, Associate Provost for Academic Planning and Administration, Co-Chair of NEASC Steering Committee, Bridgewater State University

Ellen Zimmerman, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, Framingham State University

Conference Agenda

All locations refer to the Core of the Main Building except that of the Panel Discussion, which is in the South Wing of the Main Building.

	Location ▼
8:30 a.m. Registration and Coffee/Refreshments	Main Lobby, 1st Floor
9:00 a.m. Opening <i>Judith Turcotte</i> , Conference Co-Chair and Director of Planning and Assessment, Holyoke Community College <i>Ellen Wentland</i> , Conference Co-Chair and Assistant Dean of Educational Effectiveness, Northern Essex Community College Introduction of New AMCOA Faculty Co-Chairs <i>Neal Brass</i> , Associate Professor, English Department, University of Massachusetts Boston <i>Maureen Melvin Sowa</i> , Professor of History, Division of Social and Behavioral Sciences, Bristol Community College <i>Bonnie Orcutt</i> , Professor of Economics and Chair, Liberal Arts and Sciences Curriculum, Worcester State University Welcome <i>Robert Pura</i> , President, Greenfield Community College Remarks <i>Richard M. Freeland</i> , Commissioner, Massachusetts Department of Higher Education	Dining Commons, 1st Floor
9:30 a.m. Breakout Sessions (<i>Participants will attend one session each; see descriptions and presenters on pages 4–5.</i>)	
<i>Session 1. Assessing Student Writing at Middlesex Community College</i>	C203, 2nd Floor
<i>Session 2. Assessing Quantitative Reasoning Across the Disciplines</i>	C215, 2nd Floor
<i>Session 3. Assessing Learning Outcomes in Nursing Programs</i>	C427, 4th Floor
<i>Session 4. Assessing the Science Core at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts</i>	C201, 2nd Floor
<i>Session 5. Creative Assessment Workshop</i>	C208, 2nd Floor
10:35 a.m. Roundtables: "Collegial Conversations about Assessing Critical Thinking, Quantitative Reasoning, and Writing Skills" <i>Kristina Bendikas</i> —Discussion Leader on Writing Skills, Associate Dean for Assessment and Planning, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts <i>Elizabeth Johnston-O'Connor</i> —Discussion Leader on Critical Thinking, Director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness, Cape Cod Community College <i>Linda Meccouri</i> —Discussion Leader on Quantitative Reasoning, Professional Development Coordinator; Professor, Multi Media Technology, Springfield Technical Community College	Dining Commons, 1st Floor
11:45 a.m. Lunch: "Usable Results: How Can We Get Them?" <i>Peggy Maki</i> , Consultant for the AMCOA Project, Massachusetts Department of Higher Education	Dining Commons, 1st Floor
1 p.m. Breakout Sessions (<i>Participants will attend one session each; see descriptions and presenters on pages 5–6.</i>)	
<i>Session 6. There Must be Fifty Ways to Do Assessment</i>	C208, 2nd Floor
<i>Session 7. Liberal Arts and Sciences Outcomes Assessment: Closing the Loop or Spiraling in the Right Direction?</i>	C201, 2nd Floor
<i>Session 8. Revising Gen Ed: Being More Intentional about Student Achievement of Institutional Student Learning Outcomes</i>	C215, 2nd Floor
<i>Session 9. Creating a Culture of Assessment at North Shore Community College</i>	C203, 2nd Floor
2:05 p.m. Panel Discussion: "LEAP Affiliation in Massachusetts: Current Initiatives and Implications for Colleges" (<i>See description and presenters on page 7.</i>)	Sloan Theater, Ground Floor (South Wing)
3:00 p.m. Close	

Breakout Session Information

Session 1. Assessing Student Writing at Middlesex Community College *By Middlesex Community College*

Presenters: *Stan Hitron, (former) English Department Chair; Elise Martin, Associate Dean of Assessment*

Description: Learn about MCC's 2010 assessment of student writing using a "value-added" model to learn more about how and to what degree students develop as writers over their time at the college. Topics including collaboration with ongoing program-level assessment work, evidence collection points, assessment team-building, and integration of relevant CCSSE data will be discussed, and assessment tools and results will be shared.

Expected Outcomes:

1. Learn about the processes and approaches MCC used to assess students' writing
2. Discuss how you might adapt the College's processes and approaches for your own institution

Session 2. Assessing Quantitative Reasoning Across the Disciplines *By Holyoke Community College*

Presenters: *John Donnellan, Professor of Business; Nicole Hendricks, Professor of Criminal Justice; Terri Kinstle, Professor of Psychology; Judith Turcotte, Director of Planning and Assessment*

Description: "Quantitative Reasoning (QR) Is A 'Habit of Mind,' Competency, and Comfort in Working with Numerical Data" (Quantitative Literacy VALUE Rubric, AAC&U, value@aacu.org). Members of Holyoke Community College's General Education Assessment Committee, comprised of faculty, staff, and administration, would like to share the results of their most recent research addressing one of the College's five general education competencies: quantitative reasoning across the curriculum. Members of the Committee conducted focus groups with students and assessed outcomes with work samples from a variety of academic departments such as economics, biology, music, psychology, and math. Learn about the committee's methodology, results, and insights and ways in which you may develop tools to assist and support your institution in developing its own assessment within and across disciplines.

Expected Outcomes:

1. Learn about how the College decided to gather evidence of quantitative reasoning
2. Adapt our methodology to your institution's focus on assessing general education outcomes

Session 3. Assessing Learning Outcomes in Nursing Programs *By Northern Essex Community College*

Presenters: *Patricia Demers, Assistant Dean, Division of Health Professions; Francine P. Pappalardo, Nursing Curriculum Coordinator; Ellen Wentland, Assistant Dean, Academic Program Review, Outcomes Assessment, and Educational Effectiveness*

Description: Nursing programs annually administer tests from a National Testing organization (ATI), the content of which maps onto the programs' learning outcomes. Until 2011, when we became involved in our program review at Northern Essex Community College, useful information from these tests about students' abilities, related to our learning outcomes, had not been readily apparent nor systematically examined. We, therefore, decided to develop a template to record test data, track students' performance on specific outcomes over time, and identify any areas of persistent weakness. In this session learn about how we designed this useful template and how results can be used to inform program improvements and planning.

Expected Outcomes:

1. Use the design process followed to design your own outcomes tracking templates for any programs with similar test report data
2. Experience the usefulness of systematically recording and tracking assessment data for both program evaluation and improvement efforts

Session 4. Assessing the Science Core at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts *By MCLA*

Presenter: *Adrienne Wootters, Associate Professor of Physics; Kristina Bendikas (Facilitator), Associate Dean for Assessment and Planning, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts*

Description: In the fall of 2008, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (MCLA) began a three-year cycle of assessment of its general education science program, the Science/Technology Core Curriculum. Hear about our learning outcomes, process of assessment, and the successes, challenges, and lessons learned as we complete the first cycle and move into the next. Share your own institution's experiences with assessing a science core.

Expected Outcomes:

1. View a three-year cycle of assessing a general education science program
2. Learn what MCLA learned about its program
3. Share your own experiences with assessing a science core

Session 5. Creative Assessment Workshop *By Springfield Tech. Community College and Salem State University*

Presenter: *Janet Crosier, Associate Professor of English, Springfield Technical Community College; James Gubbins (Facilitator), Assistant Professor, Interdisciplinary Studies and Faculty Fellow in Assessment, Salem State University*

Description: In colleges where the second level of English Composition is the literature semester, one common goal for instructors is to challenge students to think both critically and analytically about literature and to respond using their own creativity and originality. Students are asked to read and respond to genres of literature, principally poetry, short story, and drama. One question then arises: "How does an instructor accurately assess a student's analysis, creativity, and critical thinking skills?" Answers might lie in final exams that go beyond the traditional essay or multiple choice question and answer patterns. Why not let students design and present creative projects that call for artistry, music, theatrics, or film? This workshop shares some creatively challenging assessments that measure reading, writing, and so much more for our English Composition II students.

Expected Outcomes:

1. Showcase best practices of creative final assessments
2. Consider how you can go beyond traditional assessment methods to capture student learning

Session 6. There Must be Fifty Ways to Do Assessment *By Greenfield Community College*

Presenters: *Anna Berry, Disability Services; Kate Finnegan, Education Faculty; Paul Lindale, Art Faculty; Judy Raper, Student Development; Anne Wiley, Psychology/Women's Studies Faculty*

Description: When we consider effective methods of assessment in higher education, often we focus on systematic and intentional means of gathering information and data. The reality is that through our relationships with students, informal conversations and observations, we are constantly gathering useful information that can enhance our instruction, programs and policies. Join Greenfield Community College faculty and staff to learn about ways we increased our awareness of the organic opportunities for assessment that abound in our work and used this learning to enhance the quality of our students' education.

Expected Outcomes:

1. Consider non-traditional means of gathering information in and outside the classroom.
2. Learn about collaborative methods faculty and staff can use to assess students' needs via programs that connect curricular and co-curricular learning.

Session 7. Liberal Arts and Sciences Outcomes Assessment: Closing the Loop or Spiraling in the Right Direction? *By Fitchburg State University*

Presenters: *Jennifer Berg, Assistant Professor of Mathematics; Christopher Cratsley, Interim Director of Assessment, Visiting Professor of Graduate and Continuing Education; Elizabeth Gordon, Assistant Professor of Geo/Physical Sciences; Benjamin Railton, Associate Professor of English, Liberal Arts and Sciences Council Chairman*

Description: Fitchburg State University's Liberal Arts and Sciences (LA&S) Curriculum addresses five student learning objectives. Our efforts to analyze data on student learning have allowed us to "loop" back and revisit our LA&S program. Rather than repeating the loop, we have headed in a new direction, defining objectives, program requirements, and assessment processes. This session will provide the audience with specific information about the LA&S course approval process that has emerged from the work of the LA&S council in 2011, including the rubrics utilized to assess the Fitchburg State University LA&S objectives and the ways in which they parallel elements of the LEAP VALUE rubrics.

Expected Outcomes:

1. Learn about a course approval process based on analysis of student work
2. Understand how the LA &S rubrics parallel elements of the LEAP VALUE rubrics

Session 8. Revising Gen Ed: Being More Intentional about Student Achievement of Institutional Student Learning Outcomes *By Middlesex Community College*

Presenters: *Elise Martin, Associate Dean of Assessment; John Savage, Faculty Chair of Gen Ed Committee*

Description: Learn how Middlesex Community College is revising its General Education program and requirements for students in order to more intentionally provide students with increased opportunities to practice and develop competency with our Institutional Student Learning Outcomes. One reason for this revision is our recent institutional-level assessment of students' writing, demonstrating to us that our graduating students are not the proficient writers that we expect them to be. This finding suggested to us that our current Gen Ed distribution requirements were not sufficient for building these essential skills and abilities – "One course does not a writer make." Attendees will be provided with an outline of MCC's new Gen Ed plan.

Expected Outcomes:

1. Learn about MCC's newly revised General Education Plan based on assessment results
2. Consider how you may want to build or rebuild your general education curriculum to improve students' general education competencies

Session 9. Creating a Culture of Assessment at North Shore Community College *By North Shore Community College*

Presenters: *Saradha Ramesh, Senior Special Programs Coordinator / Academic Assessment; Dawne Spangler, Director, Center for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment; Laura Ventimiglia, Dean for Academic Assessment, Curriculum, and Special Programs*

Description: Question: What methods are useful in encouraging overall campus support, including from faculty and administrators, for student learning outcomes assessment? Based on three broad principles—(1) Inform, (2) Communicate, and (3) Trust—learn how North Shore Community College has developed an assessment culture. By examining and redefining assessment options, we now offer an assessment menu to staff and faculty—a variety of new assessment projects at different levels, ranging from the institution level to the lesson/project level. As a result of this non-hierarchical, dynamic approach to assessment, we have built trust through open dialogue about assessment findings.

Expected Outcomes:

1. Develop strategies to promote a culture of assessment
2. Develop strategies to improve faculty buy-in and increase engagement with an assessment culture

Panel Discussion Information

Final Session. LEAP Affiliation in Massachusetts: Current Initiatives and Implications for Colleges

Presenters: *Patricia Crosson, Senior Advisor for Academic Policy, Massachusetts Department of Higher Education*
Kristina Bendikas, Associate Dean for Assessment and Planning, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts;
James Gubbins, Faculty Fellow in Assessment and Assistant Professor, Interdisciplinary Studies, Salem State University; *Elise Martin, Associate Dean of Assessment, Middlesex Community College;* *Bonnie Orcutt, Professor of Economics and Chair, Liberal Arts and Sciences Curriculum, Worcester State University;*
Judith Turcotte, Director of Planning and Assessment, Holyoke Community College; *Ellen Wentland, Assistant Dean, Academic Program Review, Assessment, and Academic Effectiveness, Northern Essex Community College;* *Peggy Maki (Facilitator), Consultant for the AMCOA Project, Massachusetts Department of Higher Education*

Description: Beginning with Patricia Crosson’s description of what a possible affiliation with LEAP (Liberal Education and American’s Promise) entails, you will hear how six institutions have aligned their general education outcomes with the LEAP outcomes and the VALUE rubrics (Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education). Learn about each campus’s experiences and participate in an alignment exercise that you may adapt for your own campus.

Expected Outcomes:

1. Learn how campuses have aligned their general education outcomes with those of LEAP
2. Use or adapt an alignment exercise for your own institution



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Additional Special Thanks to:

CONFERENCE CO-CHAIRS

Judith Turcotte, Holyoke Community College
Ellen Wentland, Northern Essex Community College

CONFERENCE PLANNING GROUP

Susan Chang, Framingham State University
Elise Martin, Middlesex Community College
Bonnie Orcutt, Worcester State University
Judy Raper, Greenfield Community College
Maureen Melvin Sowa, Bristol Community College
Lisa Plantefaber, Westfield State University
John Savage, Middlesex Community College

HOST INSTITUTION

Robert Pura, Greenfield Community College

And the Presidents, Vice Presidents, and Chief Academic Officers
of the Massachusetts Public Higher Education System