



ARL Bimonthly Report 218 **October 2001**

From Expectations to Results: What Are We Finding, and How Are We Improving?

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The America Association of Higher Education (AAHE) held its 15th annual Assessment Conference, "From Expectations to Results: What Are We Finding, and How Are We Improving?" June 23-27, 2001, in Denver, Colorado. The conference focused on assessment issues and activities in institutions of higher learning and attracted educators, institutional research professionals, managers, and librarians. The high attendance (over 1,800 participants) at the conference, the overall quality of the program, and the intense involvement of the participants signaled that assessment of academic and institutional outcomes, especially assessment of student learning, is a constant and mature concern in academe, and that universities and colleges are feeling pressured, especially from accreditation bodies, to deliver assessable learning outcomes.

AAHE Research Forum

For the first time in AAHE's history, the AAHE Research Forum was convened at the AAHE Assessment Conference. The forum is a platform and an opportunity for educators, researchers, and this time also librarians, to create a research agenda around the conference theme. This year's theme was "The Scholarship of Assessment." The invited research interest groups developed research agendas around the following six theme tracks:

- Demonstrating Student Learning
- Validity and Reliability of Alternative Assessment
- Technology and Assessment
- Transforming Institutional Cultures
- Creating Opportunities for Student Reflection Across the Curriculum
- The Role of the Faculty in Assessment

The themes show the multiple aspects of issues involving assessment in higher education. The Research Forum document is available from the AAHE website:

<http://www.aahe.org/assessment/ResearchAgenda.pdf>.

Assessing Students for Citizenship in a Diverse Society

Dr. Sylvia Hurtado, Associate Professor and Director of the Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education at the University of Michigan, in her plenary address discussed a major project that sought to identify desired outcomes for a diverse society and explore institutional goals that prepare students for a diverse democracy. Among the findings of issues that affect student success on campus

was the importance of critical thinking skills on learning and social interactions. Information about the Diverse Democracy Project is available at <<http://www.umich.edu/~divdemo/>>.

The Library, Information Literacy, and Partnering with Faculty

The academic library community presented four sessions. They all focused on library initiatives and activities that are designed to achieve student learning outcomes by focusing on integrating information literacy into the curriculum, developing ways to measure information literacy outcomes, developing partnerships with faculty, and creating a culture of assessment in libraries and across campus.

The ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education were highlighted and examples of partnerships with faculty were presented. Library programs that integrate the ACRL Standards into the curriculum in partnership with faculty were presented by Debra Gilchrist (Pierce College), Janet DuMont (King's College), Anne Fiegen (California State University-San Marcos), Hannelore Rader (University of Louisville), Lyn Cameron (James Madison University), and Gregory Heald (University of Northern Colorado).

Carla Stoffle from the University of Arizona presented ARL's New Measures Initiative with emphasis on the Higher Education Outcomes Research Review, which is designed to develop new roles and responsibilities for university libraries in advancing student learning through outcome assessment. Efforts to make this all happen by developing a "culture of assessment" in libraries was presented by Amos Lakos from the University of Waterloo.

Conclusion

Although assessment in institutions of higher education is becoming a necessity, it is not yet well integrated into the organizational culture. External accreditation bodies still drive institutional assessment.

For academic libraries, this conference is of special value. It affords an opportunity to showcase libraries' commitment to learning outcomes and our considerable contributions to the educational endeavor to learning outcomes assessment. It is important to increase awareness about the work done on many campuses by librarians to integrate the competencies into the general curriculum as well as the efforts librarians make to assess student-learning outcomes. The 2002 Assessment Conference will be held in Boston June 20-23, 2002. For information, see the AAHE website at <<http://www.aahe.org/assessment/2002/>>.

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