

National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment

Making Learning Outcomes Usable & Transparent

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Student Learning Outcomes Assessment in the United States: Trends and Good Practices

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NIAD-UE UNIVERSITY EVALUATION FORUM 2012

JULY 23, 2012





Overview of NILOA

NILOA's mission is to document student learning outcomes assessment work, identify and disseminate best practices, and support institutions in their assessment efforts.

SURVEYS ● WEB SCANS ● CASE STUDIES ● FOCUS GROUPS ●
OCCASIONAL PAPERS ● WEBSITE ● RESOURCES ● NEWSLETTER ●
LISTSERV ● PRESENTATIONS ● TRANSPARENCY FRAMEWORK ●
FEATURED WEBSITES ● ACCREDITATION RESOURCES ● ASSESSMENT
EVENT CALENDAR ● ASSESSMENT NEWS ● MEASURING QUALITY
INVENTORY ● POLICY ANALYSIS ● ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

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Welcome to NILOA

New to the website? For a general overview, click here.

- Occasional Paper 13
- Webscan Report
- Occasional Paper 12
- Occasional Paper 11
- Briefs

January 2012 NILOA's 13th Occasional Paper, "From Denial to Acceptance: The Stages of Assessment" by Margaret A. Miller is now available.



Featured pages

National Survey Results 2011
Transparency Framework
National Survey Results 2009
Occasional Papers
College & University
Associations
College & University Programs



Oregon State University

Oregon State University's Office of Academic Programs, Assessment, and Accreditation (APAA) website is NILOA's Featured Website for its communication.

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Assessing Online Learning: Strategies, Challenges and Opportunities

Fri, Mar 16, 2012 - 08:00 am

Faculty Focus

A special report in Faculty Focus on assessing online learning.

Doubling Down on Degrees

Fri, Mar 16, 2012 - 08:00 am

Mitch Smith in Inside Higher Ed

As part of Indiana's performance based funding plan through the Indiana Higher Education Commission, Indiana's public colleges and universities are tasked with finding and using assessments to appropriately track their students learning.

Learning Centers Had Little Impact

Fri, Mar 16, 2012 - 08:00 am

Jack Grove for Times Higher Education

This brief article discusses the successes and failures of the Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETLs) initiative which ran from 2005 to 2010 and was financed by the Higher Education Funding Council for England.



Advanced Organizers

- What is student learning outcomes assessment?
- What is accreditation in the United States?
- What is the national picture of student learning outcomes assessment for American colleges and universities?
- What are some best practices in regards to student learning outcomes assessment?



Definition

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Assess: (v.): to examine carefully

Assessment is the systematic collection, review, and use of information about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning and development (Palomba & Banta, 1999, p. 4)

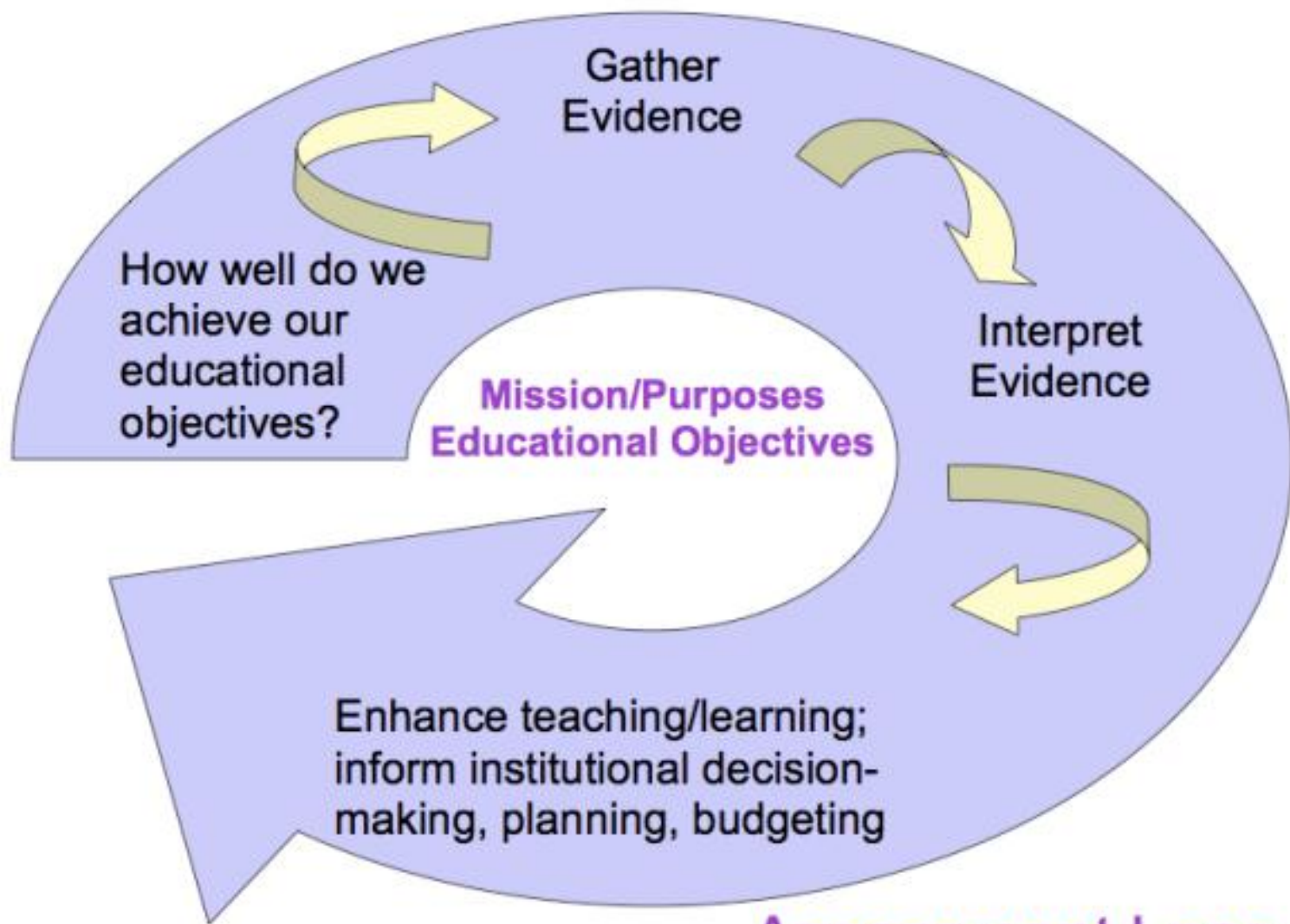


How do we know students are learning?

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- The key questions...
 - What are we trying to do and why? Or
 - What is my program supposed to accomplish?
 - How well are we doing it?
 - How do we know?
 - How do we use the information to improve or celebrate successes?
 - Do the improvements we make work?

Bresciani (2003)



Source: AAHE/NCA Higher Education Learning Commission

Assessment Loop

Assessment Tools

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- ***Direct*** (outcomes) ***measures***
 - Evidence of what students have learned or can do
- ***Indirect*** (process) ***measures***
 - Evidence of effective educational activity by students and institutions



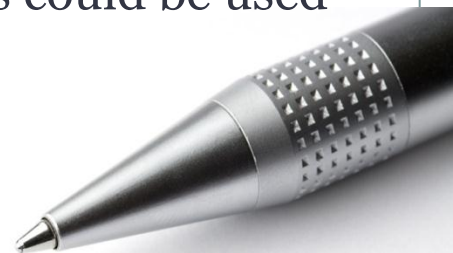
Direct Assessment Methods

- Tests
 - Performance on national licensure examinations
 - Standardized tests
 - Locally developed tests
 - Pre-and post-tests
 - Essay tests blind scored across units
- Student work/projects
 - Collections of student work (e.g. Portfolios)
 - Capstone projects
 - Observations of student behavior
 - Internal juried review of student projects
 - Project-embedded assessment
 - Course-embedded assessment
- External review of students
 - External evaluations of student performance
 - External juried review of student projects
 - Externally reviewed internship

Indirect Assessment Methods

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- **Alumni, Employer, Student Surveys/Studies**
 - National or local surveys
 - Focus groups (depending on the interview protocol, this could be used as direct evidence)
 - Exit Interviews with Graduates
 - Graduate Follow-up Studies
- **Student Success Indicators**
 - Percentage of students who go on to graduate school
 - Retention and Transfer Studies
 - Job Placement Statistics
 - Faculty/Student ratios
 - Percentage of students who study abroad
 - Enrollment trends
 - Percentage of students who graduate within five-six years
 - Diversity of student body



Setting the Context

- Growing Interest in Student Learning
- Policies and Reports
- Accreditation

Accreditation in the United States

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- Role of US Government
 - No ministry of education to oversee quality
 - Accreditation necessary to receive federal money
- Characteristics of accreditation
 - Set of standards/criteria
 - Quality assurance (accountability)/Institutional Improvement
 - Peer review/self-regulation
- Process for Accreditation
 - Self study
 - Campus visit
 - Report

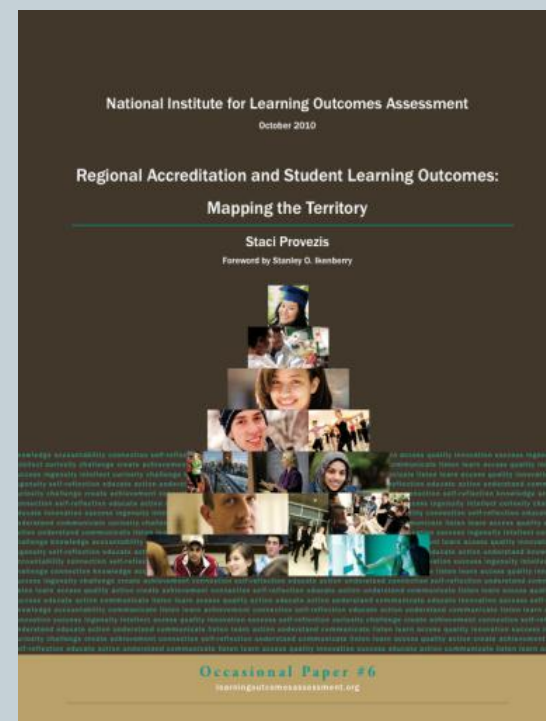


Occasional Paper #6

Regional Accreditation and Student Learning Outcomes Assessment: Mapping the Territory

Staci Provezis

This paper examines the policies and procedures at each of the seven regional accreditation organizations, as they relate to student learning outcomes assessment.

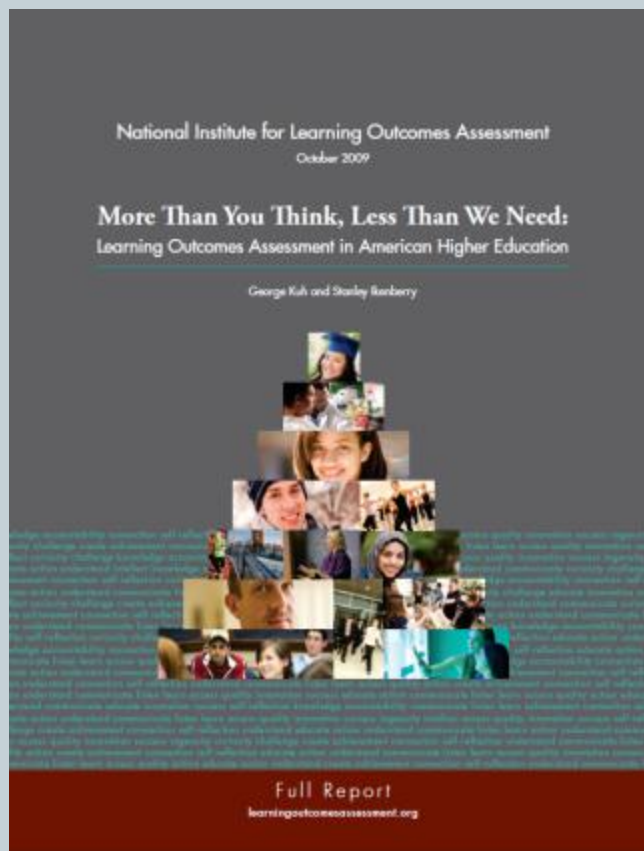


What is the national picture of student learning outcomes assessment for colleges and universities?

- Survey Report
- Focus Groups
- Accreditation Study
- Web Scan Study
- Occasional Papers
- Case Studies



Survey Report



- **Survey asked chief academic officers at all accredited 2 & 4 year colleges and universities about their assessment practices.**
- **Survey report “*More Than You Think, Less Than We Need*” released October, 2009**

Survey Guiding Questions

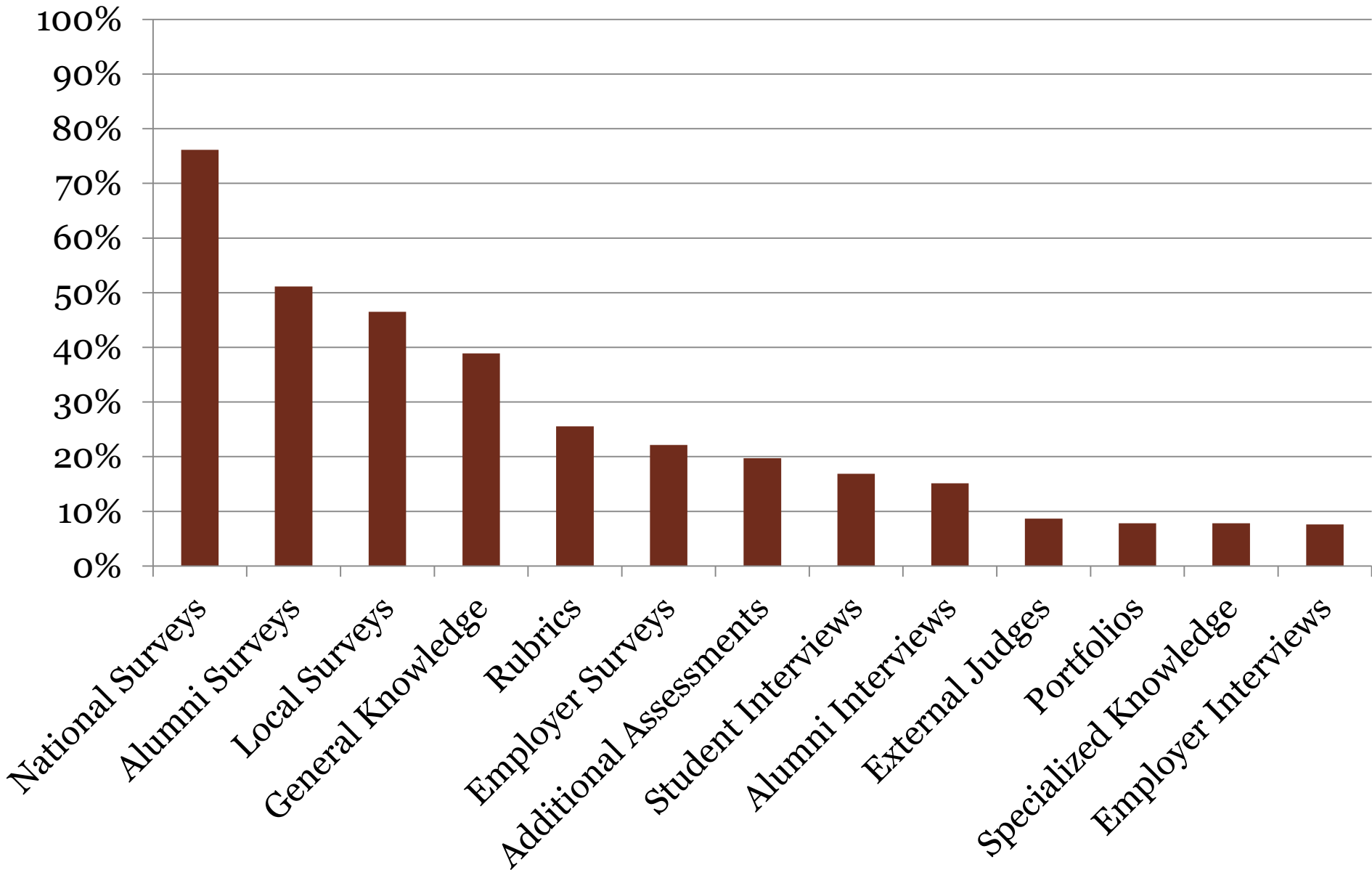
1. What learning outcomes are you measuring at your institution?
2. How are you assessing these outcomes *and* using the results?
3. What are the major factors prompting assessment at your institution?
4. What do you need to further learning outcomes assessment at your institution?

Report Summary

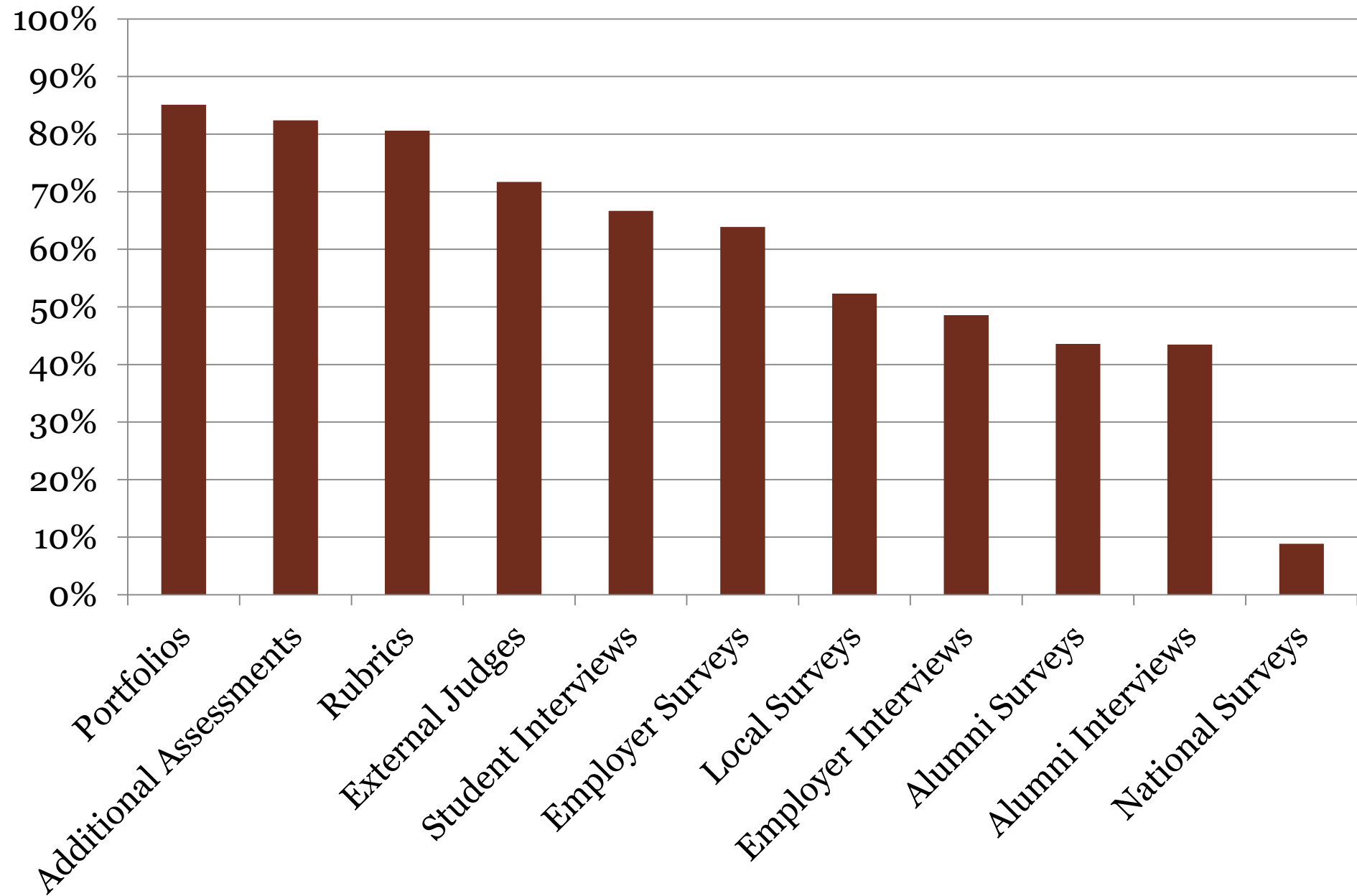
- 1. *Perhaps* more assessment underway than some acknowledge or wish to believe**



Institution-Level Assessments of Learning Outcomes for All Institutions



Program-Level Assessments of Learning Outcomes for All Institutions



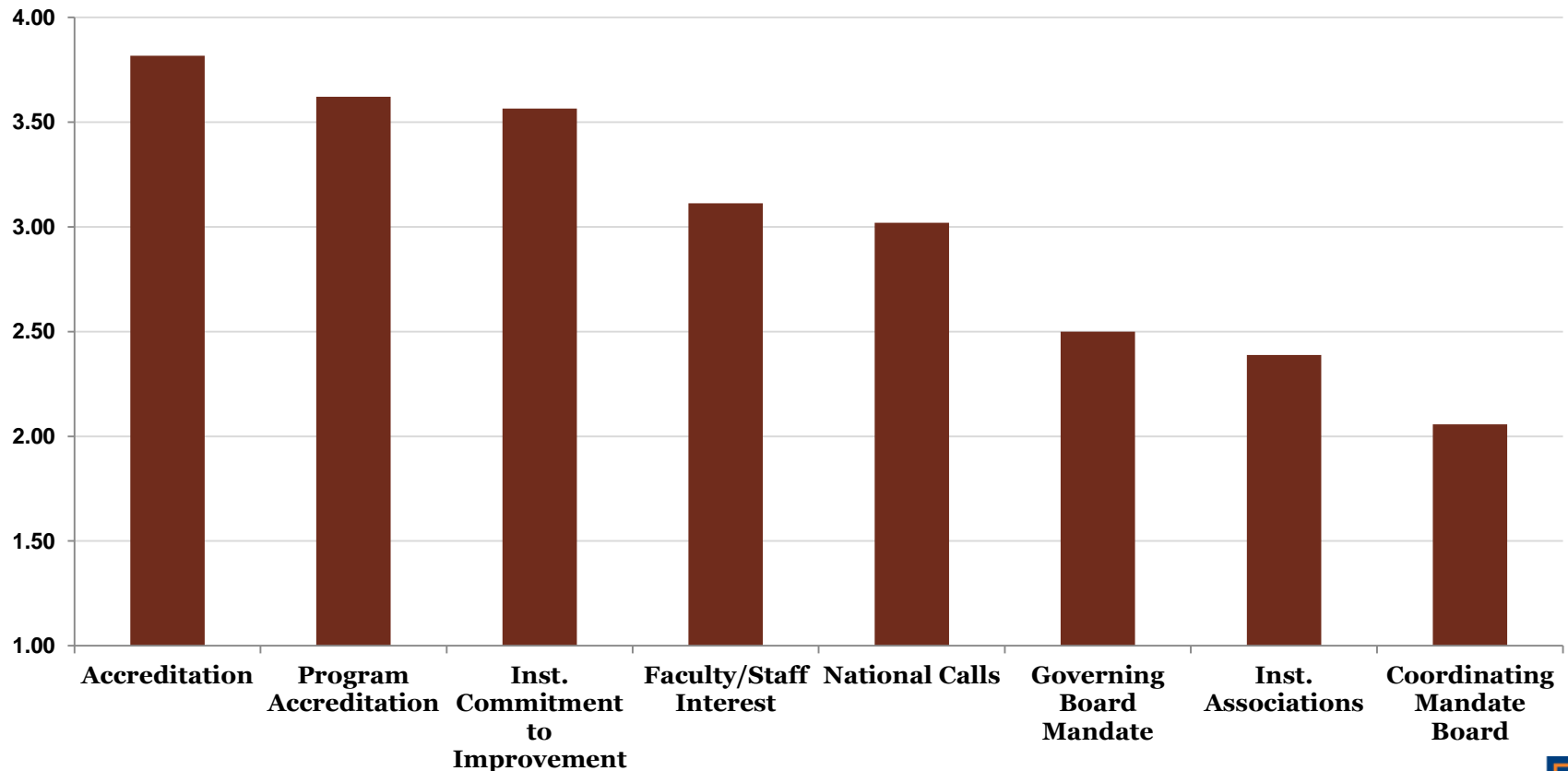
Report Summary

- 1. *Perhaps* more assessment underway than some acknowledge or wish to believe**
- 2. More attention needed to using and reporting assessment results**



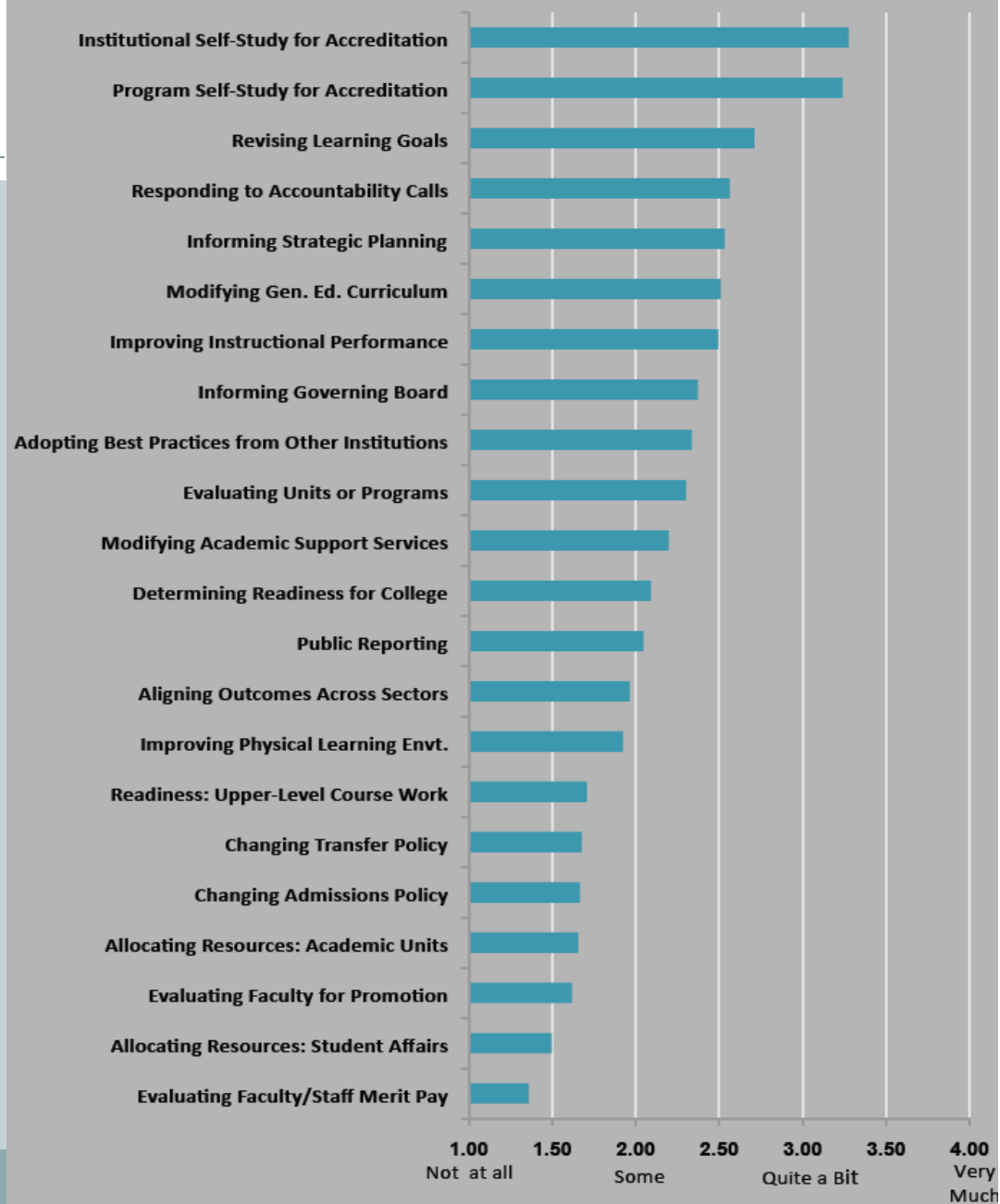
Assessment driven more by accreditation and commitment to improve than external pressures from government or employers

Assessment Drivers for All Schools



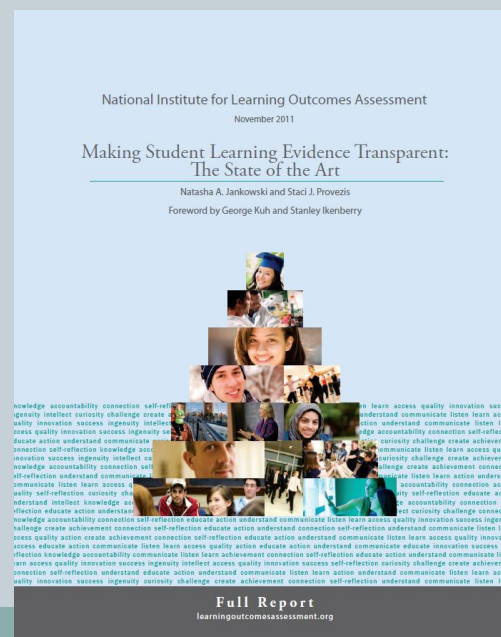
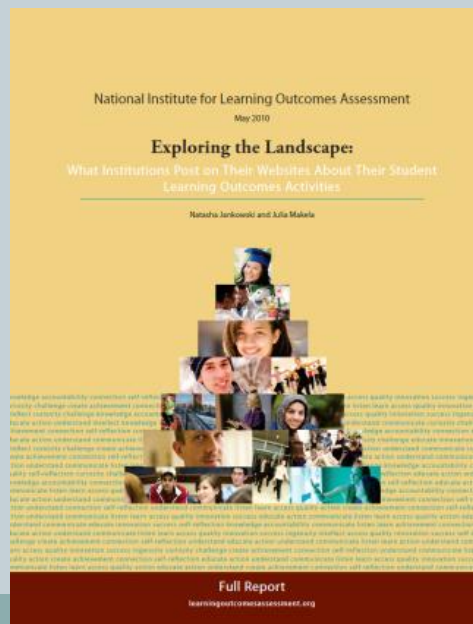
*Accreditation
tops the list
for **uses** of
assessment
data.*

Uses of Assessment Data for All Schools

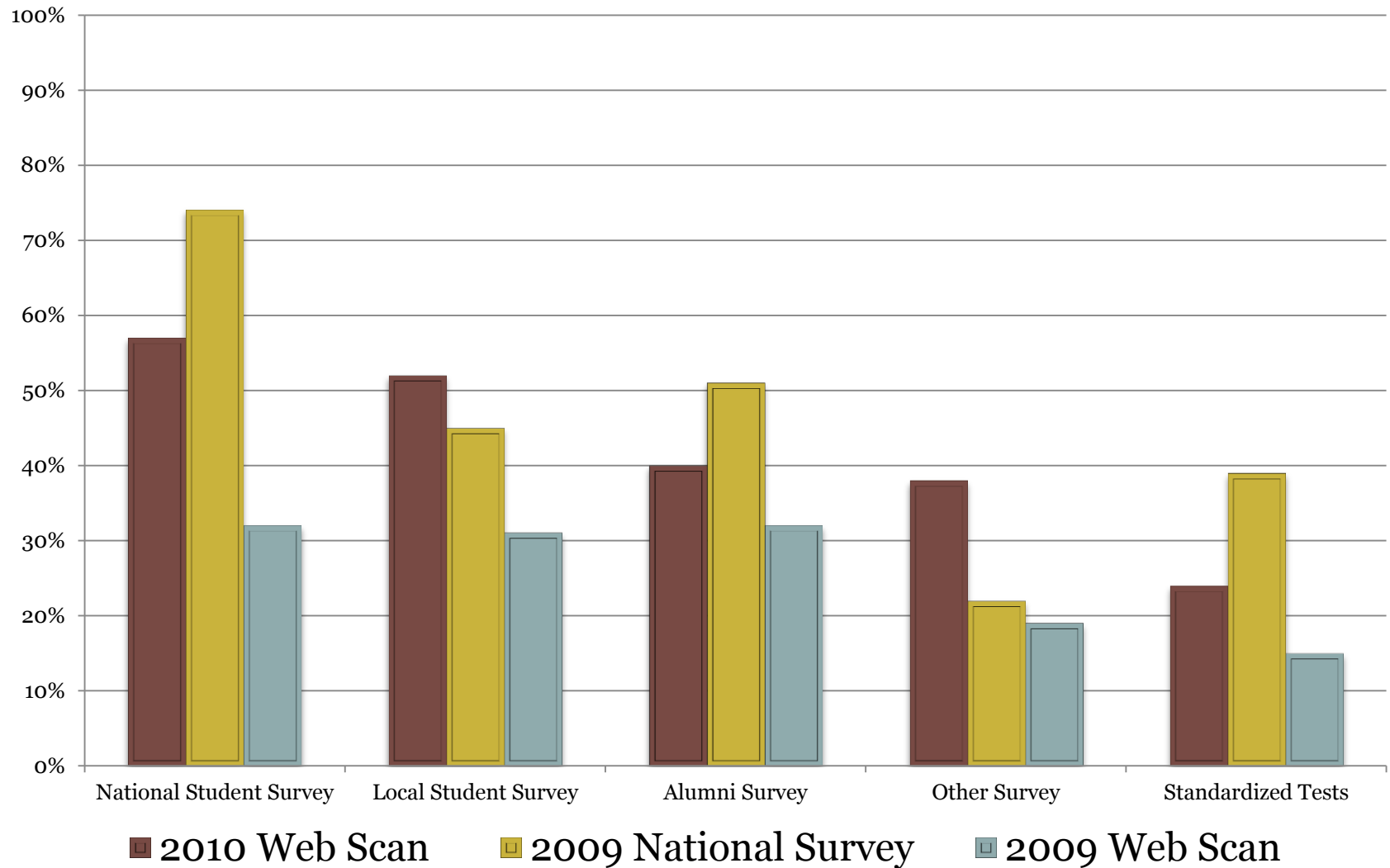


Objective of Institutional Web Scans

To understand what student learning outcomes assessment information institutions post on their websites and where they post it.



Comparison of Survey with Web Studies





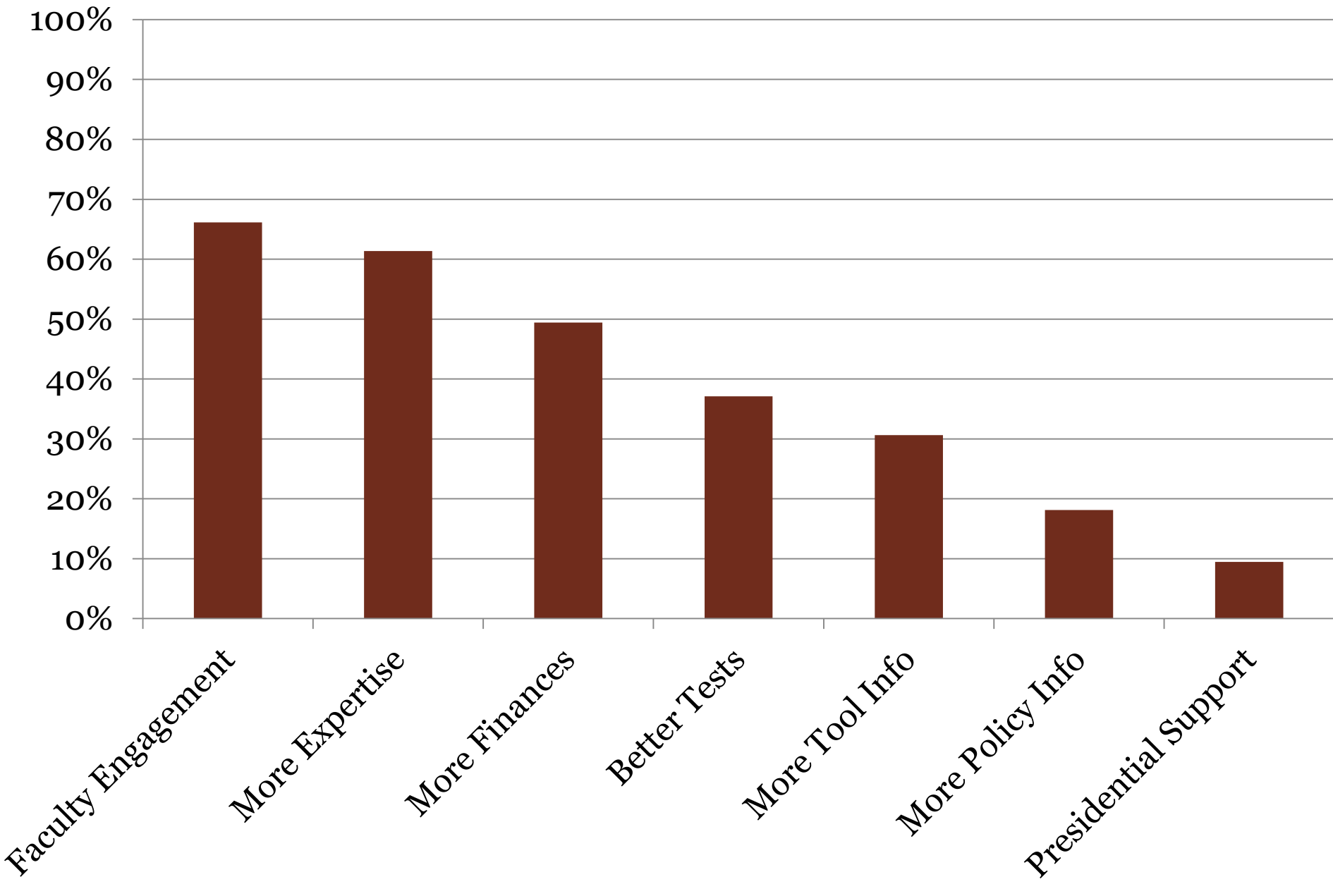
Major Findings from Website Analysis

- More assessment takes place than is shown.
- Assessment information is typically found on pages geared to internal audiences.
- Accreditation, institutional control, and participation in national initiatives appear to influence website communication on assessment.
- Institutions show results more often than you would think they do, but you have to search for it.

Transparency Framework



What is Required to Improve Learning Outcomes Assessment for All Schools



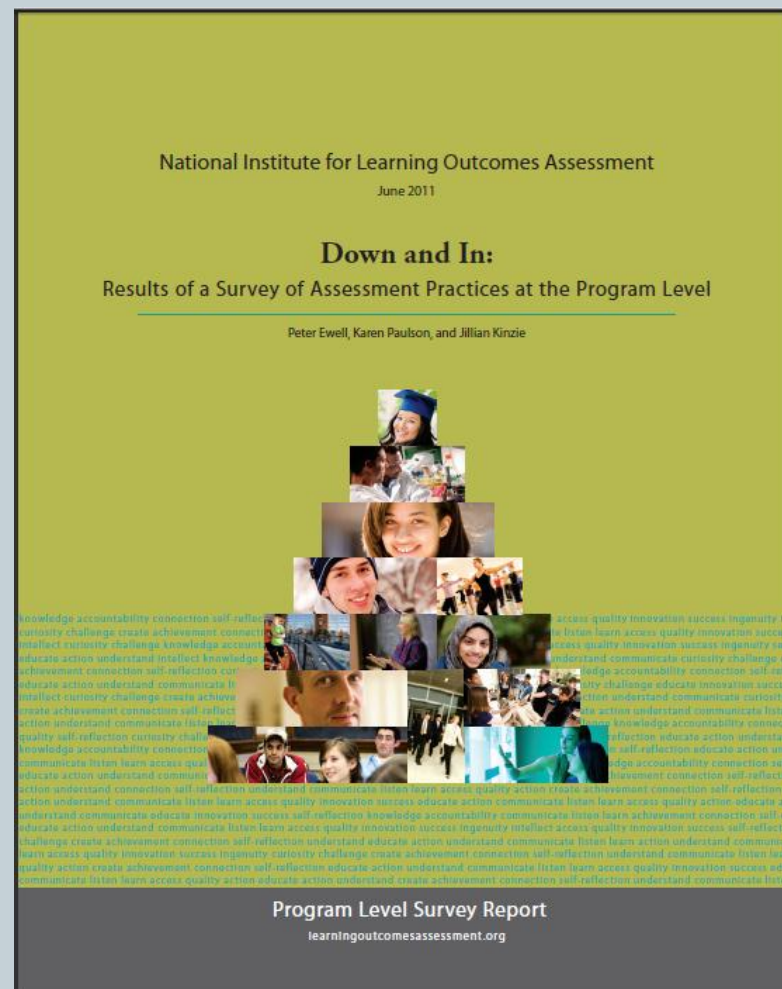
Report Summary

- 1. *Perhaps* more assessment underway than some acknowledge or wish to believe**
- 2. More attention needed to using and reporting assessment results**
- 3. Involving faculty is a major challenge**
- 4. More investment likely needed to move from data to improvement**



❖ 2010 Program-Level Survey Characteristics

- ✓ Two-staged administration
- ✓ Usable responses from 982 programs (30% of programs surveyed)



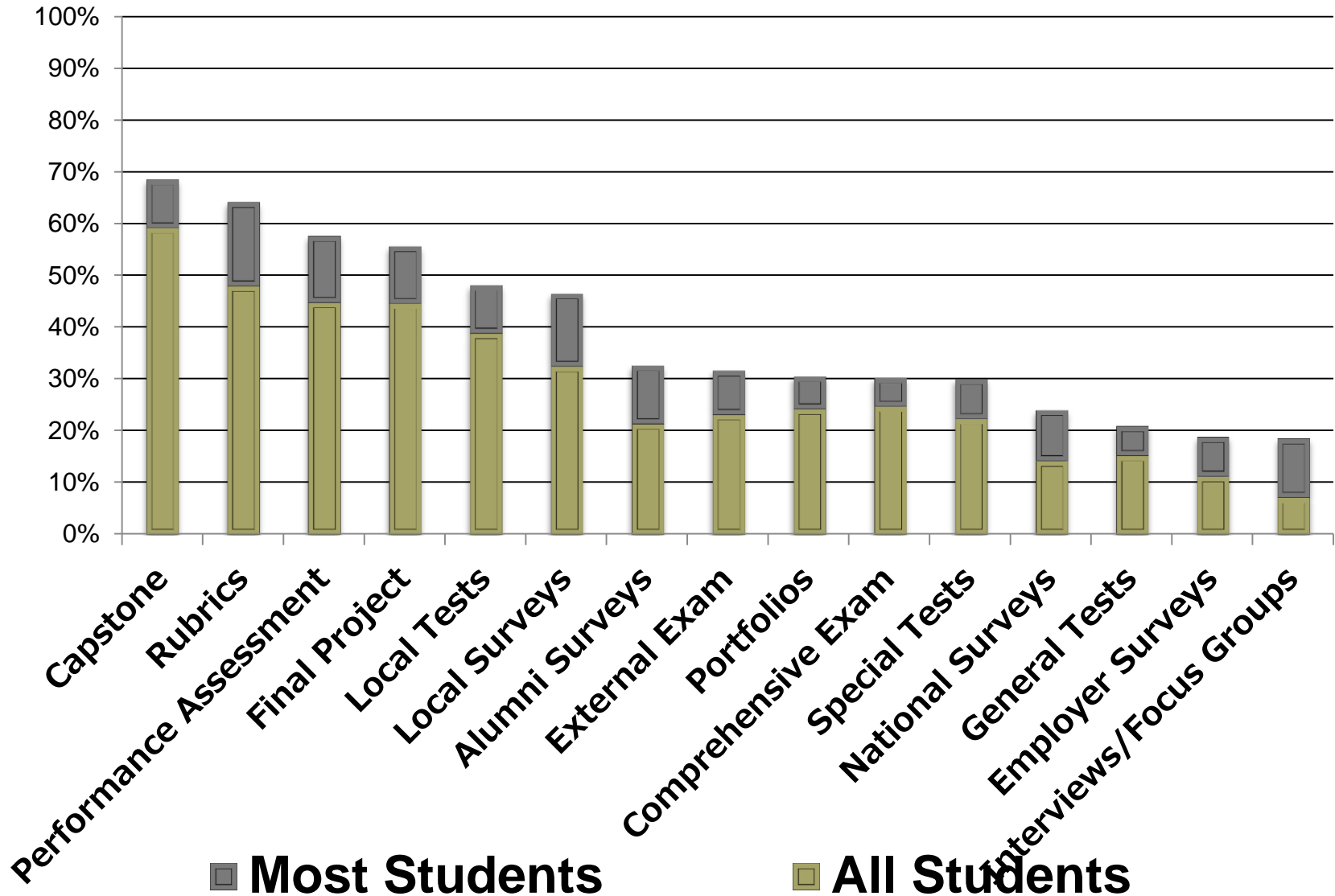
Specialized Accreditation Matters

- *Accredited programs* were significantly more likely to report that specialized accreditation is of high or moderate importance
- “Halo Effect” of programmatic accreditation

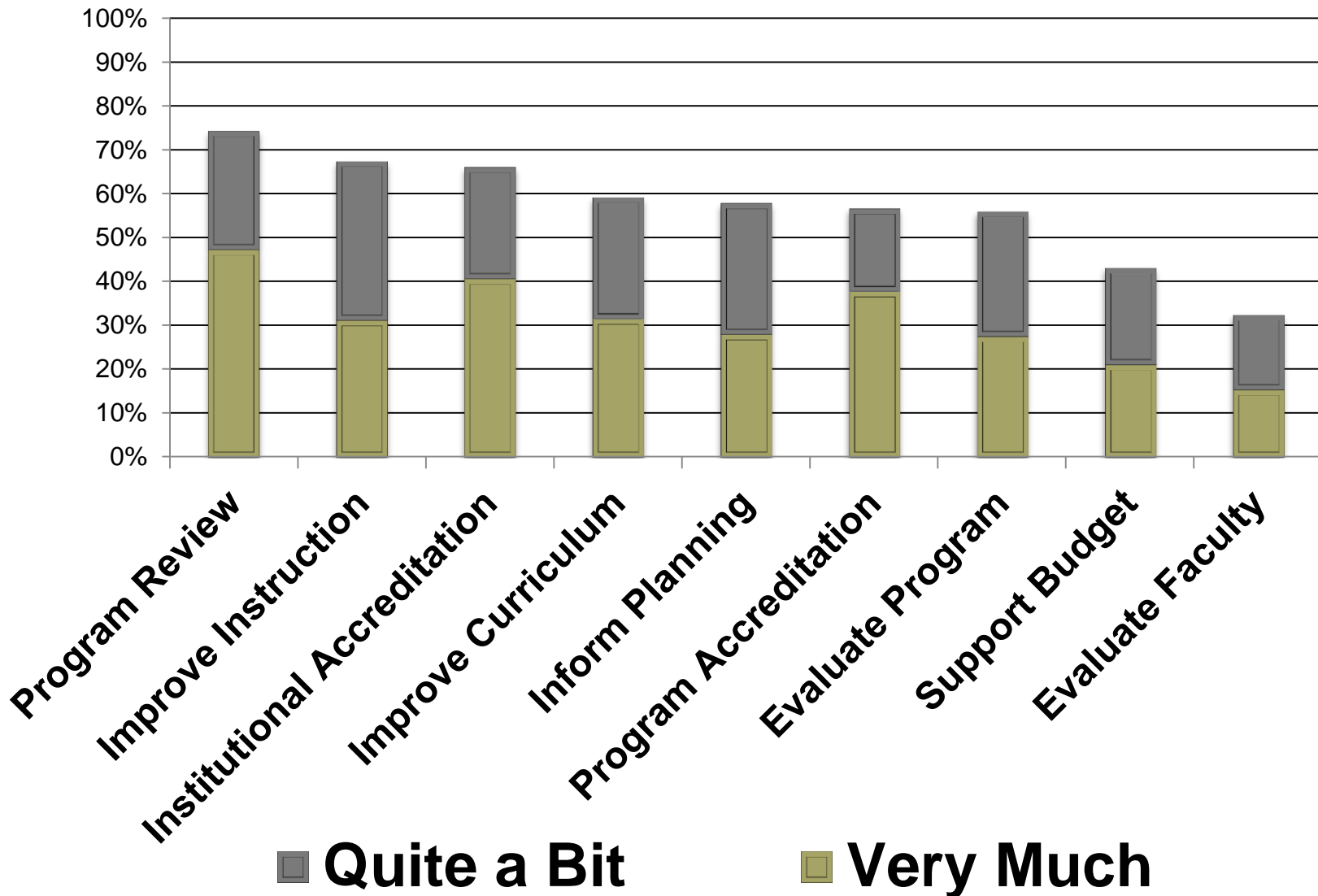
Program Learning Outcomes

- More than 8 of 10 programs have established an agreed-upon set of intended student learning outcomes
- *Overwhelming majority of programs have established learning outcomes goals*

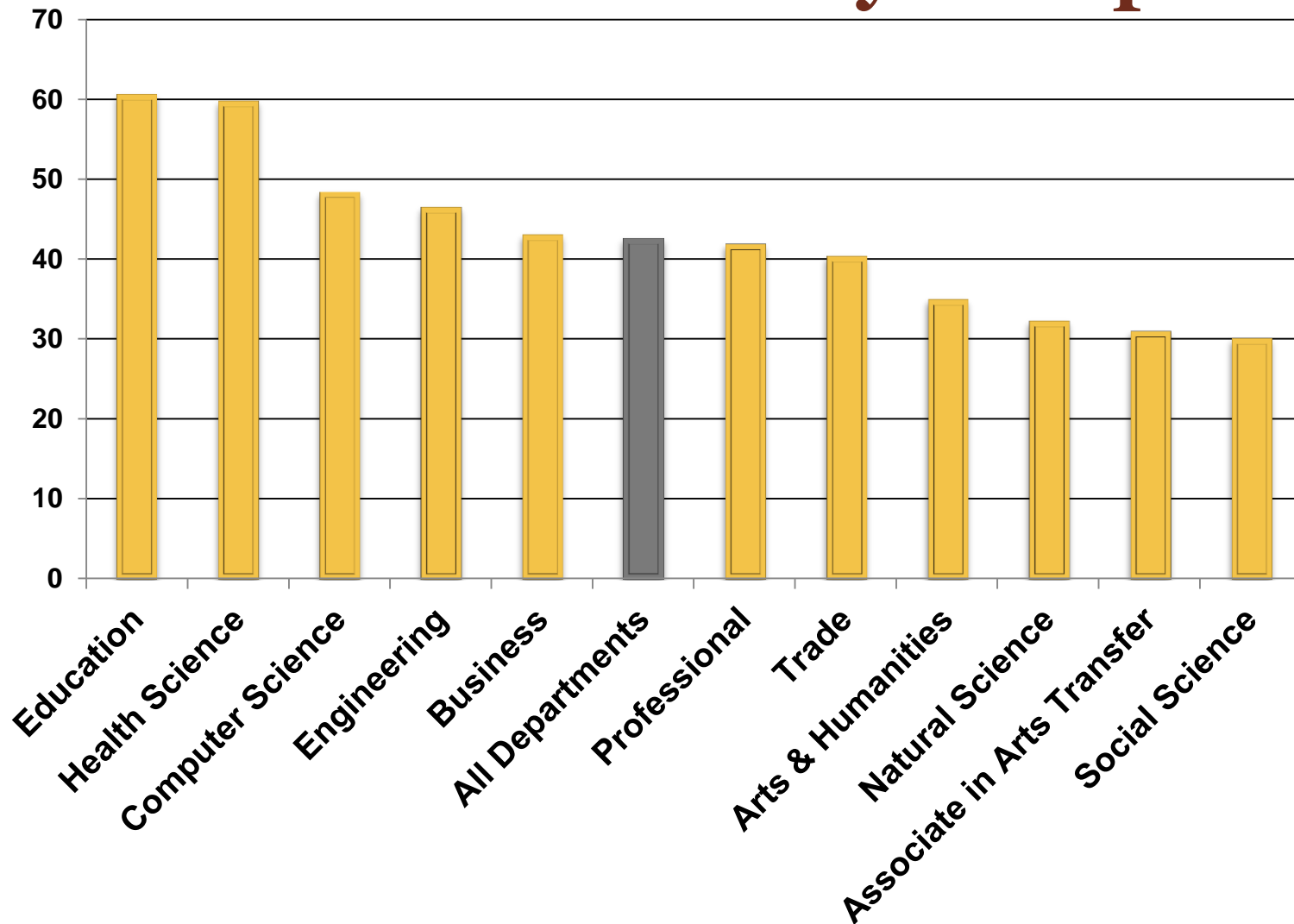
Assessment Methods Used



Use Of Results



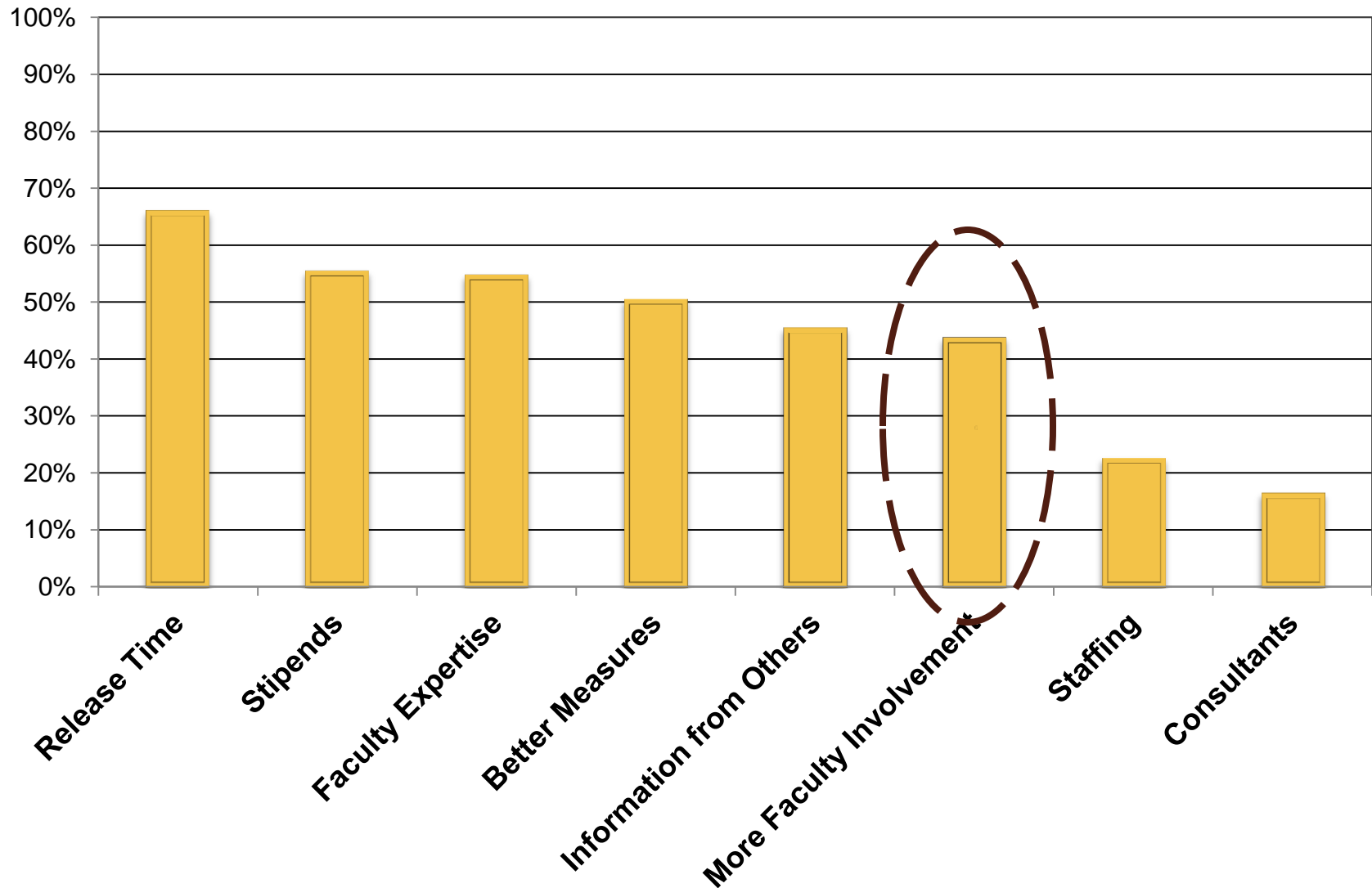
Overall Use Index by Discipline



Few resources dedicated to program level assessment

- 15% FT person
- 54% PT person
 - 63% tenured faculty, 15% received one course equivalent in release time, and an additional 7% received more than one course equivalent in release time.
- 69% prepare an annual assessment report
- 60% have an assessment committee
- Only 6% have established budget for assessment

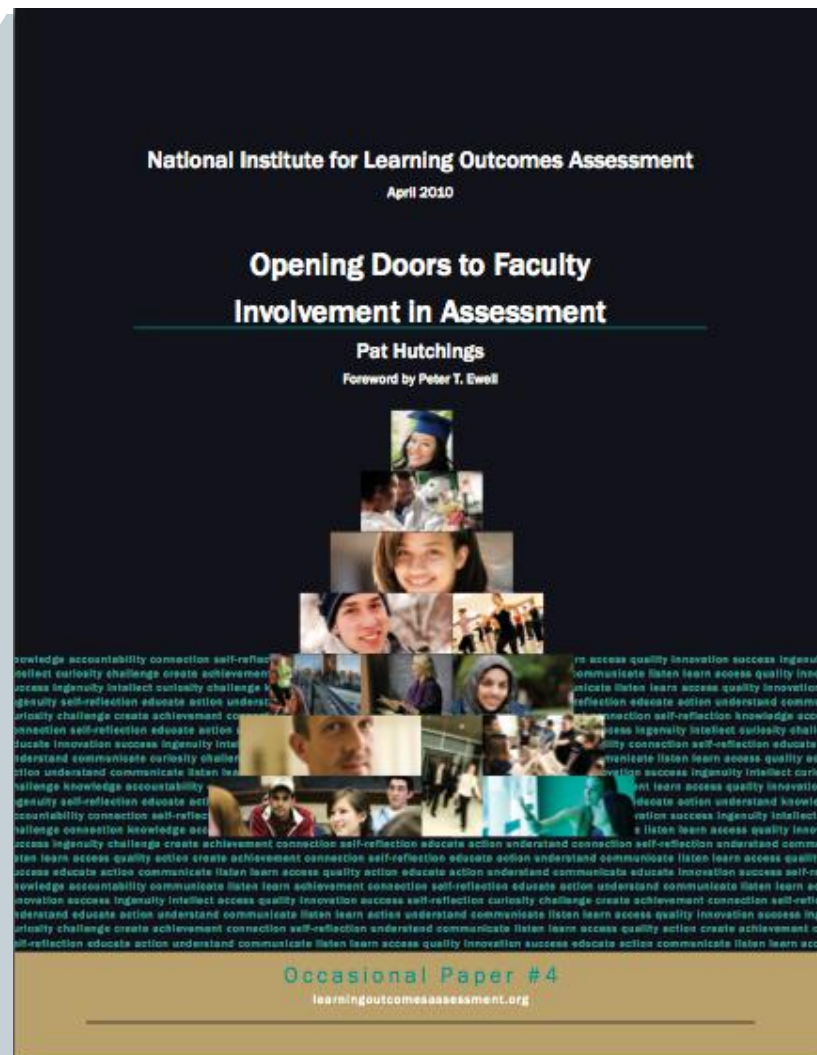
What Would Help?



Occasional Paper #4 *Opening Doors for Faculty Involvement in Assessment*

Pat Hutchings

The key to effectively using assessment data to improve student learning is to engage faculty in meaningful ways in this critical activity. This paper discusses the challenges inherent in and opportunities for doing so.



❖ **Key Findings**

- ✓ **Action at the program level**
- ✓ **Perceptions of CAOs and programs differ**
- ✓ **Specialized accreditation matters a lot**
- ✓ **Disciplinary differences matter even more**



Examples of Good Assessment Practice

- **Focus assessment efforts**
- **Harness external accountability for improvement**
- **Communicate widely**
- **Reflect on the process and results; make meaning**



- Empower an assessment committee
- Communicate openly
- Start small and build

Augustana College



- Allow variability
- Pursue faculty interests
- Faculty development
- Use accreditation
- Improve learning

Carnegie Mellon University



- Align with faculty interests
- Make assessment meaningful and manageable
- Be intentional from the beginning

St. Olaf College



- Communicate regularly
- Review assessment activities
- Support from campus leadership
- Embed in campus review systems
- Faculty development

LaGuardia Community College



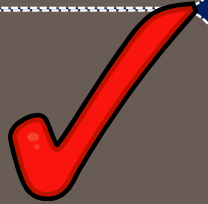
Marks of Advanced Department SLO Assessment

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Faculty invested in development of approaches & identification of measures



Multiple measures



More faculty aware of markers of student success & learning (progress rates, troublesome courses)



“Closing the loop”, evidence of change



Sharing results with students, communicating how results are used



What's Been Accomplished?

- ✓ **Assessment Seen as Legitimate**
- ✓ **Goals for Learning Established**
- ✓ **A “Semi-Profession” for Assessment**
- ✓ **Much Better Instruments and Methods**

What Remains to be Done?

- ✓ **Authentic Faculty Ownership**
- ✓ **Assessment Still an “Add-On”**
- ✓ **Use of Information for Improvement is Underdeveloped**
- ✓ **Sincere Institutional Engagement with Accreditors in Assessment**

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Discussion?
Questions?
Comments?

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