

Transparency in Teaching and Learning

Pat Hutchings

National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment ([NILOA](#))

Mary-Ann Winkelmes

University of Las Vegas, Nevada ([UNLV](#))



Our Organizations

TILT Higher Ed



NILOA

National Institute for
Learning Outcomes Assessment
Making Learning Outcomes Usable & Transparent



The Origin Story

...or, where we're coming from

1. NILOA and TILT work on assignment design
2. A commitment to advancing equitable learning
3. A focus on transparency

What Do We Mean by Transparency?

- Transparent purpose (outcomes)
- Transparent task
- Transparent criteria for evaluation
- At multiple levels and in a full range of functions

Overview for today

Purpose

- Understand how transparently designed assignments can offer equitable opportunities for college students to succeed
- Consider applications

Tasks

- Review research findings
- Discuss: sample assignments, context for inquiry

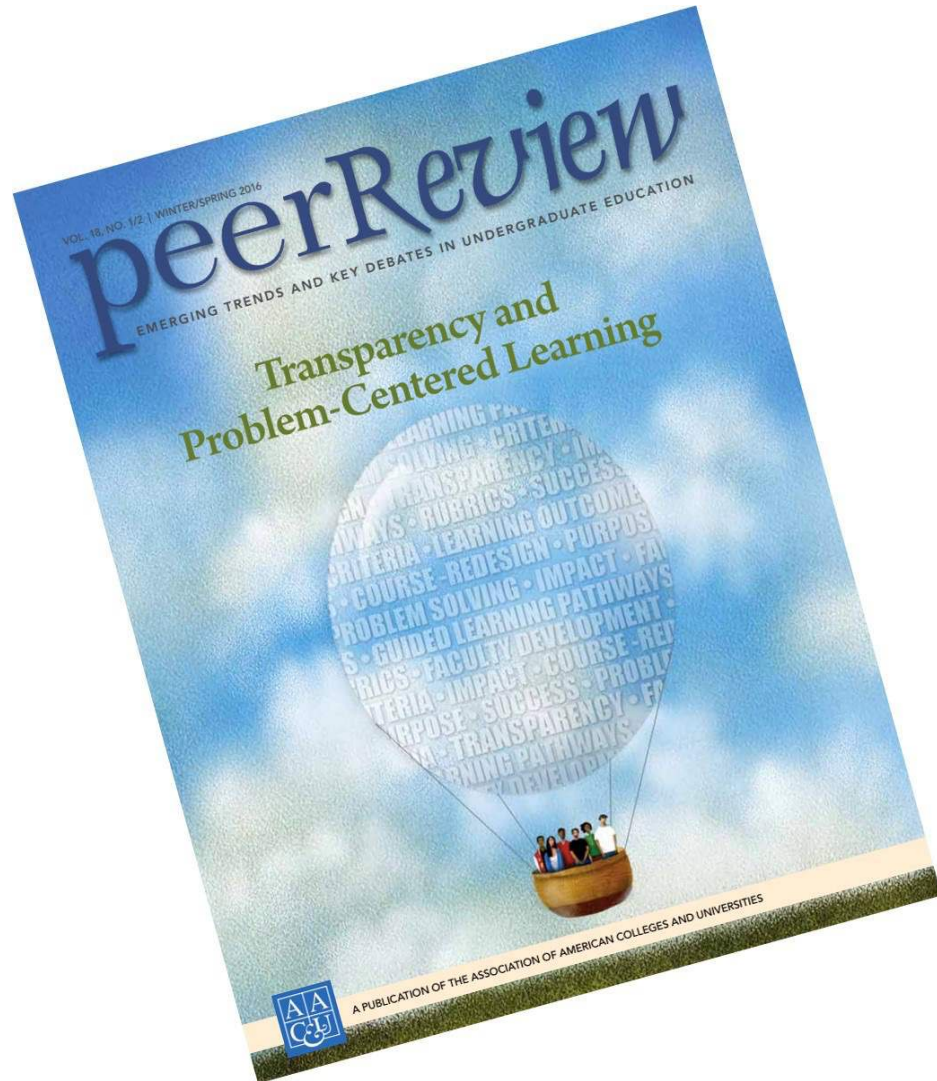
Criteria, or what you leave with

- Understanding of our research
- Plans for communities of inquiry around transparent teaching and learning

Equity Crisis: Access is Not Equity

- Underrepresented, first generation, low income: half as likely to complete college in 4 years
- Gatekeepers stunt research
- High-achievement in HS can frustrate college success
- Well-prepared novices don't think like experts

Gaining Attention: 3 main reasons



Transparency Studies

- National Study: AAC&U and TILT
- UNLV Student Retention Study

Design of National Study

- TILT, AAC&U, TG Philanthropy
- 7 MSIs
- Faculty agreed to discuss with students in advance, twice in one term:
 - Purpose
 - Tasks
 - Criteria

The Transparency Framework

- **Purpose**

- Skills practiced
- Knowledge gained
- Long-term relevance to students' lives

- **Task**

- What to do
- How to do it. Steps to follow. Steps to avoid

- **Criteria**

- Checklist or rubric *in advance* so students can self-evaluate
- Real-world work samples where students and faculty apply criteria

Built to be Shared Transparently

Creative Commons
Attribution-
NonCommercial-
ShareAlike 4.0
International License



Results

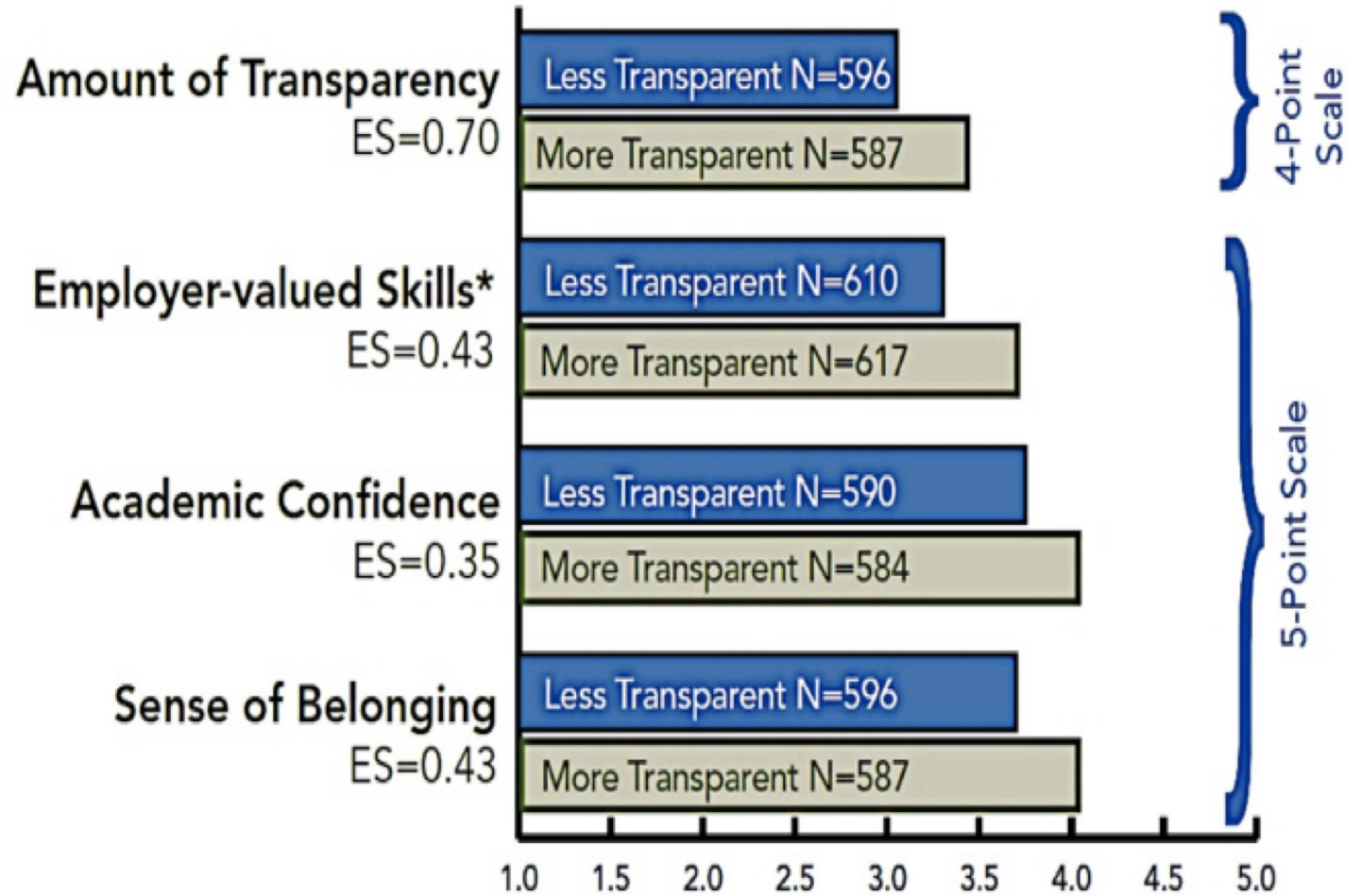
Boosted students' learning in 3 ways that are success predictors:

- Academic confidence
- Sense of belonging
- Metacognitive awareness of skill development

Winkelmes, M.A. et al, "A Teaching Intervention that Increases Underserved College Students' Success." Peer Review (Winter/Spring 2016) 18 1 / 2.

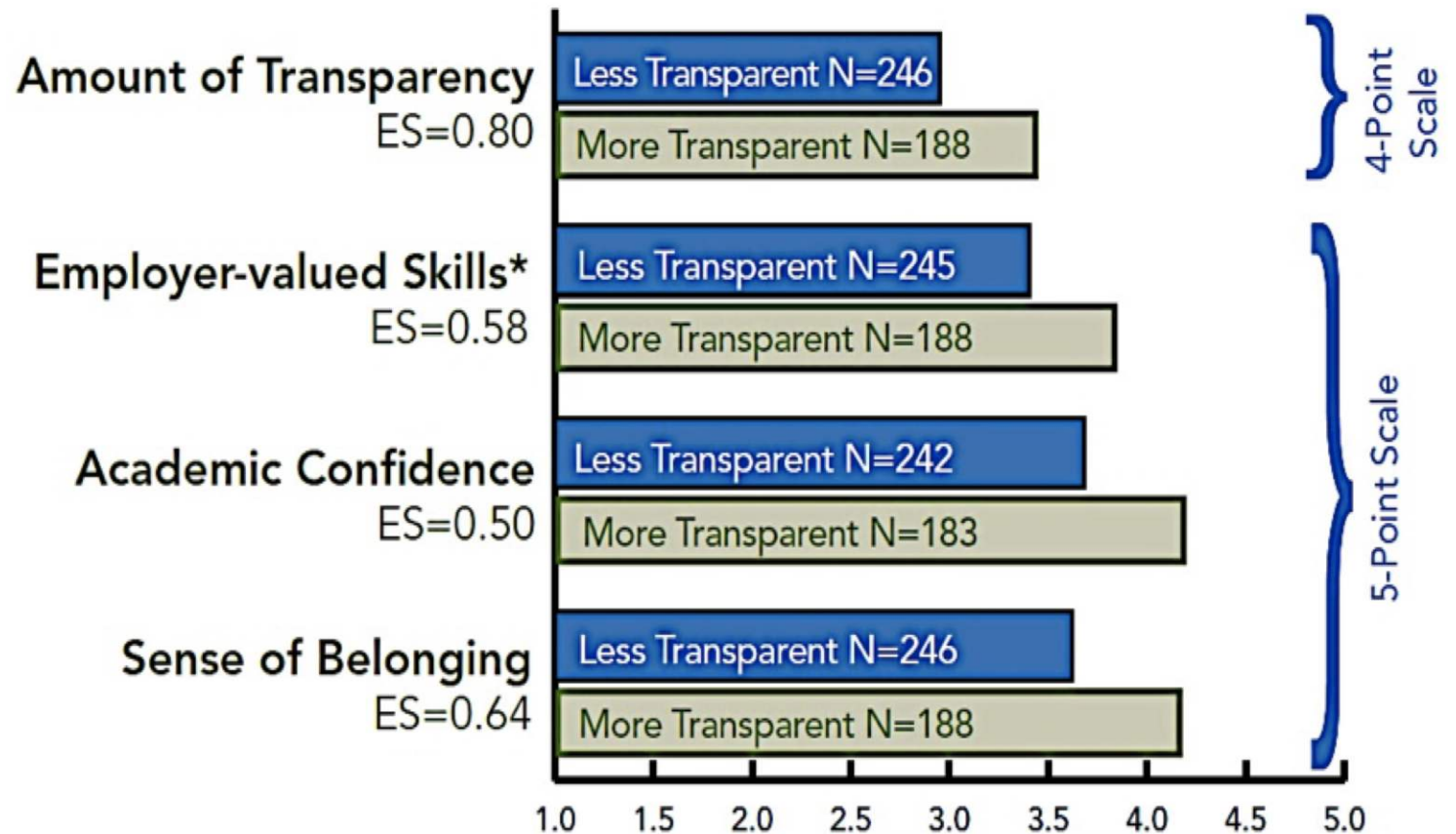
Impact 1 of 2

Boosted predictors of success significantly for all students, all disciplines



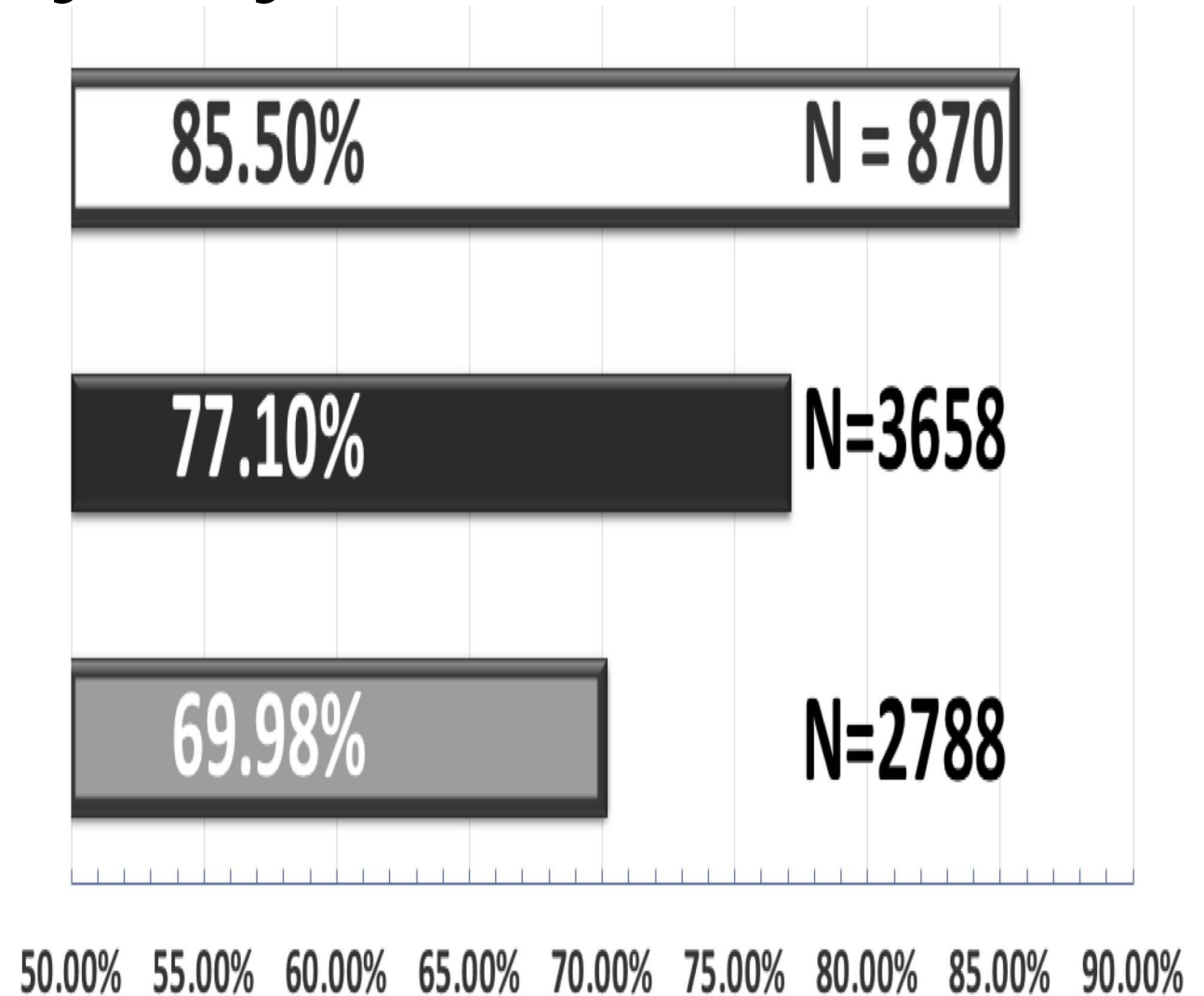
Impact 2 of 2

Benefits are greater for underserved students, i.e. first-generation



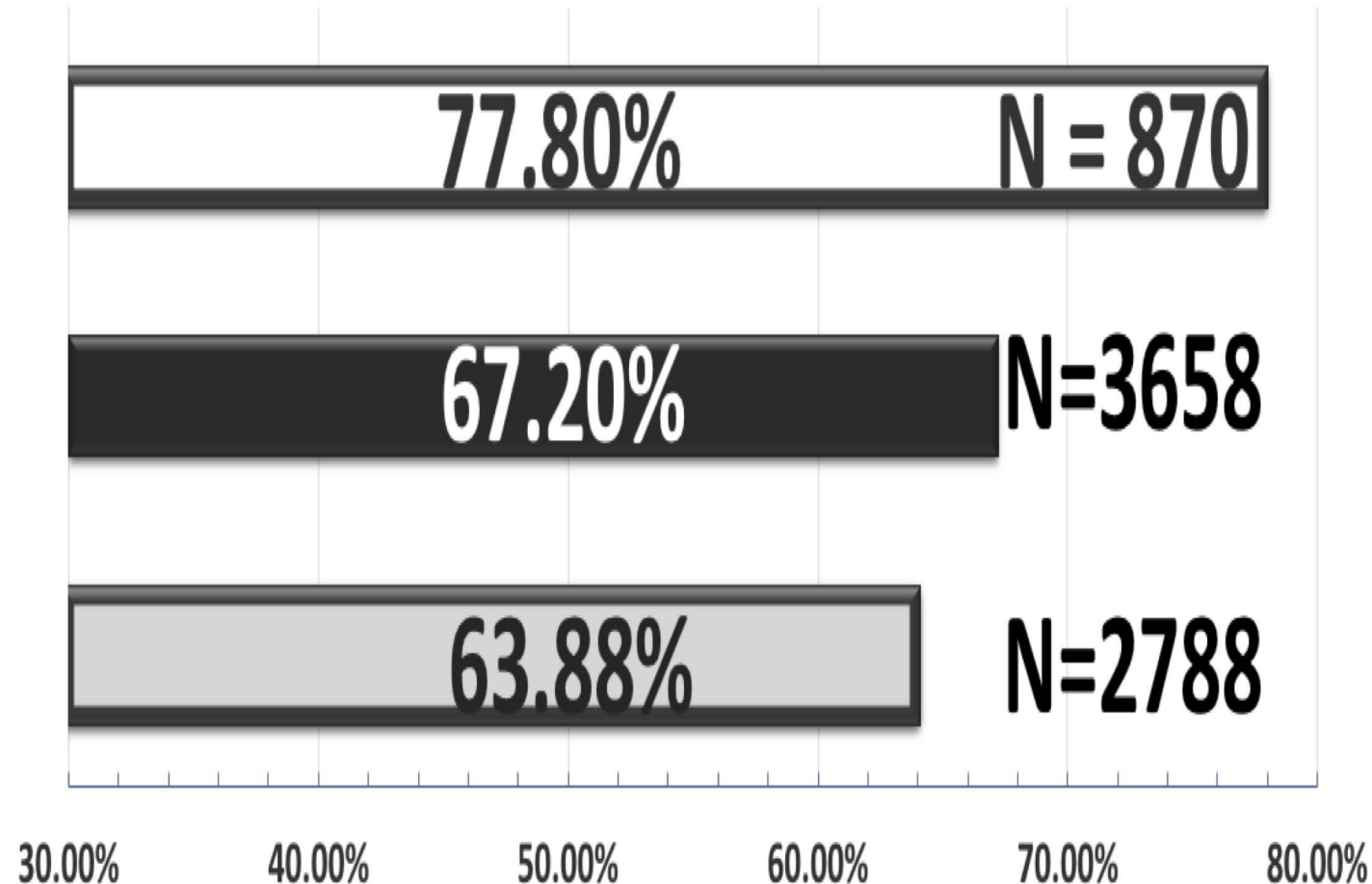
Results: UNLV Study, 1-year Retention

- Most diverse student population, US universities
- 870 students who received transparent instruction retained one year later at higher rate than those who did not



Results: UNLV Study, 2-year Retention

- Effects of transparent instruction are long-term
- 870 students who received transparent instruction retained two years later at higher rate than those who did not



Questions?

Sample Assignments

Activity: Sample A, page 2

- Time Allotted– 5 minutes
- On your own, skim through Sample A on page 2.
- In table groups, identify only the Purpose
(Skills practiced; Knowledge gained)
- Wave when you located the Purpose

Activity: Sample B, page 3

- Time Allotted– 5 minutes
- On your own, skim through Sample B on page 3.
- In table groups, identify main differences A/ B
- Suggest improvements to Sample B?

Student Quote

"I actually spend a lot more time learning the material rather than devoting a lot of unnecessary time to unscrambling what I'm supposed to be doing. I get a lot more out of class time."

What do Faculty Say?

“... [S]tudents are driven and engaged when they find meaning in their coursework; considering why and how they are learning the content can help them discover a meaning that resonates,”

“This has not only changed how I approach each assignment, but also each class meeting. Incorporating the purpose-task-criteria framework helps me focus on the main goals for each day, which helps students see the purpose of every class session.”

Transparent Assignment Template for Students

Purpose

- Skills you'll practice by doing this assignment
- Content knowledge you'll gain from doing this assignment
- How you can use these in your life beyond this course, beyond college

Task

- What to do
- How to do it (Is there a recommended process? Is the process intentionally unclear? What roadblocks or mistakes can you avoid?)

Criteria

- Checklist (Are you on the right track? How will you know you're doing what's expected? How will you know you're doing good work?)
- Examples of real-world work in this field. What's good or lacking about these examples? Use the checklist to identify the successful parts.

Please Join Us!

TILThigher.org

Participate



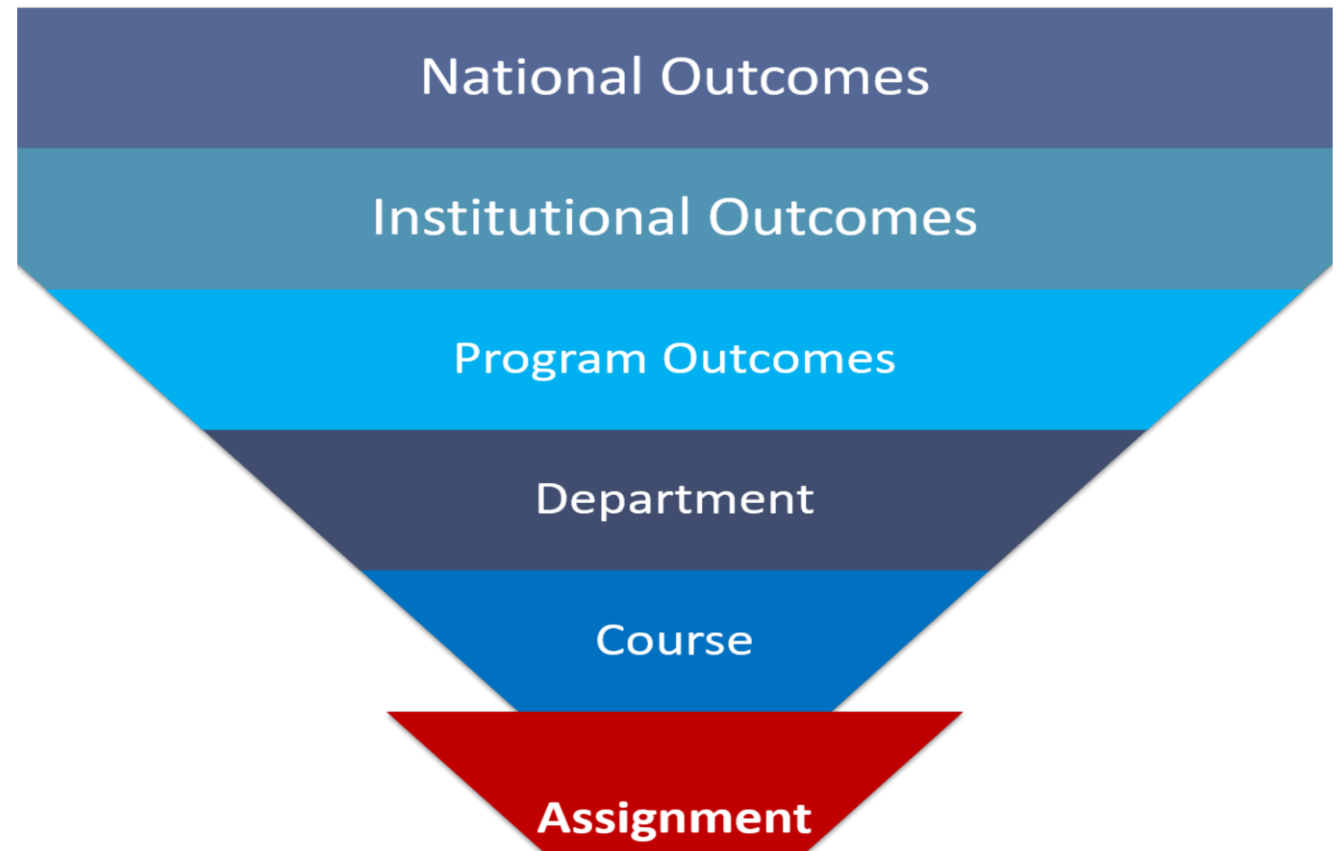
Zooming Out

Fractal: A never ending pattern that repeats itself at different scales.



Transparency Across Levels

What are the purposes, tasks and criteria at each level?



Features of a Transparent Institution

1. Common purpose—in the form of institution-level outcomes for all students, aligned at every level
2. Alignment of tasks: rowing in the same direction
3. Agreement about what success looks like: indicators
4. **Communities of practice and inquiry (COPs)**



Why COPs?

“The biggest effects on student learning occur when teachers become learners of their own teaching”

John Hattie, *Visible Learning*,

2009

What it Looks Like

- Working across disciplines and functions
- Bringing your skills and habits as academics to the work of teaching and learning
 - Posing questions about students' experience as learning
 - Generating and exploring evidence that illuminates those questions
- Using what is learned to make changes
- Repeating the cycle to determine if changes are improvements and what needs to happen next

Example: Collaborative Inquiry About Assignments

- Share assignments with one another ([NILOA charrettes](#)).
- Share **student** work.
- Use Transparency Framework to strengthen assignments
- ...and to link or align them to create pathways for students.
- Test out revised assignments with students (inquiry).
- Use what is learned to make further improvements.

A Thought Experiment

See page 4 on
your handout.

- How could such groups work on your campus?
- What would you like to see them doing?
- What would constitute success?

USS Higher Education



The COP Tug Boat

- Scholarly
- Nimble
- Responsive
- Pushy



How did we do?

Purpose

- Understand how transparently designed assignments can offer equitable opportunities for college students to succeed
- Consider applications

Tasks

- Review research findings
- Discuss: sample assignments, context for inquiry

Criteria, or what you leave with

- Understanding of our research
- Plans for communities of inquiry around transparent teaching and learning

Final Assessment

Please jot down answers and hand to Jen:

- What are the most important take-aways for you?
- What more do you need?

Resources

Materials

- NILOA Assignment Library
www.assignmentlibrary.org/
- TILT Materials:
TILTHigherEd.org

Research and Publication Opportunities

- TILT: email request to wink@TILTHigherEd.com
- NILOA
www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/

Contact

wink@tilthighered.com

hutchings.pat@gmail.com