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Compared to what? Reconsidering assessment in higher education

Gary R. Brown
Portland State University

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Compared to What?

Reconsidering Assessment in Higher Education

Gary Brown

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Senior Scholar, AAC&U

Co-Director, AAEEBL

Teaching, Learning, & Assessment Consultant

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY

World Class. Face to Face.

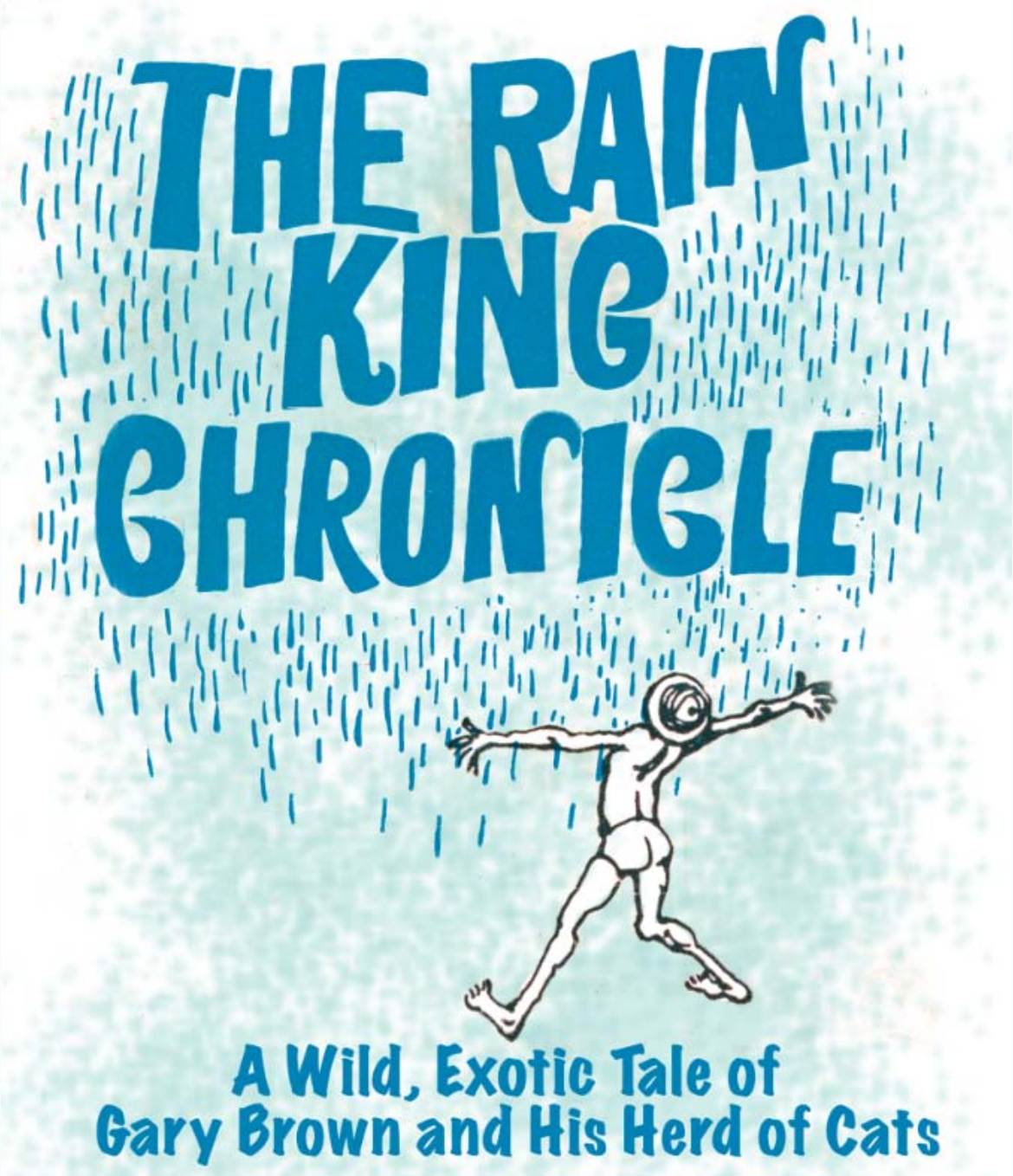
January 29, 2011

Hyatt Regency

San Francisco, California

LEAP

AAC&U Association of American Colleges and Universities



http://communitylearning.wordpress.com/category/rain-king-chronicles /

National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment

November 2009

Assessment, Accountability, and Improvement:

Revisiting the Tension

Peter T. Ewell

Foreword by George D. Kuh

Occasional Paper #1

learningoutcomesassessment.org

“There is a tension between accountability and improvement.”

—Peter Ewell

accountability
http://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/occasionalpaperone.htm
assessment for improvement

accountability

http://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/occasionalpaperone.htm

“I was convinced 20 years ago that widespread institutional attention to designing robust assessment-for-improvement programs and to taking visible action based on evidence from these programs would be sufficient to provide accountability—and would obviate the need to report measures of student achievement that can be benchmarked or compared.”

"I do not believe this today. We will need to do both in the coming years, buying the necessary time to accomplish the more needed and desirable task of building institutional infrastructures for evidence-based continuous improvement with public performance reporting" (Ewell, 2008b).

http://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/documents/PeterEwell_006.pdf

...AND NOW, AS I GO OUT INTO THE REAL WORLD...
...ARMED WITH MY DOUBLE MAJOR IN "WESTERN CIVILIZATION STINKS"...AND "READING AT A FOURTH-GRADE LEVEL"...
TINSLEY 5-19
©2009 by King Features Syndicate, Inc. World rights reserved.

Measure or Perish

December 2010

"The time is drawing to a close."

Measure or Perish

December 2010

If higher education has the courage to take responsibility for honestly assessing student learning and for publishing the results, the measuring stick will be a tool. If it doesn't, the stick could easily become a weapon.

© LIVE PENCIL

Report: States Quietly Raising Speed Limits Near Failing Schools

Measure or Perish

December 2010

Yet the prevailing attitude toward assessment still ranges from infinite caution to outright hostility.

—Kevin Carey

http://chronicle.com/article/Measure-or-Perish/125671/

"Knowing how much value an institution adds to student outcomes is, to some, a very important measure of student success."

—McPherson & Shulenberger

Student Achievement at the Institutional and Degree Level
Guidance on Disclosing Data to External Audiences, 2009, pg *9*

http://www.wascsenior.org/findit/files/forms/Task_Force_Report_on_1.2_Transparency_Accountability_.pdf

Voluntary System of Accountability Program®

Undergraduate Education Reports

College Portrait of Undergraduate Education
Voluntary System of Accountability

Sponsored by AASCU & A•P•L•U

INSIDE VSA

- Home
- About VSA
- About the College Portrait
- VSA Participants by State
- VSA Research
- Learning Outcomes Workshops
- VSA Background & Development
- Sign up for VSA
- Contact Us
- Participant Login

The VSA Online

The Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA) is an initiative by public 4-year universities to supply basic, comparable information on the undergraduate student experience to important constituencies through a common web report – the College Portrait.

The VSA was developed in 2007 by a committed group of university leaders and is sponsored by two higher education associations - the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) and the Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU).

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In the News ...

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Click here for more details.

Visit the College Portrait Website!

Explore over 300 college portraits from public universities across the nation at
www.collegeportraits.org.

© Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA)

Masada
72 AD

Romans breached the wall of the fortress. When they entered the fortress they discovered that its 960 inhabitants had set fire to everything and committed mass suicide.

ASSESSMENT TO IMPROVE

All of the CLA's products and services center on open-ended performance tasks that mirror the types of challenges students will be faced with after graduation. CLA Performance Tasks are designed to measure growth in four key areas:

CRITICAL THINKING
ANALYTIC REASONING
PROBLEM SOLVING &
WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

randomly assigned a CLA task. Students sit for the assessment for approximately 90 minutes. Freshmen test within a 10-week fall window. Seniors test within a 10-week spring window.
To enroll, contact cla@cae.org or 212.217.0700.

These tools accentuate the importance of using assessment as a means to improve teaching and learning, not just as an exercise in accountability.
For more info, contact classroom@cae.org or 212.217.0700.

"CAMPUS AND STATE OFFICIALS SHOULD DO MORE TO STRESS THE BROADER SOCIAL PURPOSE OF ASSESSING LEARNING AND DO MORE TO FOCUS ATTENTION ON HOW THE DATA CAN BE USED TO MAKE IMPROVEMENTS

Collegiate Learning Assessment

"The vast m *U.S. exercise*
little choice *' because the*
primary drive *stitution*
location and

"Even where *xist among*
selective instit *ner*
education, info *c*
performance is

Zemsky, 2005, in Ewell, 2010

assessment for improvement

Academically Adrift

Is this OK?

"By every possible measure the majority of college graduates are far from prepared for the challenges of either the economy or our democracy."

—Carol Geary Schneider, president
American Association of Colleges and Universities
http://www.aacu.org/liberaleducation/le-wi10/le-wi10_president.cfm

“Weighing the lamb doesn’t fatten the lamb!”

—Jonathan Kozol

"Trust us."Won't Cut It Anymore

http://chronicle.com/article/Trust-Us-Wont-Cut-It/125978/?sid=at&utm_source=at&utm_medium=en

Kevin Carey

January 18, 2011

Deep down, everyone knows that learning has long been neglected. But they don't want to know.

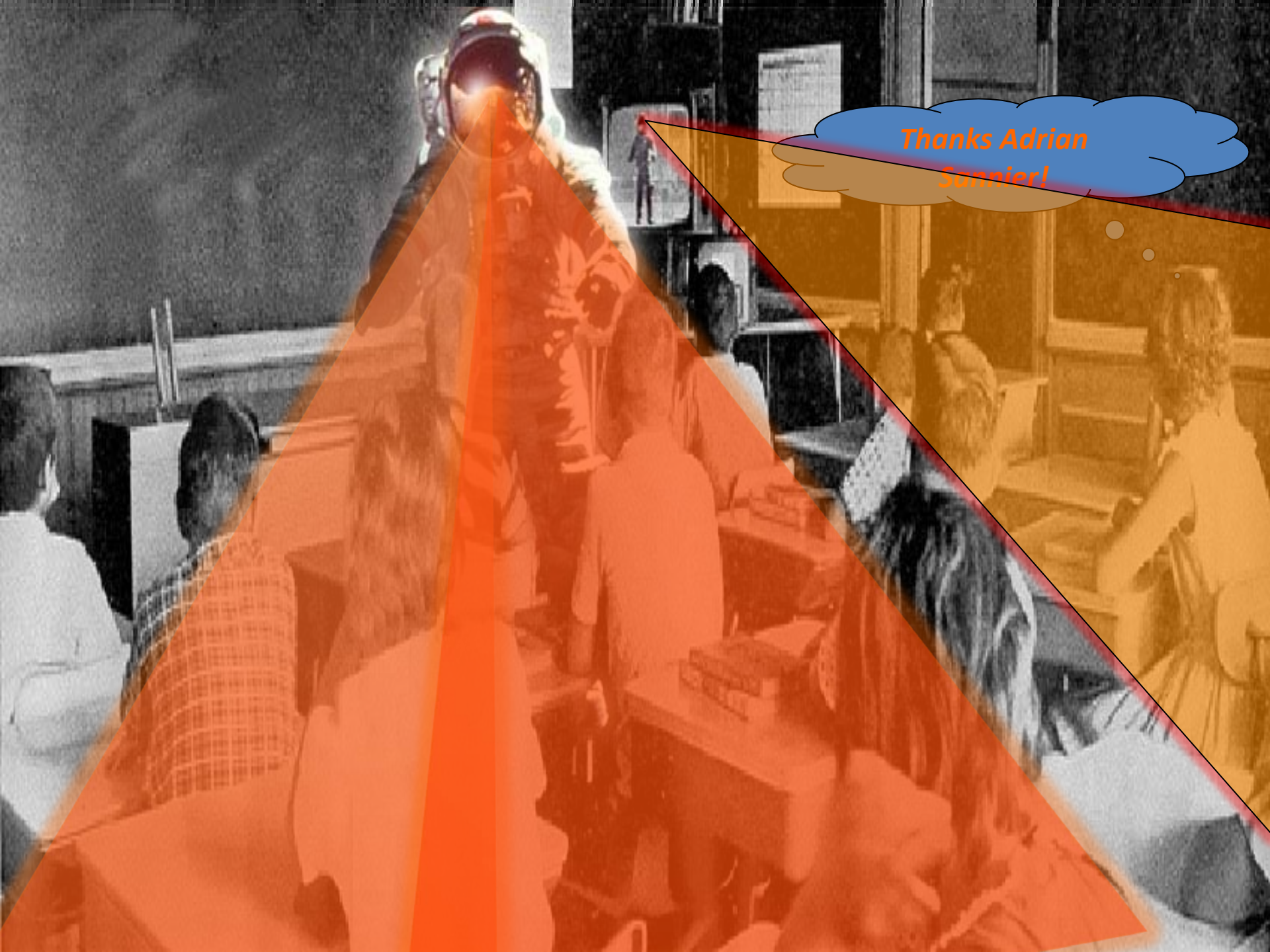
Policy makers don't want to know.

Faculty don't want to know.

Students don't want to know.

College presidents don't want to know, because fixing the problem means arguing with faculty.

"Daddy works in a magical, faraway land called Academia."


Thanks Adrian Sannier!

The Institutional Response

The Good Old Days

	My Class	Your Class	His Class	Her Class	Another Class
1st Year Content	✓				
2nd Year Content		✓	✓		
3rd Year Content					
4th Year Content					
Capstone Content					✓

When is an e-Portfolio not an e-Portfolio?

Tuesday, 5 January 2010

AAEEBL The Association for Authentic, Experiential and Evidence-Based Learning

"The Portfolio should not be considered as a [illegible] all that a student has ever produced [illegible] think that Margo has a particular aud[illegible] mble of evidences."

"Rather the Portfolio should be seen as that selec[illegible] appropriate artefacts, either work in progress or completed [illegible] that the learner feels are the be[illegible] exemplars [illegible] ning processes."

"The e-Portfolio should be that organised and well presented selection of artefacts supported by intelli[illegible] context for a particlar audience."

The professional association for the world ePortfolio community

Common ePortfolio Assessment Matrix

	Outcome #1	Outcome #2	Outcome #3	Outcome #4	Outcome #5
1st Year Content	✓				
2nd Year Content		✓			
3rd Year Content			✓		
4th Year Content				✓	
Capstone Content					✓

→→→ **Gap, AZ**

Margo Responds

http://indigifem.blogspot.com/2010/01/new-toy-map-universe-naah-its.htm

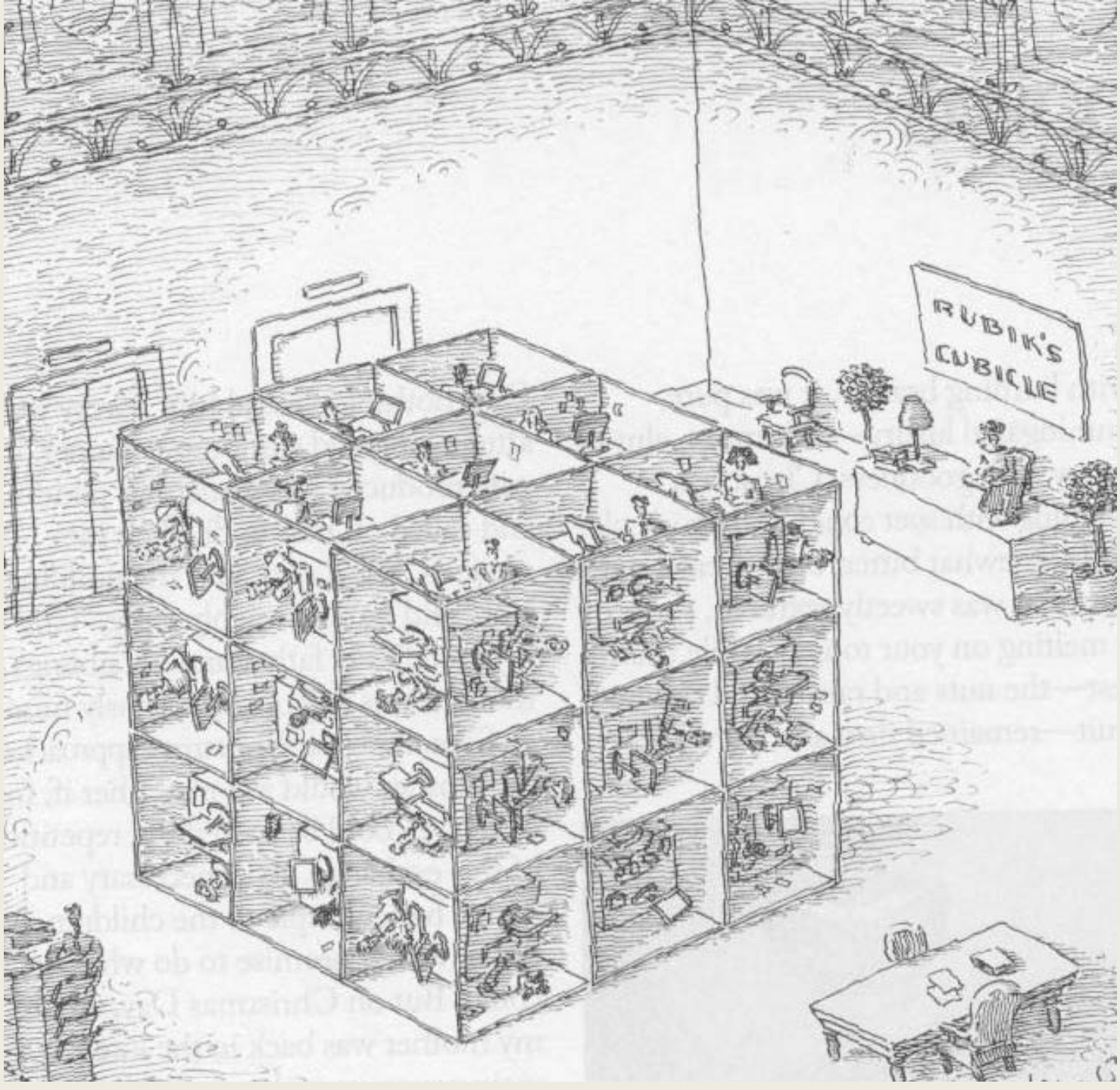
"I would advise anyone who is seriously committed to the larger structural uses of E-portfolios by contemporary students-- who by the way do not view the college classroom as their most significant 'center' of knowledge and tool acquisition-- to examine their assumptions about knowledge and power and the political will of the Indigenous peoples."

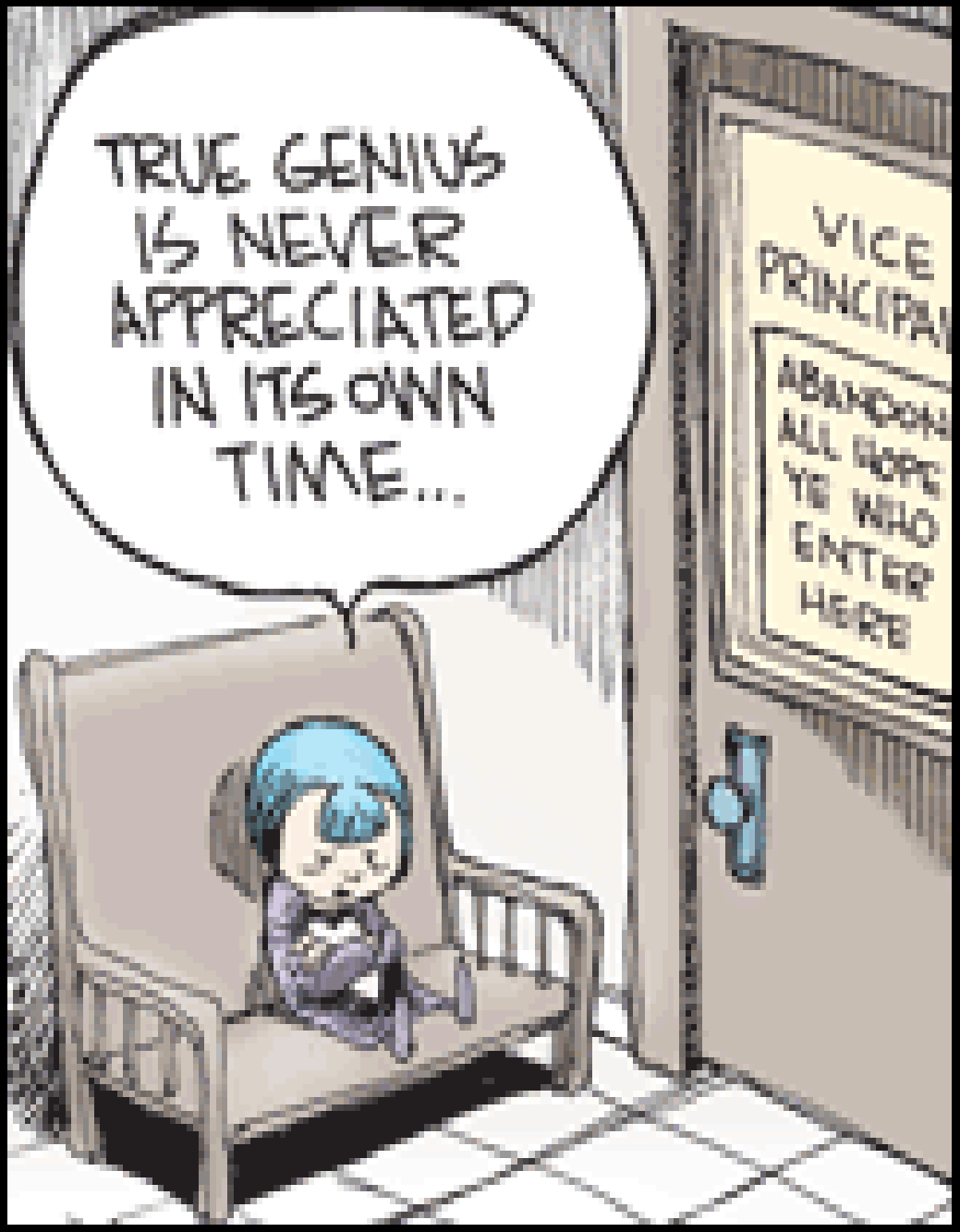
We need a new framework. Why such rigid parameters about the 'tumble' of what comprises knowledge and the process of creation and synthesis?

This makes students' real lives, experiences and real 'selves' rather flat and ordinary and I must also add, rather 'lumped' together in predictability.

Aren't we really having layered conversations at each other and not with each other, referring to the always flattening strata created by this approach to thinking about learners' ways of knowing and being ...? You speak to the layer of the strata which owns you...and which you work for, truly.

Who is the efolio or eportfolio truly for? Judges?


RUBIK'S
CUBICLE


TRUE GENIUS IS NEVER APPRECIATED IN ITS OWN TIME...
VICE PRINCIPAL
ABANDON ALL HOPE YE WHO ENTER HERE!

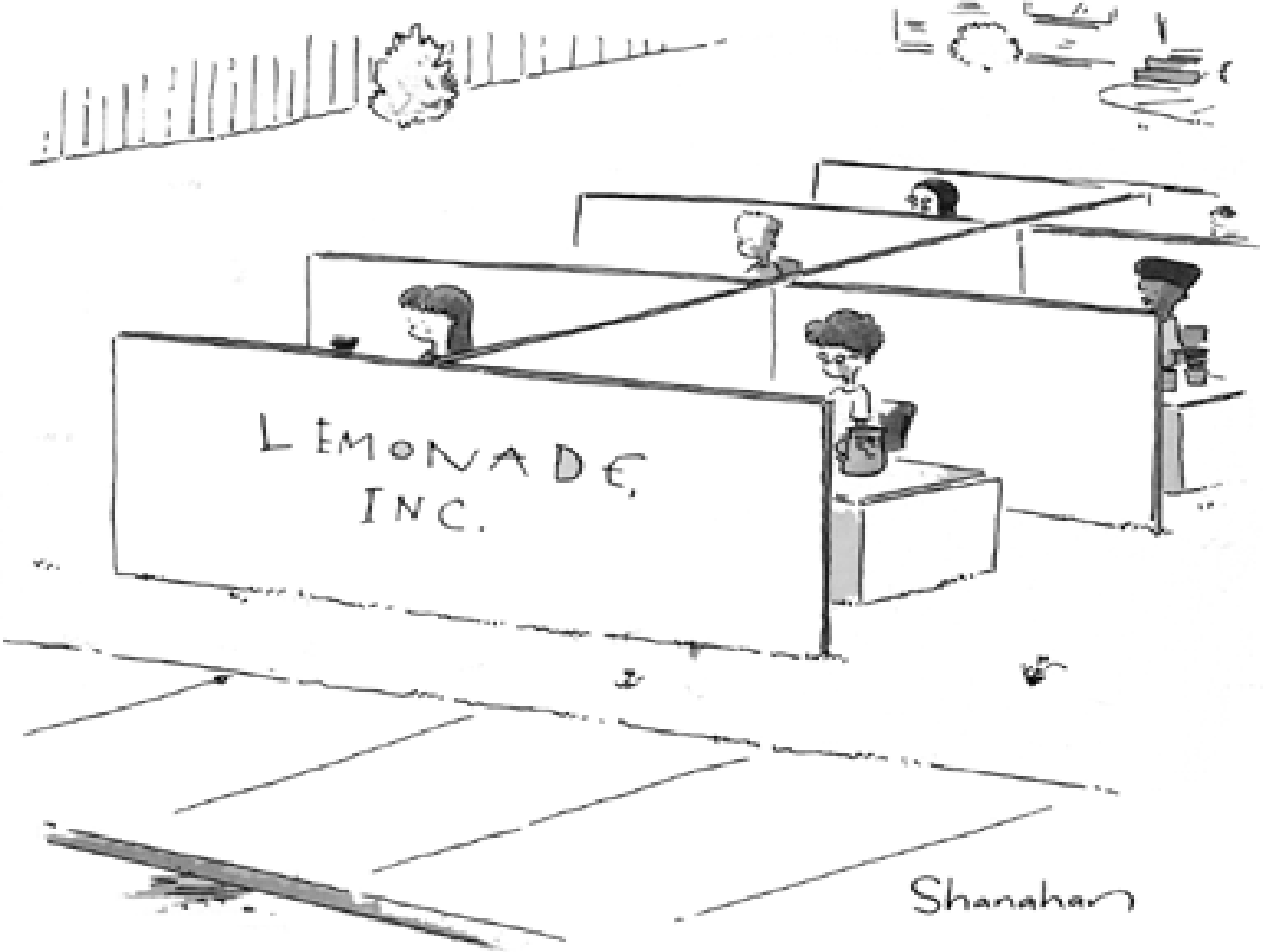
The Creativity Crisis

http://www.newsweek.com/2010/07/10/the-creativity-crisis.html

American creativity scores are falling.

A recent IBM poll of 1,500 CEOs identified creativity as the No. 1 "leadership competency" of the future.

Preparing Tomorrow's Workforce!

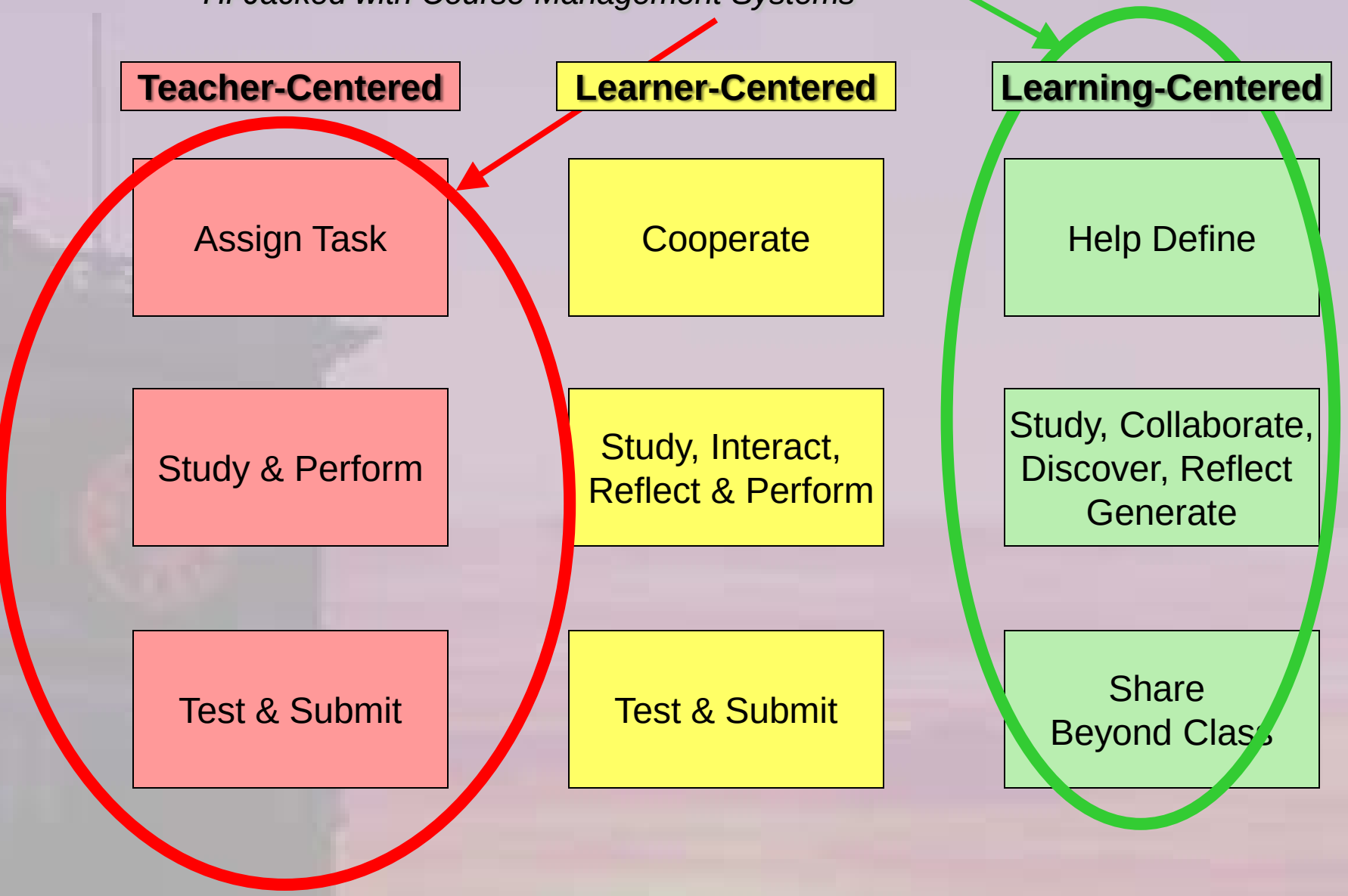

LEMONADE
INC.
Shanahan

“I’ll be happy to give you innovative thinking. What are the guidelines?”

The WSU *Inter/National Coalition For Electronic Portfolio Research* Study

Promote > Student Agency

Hi-Jacked with Course Management Systems



Key Findings

Learning-Centered

1. Are likely to be familiar with ePortfolios & interested in adoption
2. Value learning growth & sharing knowledge over term
3. Significantly value using multimedia
4. Significantly value building community

Key Findings

Learner-Centered

1. Significantly value learning growth & sharing knowledge over term
2. Low value in building community
3. Significantly value using multimedia

Key Findings

Teaching-Centered

1. Value course management
2. Do NOT value
   - ***learning growth***
   - ***sharing knowledge***
   - ***building community***
   - ***using multimedia***
3. Are unfamiliar with ePortfolios & not likely to use
4. ***Request training on tools and on the value of the tools.***

Demographics

- No significant difference by rank
- No significant difference by teaching experience
- Gender difference in perceived challenges:
  - Male faculty < Female faculty

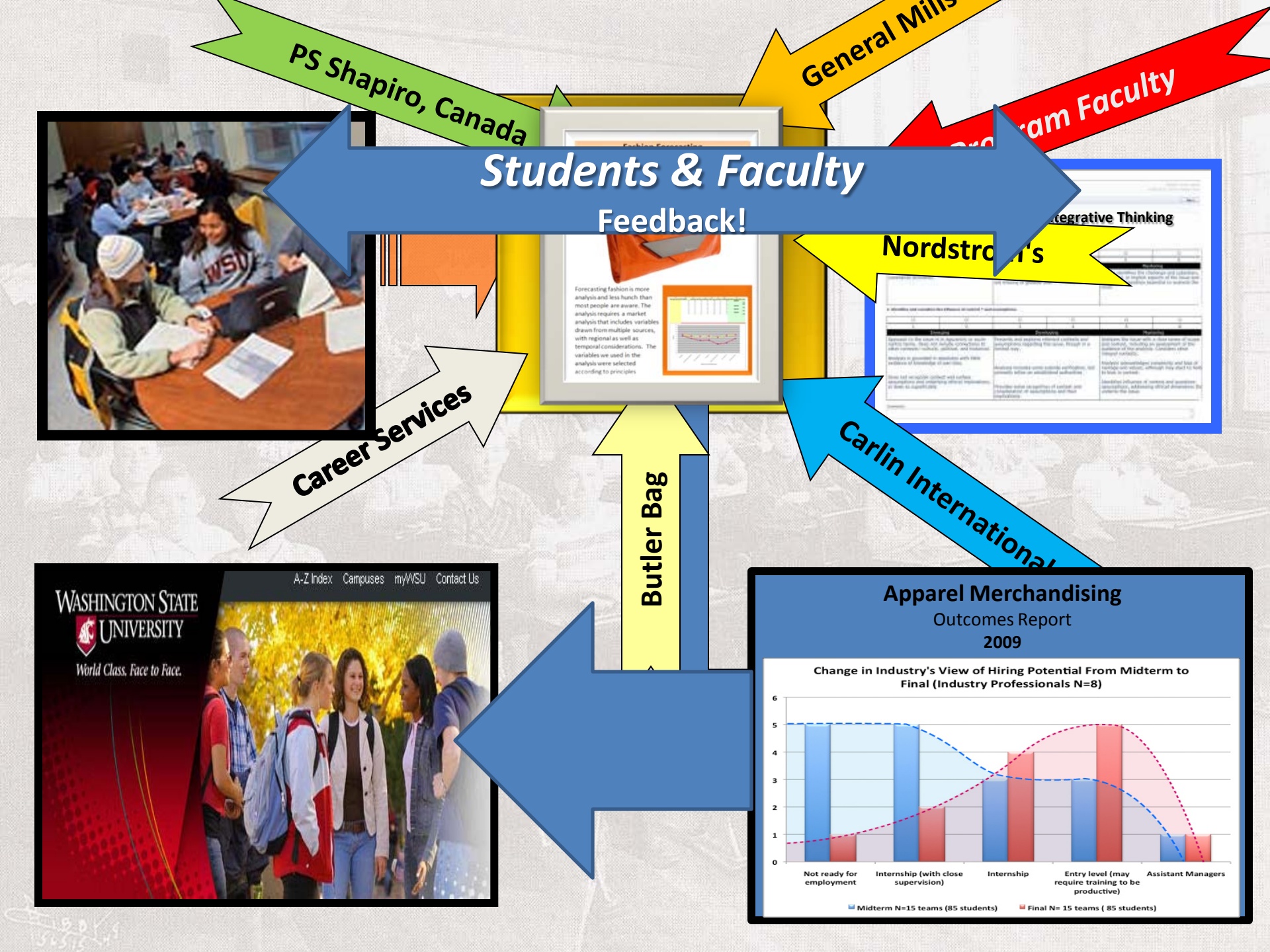
Amino Acids
How do you assess a tumble of work?

blinklist beta
shadows
clipmarks
del.icio.us
omni drive
PROTOPAGE
FREE PERSONAL START PAGES
reddit
remember the milk BETA
digg
TOPIX.NET
Allmydata.com
democracy 2.0
THE ACTIVE COMMONS
Basecamp
Ta-da Lists
a part of Basecamp
start
technology preview
Shutterbook
TailRank
βeta
glide
effortless
flickr BETA
voo2do
gabbr.com
a social news community
zoto
openomy
Xdrive
The Internet Hard Drive
digg
slashdot
del.icio.us
diggdot.us
Zoho Writer
Alpha
katrinalist.net
UNITES FAMILY & FRIENDS
(beta) writely
home
Writeboard
by 37signals
memeorandum
Findory
Rallypoint
kiko BETA
Blogniscient
The bird's eye view of the Blogosphere
CentralDesktop
organize, share, collaborate
CalendarHub

The WSU Initiative

“An emerging, complex and adaptive system….”

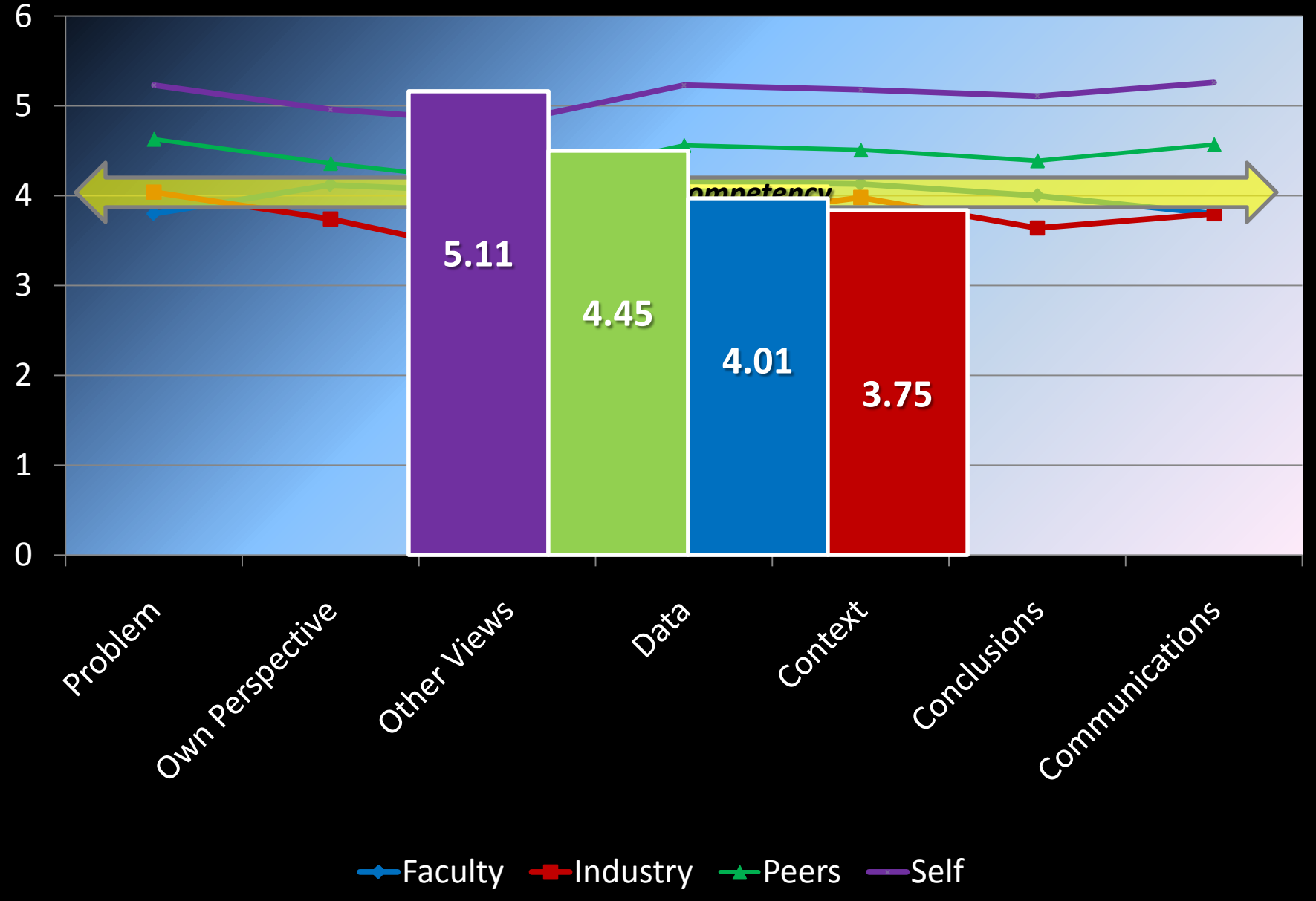
—Mark C. Taylor


PS Shapiro, Canada
General Mills
Program Faculty
Students & Faculty
Feedback!
Nordstrom's
Career Services
Butler Bag
Carlin International
Forecasting fashion is more analysis and less hunch than most people are aware. The analysis requires a market analysis that includes variables drawn from multiple sources, with regional as well as temporal considerations. The variables we used in the analysis were selected according to principles
Integrative Thinking
A-Z Index
Campuses
myWSU
Contact Us
WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
World Class. Face to Face.
Apparel Merchandising
Outcomes Report
2009
Change in Industry's View of Hiring Potential From Midterm to Final (Industry Professionals N=8)
0
1
2
3
4
5
6
Not ready for employment
Internship (with close supervision)
Internship
Entry level (may require training to be productive)
Assistant Managers
Midterm N=15 teams (85 students)
Final N= 15 teams (85 students)

Feedback can be routed back to multiple audiences.

The Harvesting Gradebook

Project Critical Thinking Ratings by Group



“A class of experts is inevitably so removed from common interests as to become a class with private interests and private knowledge.”

—John Dewey

Faculty

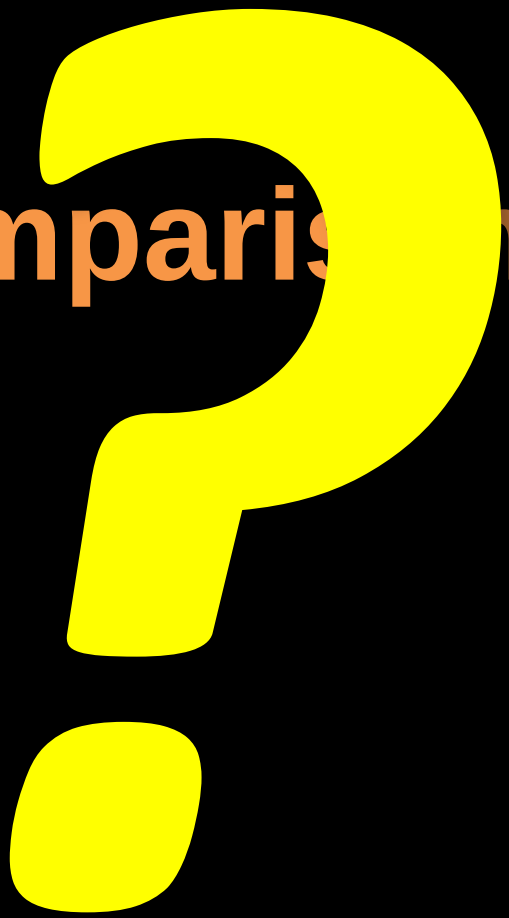
Industry

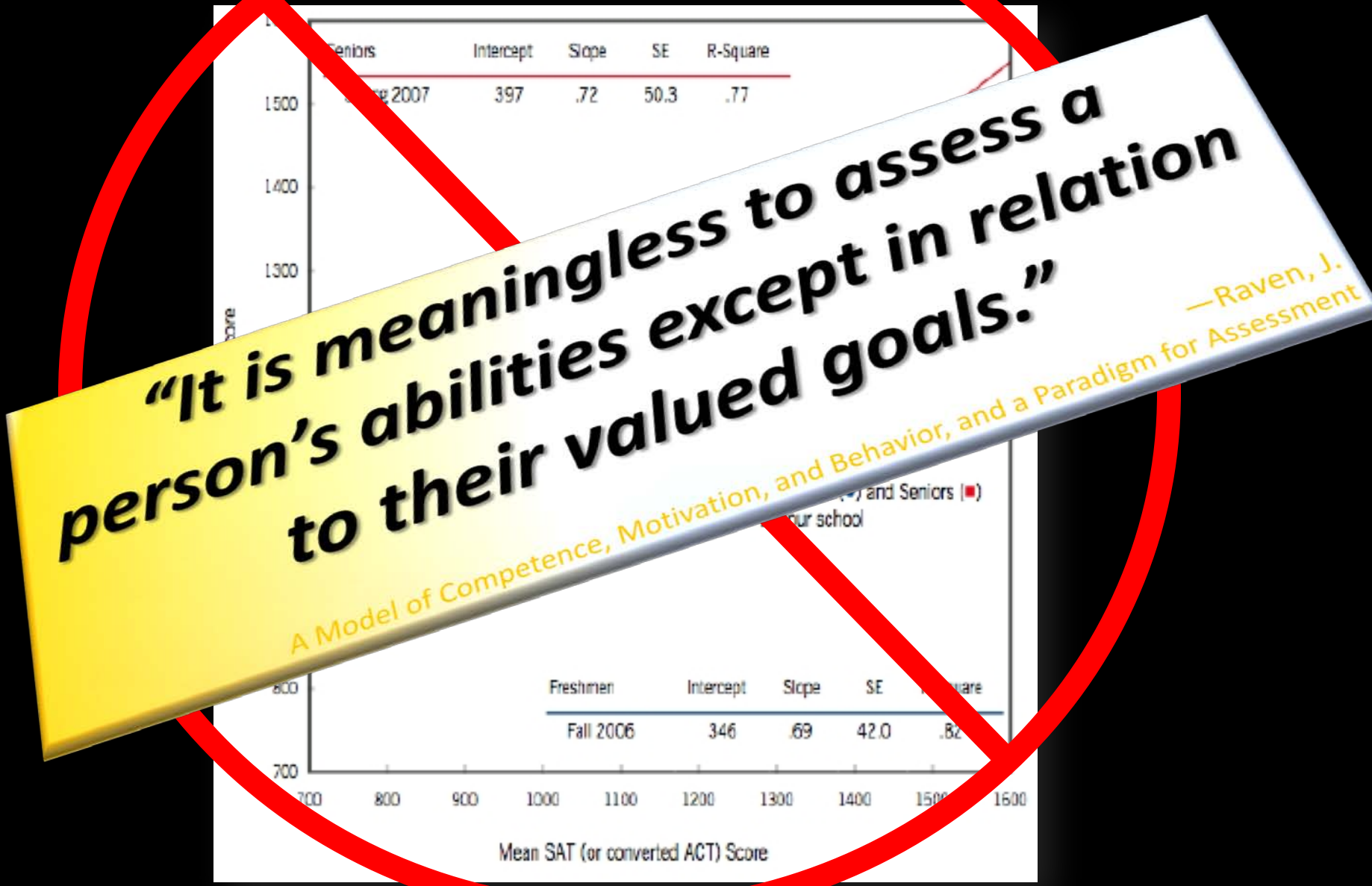
Employers Say…

“My business partner and I were so impressed with the work of the students assigned to our two teams that we have asked them to contact us regarding summer internships... ”

“We would be happy to participate in similar projects in the future and/or arrange introductions to other companies who might also be interested.”

What Comparison Matters




Seniors Intercept Slope SE R-Square
2007 397 .72 50.3 .77
1500
1400
1300
and Seniors
ur school
Freshmen Intercept Slope SE
Fall 2006 346 .69 42.0
700
800
900
1000
1100
1200
1300
1400
1600
Mean SAT (or converted ACT) Score
"It is meaningless to assess a person's abilities except in relation to their valued goals."
—Raven, J.
A Model of Competence, Motivation, and Behavior, and a Paradigm for Assessment

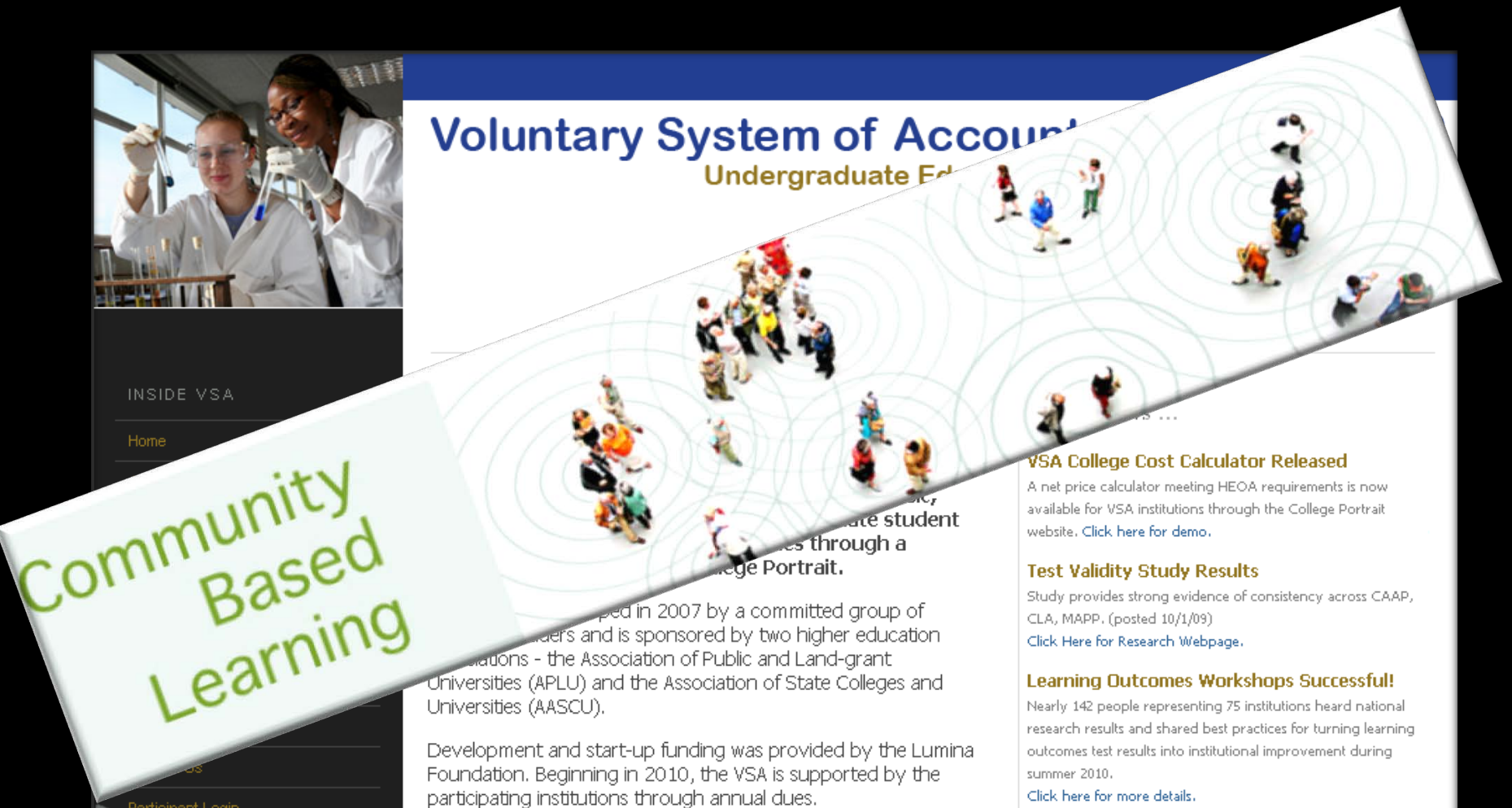
INSIDE VSA

Home

Participant Login

Voluntary System of Accoun

Undergraduate Ed



Community Based Learning

ate student

s through a

ege Portrait.

ped in 2007 by a committed group of
ders and is sponsored by two higher education
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© Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA)

Northwest Commission on
Colleges and Universities
NWCCU

1. Institutional SYSTEM of assessment
2. Assessment review every 2 years
3. Professional Accreditation will not suffice for NWCC&U

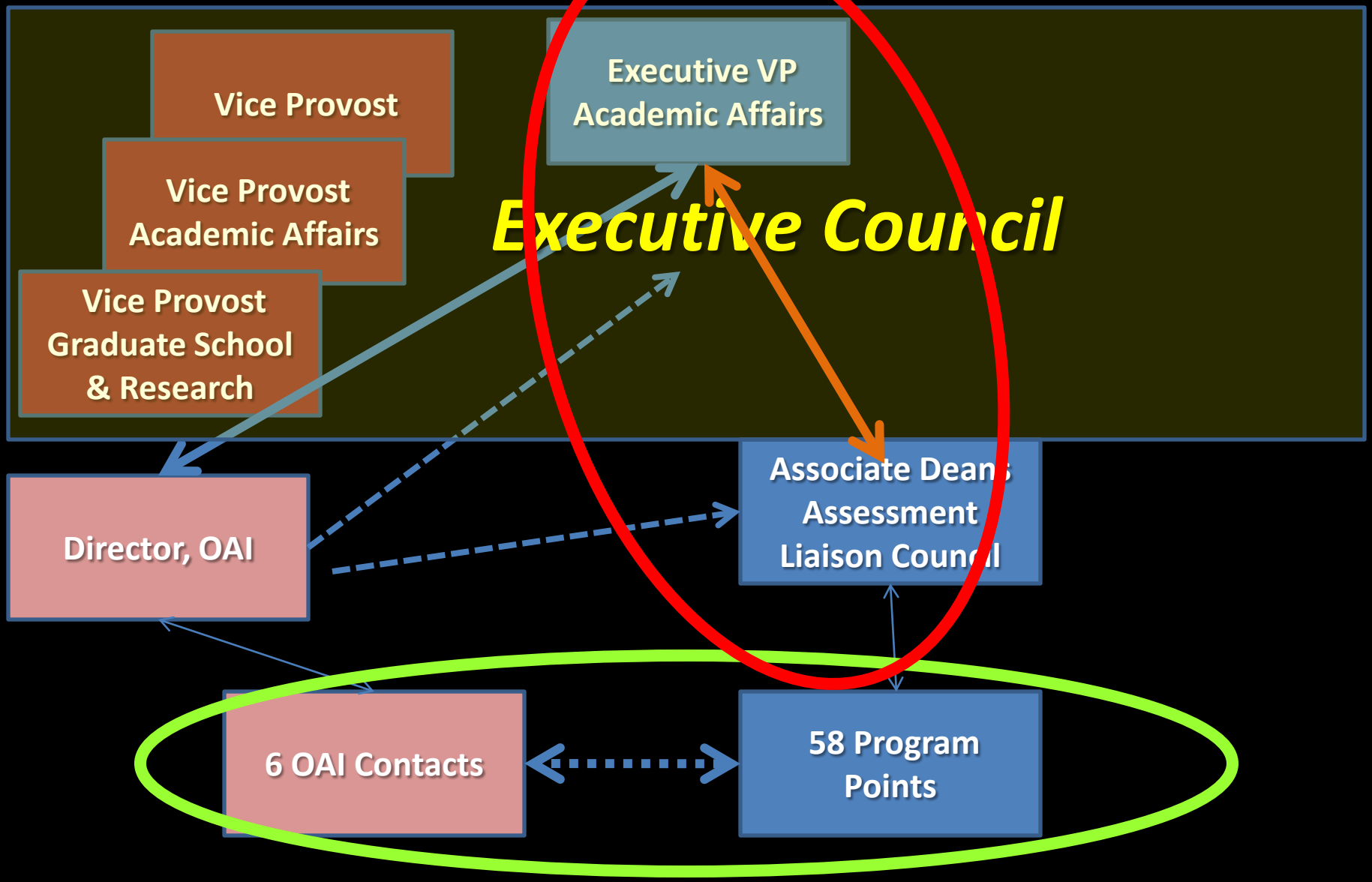
“All means all."

Northwest Commission for Colleges and Universities to WSU

The Center for Teaching, Learning & Technology

From student ePortfolios to Institutional Assessment Portfolio

The Administrative Structure



Genuine

instructor/programmatic
curiosity for improvement

Genuine Evaluation

Patricia J Rogers and E Jane Davidson

http://genuineevaluation.com/sincerity-in-evaluation-highlights-and-lowlights/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed:+GenuineEvaluation+(Genuine+Evaluation)&utm_content=Google+Feedfetcher

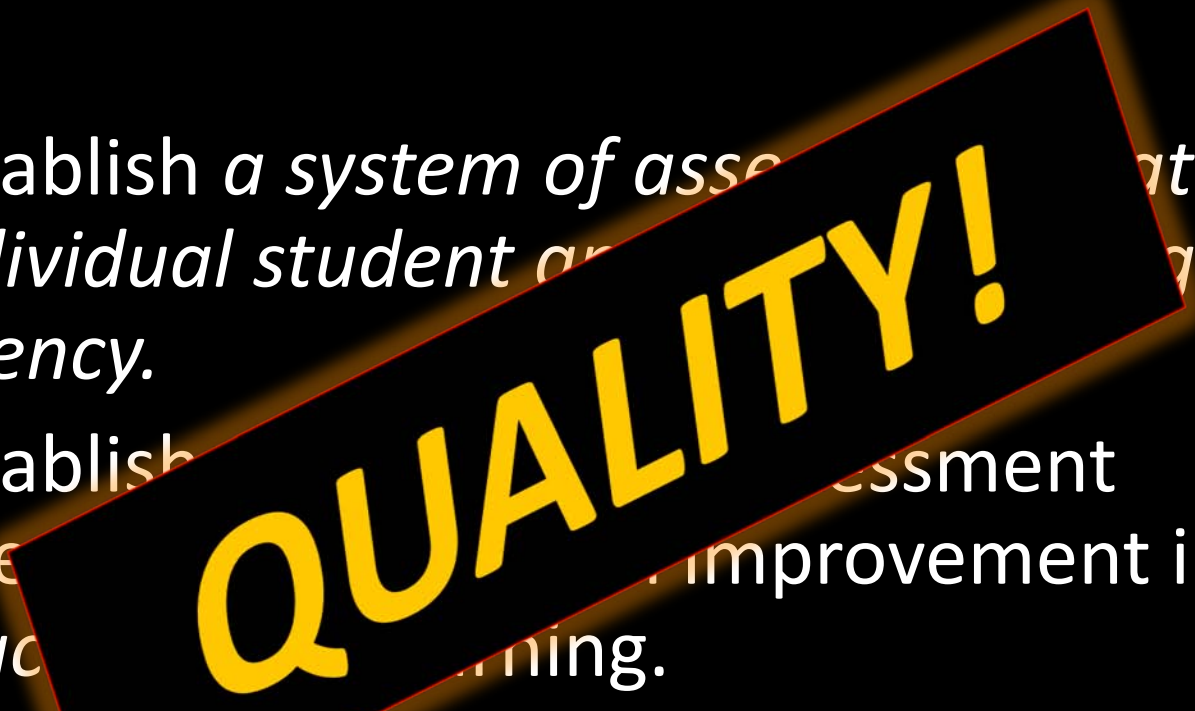
5 important attributes:

1. **VALUE-BASED -transparent and defensible values, criteria of merit and worth and standards of performance**
2. **EMPIRICAL – credible evidence about what has happened and why**
3. **USABLE – reported in such a way that it can be understood and used by those who can and should use it**
4. **SINCERE – a commitment by those commissioning evaluation to respond to information about both success and failure**
5. **HUMBLE – acknowledges its limitations**

IF YOU CAN
FAKE SINCERITY
YOU CAN FAKE
PRETTY MUCH
ANYTHING

The Three WSU Assessment Goals

1. Establish *a system of asse* *at affords individual student a* *gram agency.*
2. Establish essment (fee improvement in *teac* ning.
3. Deep ur organizational understanding of the valuable uses (and misuses) of assessment.



QUALITY!

Assessment As Lens

Assessment As Mirror

Assessment of Assessment

Overview

It is expected that each program will focus and implement assessment in ways appropriate to its own distinct context, needs, and questions.

		Minimal		Emerging		Developing		Adequate		Effective		Outstanding	
	0		1		2		3		4		5		6
1	ABSENT	**Assessment Team and System** The assessment process engages program faculty, leadership, students and other stakeholders involved with the program (cross-institutional faculty, accreditors, alumni, advisory boards, and employers) as appropriate. The system is recurring and dynamic. It is implemented and refined over time for continuous improvement.											

		Minimal		Emerging		Developing		Adequate		Effective		Outstanding	
	0		1		2		3		4		5		6
2	ABSENT	**Program Goals, Outcomes, and Measures** Goals and outcomes reflect stakeholder consensus and, curricular alignment, and support WSU strategic initiatives. Multiple evidence-based measures are complementary and are designed to illuminate questions faculty and administration care about, yielding useful information.											

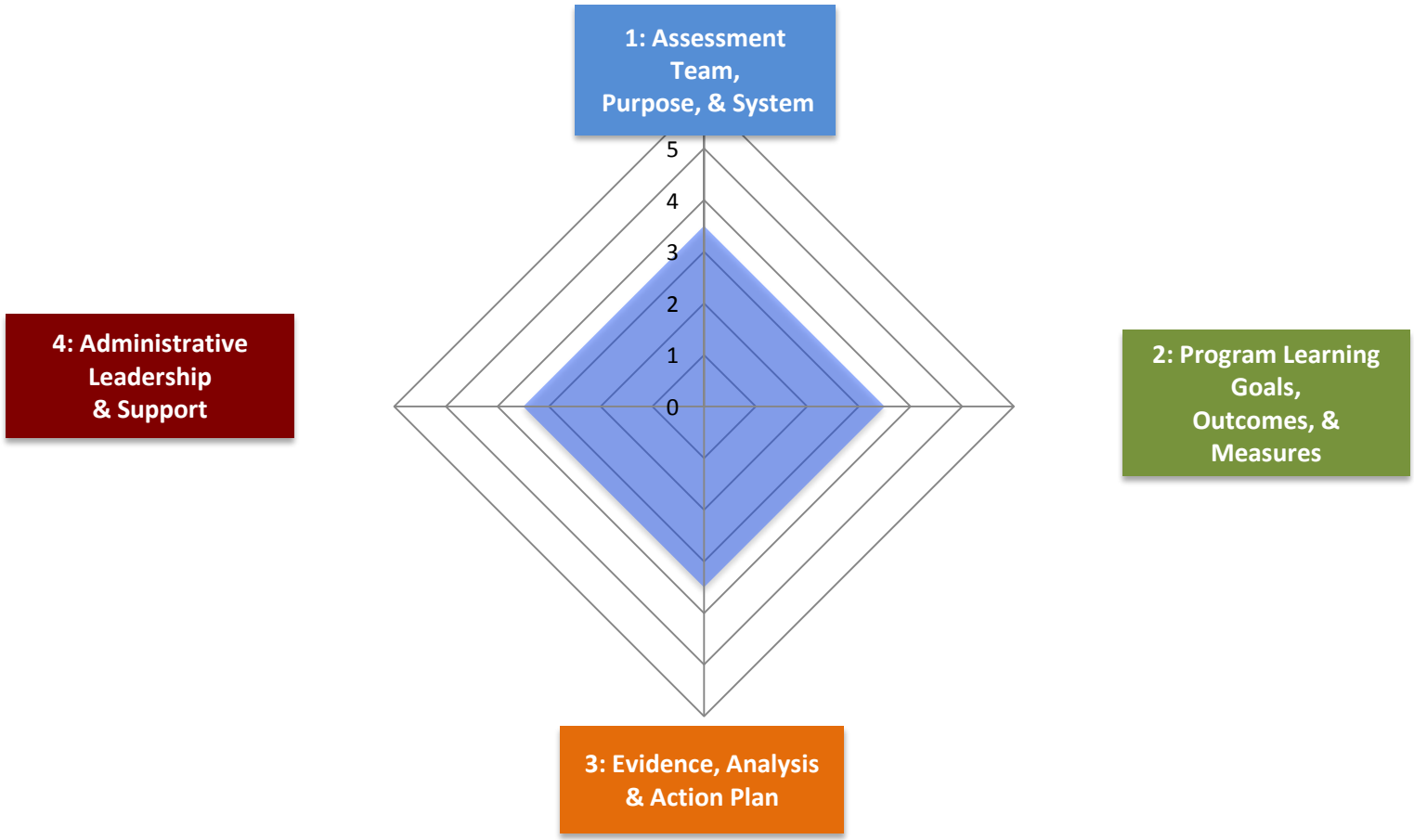
		Minimal		Emerging		Developing		Adequate		Effective		Outstanding	
	0		1		2		3		4		5		6
3	ABSENT	**Analysis and Action Plan*** Assessment system informs and guides demonstrable change and engages all instrumental program personnel in the scholarship of teaching and learning. There is follow-through with actions that may include changes and improvements to pedagogy, curricula, faculty development, and/or assessment practices in order to enrich the student learning experience.											

**It is not necessary to fill out the "Analysis and Action Plan" section for the December 18, 2009 report.*

		Minimal		Emerging		Developing		Adequate		Effective		Outstanding	
	0		1		2		3		4		5		6
4	ABSENT	**Administrative Leadership & Support** The assessment process is prioritized and robustly supported by program leaders, including significant allocation of time and resources. The policy engages all relevant stakeholders. The assessment process yields information used by administration and faculty with demonstrable impact on curriculum, teaching practice, and student learning outcomes.											

Focus on Program Assessment

Team & System	Goals & Measures	Evidence & Action	Leadership



The Invitation

Team and System

"To be ultimately successful, any meaningful assessment effort must be embraced widely by instructors."

—From "Assess This!"

"Online assessment communities link local faculty members in collaborative work to develop shared norms and teaching capacity, and then link local communities with each other in a growing system of assessment."

—Trudy Banta

http://learningoutcomesassessment.org/documents/AlternativesforAssessment.pdf

Goals, Outcomes, Measures

For assessment to "have meaning beyond an individual institution:"

1. Are public and shared with those who have responsibility for teaching and learning—not the federal government, and not the testing companies.

2. Anchored "in the curriculum that faculty teach."[2]

[2](New Leadership, Student Learning, Accountability, AAC&U p.5)

3. Are understandable to someone other than the institution itself.

4. Reflect "some kind of standard."

—From CHEA

Evidence & Actio

1. Evid … e on
2. … at
3. V … t.
4. Ac … tro

"The self assessment and a block assessment completed by students have been in place for 5 – 6 years. There is lots of data. I am not aware that it has been used in any way."

—Grant Wiggins

Assessing Student Performance.

Policy makers and the news media should be less concerned with where an institution falls in the performance distribution than with what the results signify and what is to be done about them.

Leadership

"One factor really helps make institutional effectiveness successful—If institutional leaders really value assessment results and use them to inform important decisions on important goals."

—Linda Suskie, Vice President
Middle States Commission on Higher Education
http://www.magnetmail.net/actions/email_web_version.cfm?recipient_id=198983778&message_id=890730&user_id=MAGNA_FF&group_id=265312

Quality?

Systematic *Responsiveness* to Changing Contexts

What to Report?

Here's Looking at You:

Transparency, Institutional Self-Presentation, and the Public Interest

Alexander C. McCormick

November/December 2010 Change, , pp. 35-43.

"Transparency demonstrates that the academy takes its education mission seriously."

“Such openness is risky.”

Transparency….

“Strategic Image Management”

—Alexander C. McCormick
November/December 2010 Change, , pp. 35-43.

Dear …. Alumni and Friends

January 4, 2011

I am pleased to announce that, once again our university is ranked among the "Best Values for Public Education" by *Kiplinger's Magazine*.

Factors contributing to our success include low student-to-faculty ratio (15:1) a solid freshman retention rate (84 percent), and **a high-quality education….**

- *US News and World Report's* ranking of ……
- the Wall Street Journal's top-25 ranking of ….

We are confident that the rest of the country is hearing the message that all of us have long ……

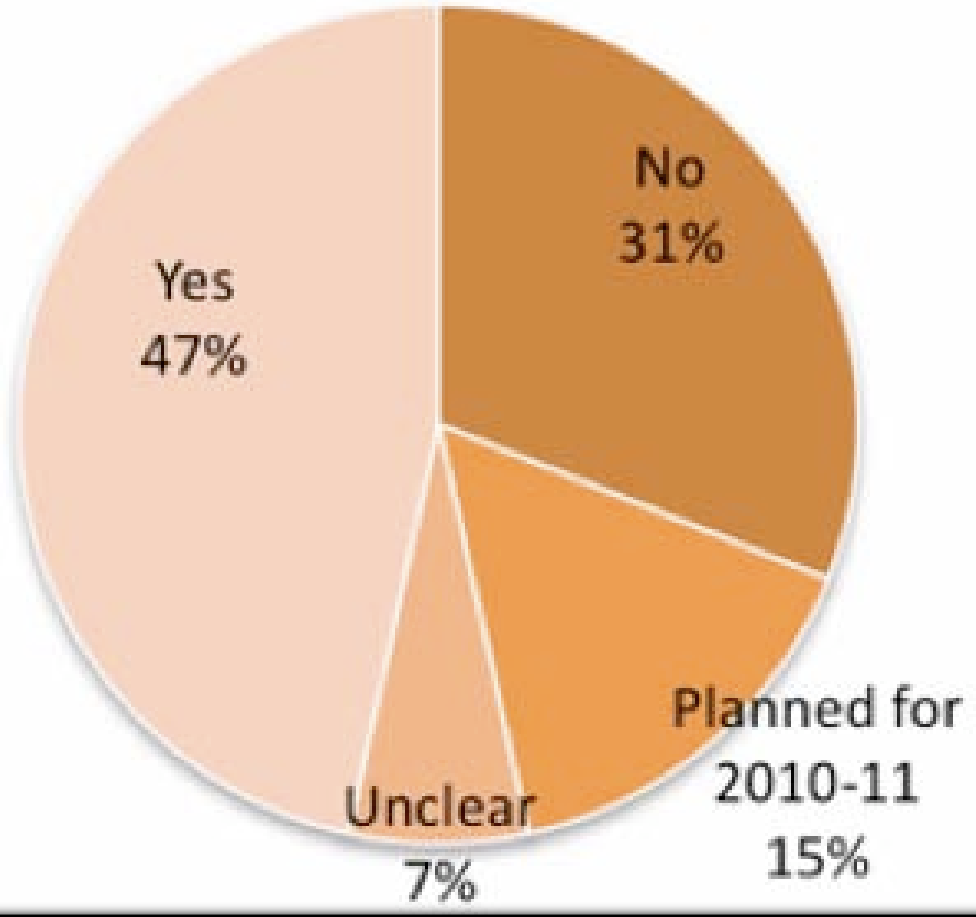
The emphasis should be on transparency regarding a different part of the assessment cycle: action plans and interventions, followed by careful evaluation of whether those interventions achieve the desired results" (43).

What to Report?

The percentage of programs collaborating with communities of practice….

25% at December 2009 Report—
47% in fall 2010

Stakeholders Have Reviewed Goals/Outcomes



Stakeholders Have Reviewed Student Work

Chemical Engineering has now involved Development officer in recruitment for engaging stakeholders.

What to Report?

WSU's Progress on Establishing a Robust Systems of Assessment

WSU Assessment System—Year 1

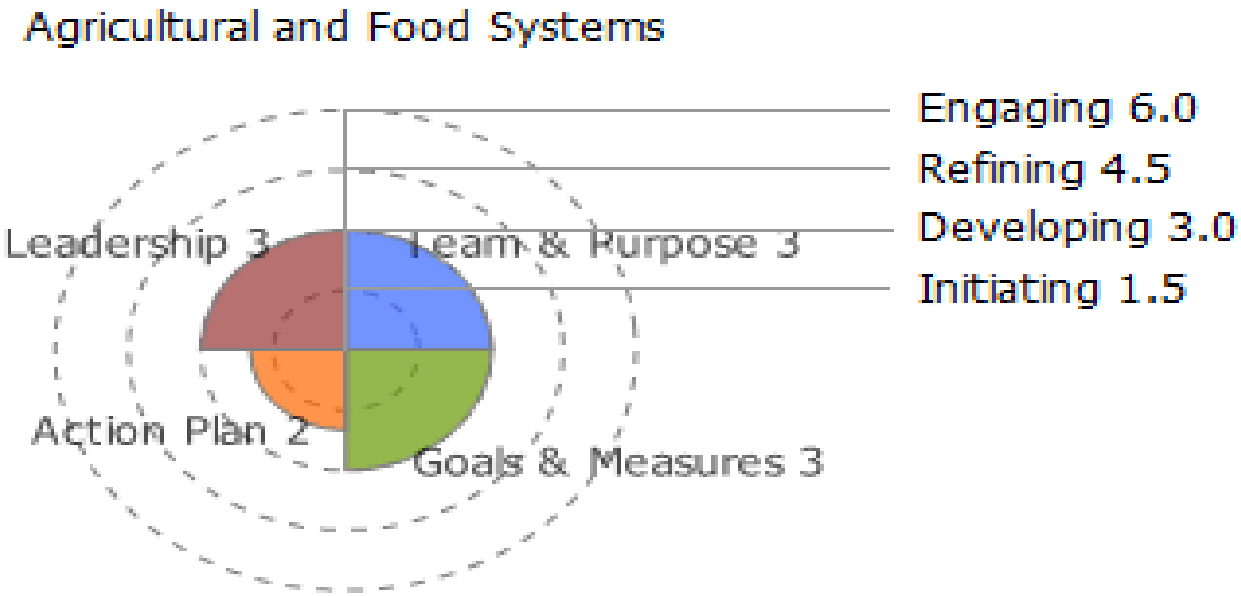
	Team & System	Goals & Measures	Evidence & Action	Leadership
Number of Programs	58	58	58	58
Mean	2.38	2.56	2.05	2.06
Standard Deviation	1.06	1.04	1.00	1.11
Minimum	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Maximum	6.0	5.5	6.0	6.0
1st Quartile	1.5	2.0	1.5	1.0
Median	2.5	2.5	2.0	2.0
3rd Quartile	3.0	3.5	2.5	3.0
Mode	{2.0}	{2.0}	{2.0}	{1.0}
Inter-Rater Reliability (allowing 1 point difference)	79%	86%	74%	82%

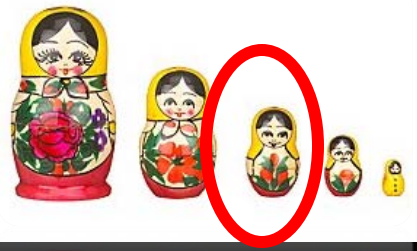
The initial assessments of WSU's programs reviewed anonymously and reliably (see last line of the Table above) using the Guide to Effective Assessment. Additional analysis of these benchmark scores confirms that "Leadership" is the single best predictor of a program's assessment.

Year One Results

WSU | College | Program

Program: Agricultural_and_Food_Systems



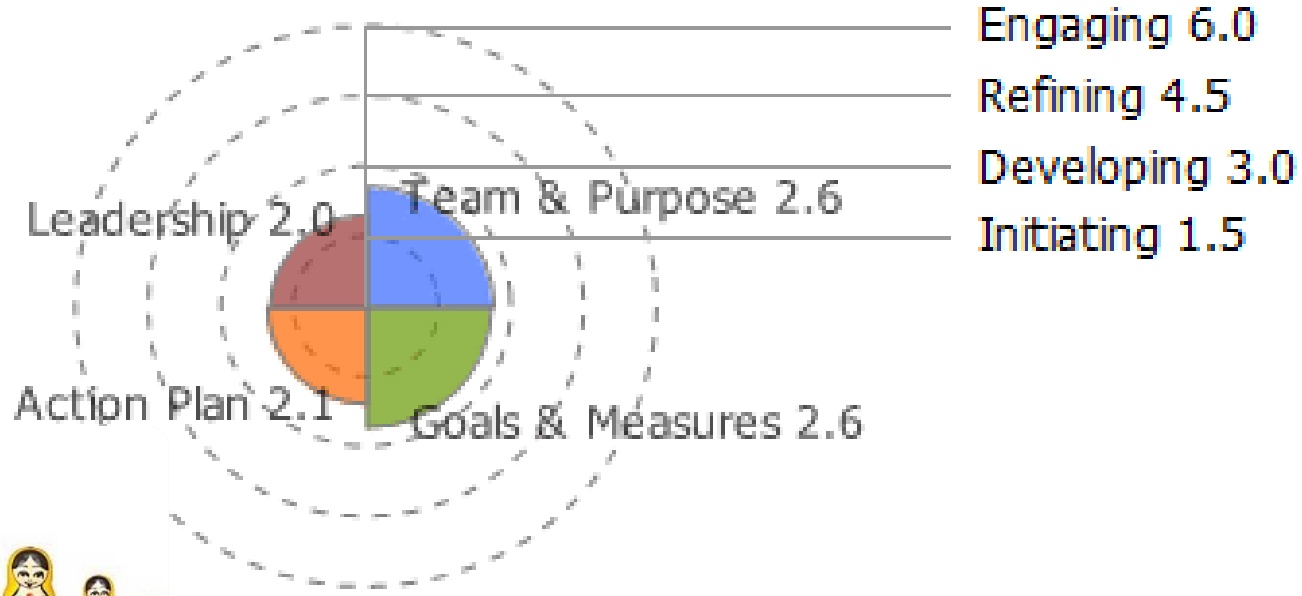


Year One Results

WSU | College | Program

College: Engineering_and_Architecture

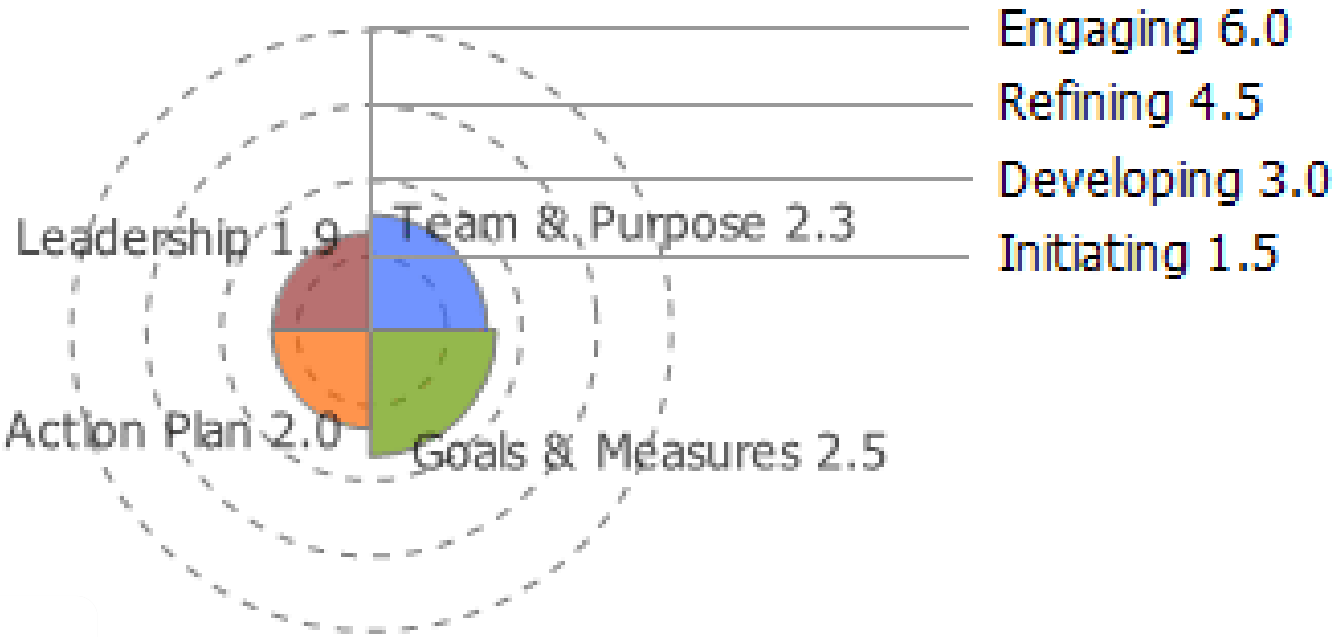
Engineering and Architecture (9 of 9)



Year One Results

WSU | College | Program

WSU Overall System of Program Assessment



What to Report?

Outcomes Mapped to WSU's 6 Goals of the Baccalaureate

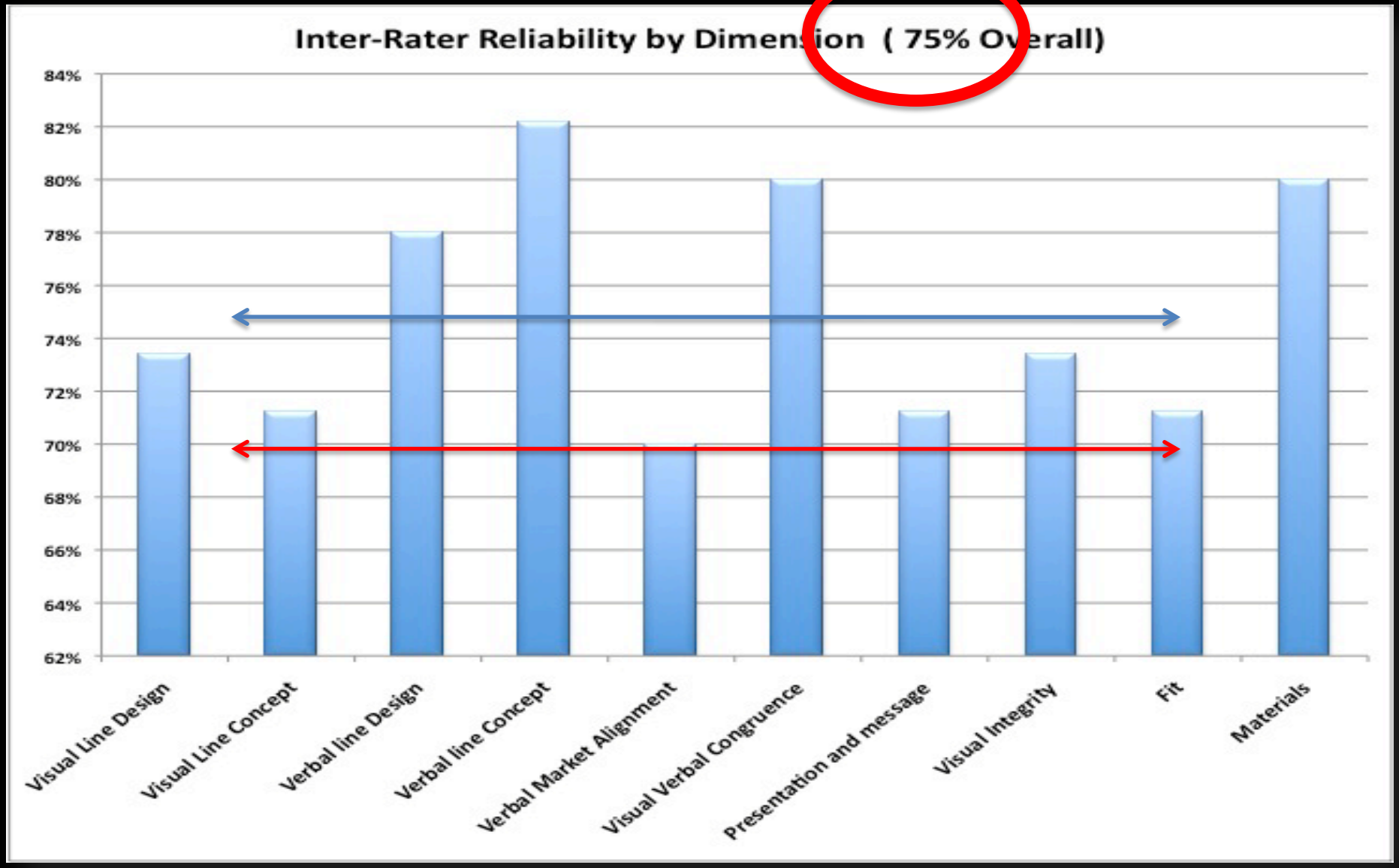
Mapping AMDT Design Outcomes to the WSU 6 Goals of the Baccalaureate

	Visual Line Design	Visual Line Concept	Verbal line Design	Verbal line Concept	Verbal Market Alignment	Visual Verbal Congruence	Presentation and message	Visual Integrity	Fit	Materials
Critical & Creative Thinking			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Quantitative & Symbolic Reasoning	✓	✓						✓	✓	
Research & Investigation					✓					
Communication	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Responsible World Citizenship					✓					
Disciplinary Competence	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Mapping Program Goals to WSU 6

	Visual Line Design	Verbal Line Concept	Verbal Line Design	Verbal Market Agreement	Visual Verbal Congruence	Presentation & Message	Visual Integrity	Fit	Materials	WSU 6 Goals
Critical & Creative Thinking			3.77	3.58	3.89	3.76	3.79			3.8
Quantitative & Symbolic	3.88	3.95						3.53	3.92	3.8
Research and Investigation					3.89					3.9
Communication	3.88	3.95	3.77	3.58	3.89	3.76	3.79	3.53	3.92	3.7
Responsible World Citizenship					3.89					3.8
Disciplinary Competence	3.88	3.95	3.77	3.58	3.89	3.76	3.79	3.53	3.92	3.7

Inter-Rater Reliability

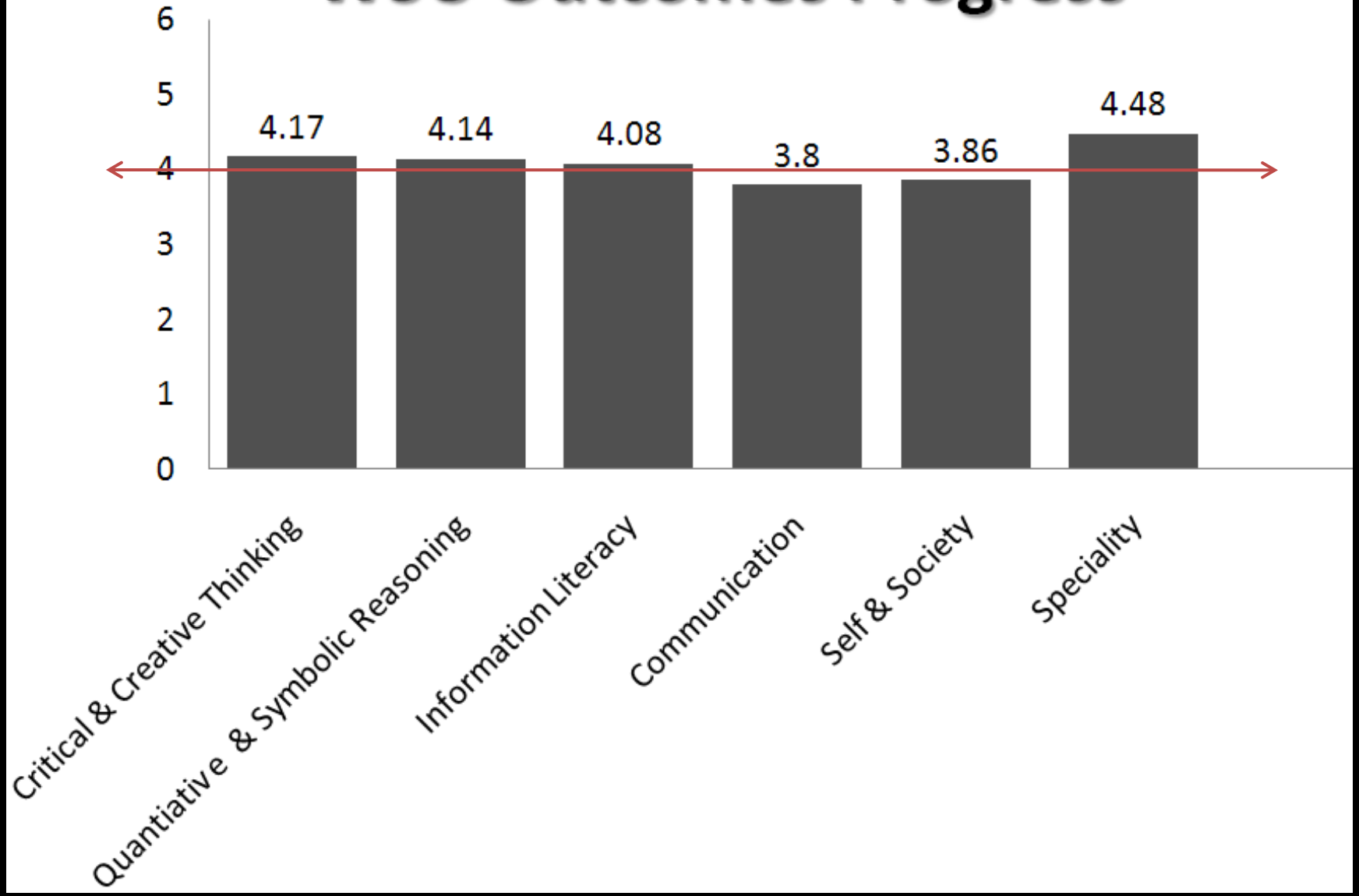


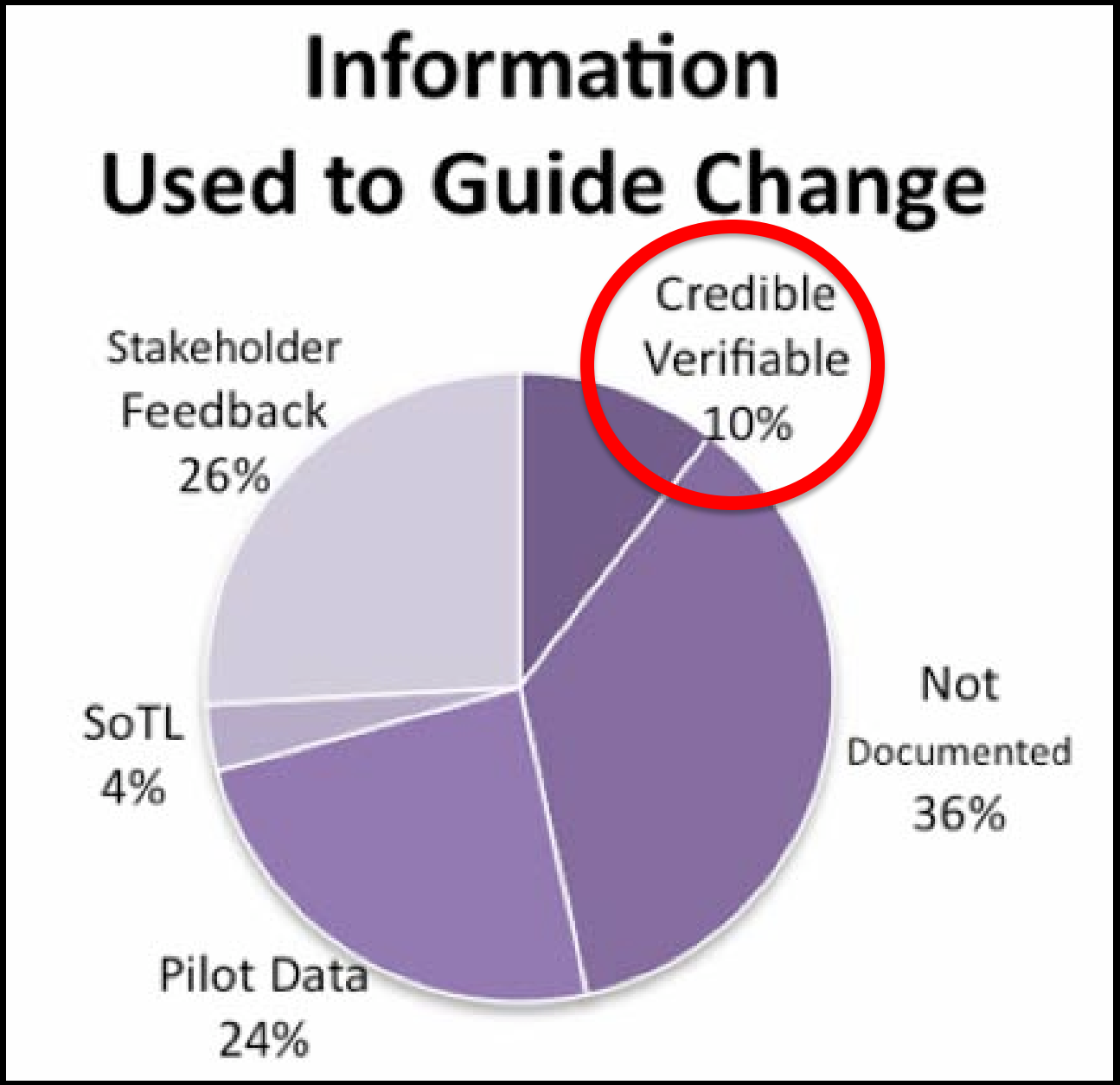
1190 Graduating Students

17% of WSU Undergraduate Programs

Almost 20% of Graduating Class

WSU Outcomes Progress





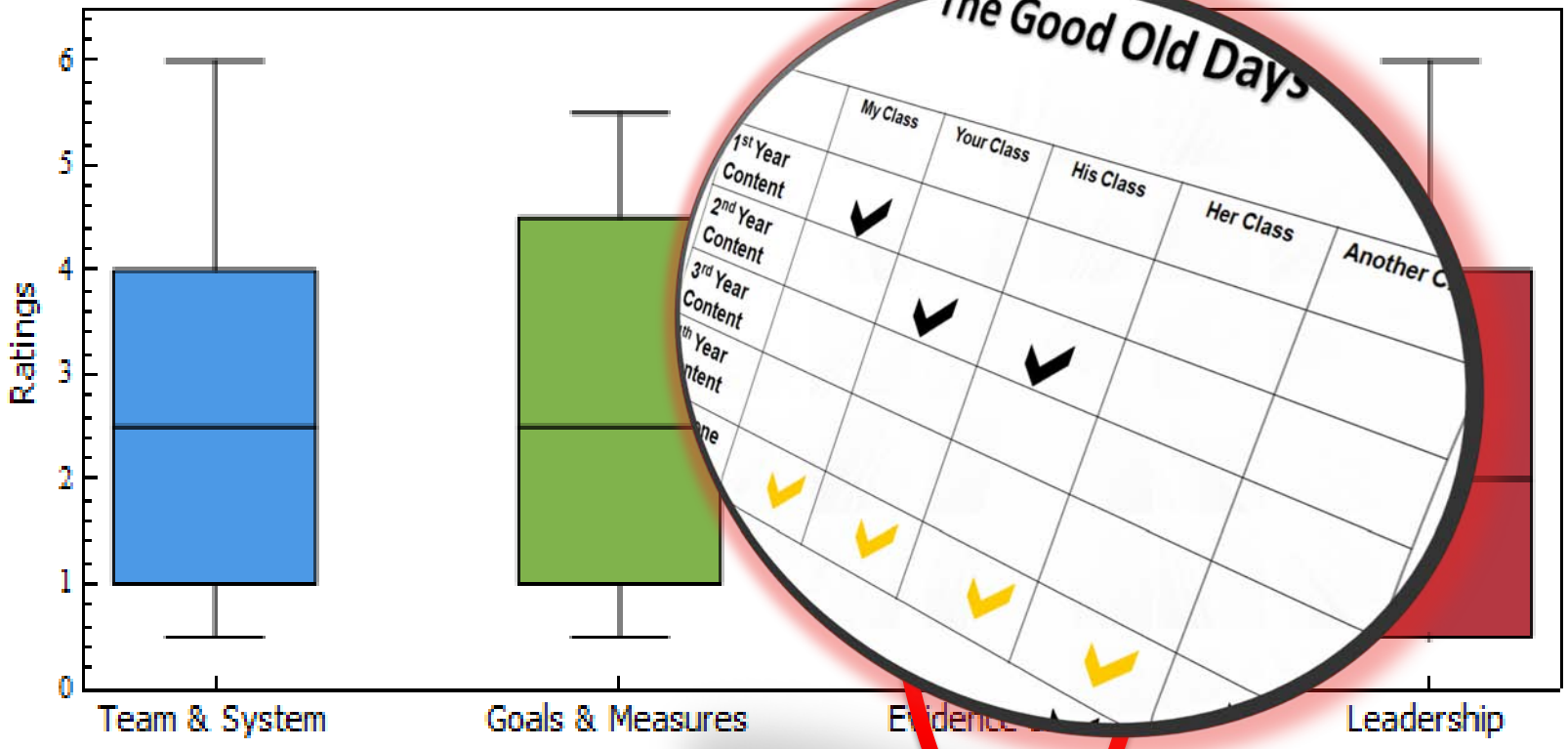
Information type WSU Programs used in the 2009-2010 cycle to inform or guide change

What to Report?

WSU's Progress on Closing the Loop

Review of WSU Learning Outcomes Assessment 2010

Box covering 90 % of data (58 Programs)



Most "plans of action" in the first year of the WSU model have focused on assessment modifications or, occasionally, on adding or cutting courses.

The goal of the process is ultimately enrichment of student learning opportunities, and to that end ongoing professional development will be essential.

What is Learned & Applied

Sample Findings

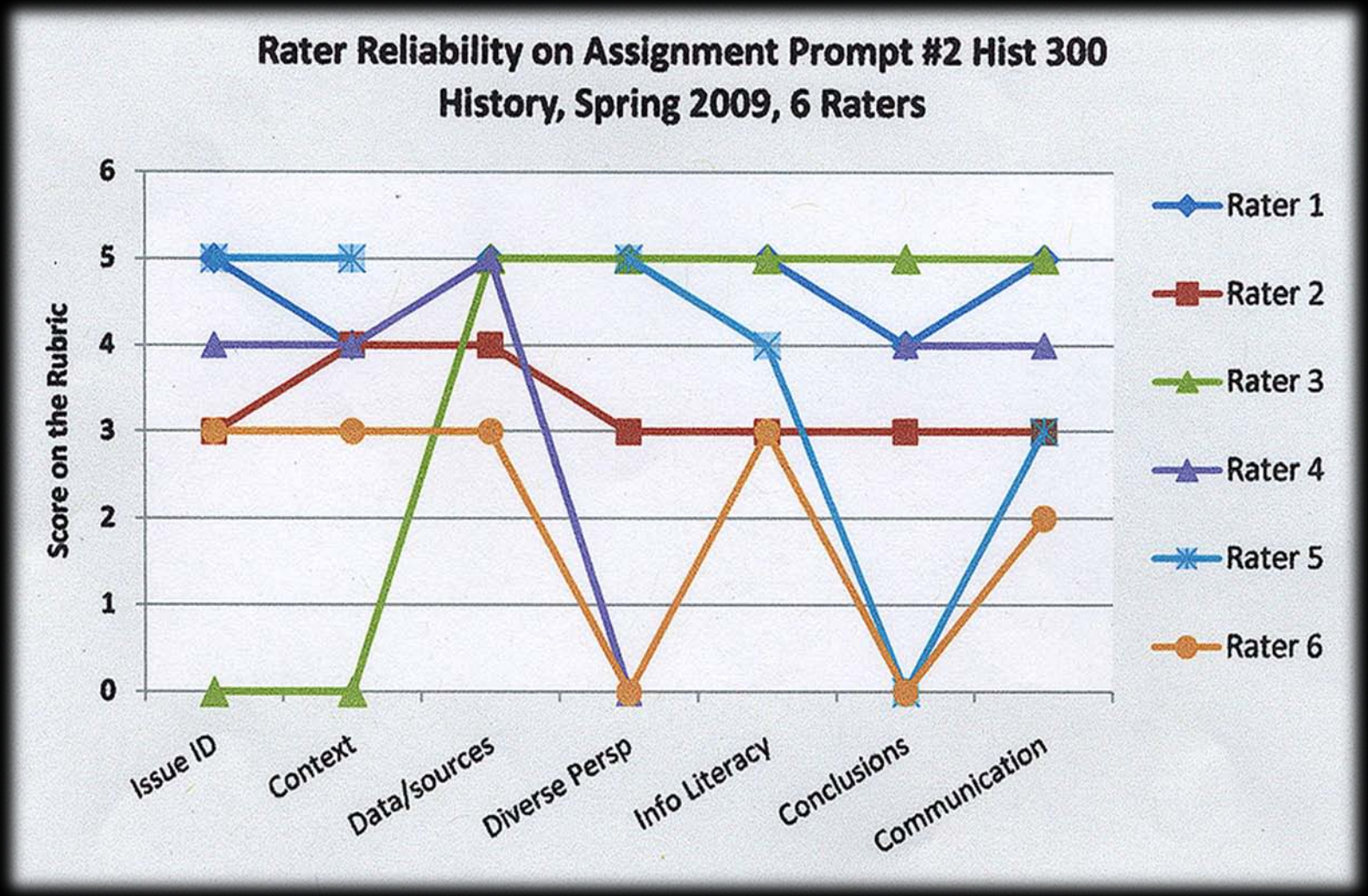
Finding:

More than 50% consistently fail intro calculus

Action:

1. Ask Why
2. Follow Successful Students
3. Experiment
4. Isolate Problem—*exponentials*

Sample Findings



Sample Findings

Finding:

Inconsistent perceptions of goals, performance expectations as reflected in assignments and grading….

Action:

“Imagine how students perceive our curriculum?”

Initiate peer assignment review.

What NOT to Report?

On the other hand…

http://chronicle.com/blogs/measuring/measuring-student-learning-many-tools/27541

"All means all."

Action:

Deploy admissions exam to screen out at-risk students.

Sample Findings of Concern

Finding:

Graduating seniors are weak on global, cultural and societal contexts," and "They were not quick to identify the areas in which they were ignorant."

Action:

Report that students are meeting expectations.

Sample Findings of Concern

Finding:

A majority of majors did not “meet expectations” on any outcomes.

Action:

1. Raise entry requirements
2. Provide more rigor in required courses.
3. Lower expectations given the quality of the students.

Sample Findings of Concern

Sample Findings of Concern

Contention:

Studen rom a senior
qualifiec nd an
feedback y regarding
program, am
are. entical.

Action:
Dismiss senior & alumni survey findings

Sample Findings of Concern

Finding :

Action:

“We are giving too many 4’s.”

Stop giving too many 4’s

Is this OK?

Sample Feedback

Junior faculty:

“How should we respond to the Office of Assessment’s feedback on our assessment plan?”

Tenured professor:

"Oh -kiss my ass! I have been here long enough to know that THAT thing will be flushed down the toilet, so I wouldn't worry too much.“

*"The future effectiveness of institutional accreditation in both promoting good practice and in reinforcing the academy's assumption of consistent and transparent standards of student academic achievement lies entirely **in the hands of the academy and its leadership**."*

—Peter Ewell

http://www.learningoutcomeassessment.org/occasionalpaperone.htm

Epilogue

Sample Findings of… Concern

Finding:

Report submitted to NWCC&U in October…

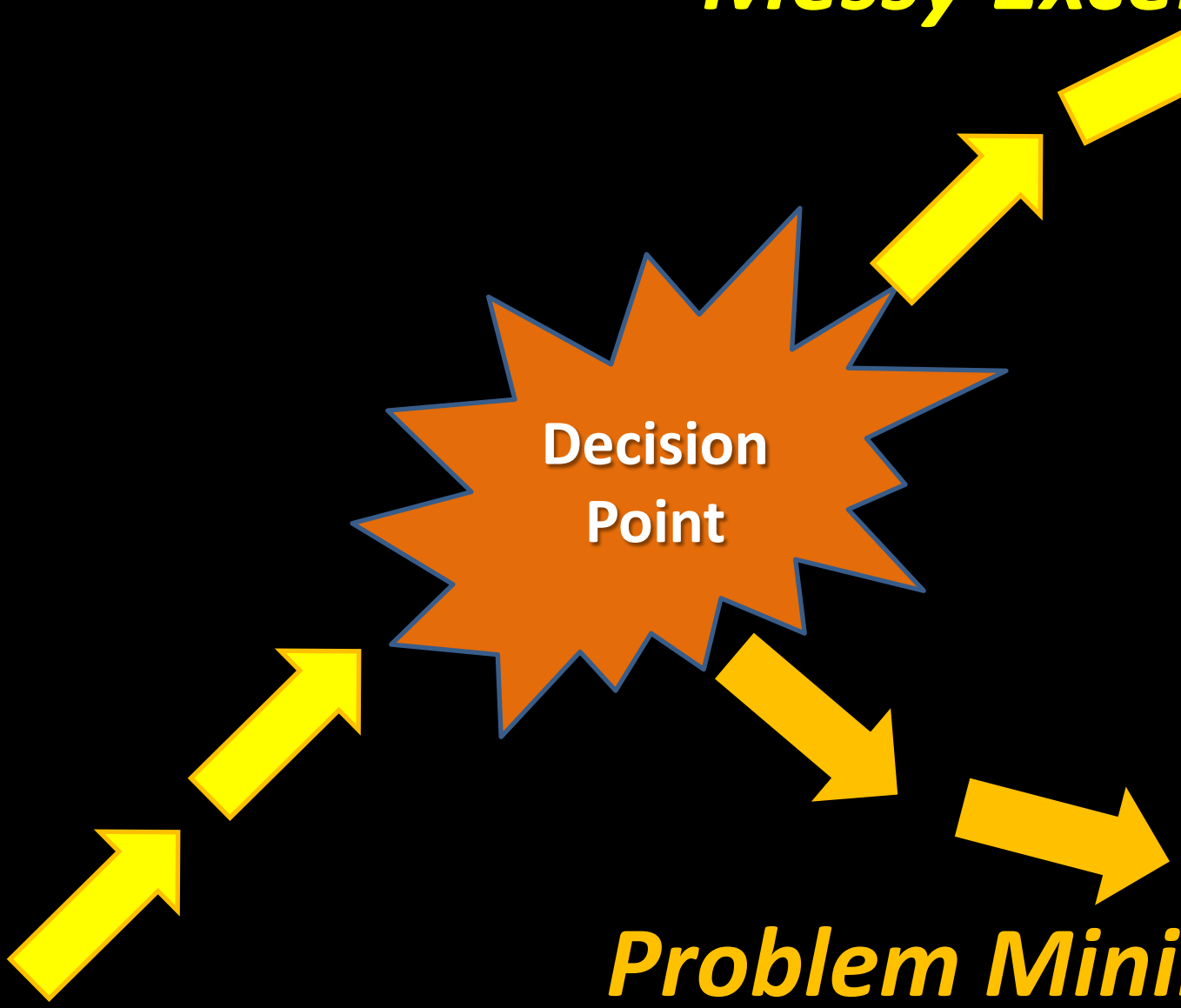
The report reveals that 33% of units have reported perfunctory assessment results.

Action:

Questions?
communitylearning.wordpress.com

Bereiter, C., & Scardamalia, M. (1983). Levels of inquiry in writing research. In P. Mosenthal, L. Tamor & S. A. Walmsley (Eds.), Research on writing: Principles and methods (pp. 3-25). New York:

Messy Excellence



Problem Minimization