

May 7, 2014

MEMORANDUM

TO: State Board of Regents

FROM: David L. Buhler

SUBJECT: Report: The Multi-State Collaborative to Advance Learning Outcomes Assessment

Issue

The Utah System of Higher Education has entered into an agreement with nine other state systems to pilot test an assessment of student learning outcomes. This initiative, called the Multi-State Collaborative to Advance Learning Outcomes Assessment, will demonstrate student learning, thus meeting accountability expectations of policy makers.

Report

The Multi-State Collaborative to Advance Learning Outcomes Assessment (MSC) is an experimental approach to student learning outcomes assessment. Its goals are to test the assessment process developed in initial work conducted in Massachusetts - the Vision Project - and to produce a framework for how we present student learning to policy makers so that higher education is less arcane and more transparent.

The problems addressed by the MSC are accountability – how we demonstrate to policy makers that students are learning, and the validity and reliability of the VALUE rubrics (Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education) which will be used to assess student learning.

Nine states are involved in the pilot study: Connecticut, Indiana, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, Oregon, Rhode Island, and Utah. Faculty from participating state systems will collect authentic student work in written communication and quantitative literacy from both community colleges and research universities. Students' work (artifacts) from community colleges will be collected once students have completed 75% of their course work before earning an associate's degree; students' work (artifacts) from the universities will be collected once students have completed 75% of their coursework prior to earning a bachelor's degree. These artifacts will be scored by trained faculty using the VALUE rubrics (Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education) which will identify the level of mastery in written communication and quantitative literacy. In addition, several of the institutions, including Salt Lake Community College, are collecting student artifacts on critical thinking. Scored student work will be returned to the faculty and institutions but will not be publicized nor compared to other states and institutions. Presentation of results will be segmented by type of institution - community colleges, universities. Those

involved with the MSC believe that no two colleges or universities are the same, thus making meaningful comparisons difficult. In addition, narrative will be used to explain levels of student mastery. More important, the participating institutions will receive their students' scored work in order to improve both teaching and learning. Participating Utah institutions are the University of Utah, Utah State University, Snow College, and Salt Lake Community College.

The MSC steering committee believes that by presenting levels of learning by segmentation and narrative, policy makers will be informed about what students are learning. This information addresses accountability expectation by policy makers. Participating faculty and institutions will see their own students' scored work and will know where they need to adjust teaching strategies so that students are learning and demonstrating learning in greater depth.

The pilot study is being funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and is overseen by the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) and the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U).

Representing Utah on the MSC are Teddi Safman, who serves as state facilitator and is a member of the Steering Committee and the Communication Committee, and Greg Benson who serves on the Pilot Study Committee.

Commissioner's Recommendation

The Commissioner recommends that the Regents accept the report on the Multi-State Collaborative to Advance Learning Outcomes Assessment and raise questions. No other action is required.

David L. Buhler
Commissioner of Higher Education

DLB/PCS