Title of iREAL Working Group: Assessment

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Executive Summary

The following report addresses the major drivers of change in the assessment of learning at the university level and how they impact FIU. The workgroup identified technology as the leading driver of change, but also as a critical tool that FIU needs to harness to best address these changes and lead the way in the use of technologically advanced assessment techniques. To best address the charge of the commission, the workgroup identified four components that drive assessment change: employers' expectations, regulatory agencies, open-learning opportunities, and students and families. Each of these component groups must be addressed by FIU to ensure that assessment of student learning is approached from the most efficient and relevant perspective. Following each component description, the workgroup identified trends, solutions, and strategies, including a timeline, for implementation. The report ends with a list of perceived benefits that FIU could receive based on the integration of the report's suggestions. Overall, the workgroup determined that FIU must embrace technological change, especially in terms of becoming more flexible in the assessment of student learning.

Working Group Report

Technology in a post knowledge-based economy plays the dual role of driving change in the assessment of learning and addressing these changes. Each of the components within this report involves technology and how FIU needs to be aware of these changes to assess student learning in the most effective and relevant way. In drafting this report, multiple stakeholders were taken into consideration to determine how changes in technology can be used to devise and implement these new assessment strategies. Furthermore, the importance of being alert to changes in technology requires FIU to remain flexible in its approach to assessment of student learning. The following components were identified by the work group as the major drivers of change in at the university level. After identification of each driver, what follows are the potential solutions, benefits, and suggested action steps.

- **Employers' expectations** are driving expected components of student learning outcomes (e.g., higher order thinking, communication, teamwork, global awareness, quantitative reasoning, technology, and critical thinking) (Sternberg, 2013). The push for students to have these multidimensional skills and knowledge, as opposed to just a high GPA, is challenging the traditional method of paper and pencil testing as a measure of student learning (Belkin, 2013; Sternberg, 2013). Competencies needed in the job market should drive the assessment measures of these critical abilities.
    - **Trend:** There are numerous examples of external assessments created to measure employers' objectives (CLA+; Proctor and Gamble – internal assessment of applicants) (Belkin, 2013). The CLA+ has been accepted at more traditional institutions that are confident in their students' ability to perform on these types of assessments.
    - **Solution:** Use of a standardized instrument such as the CLA+ is usually accomplished in a low-stakes assessment environment. FIU should develop a customized assessment that works for our student body/environment to improve the reliability and validity of the instrument.
        - **Strategy for Implementation:** Use FIU's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) post-assessment – the Case Response Assessment (CRA) - to begin developing other options for "senior" testing that can be measured by VALUE Rubrics (see glossary). Identify departments interested in piloting preliminary versions with their senior students.
        - **Resources and Tools:** Utilize existing support offices such as the Center for Advancement of Teaching, the Office of Global Learning Initiatives, and Academic Planning and Accountability.
        - **When should solution be applied / Timeline:**
            - 2014-15: Develop assessment prototype and develop administration procedures to ensure instrument reliability.
            - 2015-16: Pilot preliminary versions.

- 2016-17: Expand department participation.
- 2017-18: Fully implement assessment instrument.

- **<u>Regulatory agencies</u>**, such as the United States Department of Education (US DOE), establish federal requirements for all institutions receiving federal financial aid. In addition, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACS-COC), requires their member institutions to meet various Principles of Accreditation.
    - US DOE stipulates the monitoring of student achievement such as graduation and retention rates and success on licensure examinations.
    - Using the umbrella term "institutional effectiveness", SACS-COC requires that "the institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvements based on analysis of the results" (Southern Association, 2012, p. 27).
    - **Trend:** Documenting student achievement and learning outcomes requires faculty to devote time to these tasks. In addition, programs must demonstrate comparable student learning outcome (SLO) results among different venues for instruction (e.g., face-to-face, online, off-campus). One trend of best practice within FIU, the College of Architecture + the Arts provides incentives to faculty who are responsible for assessment. Another best practice is the Writing Across the Curriculum program which awarded several grants for infusion of writing and assessment by VALUE rubrics in key courses of various majors.
    - **Solution:** Expand the practice in CARTA to other colleges of providing stipends and course releases to encourage faculty who are willing to take on the responsibility of assessment of student learning (Havens, 2013).
        - **Strategy for Implementation:** Identify interested faculty and provide training as necessary to become "Assessment Scholars."
        - **Resources and Tools:** Identify funds to provide stipends and course releases. Utilize existing support offices such as Center for Advancement of Teaching, Writing Across the Curriculum, and Academic Planning and Accountability.
        - **When should solution be applied / Timeline:**
            - 2014-15: Identify funds and initiate training.
            - 2015-16: Implement "Assessment Scholar" program.
            - 2016-17: Track and Document program success.
            - 2017-18: Institutionalization of "Assessment Scholar".

- **<u>Open-learning opportunities</u>**, such as MOOCs, offer access to the population at-large on a variety of topics. Prospective students are gaining a variety of learning experiences prior to entering the university; there is a push to design institutional assessment to award credit for these course experiences.

- **Legislature** - "As required by CS/HB 7029, beginning in the 2015-2016 school year the Board of Governors and the State Board of Education must adopt rules that enable students to earn academic credit for online courses, including massive open online courses, prior to initial enrollment at a postsecondary institution." (State University System, 2013).

- **Trend:** If FIU does not come up with viable methods to assess prior learning, we will lose position in the marketplace. In response to this need, FIU Online established five MOOCs (see glossary). The *Entrepreneurship and New Ventures* course will offer an optional assessment to obtain course credit. Furthermore, FIU offers several opportunities for students to gain credit for prior learning (see glossary).
  - The Task Force on Postsecondary Online Education in Florida (State University System, 2013) is finalizing a report regarding their charge to recommend strategies for better coordination for services and online programs.

- **Solution:** Although there will be a state-wide directive regarding awarding credit, departments must play an active role in determining assessment methods. This will require the university to review its policies on Credit by Exam (340.130) and Credit for Non-College Learning (340.110) (Florida International University, 1998; Florida International University, 1994). The state or FIU will need to define "prior to initial enrollment at a postsecondary institution" in developing its policies.
  - **Strategy for Implementation:** Initial steps required of degree programs will be to first affirm their Academic Learning Compacts (ALCs) as definitive outcomes. The objectives of each course in the curriculum must be linked to these ALCs along with standardized assessments. Further, the cost associated with developing, administering, and tracking these assessments needs to be determined to set fees for this credit-awarding process.
  - **Resources and Tools:** Utilize existing support offices such as Center for Advancement of Teaching and Academic Planning and Accountability and University Testing Center.
  - **When should solution be applied / Timeline:**
    - 2014-15:
      - Establish a Faculty Senate Assessment of Prior Learning Committee responsible for oversight.
      - Select 1-2 degree programs to review ALCs and map curriculum / objectives to ALCs to establish policies and procedures for remaining programs. This could be initiated with current fully-online programs who have established strong objectives and related assessments.
      - Identify available standardized assessments and determine assessment gaps.

- o   Determine costs associated with each form of assessment.
    - • 2015-16:
        - o   Pilot assessments and determine administration plan (department vs. testing center).
        - o   Finalize fee schedule.
    - • 2016-17: Implement with remaining programs.
    - • 2017-18: Evaluate processes and implement necessary changes.

- • **Students and families** want to keep down the cost of their degree and shorten the time for completion. Costs of higher education have increased rapidly over the past 10 years. Furthermore, according to the iREAL survey, students identified that "keeping the cost of degrees low" is the third most important strategic planning initiative (Florida International University, 2013a).
    - o **Trend:** In Florida, there has been a shift for students to pay a larger portion of the actual cost of the degree. In addition, the BOG has identified several key performance metrics that will affect future funding awarded to FIU; these include: time to degree, excess credits, and cost of degree. Thus, if FIU doesn't keep costs down, future state funding may diminish, in addition to the fact that students may choose to go to other lower-cost institutions, including Florida state colleges. FIU Nursing received a grant to fast-track returning veteran medics into the undergraduate nursing degree. Students will be individually assessed for technical expertise applicable to nursing competencies (Rosenberg, 2013).
    - o **Solution:** Developing a model that keeps costs down and works for FIU students, especially for those that are employed full-time and have families. Developing, administering, and tracking these assessments needs to be determined to set fees for this credit-awarding process.
        - ▪ **Strategy for implementation 1:** Introducing a model of competency-based assessment (CBA) that would focus on competencies of graduates rather than required curricular sequences.
            - o Units should develop competencies that exist throughout the curriculum, not just at the end of the curriculum sequences. Thus, this will require structuring assessment of learning throughout the curriculum (e.g., the use of assessment milestones, measured with summative and formative evaluation procedures)
            - o Using MOOCs to supplement course sequencing to enhance necessary competencies. Understanding the student's competence throughout the curriculum to more quickly identify appropriate interventions to help them meet the required competency, thus lowering time to degree. This can include

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taking MOOC tools or online modules to master writing or quantitative skills.

- **Resources and Tools:** New position established within APA to focus on development, implementation, and assessment of CBA. Identify resources to support degree programs willing to initiate CBA (release time for faculty, professional development).
- **When should solution be applied / Timeline:**
  - o 2014-15: Identify 2-3 degree programs that are compatible with CBA. Provide professional development for identified faculty. Begin to identify competencies and assessment milestones within the curriculum.
  - o 2015-16: Develop initial assessment methods and pilot.
  - o 2016-17: Implement programs.
  - o 2017-18: Evaluate processes and implement necessary changes.
- **Strategy for implementation 2:** In response to the rapidly increasing use of technology and need to reach out to more students, FIU must tailor their educational programs to meet these requirements.
  - FIU strives to deliver and assess the learning that will meet objectives regardless of learning environment. The use of technology in assessment of student learning needs to be enhanced to better benefit students.
    - o Identify how FIU students learn best and then develop and integrate appropriate models of teaching and assessment.
    - o In addition, FIU must analyze the cost of implementing these tools and identify the costs that will be passed on to the student in terms of having access to required technology (creation of computer/smartphone requirement for incoming students).
  - **Resources and Tools:** Identify resources to support faculty grants; UTS, Media and Technology Services, FIU Online, Center for the Advancement of Teaching, Academic Planning and Accountability.
  - **When should solution be applied / Timeline:**
    - o 2014-15: Call for proposals to conduct research on student learning using traditional and non-traditional methods of instruction (TechDoc proposals). Spring implementation.
      - ▪ Determine university policy on technology requirements for incoming students. Incorporate cost of purchasing technology in financial aid budget. Establish loaner program (e.g., tech fee grant) for students whose financial aid has already achieved maximum award.

- 2015-16: Research completed in fall term and results disseminated at spring TechDoc workshop.
    - Implement technology policy.
    - Increase TechDoc grant program.
- 2016-17: TechDocs mentor additional faculty.
- 2017-18: Evaluate processes and implement necessary changes.

THE BENEFITS

- Maintaining the quality of graduates and FIU's brand, academic integrity, reputation.
- Reducing the cost of degree through streamlined and alternative means of progression of students (CBA).
- Better positioning the university to be more flexible, preparation for performance-based funding.
- Improve access and degree production while maintaining the quality of the instruction students receive
- Culture of assessment embraced by entire university.
- Computers / hand-held devices open up opportunity for real-time assessment (Nearpod, other apps).
- The use of prior learning assessments and competency-based education could result in raising the college attainment rate in ways that are both cost and time effective for students, institutions, and taxpayers.
- These strategies could ensure that the credentials and degrees conferred are high-quality while meeting the needs and expectations of potential employers.
- Changing the assessment of learning will allow FIU the opportunity to target a new set of non-traditional students such as adult learners that may not have been interested in the university under the traditional teaching and assessment model.
- Students are rewarded for prior knowledge and are able to spend more time focusing on areas of the course/program that require more of their attention and spend less time on topics they have mastered.
- Learning is constant and time is variable. Outcomes are based on demonstrating masteries and students have the freedom of completing courses at their own pace, at their own time.
- Competencies provide students with a clear map and tools to move expeditiously toward their goals.
- Students can significantly accelerate their degree path if they have the desire and are capable.
- The solutions offer alternative learning options for students and provide professors and administrators with more flexibility and alternative teaching delivery methods.
- Online courses allow for more flexibility and since seat-time is de-emphasized, professors are not required to be present and more can work remotely.
- The solutions offer alternative learning options for students and provide professors with alternative ways of teaching.

<h1 style="text-align:center">Glossary of Terms</h1>

AAC&U – VALUE Rubrics (Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Ed.) est. 2007; recent publication summarizes all of their rubrics, which have been developed for 15 areas of learning (i.e. critical thinking, written communication, oral communication, inquiry & analysis). FIU will be using two of the rubrics within their Writing Across the Curriculum projects (critical thinking & written communication). Some institutions are using VALUE rubrics to assess E-Portfolios. LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes "component project of AAC&U's Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP)…rooted in a philosophy of learning assessment that privileges the authentic assessment of student work and the development of shared understandings of student learning outcomes" (Rhodes & Finley, 2013, p. 1).

Council for Aid to Education (CLA) - Exit exam (CLA+) designed to measure learning by asking critical thinking questions. This was the focus of Belkin's (2013) article as the CLA+ leveling the playing field between college graduates from a variety of institutions, where GPAs may not indicate appropriate skills needed for the workforce).

- CLA+ Instrument
  - 90 minutes
  - 1 performance task (60 min) – no math, but quantitative reasoning does occur
    - Compelling scenario (student engagement)
    - Question (What happens when a town is confronted by an increase in drug use during an election season?)
    - Documents from where they get information (memo from Private investigator – is there bias?; newspaper article; drug treatment program results; may present irrelevant data to see if students can determine that is it not relevant to the task)
  - 25 selected response questions (30 min)
    - Document and scenario based
    - i.e. choosing appropriate research design

Competency-Based Education

- DOE Strategy:
  - "Competency-based approaches to education have the potential for assuring the quality and extent of learning, shortening the time to degree/certificate completion, developing stackable credentials that ease student transitions between school and work, and reducing the overall cost of education for both career-technical and degree programs. The Department plans to collaborate with both accrediting agencies and the higher education community to encourage the use of this innovative approach when appropriate, to identify the most promising practices in this arena, and to gather information to inform future policy regarding

competency-based education. Currently, the direct assessment authority in the HEA is the mechanism through which title IV, HEA funds can be provided for competency-based education, and we understand that it may not adequately accommodate this educational model. The Department intends to use what we learn from participating institutions to inform future discussions regarding the reauthorization of the HEA" (U.S. Department of Education, 2013).

- Competency-Based Assessment (CBA) requires removing the three-credit course model from education. Instead the credit hour focus is: "shaping workload, units of learning, resource allocation, space utilization, salary structure, financial aid regulations, transfer policies, degree definitions, and more" (LeBlanc, 2013).
  - o Carnegie Foundation "now believes it is time to consider how a revised unit, based on competency rather than time, could improve teaching and learning in high schools, colleges, and universities" (Laitinen, 2013).
- Trends in competency based education include:
  - o Several emerging new programs with a competency-based approach: University of Southern New Hampshire, "College for America" (uses Lumina DQP; AA in general studies; 120 competencies organized around 20 task families and 10 competency clusters; approved by the US Dept. of Education and their regional accrediting body; $1,250 per 6 month term); Northern Arizona University (Personalized Learning; BA in Liberal Arts, Business, Computer/Information Technology; $2,500 per 6 month term); Capella University (est. competencies 10 yrs ago for BA in Management and MBA – require 3.25 GPA for admission to competency-based degree; $2,000 per 3 month term); Texas A&M Commerce; University of Wisconsin (Approved by the Higher Learning Commission; Flex Option – AAS in general education, bachelor's degrees in nursing, diagnostic imaging, and information science and technology; certificate in professional and technical communication; $2,250 per 3 month term); Western Governor's University (BA, MA, MS Education; BS, MS IT; BS, BSN, MSN Nursing; $2,890-$4,250 per 6 month term); Kentucky Community and Technical College System (within SACS) (Kamenetz, 2013); UWF initiated new competency-based degree Fall 2013.

CS/HB 7029: Section 1004.0961, Florida Statutes, is created to read: "1004.0961 Credit for online courses.—Beginning in the 2015-2016 school year, the State Board of Education and the Board of Governors shall adopt rules that enable students to earn academic credit for online courses, including massive open online courses, prior to initial enrollment at a postsecondary institution. The rules of the State Board of Education and rules of the Board of Governors must include procedures for credential evaluation and the award of credit, including, but not limited to, recommendations for credit by the American Council on Education; equivalency and

alignment of coursework with appropriate courses; course descriptions; type and amount of credit that may be awarded; and transfer of credit" (CS/HB 7029, 2013)

FIU MOOCS: (mooc.fiu.edu)

- Applied Real Estate
- Entrepreneurship and New Ventures
- Legal and Ethical Government
- Project Management Basics
- Fundamentos para la Direccion de Proyectos

FIU Policy on Credit-By-Exam and Credit for Non-College Learning:

CREDIT-BY-EXAM

The academic programs of the University are planned in such a manner that students may complete some of their degree requirements through one or more accelerated mechanisms. Florida International University recognizes the following credit-by-exams: Advanced Placement (AP), Cambridge Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE/A and AS-Level), Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examinations (CAPE), College Level Examination Program (CLEP), DANTES Subject Standardized Tests (DSST), Excelsior College Examinations (ECE), and International Baccalaureate (IB).

The awarding of credit for AP, A and AS-Level, CLEP, DANTE/DSST, Excelsior, and IB follow the guidelines established by the Florida Board of Governors' Articulation Coordinating Committee. These guidelines include, but are not limited to, the following:
1. A maximum of 45 semester hours may be granted for all credit-by-exams combined.
2. Credit awarded by exam may not duplicate other credit.
3. If duplicate credit exists, the exam yielding the most credit will be awarded.
4. Course equivalencies are included in the student's unofficial transcript and degree audit.
5. There are no grades associated with credit-by-exam equivalencies.

A complete set of guidelines, as well as credit-by-exam equivalency tables, can be found on the Transfer and Transition Services website:

http://transfer.fiu.edu.

ADDITIONAL CREDIT-BY-EXAM

Florida International University recognizes additional forms of acceleration, including Defense Language Proficiency Test, German Abitur, and French and General Baccalaureate. These credit-by-exam mechanisms are evaluated on a case by case basis in consultation with University faculty. The application of credit for these exams is left to the discretion of the University.

Florida International University awards credit for Advanced Level Program completed through College Board, Puerto Rico and Latin America Office. The following three

exams and scores are accepted: Pre-Calculus (Level II) with a score of 4 or 5, English with a score of 4 or 5, and Spanish with a score of 3, 4, or 5.

COLLEGE LEVEL EXAMINATION PROGRAM (CLEP)

One credit-by-exam that is available to students while enrolled at the University is the College Level Examination Program. This examination program is designed to measure knowledge in certain subject areas of general education. Credit earned through CLEP examination may be equated to courses in the University Core Curriculum or lower-division electives. To register for an exam, go to **https://testing.fiu.edu** or contact the University Testing Center at (305) 348-2441 (Modesto A. Maidique Campus) and (305) 919-5927 (Biscayne Bay Campus).

CREDIT FOR NON-COLLEGE LEARNING

The awarding of credit for learning acquired outside the university or classroom experience is the prerogative of each academic department or program. Only degree-seeking students are eligible to receive this type of credit. The significant learning must be applicable to the degree program of the student, and should be discussed and appropriately documented at the time the desired program of study is initially discussed and decided with the student's program advisor. A maximum of 6 credit hours will be awarded. Credit for learning may not be used to meet University Core Curriculum (UCC) requirements." (Florida International University, 2013b, p. 22).

In addition, students may receive credit for Excelsior and UExcel. UExcel is the new branding for Excelsior exams, but not all exams have been changed yet, so Excelsior College is using both at this time. However, unlike AP, IB, and AICE, which must be completed during high school, Excelsior/UExcel exams allow any student to complete these exams while attending FIU.

The link below includes the ACC guidelines on awarding credit for the FCS and SUS. You will see all exams offered under each of these exams.

http://www.fldoe.org/articulation/pdf/ACC-CBE.pdf

LUMINA Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP): "A proposed framework for quality assurance that offers a baseline set of reference points for what students in any field should learn, understand, and do at each degree level, from associate's to master's. DQP incorporates LEAP essential learning outcomes into its recommended strands of learning, and stipulates that a specified level of performance or attainment should be demonstrated prior to the award of a degree" (Rhodes & Finley, 2013, p.2).

QEP/CRA: "The case response instrument requires that students read a case study and respond to two essay prompts. A five-level (zero-four) holistic rubric is used to score students' responses according to their level of achievement of global learning SLOs one through four. The levels of the rubric correspond to the levels of Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Development (Bloom

1956). A score of "three" represents the cognitive level of analysis. The pilot faculty members, the OGLI and the Office of Academic Planning and Accountability determined this score to be a meaningful academic criterion and the minimum criteria for success… In its review of methods used by other institutions to assess global learning, the OGLI did not find an existing instrument it deemed a valid measure of FIU's global learning… The case studies used in this instrument feature complex, real-world problems. They prompt students to exercise interdisciplinary knowledge and multi-perspective analytical skills to understand case issues and formulate potential solutions. The cases are also consistent with the content of global learning courses and the pedagogical methods used in the courses. Being problem-based, the cases draw on discussion and argumentation skills practiced in global learning courses. The case response instrument is practical for delivery to students majoring in disciplines across the curriculum. Students with differing disciplinary expertise can approach the multi-layered issues using various theoretical frameworks and analytical approaches. Further, the cases are an engaging, compelling, high-… interest method of assessment. Written in narrative form, students are encouraged to consider multiple perspectives and solutions (Golich, Boyer, Franko, and Lamy 2000; Wraga 2008)" (Florida International University, 2010, pp.27-28).

Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA) –" initiative by 4 year universities to provide clear, accessible, and comparable information on the undergraduate student experience to important constituencies through a common web report – college portrait- designed for comparable info for over 300 colleges/universities, geared towards public (families, students, advisors, etc…)" (The Voluntary System of Accountability, 2013). VSA is sponsored by the American Association of State Colleges and University (AASCU) and the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities (APLU). AAC&U VALUE rubrics are recognized by VSA as a valid method of senior competency assessment (in lieu of standardized exams).

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