Measuring College Success: The State of Assessment in Higher Education

Address to the Aiken Rotary

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Three Questions about Quality

1) How can I tell that my son or daughter will receive a good education at this college?

2) How can I tell that this job applicant received a quality education from his or her university?

3) How can I tell that my tax dollars and alumni contributions are being invested wisely in higher education?
The Historical Answer: Reputation

Educational quality has been gauged traditionally by institutional prestige.

Prestige and reputation are motive forces behind many national rankings.
The Great Chefs Method of Assessment

If the integrity of the process and quality of the inputs are controlled then the desired outcomes will be produced.

Assumption:
  - Quality Incoming Students
  - Quality Faculty
  + Quality Curriculum
  - Quality Education
Retention and Graduation Rates

- Current tracking only available for full-time students entering as freshmen.

- Heavily influenced by institutional type and size, demographic factors, and academic inputs.

- Institutional disincentive to ease student transfer and to promote access.
Student Engagement

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE pronounced “Nessie”) measures students’ active involvement in academic and out-of-class activities

Measures include:
- Time usage in and out of class
- Type and frequency of mental activity
- Type and frequency of interactions with faculty, staff & other students
- Supplementary activities and experiences
- Amount and quality of papers, problem sets, reading completed
- Self-assessment of growth and development
National Findings from NSSE

- Formalized first-year experience programs and bridge programs for freshmen and transfer students led to higher levels of engagement.
- Full-time students in more challenging institutions (top 25%) averaged about 16 hours per week preparing for class; full-time students in the least challenging institutions (bottom 25%) spent only about 10 hours per week on academics.
- Nationwide, only 10% of students rely on newspapers or magazines as a primary source for news about international, national, or local news, while 50% primarily gained this information from television.
Further Information

Further information is available on the USCA Office of Institutional Effectiveness web site at:

http://ie.usca.edu

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