



U N I V E R S I T Y O F  
**SOUTH CAROLINA**  
A I K E N

# 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.

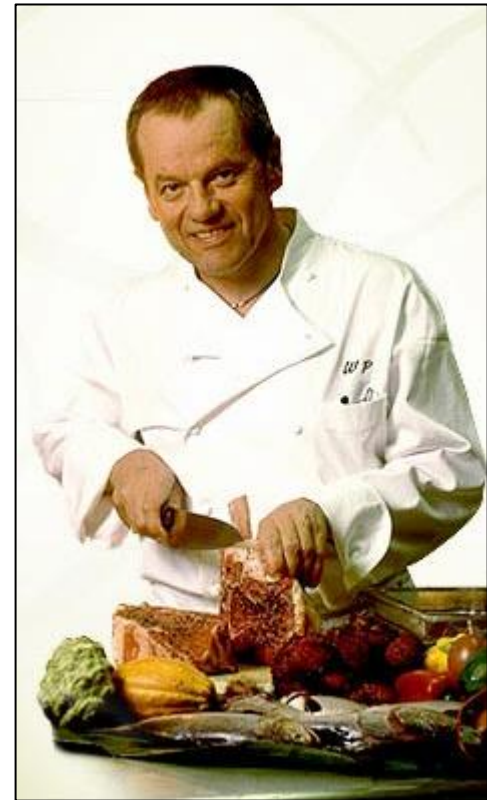


# The Great Chefs Method of Assessment

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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