

# Riding the Pig

## LEARNING IMPROVEMENT IN A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD

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# Outcomes

1. Participants will be able to discuss the importance of pushing past the loop and on to meaningful improvement in their programs.
2. Participants will discover the importance of awareness and understanding when it comes to meaningful improvement.
3. Participants will leave with the charge :  
“Go forth and seek improvement!!





# What Data Really Matters?

## Interesting Information vs. Useful Information

\*\* Never ask a question without a meaningful end.

Important Caveat : This does not mean we should avoid questions we're not sure we want the answers to.



# Benefits of Assessment

- Making a difference, and then measuring it.
- Documentation of student learning.
- Demonstration of the value/outcomes of certain offerings in a program.
- Gaining support for additional funding in your program.
- Improvement of student learning and/or services.
- Satisfying your accreditor.



# Assessment ... to what end?

## 3 Steps of Assessment

1. Outcomes we expect for our students.
2. Information – How well students achieve these outcomes.
3. Action – How we use this info to **improve** student learning.

Walvoord (2010)



# Learning Outcomes ( A Review)

Learning outcomes are what students are expected to demonstrate in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes upon completion of a program, course, or activity.

\*\* To change the culture, focus should be on learning. \*\*

1. How can we help our students learn?
2. What is best for our students?



# Compliance or Culture

## Decisions to be made

- Was there 100% compliance on campus
- Is there a culture of assessment?
- Is assessment meaningful on campus?
- Was assessment practiced the same during the pandemic?
- What was different? What contributed to the deficiencies?





# A Combined Plan of Attack

## Action Plan

- Provost and Academic Affairs announced “partnership” between curriculum requests and completion of proper assessment.
- Encouraged meaningful and direct results driven approach to making their programs stronger.
- Compliance was addressed by Provost in Dean’s Council
- Suggestions for assessment with strong purpose would lead to improvement.
- Non-academic assessment was paired with the Strategic Plan with improvement as the driving expectation.





# Improvement

Fact

“A pig never fattens because it  
was weighed”

Conversely

“Students never learn more  
simply  
by being assessed”



Fulcher, et al (2014)



# Improvement

Just feed the pigs ... or buffaloes???

“A Simple Model for Learning Improvement: Weigh Pig, Feed Pig, Weigh Pig.” An Occasional Paper #23 (Fulcher, Good, Coleman, & Smith, 2014)

National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment  
(NILOA)



# What do we want to Improve?

Our students' expectations vs. their perceptions

- How are under-represented student populations performing in our programs?
- Are students satisfied with what they're learning?
- Retention is implied through improvement!!



# What Data Really Matters?

- Interesting Information vs. Useful Information
- Never ask a question without a meaningful end.
- **Important Note: This does not mean we avoid questions we're not sure we want the answers to.**



# Assessment – to what end?

## 3 Steps of Assessment

1. Outcomes we expect for our students.
2. Information – How well students achieve these outcomes.
3. Action – How we use this info to *improve* student learning. (Closing the loop)



# Assessment vs. Improvement

- Assessment = Procedure
- Improvement = Process
- Assessment = Proposition
- Improvement = Change
- Assessment = Discussion
- Improvement = **Action**



# Answering Faculty Questions/Conclusions



- Why must we assess?
- Why are you evaluating?
- - Why must we do the Provost's busy work?
- - What do you want me to write to get this done?



# Pandemic Struggles

## Administration/Deans

- “Now is not the time for assessment expectations.”
- “They’ve got far too much on their plate ... I won’t add too it.”
- “We’ll pick it up when everything settles down.”

... but the accreditors had other ideas and expectations ...



# Why Improvement?

The most important consideration in assessment “is whether the assessment process is leading to improvements in academic and co-curricular programs.”

Banta and Palomba (2015)





# Why Improvement?

Linda Suskie (2018) takes this idea a step further and suggests “building a culture of evidence and betterment” which informs change ... in “curricula, teaching/learning strategies, learning goals, co-curricular experiences, and support systems.



# Improvement Process



Learning Outcomes  
≠  
Improvement



# Improvement Process

Measures track Outcomes  
but...

Not always Improvement



# Improvement Process

Benchmarks prove Achievement  
but...

Not always Improvement



# Improvement Process

Action Plans should drive  
Improvement  
or...

At the very least seek Improvement



# Improvement Process

Lesson to be learned

We want to track

Action Plans

Intended to achieve Improvement!!

= Planning to Improve



# Pushing beyond the Loop

## A brighter vision for Learning Improvement

- What can we agree on?
- Draft a singular guiding statement.
- Seek student ownership of the vision.



(Fulcher and Prendergast), 2021



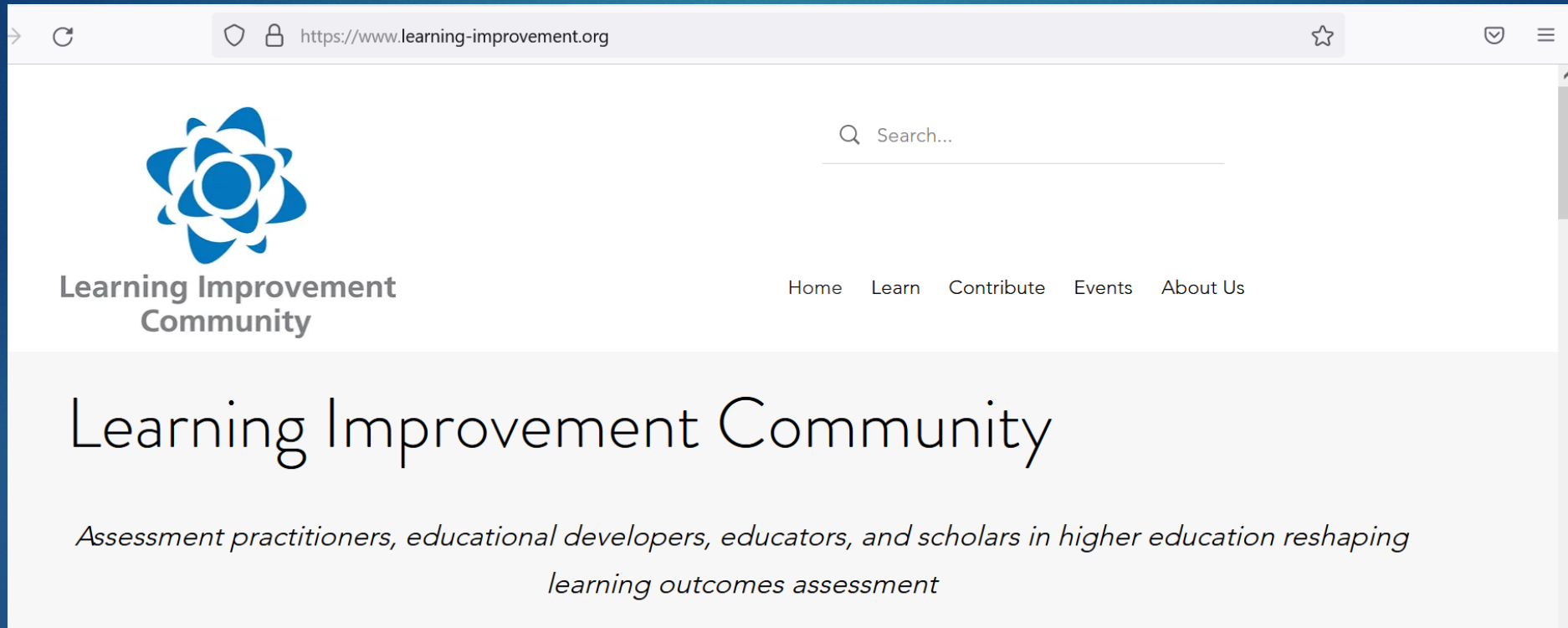
# Pushing beyond the Loop

## Setting the baseline

- What do our students know? (Pre-Test?)
  - Where do we expect them to go? (Outcome)
  - Where do we place our measurements (course) and what instruments do we use?
- \* Important reminder: **Closing the loop is NOT improvement.**



# Other Resources



[www.learning-improvement.org](https://www.learning-improvement.org)



# Learning Improvement Tools

- <https://www.learning-improvement.org/learn>
- <https://www.learning-improvement.org/learn-improvement.org/story-guide>
- <https://www.learning-improvement.org/tenets-of-learning-improvement>



# References

Banta, T.W. and Paloma, C.A. (2015). *Assessment Essentials: Planning, Implementing, and Improving Assessment in Higher Education*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Fulcher, K.H. and Prendergast, C.O. (2021) *Improving Student Learning at Scale; A How-to Guide for Higher Education*, Stylus Publishing.

Suskie, L. (2018). *Assessing Student Learning; A Common Sense Guide*. (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition). Jossey-Bass Publishers.

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# Thank You for your Attendance!

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Call anytime if you have questions or need for suggestions!!