

**SPECIAL
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CWAC Assessment Newsletter

AUGUST 2018

A Brief Discussion on Students' Learning Outcomes in Higher Education: Assessing the Impact of Tacit Knowledge on Explicit Knowledge

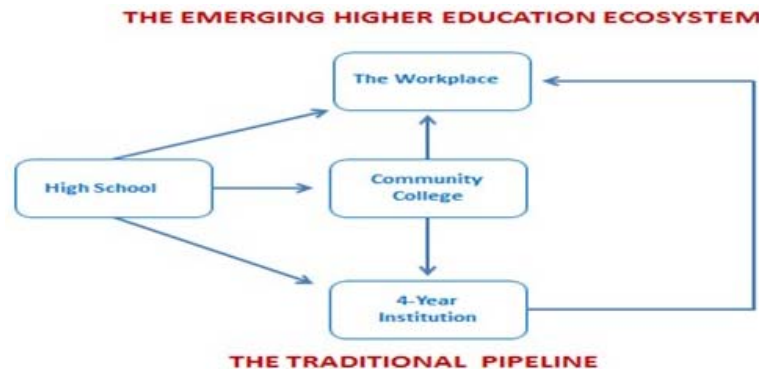
by Danté A. Tawfeeq

The Middle States Commission of Higher Education has moved from fourteen *Standards* to seven and from 10 requirements to 15. And while this might be news to many, the importance that program, departmental, and institutional assessment & evaluation plays in the maintenance of accreditation should be of common knowledge.

What is not often common knowledge amongst faculty is the impact that Student Affairs has on student academic outcomes (Upcraft & Shuh, 1996). The knowledge required to socialize oneself towards appropriate behaviors that facilitate learning is tacit and learned through experiences that Student Affairs can offer. Frade (2003) suggest that engaging students in tacit-learning opportunities that promote social behaviors and attitudes that are highly conducive to learning can surmount students' academic disparities that emerge from diverse schooling ecosystems that are not socially nurturing.

These disparities can flow from traditional as well as multi-dimensional schooling ecosystems. The traditional educational ecosystem, as suggested by Bernhardt (2013), is a framework in which assessment design tends to focus explicitly on compliance:

Figure 1: Emerging Higher Education Ecosystem: Traditional



The new design considers college and career readiness as bilateral and is equipped to be responsive to breaks in the traditional learning ecosystem (Labov, 2012):

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Students' Learning Outcomes (Continued)

Figure 2: Emerging Higher Education Ecosystem: New Dimension/Opportunities

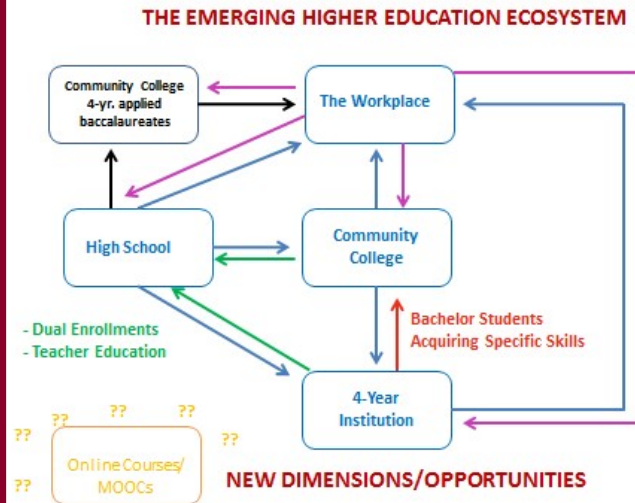


Figure 2, tends to better reflect social-economic paradigm shifts and initiatives that promote college and career readiness. This system, with numerous pathways and therefore the potential of multiple tacit-learning gaps, continually attempts to respond to the emerging global social-economic issues while possibly ignoring the development of social behaviors that impact explicit learning.

Because of this, institutions of higher education should shift their assessment process from solely compliance to continuous improvements based on multiple

learning experiences students will and can engage during their post-secondary experiences. Institution of higher education will need to move away from looking at a few sets of student outcomes that tends toward only academic proficiency to looking at several broad based outcomes that tends toward a higher level of understanding (Bernhardt, 2013). To that end, faculty, staff, and administrators will need to engage in diverse types of environmental scanning. Environmental scanning can assist an IHE in adapting to diverse changes in an evolving education market (Morris, 1992). Some scanning is informal and seeks to find particular facts. Some scanning is formal and seeks to be proactive by utilizing formal methodologies for change. These types of scanning can be done in relation to the macro-environment, task environment, and industry environment (Morrison, 1992).

Example Framework for an Impact Study

Two integrated models can be used in assessing the impact that learning (tacit) gained by students in Student Affairs sponsored activities has on learning (explicit) in the formal class environment. First, such an impact study will use an environmental assessment model as a framework. It is imperative that this study utilizes such a model since the main objective is to integrate students in a high functioning learning environment by developing learning behaviors that are appropriate for such an environment. Such models flow from Lewin's (1936) formula titled *Person-Environment Interaction* (cited by Upcraft & Schuh, 1996). The model that will govern the study to determine the Academy's impact on student stakeholders is the Behavior Engineering Model designed by Gilbert (1978). Essentially, this model improves student performance and satisfaction in an academic environment by aligning aspects of academic environmental support and the student's repertory to form a transaction called behavior. Second, this impact study will utilize Astin and Antonio's I-E-O model of outcome assessment. Astin and Antonio's (2012) conceptual model of assessment utilizes three domain variables that have observable relationships:

1. Variables of Inputs - These variables are those that reflect the foundational qualities of students before exposures to an IHE's academic program and student social life;
2. Environmental Variables - These variables comprise the wide-ranging set of college experience that range from academics to student activities; and
3. Outcome Variables - Denote the preferred end product that colleges want to see in its students.

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Students' Learning Outcomes (Continued)

Amongst a number of features, this model allows for Input variables to be bi-directional from/to both the Environmental and Outcome domain. This structure acknowledges that students are very diverse upon entering college. Some students already possess certain outcome qualities upon entering college, while others need to go through a process to obtain desired ending characteristics.

Conclusion

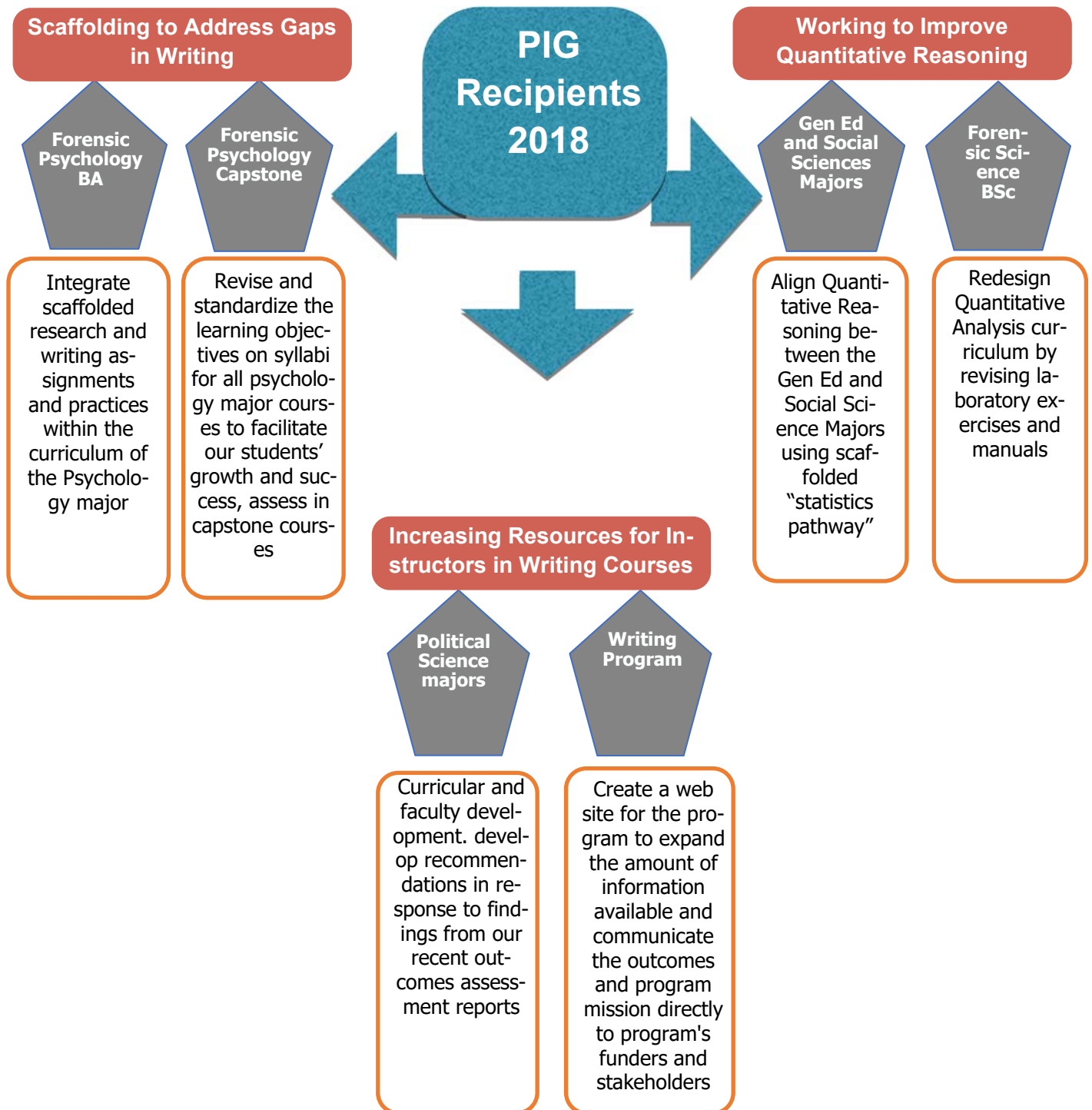
The purpose of this brief discussion was to reengage and reinvigorate conversations around issues of assessment and learning outcomes. Furthermore, this discussion situated learning in a broader scheme that includes the impact that tacit knowledge may have on facilitating the learning of explicit knowledge. This was done from a short review of literature and the presentation of a simple framework for an impact study. It is hoped that this discussion inspires faculty, staff, and administration to reinvasion assessment and engage discussion about diverse ways of assessing students' learning outcomes.

References

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What happened to the PIGS?

CWAC met with Gina Foster, the Teaching and Learning Center Director (TLC), to learn about the new round of Program Improvement Grants (PIGs) that were funded by the TLC this year. She informed us that all proposals submitted were funded and that they all presented strong projects to “close the loop” on prior assessments. Congrats to all recipients!



What happened to the PIGS? (continued)

She also shared with us that the TLC leadership decided to pair funded PIGs (PIG pals) for a peer-feedback grant process, by identifying underlying themes in the submitted proposals. This led to three groups working in three areas:



1. Scaffolding to address gaps in writing for Psychology courses
2. Increasing writing and critical thinking resources for Political Science instructors
3. Working to improve quantitative reasoning in statistics and science courses.

The peer-feedback process has been guided by Dr. Foster, who has met with each group. The PIG pals have also met to share ideas and discuss progress. This approach is aiding faculty in making connections they can't make independently and in receiving feedback from faculty working in other areas that have common goals.

Dr. Foster told us that ultimately the PIGs aim to bring a larger group of faculty to identify and address gaps in student success and skills that need to be in the curriculum but are not currently there, as well as to help faculty make clear connections to formal assessment and identify the gaps in student success. Applications will open again next Spring, and the TLC is encouraging faculty in all programs to consider applying.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

New to the college? Not on any committee? Want to make sure students are learning what we intended to teach them? Here is what you can do to support learning outcome assessment:

- Familiarize yourself with your program's curriculum map (in the assessment plan).
- Review stated learning goals and objectives.
- Get involved if you would like to see modifications.
- Ensure your own syllabus aligns with the program's goals and objectives.
- Select a component of your class that can be used to track students' progress.
- Prepare a rubric using this class component to measure desired outcomes (acquired knowledge, skills, or both).
- Try it out – assess your own class and use the information to help your students.
- Volunteer to be on the Department's Assessment Committee.
- Go big – join the College Wide Assessment Committee (CWAC).

Please note: not all courses in a program/major will be on the official assessment schedule. But wouldn't you want to know if your class works?

There is an assessment plan for Gen Ed classes, if that is what you are teaching: http://www.jjay.cuny.edu/sites/default/files/contentgroups/instu_research_assessment/GenEd%20Assessment%20Plan.2015.pdf

Educate yourself and get more information about assessment by checking our website <http://www.jjay.cuny.edu/assessment-john-jay-college>.



CWAC: Assessment Ambassadors

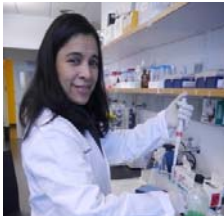
The College-Wide Assessment Committee provides feedback on annual assessment reports by academic and non-academic units, and coordinates assessment efforts for both student learning and institutional effectiveness, broadly understood. The College –Wide Assessment Committee **Assessment Ambassadors promote greater campus awareness about the benefits of systematic assessment.**



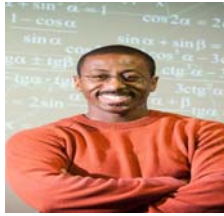
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