Advancing a Massachusetts Culture of Assessment

Improving Student Learning: Gathering, Distributing and Acting on the Evidence

Statewide Conference on Assessment in Higher Education

Monday, April 23, 2012
8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
UMass Boston Campus Center
Boston, MA
AMCOA Team Members

Julie Alig, Director, Institutional Research, University of Massachusetts Lowell
Pamela Annas, Associate Dean, College of Liberal Arts, University of Massachusetts Boston
Barika Barboza, Director of Learning Assessment, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth
Kristina Bendikas, Associate Dean for Assessment and Planning, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts
Gaelan Benway, Professor of Sociology, Quinsigamond Community College
William Berry, Associate Professor, Language and Literature Department, Cape Cod Community College
Neal Bruss, Associate Professor, English Department, University of Massachusetts Boston
Barb Chalfonte, Dean of Institutional Effectiveness, Springfield Technical Community College
Susan Chang, Director of Assessment, Framingham State University
Christopher Cratsley, Director of Assessment, Fitchburg State University
Thomas Curley, Dean of Humanities, Berkshire Community College
Neal DeChillo, Associate Provost and Dean, College of Health and Human Services, Salem State University
Melissa Fama, Vice President of Academic Affairs, Mount Wachusett Community College
Kate Finnegan, Professor of Education, Greenfield Community College
James Gubbins, Assistant Professor, Interdisciplinary Studies and Faculty Fellow in Assessment, Salem State University
Paula Haines, Coordinator, First Year Writing Program, English Department, University of Massachusetts Lowell
Wendy Haynes, Associate Professor and Coordinator of the MPA Program, Co-Chair of NEASC Steering Committee, Bridgewater State University
Lois Hetland, Professor of Art Education, Massachusetts College of Art and Design
Peter Johnston, Dean of Academic Advising and Assessment, Massasoit Community College
Elizabeth Johnston-O’Connor, Director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness, Cape Cod Community College
Kathy Keenan, Associate Vice President for Planning and Research, Massachusetts College of Art and Design
Nina Keery, Professor of English, MassBay Community College
Susan Keith, Associate Professor of English and the English Department Chair, Massasoit Community College
Terri Kinstle, Associate Professor of Psychology, Holyoke Community College
Donna Kuizenga, Special Assistant to the Provost, University of Massachusetts Boston
David Langston, Professor of English/Communications, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts
Paul Lavery, Professor of Mathematics, Mount Wachusett Community College
David Leavitt, Director of Institutional Research, Bunker Hill Community College
Carol Lerch, Assistant Vice President of Assessment and Planning, Worcester State University
Charlotte Mandell, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, University of Massachusetts Lowell
Elise Martin, Associate Dean of Assessment, Middlesex Community College
Timothy McLaughlin, Chair of the English Department; Co-chair of Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Program (SLOAP), Bunker Hill Community College
Linda Meccouri, Professional Development Coordinator; Professor, Multi Media Technology, Springfield Technical Community College
Maureen Melvin Sowa, Professor of History, Division of Social and Behavioral Sciences, Bristol Community College
Brenda Mercomes, Academic Affairs Vice-President, Roxbury Community College
Javad Moulaei, STEM Division Faculty Member, Roxbury Community College
Bonnie Orcutt, Professor of Economics, Worcester State University
Richard Panofsky, Assistant Chancellor for Institutional Research & Assessment, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth
Mark Patrick, Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs, Massachusetts Maritime Academy
Lisa Plantefaber, Associate Dean, Institutional Research and Assessment, Westfield State University
Charles Prescott, Assistant Professor of English, Berkshire Community College
Benjamin Railton, Associate Professor of English, Coordinator of American Studies, Fitchburg State University
Judy Raper, Director of Student Development, Greenfield Community College
Yves Salomon-Fernandez, Dean of Institutional Planning, Research and Assessment, MassBay Community College
John Savage, Professor of Chemistry, Middlesex Community College
Nancy Schoenfeld, Dean of Human Services & Science, Quinsigamond Community College
Ruth Slotnick, Director of Articulation and Learning Assessment, Mount Wachusett Community College
Dawne Spangler, Director of the Center for Teaching, Learning and Assessment, North Shore Community College
Martha Stassen, Assistant Provost, Assessment & Educational Effectiveness, University of Massachusetts Amherst
Susan Taylor, Professor, Mount Wachusett Community College
Judy Turcotte, Director of Planning and Assessment, Holyoke Community College
Suzanne Van Wert, Professor of English, Northern Essex Community College
Laura Ventimiglia, Dean for Academic Assessment, Curriculum, and Special Programs, North Shore Community College
Michael Vieira, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, Bristol Community College
Felix Wao, Director of Assessment, Bridgewater State University
Lori Weir, Instructional Design Specialist, MassBay Community College
Ellen Wentland, Associate Dean of Academic and Institutional Effectiveness, Northern Essex Community College
Marcellette Williams, Senior Vice President, Academic Affairs, Student Affairs & International Relations, University of Massachusetts President’s Office
Amanda Woods, Professor, Science and Mathematics Department, Massachusetts Maritime Academy
Ellen Zimmerman, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, Framingham State University
## Conference Agenda

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:30 a.m.</td>
<td><strong>Registration and Coffee/Refreshments</strong></td>
<td>Ballroom C Foyer</td>
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<td>9:00 a.m.</td>
<td><strong>Opening</strong></td>
<td>Ballroom C</td>
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<td><strong>James Gubbins</strong>, Conference Chair; Assistant Professor, Interdisciplinary Studies; and Faculty Fellow in Assessment, Salem State University</td>
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<td><strong>Welcome</strong></td>
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<td><strong>J. Keith Motley</strong>, Chancellor, University of Massachusetts Boston</td>
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<td><strong>Remarks</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Richard M. Freeland</strong>, Commissioner, Massachusetts Department of Higher Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:00 a.m.</td>
<td><strong>Breakout Sessions</strong> <em>(Participants will attend one session each; see descriptions and presenters on pages 4–5.)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Session 1. A Practical Approach to Assessment in Service-Learning (NSCC)</strong></td>
<td>Conf. Room 3545</td>
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<td><strong>Session 2. Redefining Gender Equity, or Save the Males! (NECC)</strong></td>
<td>Conf. Room 3540</td>
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<td><strong>Session 3. Learning Outcomes as Student Assessment: The Redesign of College Writing II (UML)</strong></td>
<td>Ballroom C</td>
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<td><strong>Session 4. Reducing the Impact of Subjectivity in the Assessment of Creative Projects in the Graphic Design and Multi-Media Programs (NECC)</strong></td>
<td>Conf. Room 2540</td>
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<td><strong>Session 5. Assessment 101–Part 1: The Collaborative Tasks That Underlie Both Program-Level and Institution-Level Commitment to Assessing Student Learning (DHE)</strong></td>
<td>Conf. Room 2545</td>
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<td>11:00 a.m.</td>
<td><strong>Break</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Session 6. Creating and Assessing an Active Capstone Experience: From Process to Outcomes (SSU)</strong></td>
<td>Ballroom C</td>
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<td><strong>Session 7. The Use of VALUE Rubrics to Inform the Assessment Process in a Business School and to Close the Feedback Loop (UML)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Session 8. Lessons Learned in WAC Assessment (BHCC)</strong></td>
<td>Conf. Room 3545</td>
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<td><strong>Session 9. Assessment 101–Part 2: The Collaborative Tasks That Underlie Both Program-Level and Institution-Level Commitment to Assessing Student Learning (DHE)</strong></td>
<td>Conf. Room 3540</td>
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<td><strong>Session 10. Assessing Skills in a Two-Year Laboratory Science Program Using Internal and External Expertise (NECC)</strong></td>
<td>Conf. Room 2545</td>
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<td>12:15 p.m.</td>
<td><strong>Lunch</strong></td>
<td>Ballroom A/B</td>
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<td>1:00 p.m.</td>
<td><strong>Keynote: “Potential Uses of Emerging Education and Workforce Data Sources to Inform Analysis of Student Learning Outcomes”</strong></td>
<td>Ballroom A/B</td>
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<td><strong>Jonathan Keller</strong>, Associate Commissioner for Research, Planning and Information Systems, Massachusetts Department of Higher Education</td>
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<td>1:30 p.m.</td>
<td><strong>Plenary Session for Reporting on Six Assessment Experiments</strong> <em>(See description and presenters on pages 8–9.)</em></td>
<td>Ballroom C</td>
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<td><strong>1. Bristol Community College and Massasoit Community College</strong></td>
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<td><strong>2. Fitchburg State University, Mount Wachusett Community College, Quinsigamond Community College, and Worcester State University</strong></td>
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<td><strong>3. Framingham State University and MassBay Community College</strong></td>
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<td><strong>4. Holyoke Community College</strong></td>
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<td><strong>5. Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts and Berkshire Community College</strong></td>
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<td><strong>6. University of Massachusetts Lowell, Northern Essex Community College, and Middlesex Community College</strong></td>
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<td>3:15 p.m.</td>
<td><strong>Conference Wrap-Up: “The Year That Lies Ahead”</strong></td>
<td>Ballroom C</td>
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<td><strong>Patricia Crosson</strong>, Senior Advisor for Academic Policy, Massachusetts Department of Higher Education</td>
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<td>3:30 p.m.</td>
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Breakout Session Descriptions

10 a.m. Breakout Sessions

Session 1. **A Practical Approach to Assessment in Service-Learning**  
*By North Shore Community College*

**Presenters:** Cate Kaluzny, Service-Learning Coordinator; Saradha Ramesh, Assessment Coordinator; Dawne Spangler, Director of Center for Teaching, Learning and Assessment

**Description:** Service-Learning has demonstrated its value to higher education in supporting classroom learning outcomes by providing opportunities for students to use their skills and knowledge to meet the needs of the community. This session addresses the approaches and results of a comprehensive assessment of a service-learning program, including student feedback, motivation and persistence of faculty, and reactions of community based partners. We will include a discussion of the data and its impact in terms of informing and improving the program.

**Expected Outcomes:**
1. Explore an assessment process for service-learning and examine the methods employed
2. Become familiar with factors that motivate faculty to take part in service-learning and continue to support the program
3. Discuss assessment findings and plans for closing the loop

Session 2. **Redefining Gender Equity, or Save the Males!**  
*By Northern Essex Community College*

**Presenter:** Suzanne Van Wert, Professor of English

**Description:** In 2008, an assessment of writing and critical thinking skills among Liberal Arts students at Northern Essex revealed that males scored significantly lower than females in 14 of 18 criteria. A review of published research confirmed that males are less successful at every level of schooling, with the male share of college students dwindling steadily over the last fifty years. This session looks at a wide range of possible causes for male academic under-achievement, and describes some of the formal and informal ways faculty at Northern Essex are trying to address the new gender gap.

**Expected Outcomes:**
1. Learn about results of writing assessment at the College and causes for under-achievement among male students
2. Learn about both formal and informal ways faculty are addressing the causes for underachievement

Session 3. **Learning Outcomes as Student Assessment: The Redesign of College Writing II**  
*By University of Massachusetts Lowell*

**Presenters:** Dina Bozicas, Lecturer, English Department; Paula Haines, Coordinator, First Year Writing Program, English Department; Kathryn Flinner, Adjunct Faculty in the First Year Writing Program; Alison Harriman, Adjunct Faculty in the First Year Writing Program; Evanthea Vlahakis, Adjunct Faculty in the First Year Writing Program

**Description:** In Spring 2011, the First Year Writing Program at UML launched a radically redesigned set of standard learning outcomes to be implemented in all 85 sections of College Writing II. The previous learning objectives lacked specificity, which had allowed for a proliferation of syllabi that lacked alignment with the general education purpose of the course. We will describe the development of the new objectives, the process for ensuring their adoption by adjunct faculty, and the critical shift to understanding learning outcome as the basis for student assessment. The discussion will be turned over to the adjunct faculty who will address the challenges and benefits of the revised learning outcomes in terms of their own teaching and their students' success. The audience will hear the practical and specific consequences of the instructional redesign.

**Expected Outcomes:**
1. Learn about how the University came to terms with proliferation of writing syllabi that lacked alignment with the general education purpose of our College Writing II
2. Engage in discussion with adjunct faculty about the challenges and benefits of the instructional redesign that has occurred once learning outcomes were revised for College Writing II
Session 4. Reducing the Impact of Subjectivity in the Assessment of Creative Projects in the Graphic Design and Multi-Media Programs

By Northern Essex Community College

Presenters: Kathleen Andler, Adjunct Faculty, Art and Design; Patricia Kidney, Department Chair, Art and Design; Sharon Wolff, Assistant Dean, Arts, Business, Communication and Technology

Description: One of the most difficult aspects of assessing outcomes for creative projects is how to quantify a subjective result. Several factors can have a significant influence on the resulting outcome including personal bias/preference, definition of project objectives and audience, and assessment of technical skills utilized. Creative projects by their very nature offer widely differing results and present challenges to assess but by carefully considering and clarifying the objectives of a particular project one can minimize the impact of factors such as personal preference and subjectivity. We will demonstrate how a combination of approaches led to concrete curricular improvement action items.

Expected Outcomes:
Participants will learn strategies to reduce the impact of subjectivity in the assessment of creative projects including:
1. Recognizing personal bias/preference and adjusting for it
2. Judging work for both technical skills and creative impact
3. Strategies for creating individual project objectives
4. Utilizing customized rubrics to assess objective outcomes
5. Standardizing rubrics within a program

Session 5. Assessment 101—Part 1: The Collaborative Tasks That Underlie Both Program-Level and Institution-Level Commitment to Assessing Student Learning

By Massachusetts Department of Higher Education

Presenter: Peggy Maki, Consultant to the AMCOA Project

Description: The first of this two-part interactive session focuses on identifying the initial collaborative tasks that underlie program- and institution-level assessment of student learning. Specifically, this session will describe and illustrate (with campus examples) learning outcome statements—agreed upon claims that institutions and programs assert their students achieve; curricular and co-curricular mapping—visual representations of where and how students learn or advance these agreed upon outcomes; and discuss the importance of identifying appropriate times to assess students’ progress towards and achievement of outcomes so that there is chronological tracking of student learning and chronological use of assessment results to improve students’ eventual levels of achievement.

Expected Outcomes of Part I:
1. Develop representative outcomes for your program or institution or review them in light of the characteristics of effective outcome statements
2. Describe or develop a plan for a curricular-co-curricular map
3. Identify formative times to assess your students’ learning and share those results with colleagues as a way to build a collaborative commitment to your students’ learning
11:15 a.m. Breakout Sessions

Session 6. Creating and Assessing an Active Capstone Experience: From Process to Outcomes
By Salem State University

Presenters: Jeanne Corcoran, Occupational Therapy Department Chairperson; Jean MacLachlan, Ph.D. Candidate MSOT, Academic Fieldwork Coordinator; Jeramie Silveira, Occupational Therapy Department, Graduate Coordinator

Description: This presentation showcases a capstone seminar in occupational therapy that measures program outcomes and student learning objectives, while simultaneously meeting several accreditation standards. Through experiential learning assignments such as the development and implementation of a graduate student research conference, a summative electronic portfolio, and a reflective autoethnography, this capstone seminar emphasizes the importance of research, evidence-based practice, professional development skills and the promotion of professional advocacy. Through continuous program evaluation, the outcomes from the capstone seminar have led to changes in the content, sequence and pedagogy of the curriculum. Using online e-learning rubrics and evaluation tools, the occupational therapy department has been able to access outcome data to track and compare the changes in student learning.

Expected Outcomes:
Based on the experiences of the capstone seminar in occupational therapy attendees will:
1. Describe a variety of capstone seminar assignments that provide evidence of active student learning
2. Explore measurement options to effectively demonstrate student learning
3. Describe strategies to evaluate student competencies and gather evidence-based data for curriculum evaluation

Session 7. The Use of VALUE Rubrics to Inform the Assessment Process in a Business School and to Close the Feedback Loop
By University of Massachusetts Lowell CANCELLED

Session 8. Lessons Learned in WAC Assessment
By Bunker Hill Community College

Presenters: Tim McLaughlin, Professor and Chair of English Department; Natalie Oliveri, Professor of English and WAC Coordinator

Description: Bunker Hill Community College has conducted large scale assessments of writing and critical thinking since the inception of the college’s Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Project (SLOAP) in 2004. Each year’s spring assessment project differs in some way from the previous year’s project—making this an ever-evolving, dynamic process. Participants in this session will hear about problems encountered and lessons learned in assessing writing and critical thinking across the curriculum; they will also be encouraged to share their own experiences. Prominent emphasis in this session will be given to those aspects of assessment that faculty members have found particularly engaging and valuable.

Expected Outcomes:
1. Participants will have derived a good understanding of how one institution has grappled with assessment of writing and critical thinking and will be able to identify lessons learned from these experiences.
2. Participants will see how one institution learned that assignment design is a crucial factor in eliciting critical thought—and then acted upon this finding.
3. Participants will have an opportunity to discuss their own efforts in this area, thus giving all participants an opportunity to hear about and learn from one another.
Session 9.  **Assessment 101—Part 2: The Collaborative Tasks That Underlie Both Program-Level and Institution-Level Commitment to Assessing Student Learning**  
*By Massachusetts Department of Higher Education*

**Presenter:**  *Peggy Maki, Consultant to the AMCOA Project*

**Description:** The second of this two-part interactive session focuses on identifying the collaborative tasks involved in assessing student work and reporting on and using results to inform educational practices. Specifically, this session will distinguish between and illustrate direct and indirect methods of assessment that provide evidence of how well students are making progress towards or achieving agreed upon outcomes and also align with pedagogy and feedback to students; illustrate the importance of establishing agreed upon criteria and standards of judgment to score student work or using AAC&U’s VALUE rubrics; illustrate a way to report out results of scoring student work—an assessment brief—that collaboratively engages educators in dialogue about ways to address patterns of weakness in student work; and presents a report format template.

**Expected Outcomes for Part 2:**
1. Identify direct and indirect methods you might use to assess one or more of your outcomes
2. Review some scoring rubrics—institutionally developed and nationally developed
3. Consider how you would use principles of assessment briefs to develop collaborative discussion about ways to improve student learning
4. Consider principles of a report template format as a common means to share and document program- or institution-level commitment to improving or advancing your students’ learning

Session 10.  **Assessing Skills in a Two-Year Laboratory Science Program Using Internal and External Expertise**  
*By Northern Essex Community College*

**Presenters:**  *Noemi Custodia-Lora, Acting Assistant Dean, Foundational Studies, Liberal Arts & Sciences; Marguerite White-Jeanneau, Coordinator, Laboratory Science Program & Natural Science Department Faculty*

**Description:** The Laboratory Science Program at Northern Essex Community College is a two-year degree program for training laboratory technicians in biotechnology, analytical chemistry, and environmental science. During curriculum development, faculty surveyed lab managers from a variety of facilities regarding the highest level skills needed in entry level technicians. From the survey results, six critical skills, including technical and non-technical or soft skills, were identified. These were incorporated across the program curriculum. This presentation focuses on how these skills are assessed by instructors through student coursework as well as by industry supervisors during the capstone lab externship experience. Finally, we discuss how these results continue to influence program curriculum development.

**Expected Outcomes:**
1. Learn to use similar process to design and/or modify program curriculum to incorporate and measure learning outcomes across disciplines and courses
2. Learn new ideas on how to use post-assessment data to make further improvement to program curriculum
1:30 p.m. Experiment Descriptions for Plenary Session

CONNECTING Writing Assessment in Southeastern Massachusetts  By Bristol Community College and Massasoit Community College

Contact:  Jean-Paul Nadeau, Associate Professor of English, Bristol Community College

Presenters:  Deb Anderson, Associate Professor of English, The Central Team, Bristol Community College; Farah Habib, Instructor of English, The BCC Team, Bristol Community College; Susan Keith, Associate Professor of English and the English Department Chair, The Central Team, Massasoit Community College

Description:  The CONNECT Consortium AMCOA Assessment Experiment is piloting the LEAP Framework and LEAP VALUE Rubric for assessing written communication general education outcomes and comparing these results with locally defined rubrics and general education frameworks that are currently in use by the colleges in Southeastern Massachusetts. The project is engaging English faculty from Bristol Community College and Massasoit Community College in a regional effort to learn about and apply the LEAP Framework and LEAP VALUE Rubric for written communication to assess mastery of written communication skills. It will provide a structure for comparing the experience and results of applying the LEAP VALUE Rubric with the experience and results of applying locally designed rubrics to a common assignment.

Central Massachusetts Partnership to Assess Written Communication  By Fitchburg State University, Mount Wachusett Community College, Quinsigamond Community College, and Worcester State University

Contact:  Christopher Cratsley, Director of Assessment, Project Contact, Fitchburg State University

Presenters:  Gaelan Benway, Professor of Sociology, Quinsigamond Community College; Carol Lerch, Assistant Vice President for Assessment and Planning, Worcester State University; Susan Taylor, Professor of Computer Information Systems, Mount Wachusett Community College

Description:  This partnership focuses on assessing written communication by evaluating student work. The assessment is being carried out by a team of 12 faculty, 3 from each institution. Student work will be collected for entering freshmen and spring-semester sophomore students enrolled in writing-intensive courses. Each artifact of student work will be assessed using both an institutionally-developed rubric and the LEAP VALUE rubric for written communication. Data will be aggregated using the TK20 web-based assessment system to examine differences across rubrics, grade levels, demographic groups and institutions, and faculty will use this data to develop recommendations for monitoring and reporting student achievement in written communication.

Two- or Four-Year Institution ... Doesn’t Matter: Student Success Is Student Success  By Framingham State University and MassBay Community College

Contact:  Susan Chang, Director of Assessment, Framingham State University

Presenters:  Yves Salomon-Fernandez, Dean of Institutional Planning, Research and Assessment, MassBay Community College; Lori Weir, Instructional Designer Specialist, MassBay Community College; Ellen Zimmerman, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, Framingham State University

Description:  A partnership between Framingham State University and MassBay Community College, the goal of both institutions is to identify ways to improve the academic experience and success of students who transfer from a community college to a four-year institution by using assessment tools and processes. The six objectives focus upon assessment processes, General Education, developing benchmarks, and exploring assessment software. This information will inspire and influence changes in the curriculum and continue the ongoing relationship between the schools. It is anticipated that the first cycle of full assessment will be completed by May 2013.
Integrating Quantitative Reasoning Modules into High-Impact Courses to Improve Student Performance and Curricula Design at Holyoke Community College

Contact: Judith Turcotte, Director of Planning and Assessment, Holyoke Community College

Presenters: Garret Cahill, Instructor of Mathematics, Holyoke Community College; Catherine Dillard, Assistant Professor of Mathematics, Holyoke Community College

Description: Holyoke Community College plans to strengthen teaching and learning in the area of quantitative reasoning (QR), one of the College’s five general education outcomes, in response to a recent QR assessment conducted by the College’s general education committee. Faculty from eight disciplines who teach high-enrolled, high-impact introductory courses will work with four “QR faculty experts” to learn how to develop, implement and assess QR modules over a two-semester period. The Quantitative Literacy VALUE Rubric will be used as a framework for assessing student work.

Writing Assessment Experiment:
Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, Berkshire Community College

Contact: Kristina Bendikas, Associate Dean for Assessment and Planning, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts

Presenters: Harris Elder, Professor of English / Communications, MCLA Senior Writing Taskforce, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts; Gerol Petruzella, Philosophy Faculty, MCLA-BCC Sophomore Writing Taskforce, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts; Charles Prescott, Assistant Professor of English, MCLA-BCC Sophomore Writing Taskforce, Berkshire Community College

Description: Faculty from MCLA and BCC have been working with Dr. Kathleen Yancey, a nationally known expert in college writing, to develop scoring guides for written communication at the sophomore/AA level and for the senior/bachelor’s level. Both groups will review student artifacts, as well as NSSE/CCSSE data, and determine action steps for coordinating writing expectations within their own institutions, and increasing student success in writing for those that transfer. The experiment also includes the creation of an intranet or internet sites at MCLA and BCC where students can go to access and view the writing rubrics and models of student work.

Using Assessment to Develop Interdisciplinary Writing Standards Across College Levels:
A Collaborative Model for Two- and Four-Year Institutions

By University of Massachusetts Lowell, Northern Essex Community College, and Middlesex Community College

Contact: Charlotte Mandell, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, University of Massachusetts Lowell

Presenters: Elise Martin, Associate Dean of Assessment, Middlesex Community College; Richard Siegel, Professor and Chair of the Psychology Department, University of Massachusetts Lowell; Suzanne Van Wert, Professor of English, Northern Essex Community College; Ellen Wentland, Associate Dean of Academic & Institutional Effectiveness, Northern Essex Community College

Description: The University of Massachusetts Lowell and two feeder community colleges, Northern Essex Community College and Middlesex Community College, have developed a pilot process for an interdisciplinary approach to examining students’ achievement with respect to an essential Gen Ed student learning outcome – Written Communication. This pilot will lay the groundwork for a future comprehensive assessment process from which we expect to articulate a set of common expectations or standards for student writing at “milestone” points in students’ undergraduate work.
A Letter to the AMCOA Team

April 23, 2012

Colleagues,

I want to commend you for your tremendous work this year. I am pleased and impressed by how far we have come in building a system-wide learning community around assessment issues in this short time. The interest and enthusiasm that you have shown for this project—supporting collaboration and faculty professional development, sharing best practice information among campuses, engaging in collaborative learning and designing innovative experiments—have been an inspiration and have emboldened me to believe that we can build on your successful work to become national leaders in the area of student learning outcomes assessment.

And clearly I am not alone. Your work has convinced the Association of American Colleges and Universities to grant us LEAP State status and bring this discussion to the national level. The State Higher Education Executive Officers’ Association and the Nellie Mae Education Foundation have stepped up to support those discussions. The New England Association of Schools and Colleges and other eminent higher education organizations have expressed their enthusiasm for this genuine contribution to the academy. We all look forward to what is to come.

Again, thank you. This work would be impossible to pursue without your support and, most importantly, your expertise. The AMCOA Project has been well worth your time and investment, and I want you to know that I deeply appreciate your efforts.

Sincerely,

Richard M. Freeland
Commissioner of Higher Education
Scenes from the February 9 AMCOA Conference held at UMass Lowell’s Conference Center and Inn. Photos by Kevin Harkins/Harkins Photography.
We will produce the best-educated citizenry and workforce in the nation.

We will be a national leader in research that drives economic development.

[www.mass.edu/visionproject](http://www.mass.edu/visionproject)

The AMCOA Statewide Conference is supported by a grant from the Davis Educational Foundation awarded to the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education.

Additional Special Thanks to:

**CONFERENCE CHAIR**
James Gubbins, Salem State University

**CONFERENCE PLANNING GROUP**
Neal Bruss, University of Massachusetts Boston
Christopher Cratsley, Fitchburg State University
Donna Kuizenga, University of Massachusetts Boston
Dawne Spangler, North Shore Community College

**HOST INSTITUTION**

J. Keith Motley and Winston Langley, University of Massachusetts Boston

And the Presidents, Vice Presidents, and Chief Academic Officers of the Massachusetts Public Higher Education System