

The Variety of Assessment

Faculty, student affairs educators, and higher education professionals engage in a variety of assessment efforts as evidenced through campus collaborations, conference presentations, and scholarly writing. These efforts include learning in the academic major, general education, co-curricular learning and development, assessment methods, measurement issues, and best practices in assessment. Related assessment activities are often based on one's academic discipline, current work in student development initiatives, or curiosity about student learning and development and highlight the diversity of interests across higher education.

The contributions presented in this issue of *Research & Practice in Assessment* reflect the variety found in current assessment practices. This volume provides readers with the opportunity to understand assessment from the perspectives of students, alumni, assessment professionals, student affairs educators, and faculty members. Hopefully this array of research and practice will contribute to the variety of your assessment efforts.

The Winter 2015 issue includes four peer-reviewed articles that exemplify the variety of work taking place in higher education assessment. Dumford and Miller examine the effectiveness of arts programs from the perspectives of both students and alumni noting that the passage of time can change the opinions individuals have toward their educational experiences. Smith, Good, Sanchez, and Fulcher emphasize the importance of clearly defining commonly used assessment terms. Phrases such as “use of results” and “closing the loop” are frequently used, but are not always interpreted in the same way. The authors suggest better communication will lead to better assessment practice and ultimately to improved student learning. Two articles in this issue of *Research & Practice in Assessment* focus on assessment in the co-curriculum. Ryder and Kimball propose a conceptual model of assessment that includes reflexive practice. The authors position this model at the center of student affairs work. Hoffman articulates her findings about the perceptions new student affairs professionals have toward assessment skills. These new professionals indicate the importance of developing assessment skills and describe their skills in engaging in assessment practice.



In the reviews, Prihoda comments on *Higher Education Accreditation: How It's Changing and Why It Must*, a timely review of Gaston's book that engages readers in an examination of quality assurance processes in United States higher education. Bachen reviews *Using Evidence of Student Learning to Improve Higher Education*, a look at how to position assessment as an activity that improves student learning rather than one that is required to fulfill a mandate.

This issue also includes a Notes in Brief exemplifying the importance of faculty involvement in assessment. Ellis, Marston, Lightfoot, Sexton, Byrnes, Ku, and Black describe their approach faculty professional development in assessment. The authors describe the challenges and success of developing and executing the Assessment Leadership Institute in this submission. I hope the array of contributions in this issue inspire your assessment efforts.

Regards,

Katie Busby

Tulane University