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Assessing Student Outcomes - Why, Who, What, How: New Directions for Institutional Research, Assessment Supplement 2009

J. Fredericks Volkwein

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This volume offers administrators and practitioners a summary guide to assessment in higher education, from the reasons for undertaking assessment to the delivery of findings. It opens with the questions that precede an effective study and drive research design:

1. To what extent is the study aimed at educational improvement, and to what extent is it aimed at external accountability?
2. Are the results expected to demonstrate goal attainment, improvement, comparison to others, meeting standards, cost-effective investment?
3. What is the population from whom assessment data are being collected: Are we measuring the knowledge and skills of individuals and making decisions about their remediation, certification, or development?
4. Or are we sampling from particular groups of students and comparing them to each other, or perhaps to themselves over time?

The core of the volume is devoted to the objects of assessment: basic skills, general education knowledge, attainment in the major, personal growth, attitudes and satisfaction, and alumni outcomes, keeping in mind both cognitive and noncognitive measures. One chapter describes common obstacles to effective assessment; others describe conceptual models, research methods, and data collection strategies and instruments. The concluding chapter underscores the importance of communicating research results effectively.

This is a special volume of the Jossey-Bass higher education quarterly report series *New Directions for Institutional Research*. Always timely and comprehensive, New Directions for Institutional Research provides planners and administrators in all types of academic institutions with guidelines in such areas as resource coordination, information analysis, program evaluation, and institutional management.

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