

WHITE PAPER

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES  
IN POSTSECONDARY OUTCOMES  
ASSESSMENT – BENCHMARKING  
INSTITUTIONAL PROGRESS

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

An emerging global imperative for higher education institutions to better understand, improve, and document their educational effectiveness is driving adoption of outcomes assessment. Growing competition, mounting demands for accountability, and the increasing value on measurable skills in the workplace create powerful incentives for institutions to implement outcomes assessment in order to improve academic and institutional effectiveness.

Outcomes assessment, in its broadest sense, is the systematic and ongoing process of defining goals, collecting, and reflecting on evidence, taking action to improve academic quality, and documenting improvements to meet accountability requirements. It is most effective as a collaborative effort among faculty, staff, students, alumni, and other stakeholders. Assessment allows institutions to realize significant benefits in improved understanding of their educational effectiveness; better informed decisions about curriculum, policy, and resource allocation; and the ability to meet accountability demands.

Although a cadre of innovative institutions has blazed an assessment trail, outcomes assessment practices, systems, and supporting technology are in a nascent state. Many higher education institutions have yet to recognize the benefits of implementing outcomes assessment programs. This white paper reviews the challenges and opportunities of outcomes assessment. The insight and benchmarks are derived from Eduventures' ongoing research, including secondary literature reviews and continuing interaction with academic leaders through informal discussions, formal qualitative interviews, and a quantitative Web survey of academic leaders conducted in December 2007, which statistically represents the population of degree-granting institutions in the United States.

**THE KEY FINDINGS OF THIS REPORT ARE:****1. Institutions primarily view assessment as a means of improving student learning and retention.**

54% of academic leaders list improved achievement of program curriculum goals among their top three priorities, while another 24% include enhanced general education outcomes. Meeting accreditation requirements (31%) and improving student retention rates (27%) are the next most important priorities.

**2. The objectives for assessment differ by size and type of institution.**

For example, larger institutions (enrollment more than 15,000) and community colleges place importance on using assessment for increasing retention rates over improving learning outcomes.

**3. Academic leaders view general education as the most important area for outcomes assessment.**

The next highest priorities for program-level outcomes assessment are in education, business, and arts and sciences, in order of priority. Larger institutions are more likely to consider outcomes assessment important for professional programs, whereas smaller schools focus more on general education.

**4. Outcomes assessment has emerged as being equally important for improving student affairs as it is for most academic departments.**

This parity of priority reflects the increasing recognition of the importance of student affairs for improving student learning and broader student success.

**5. Most institutions report *little to moderate* progress in implementing outcomes assessment and achieving their assessment objectives.**

Academic leaders cite the greatest success in general education (moderate progress) and the least for engineering (little progress) with business, arts/sciences, health sciences, student affairs, and university business affairs ranking in between. Results also indicate that focused efforts are rewarded with greater progress: a higher priority on outcomes assessment for a particular department translates into greater reported success for most respondents.

**6. Most institutions struggle to leverage collected evidence to inform curriculum, policy, and resource allocation decisions.**

The challenge is in making assessment a natural part of an institution's processes and decision-making. The majority of institutions have, to some extent, defined outcomes, identified necessary evidence, and gathered evidence. However, leaders consistently report that aggregating data and using it to inform real decisions is yet to be accomplished.

**7. Two key challenges to realizing the benefits of outcomes assessment are the difficulty of aggregating and analyzing evidence and building faculty participation.**

More than 75% of academic leaders in Eduventures' survey report one of these among their top challenges. Most leaders (60%) did not list faculty among their current top three stakeholders in outcomes assessment.

**8. Six in 10 institutions are budgeting for outside assessment technology or consulting services.**

Results illustrate that institutions recognize the importance of assessment and the value of technology in addressing their challenges. Academic leaders report that the central budget will contribute 75% of these funds, reflecting the growing value placed on institutionwide coordination.

**9. Most institutions have not yet selected an institutional software solution for managing outcomes assessment.**

Software solutions are now most commonly used for the collection and storage of outcomes data; institutions typically draw on existing technologies such as their learning management or content management systems. As institutions more clearly identify their assessment strategies and processes, they are more clearly defining the role of technology and will realize its benefits more fully.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

- I. Introduction
- II. The Framework
- III. Drivers and Strategic Objectives
- IV. Implementation Progress
- V. Key Obstacles
- VI. Technology Adoption
- VII. Final Considerations

### I. INTRODUCTION

There has been a marked shift among higher education institutions toward outcomes assessment as a way to enable internal improvement and document results to stakeholders. Given the clear benefits and growing mandates, the trend is not likely to reverse. In fact, it is a widespread global effort.

Institutions face common realities that are motivating more systematic assessment practices across national boundaries, including escalating competition, growing demand for accountability, and the fact that success in work, citizenship, and life in the twenty-first century increasingly requires broader, higher-order skills.

Despite the significant opportunities and increasing requirements, academic leaders know too little about the adoption of outcomes assessment industrywide. This white paper explores why and how institutions are adopting assessment:

- With different missions, cultures, and stakeholders, institutions implement assessment for diverse reasons. *Why are institutions adopting outcomes assessment?*
- Institutions are at very different stages of putting assessment into practice. *How do institutions gauge their progress overall and by department?*
- Better understanding the challenges can help inform more effective implementation strategies. *Which challenges are most impeding their progress?*
- Technology is now fundamental to helping organizations outside higher education improve their effectiveness and reduce inefficiency. *How are higher education institutions using technology to address their assessment challenges?*

### II. THE FRAMEWORK: AN OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

Outcomes assessment is not a new discipline, although its application to higher education is still evolving. It adopts and adapts continuous improvement processes that have emerged and developed in healthcare, other mission-based organizations, and more broadly across the corporate sector.

### DRIVING IMPROVEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY AT MULTIPLE LEVELS

Assessment activities operate at multiple levels in the higher education enterprise, with a consistent focus on improving and documenting educational effectiveness, most commonly at the institution, program, course, and student levels.

- Institutional assessment includes general education assessment, focusing on developing the learning outcomes that all graduates of an institution should be able to demonstrate.
- Program level assessment is the most prevalent assessment activity and focuses on the effectiveness of academic programs in achieving administrative and learning outcomes.
- Course-level assessment helps identify whether specific course objectives are achieved and measures alignment of course objectives to program-level outcomes.
- Student-level assessment focuses on whether each particular student has achieved defined learning goals.

### SERVING MULTIPLE STAKEHOLDERS

In the mission, goals, and measures selected, outcomes assessment activities are shaped and driven by multiple stakeholders both internal and external to the higher education institution. Internal stakeholders are focused on improving student learning and success, while external stakeholders focus on evidence of accountability. These objectives often overlap; for example, external stakeholders like regional accrediting agencies broadly require that institutions implement and document continuous improvement processes.

### MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF INSTITUTIONAL COORDINATION

Numerous stakeholders contribute to student success and institutional effectiveness at multiple levels of the institution. To ensure that activities at each level support broader goals, institutions benefit from a coordinated assessment strategy that connects multiple stakeholders and assessment activities.

Student learning is not the result of a solitary faculty member; it is developed across curricular and co-curricular experiences and reflects the joint effort of academic, student affairs and administrative units. A coordinated approach is necessary to help each part of the institution identify and measure their contribution to shared program and institutional learning goals for students.

Strategic planning, assessment, and accreditation activities often draw on common instruments and data. For example, course-based assessment of student writing might inform program assessment, support specialized ABET accreditation, and demonstrate unit contribution to a strategic planning goal. Coordination helps avoid overlapping of activity and wasted time and effort. Measurement of educational effectiveness should be foundational, informing strategic planning, curriculum planning, resourcing, budgeting, and accreditation. The challenge is to connect these activities effectively and efficiently.

### ALIGNING PROCESSES, CULTURE, LEADERSHIP, AND TECHNOLOGY

A coordinated institutional approach to outcomes assessment is commonly characterized by several key elements:

- Systematic, *full-cycle* implementation of assessment that includes defining outcomes, identifying relevant evidence and performance levels, gathering evidence, aggregating and analyzing results, reporting results, and leveraging results to impact institutional effectiveness
- Alignment of institution, program, course, and student assessment activities to guide institutional activities to achieve broader goals
- Leadership that drives and fosters an institutionwide culture of inquiry, evidence, and continuous improvement
- Technology infrastructure that supports effective assessment processes by addressing such logistical challenges as data sharing across units and integrating assessment activities with daily routines

Few, if any, institutions have successfully implemented a truly systematic, coordinated, and institutional approach to assessment. In fact, the very strategies and processes that make up outcomes assessment at any institution must themselves adapt and improve over time. However, the more systematic and systemic the adoption of assessment, the greater the opportunity for informed improvement, coordinated institutional activity, and easier documentation for stakeholders. This white paper explores how academic leaders gauge their progress in implementing assessment and realizing their intended benefits.

MULTIPLE LEVELS OF OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION		
	Related Processes	Selected Measures
INSTITUTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutional accreditation</li> <li>• Strategic planning</li> <li>• General education assessment - evaluation of learning outcomes developed across curricular and co-curricular areas</li> <li>• Institutional research and state reporting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education quality measures, including of general education outcomes                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct measures - e.g., Collegiate Learning Assessment, Measure of Proficiency and Progress</li> <li>• Indirect measures - National Survey of Student Engagement</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Cost of tuition and delivery</li> <li>• Accessibility measures</li> <li>• Others - graduation rates, transfer rates</li> </ul>
PROGRAM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program reviews and assessment</li> <li>• Program specific accreditation (NCATE, ABET, etc.)</li> <li>• Curriculum planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program learning outcomes                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct measures - e.g., Major Field Tests (ETS), EBI Surveys of ABET programs</li> <li>• Indirect measures - e.g., alumni surveys employer surveys</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Cost of tuition and delivery</li> <li>• Others - licensure rates, student placement rates, faculty research</li> </ul>
COURSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Course review</li> <li>• Course evaluations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Course objectives - e.g., standardized tests and rubric based assessment</li> <li>• Others - course completion rates</li> </ul>
STUDENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traditional grading</li> <li>• Portfolio assessment</li> <li>• Rubric-based assessment</li> <li>• Criterion referenced tests</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grades</li> <li>• Measures of institution-, program-, and course-level outcomes</li> </ul>

### III. DRIVERS AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

There are common motivators to engage in outcomes assessment across institutions, and some nuances in objectives by segments of institutions.

#### KEY MOTIVATORS OF ASSESSMENT

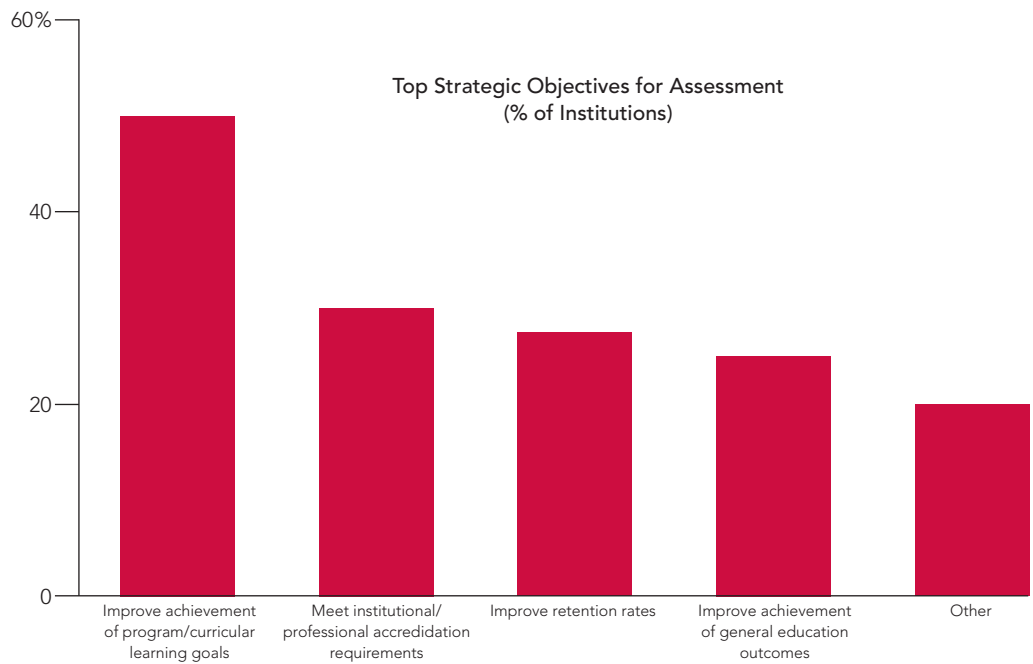
- **Increasing accountability** – Public concern regarding access to higher education is a key factor motivating continuing government demands for accountability. Given the declining relative contribution of government funding, the costs for students, and shifts in U.S. demographics, scrutiny of institutions will continue to grow. Federal and state government agencies are both encouraging and requiring improved reporting of and access to transparent data about price, costs, student learning, and, in some cases, the value-added results of a postsecondary education. The State Higher Education Executive Officers' National Commission on Accountability in Higher Education's 2005 report makes a priority of public access to this information, delivered in a format that enables better decision-making by consumers and policy-makers.

Some states have developed, and are refining, systems for higher education accountability, including North Carolina, Wisconsin, Texas, and Kentucky. The systems in these states provide various stakeholders with evidence based on state-defined outcomes. Federal-level initiatives led by the U.S. Department of Education follow the same path, requiring institutions to publicly report such evidence as graduation rates, licensure and certification examination performance, and broadly accepted assessments of adult literacy.

- **Accreditation requirements** – Accreditation and quality assurance agencies continue to increase requirements that institutions assess student learning outcomes; that is, that institutions not simply measure and document outcomes, but also document a continuous process of defining goals, collecting evidence, and using the results to guide actions to improve their effectiveness.
- **Increasing competition** – Whether from online, proprietary, community college, or international institutions, most institutions face increasing competition for students. As a result, institutions have a growing incentive to differentiate and to do so by touting their effectiveness. As costs increase, students and parents are becoming savvy consumers, demanding evidence of relevant outcomes.
- **Workplace readiness** – Students, parents, and employers embrace the connection between education and workplace readiness and drive increasing demand for institutions to document that its graduates are prepared and have the skills to succeed in the workplace.

KEY STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND BENEFITS

Institutions’ top strategic objectives for assessment relate to student learning. Based on Eduventures’ survey of academic leaders, the most common top strategic objective of outcomes assessment is to improve achievement of program or curricular learning goals. Improving general education outcomes, another learning-focused strategic objective, is also a top objective. Meeting accreditation requirements and improving retention rates follow behind learning outcomes in priority. Institutions also cite increasing faculty engagement in teaching and learning and documenting achievement of planning goals as strategic objectives for assessment, although less frequently. Larger institutions and community colleges, however, tend to prioritize retention efforts more highly than smaller institutions and four-year colleges.



**The benefits to pursuing outcomes assessment often surpass the immediate objectives.** Institutions that have successfully implemented outcomes assessment often report realizing benefits beyond their original strategic objectives. For example, many institutions develop a new culture of collaboration and integration across curricular and co-curricular areas.

*“The real value of assessment is bringing the academic sector and academic support sector together to take a look at how we are educating students at this institution and how well we are doing it.”*

- Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs Long Island University

For-profit educational institutions entered the market with some focus on measuring and documenting outcomes in order to compete as newcomers. The New England College of Finance notes the benefit of promoting outcomes internally and externally. Institutions that are able to differentiate themselves by their outcomes can gain competitive advantage in the market for students, as well as demonstrate accountability to stakeholders at large.

*“Our assessment activities are helping us promote the integrity of the institution as a whole.”*

- Vice President/Dean of Academic Affairs New England College of Finance

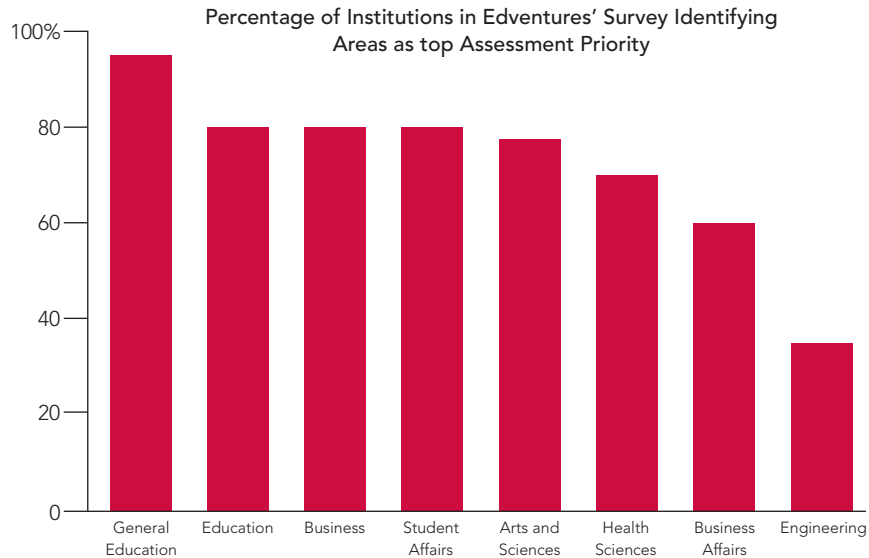
Several institutions report that establishing an assessment process has helped to inform and streamline program and curriculum development. When program outcomes are defined upfront, multiple elements of program development are informed. For example, the evidence needed to measure the outcome is considered during curriculum development and integrated as part of the program delivery from the outset. Marketing and recruiting messages can also be aligned with the intended learning outcomes.

**Shared ownership of assessment is a common goal across higher education but not yet achieved as indicated by the key stakeholders of assessment at institutions today.** Chief academic officers and provosts are the most interested stakeholders, as indicated by 79% of respondents in Eduventures’ survey. Faculty members are stakeholders at 40% of institutions, which is one indication that many institutions have not developed an enterprisewide culture of assessment.

Approximately one-third of institutions surveyed have a dedicated director of assessment. We expect more campuses to identify a director of assessment, director of institutional effectiveness, or an equivalent position to focus full time attention on facilitating campuswide visibility and coordination.

Historically, leaders of professional programs have been stakeholders in assessment as these programs have more often been measured by their graduates’ success in passing certification and licensure exams and placement rates. Today, faculty members engaged in general education are increasingly becoming stakeholders as institutions prioritize assessment of general education outcomes.

Institutions put an equal emphasis on improving co-curricular departments through outcomes assessment. The majority of institutions in Eduventures’ survey indicate that outcomes assessment is as important for student affairs as it is for most academic departments.



**IV. IMPLEMENTATION STATUS: INSTITUTIONS REPORT PROGRESS, BUT NOT FULL SUCCESS**

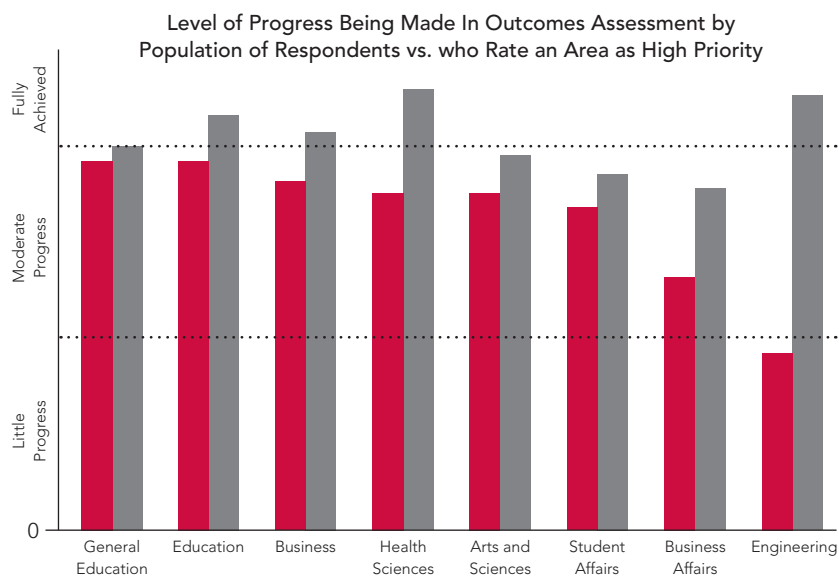
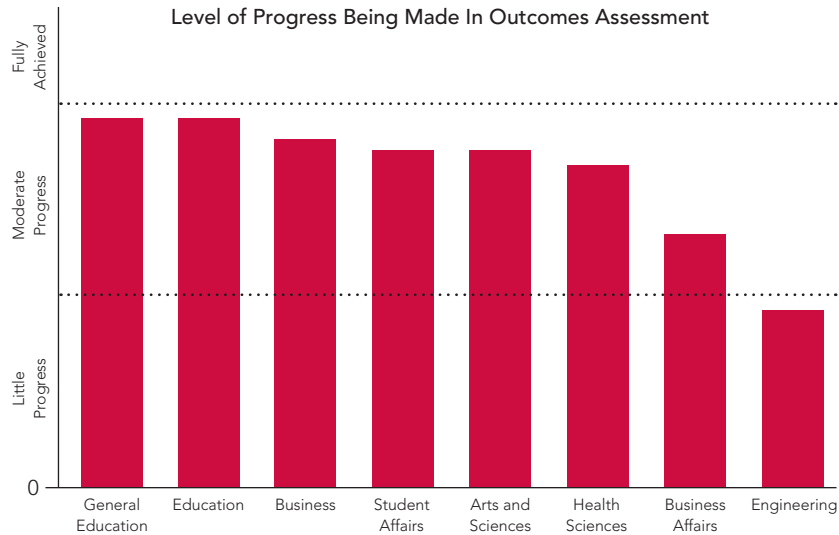
*“One of our institutional learning outcomes addresses ethical decision-making and behaviors. We are beginning to examine how this institutional outcome can be assessed and understood across degree programs and co-curricular work.”*

- CAO, Small Private Non-Profit Master’s Institution

Despite the imperative of, and high institutional priority placed on assessment activities, most academic leaders report limited to moderate success in realizing their objectives. Self-reported progress differs by department, type of institution and degree of institutional priority. Progress can be defined by two variables: 1) the breadth of departments, programs, and campuses engaged in assessment across the institution, and 2) the depth with which the assessment process is implemented, from defining outcomes to informing curricular, policy, and other institutional improvement efforts.

**Academic leaders report the greatest overall progress with general education.** By academic program, respondents report the most progress in teacher education and the least progress in engineering.

Academic leaders consistently report higher levels of progress for areas in which they have put a higher priority on outcomes assessment. However, results show the least additional success for those who prioritize general education and student affairs, reflecting the challenges of coordinating these activities institutionwide.



**V. KEY OBSTACLES: LEVERAGING DATA TO INFORM DECISION-MAKING AND GAINING FACULTY BUY-IN**

What most accounts for institutions’ limited progress among the many encountered obstacles? In Eduventures’ survey, academic leaders identify aggregating and analyzing data to support decision-making and growing faculty participation as their top challenges.

Academic leaders report that aggregating and analyzing outcomes evidence to support decision-making is the most difficult assessment activity; 76% percent identify it as one of the top five challenges. Leaders rarely report that they are held back by a lack of data, but instead by the

challenge of pulling it together from multiple locations, making sense of it, and using it to inform better curriculum, policy, or resource allocation decisions.

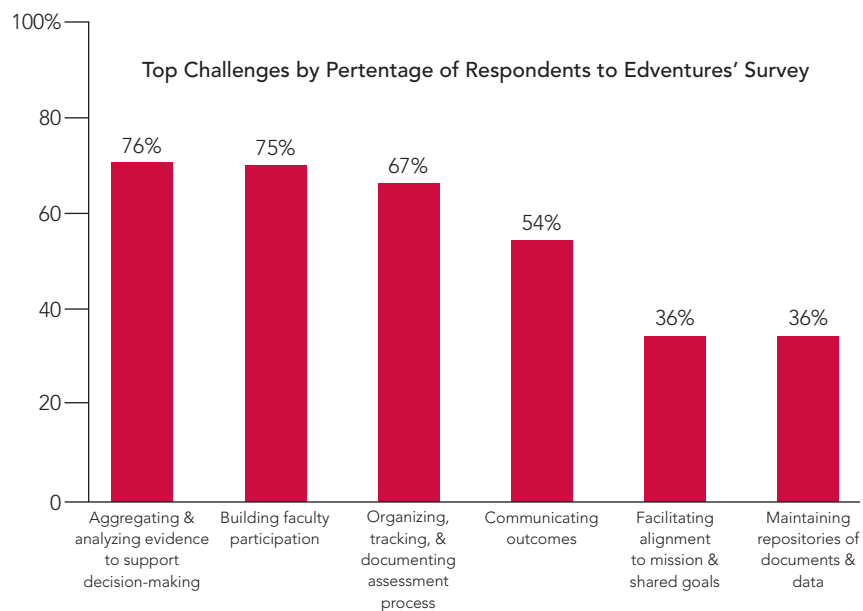
*“The greatest challenge is linking assessment with curricular change and improvement. It is viewed as a static measure and not as a tool for changing how classes are taught or how curriculum should be changed.”*

- CAO of a Mid-Sized, Private, Non-Profit Master’s Institution in the Northeast

For many academic leaders, ensuring that insights lead to improvements is a challenge because the institutional infrastructure required to do so is absent. Outcomes assessment success requires an organizational, process, and technology infrastructure.

**Academic leaders identify engaging faculty in assessment as the second greatest challenge.** Faculty are often balancing teaching, scholarship, and service responsibilities, and adding assessment activities can be a challenge.

Institutions that have effectively engaged faculty point to best practices that range from including faculty on steering and implementation committees to providing release time and stipends and instituting forums for faculty to learn about peer best practices. Related to the challenge of getting buy-in is the need to build the skills to help faculty be effective assessment participants; writing a mission statement, creating a learning objective, or conducting rubric-based assessment are new activities for many faculty members.



Assessment management rates as the third most significant challenge, identified by 67% of academic leaders surveyed. Assessment processes are largely manual and unit-based and can challenge organizing, tracking, and documenting activities. Also, without a dedicated director of assessment or similar position, coordinating activities can be a challenge. One CAO reported his greatest challenge as *“coordinating assessment activities across the campus because each area is responsible for its own assessment plan. There is no campuswide director of assessment.”* Lack of coordination makes it difficult to promote achievement of institutionwide goals and to share best practices across departments.

Of common concern is the quality and consistency of the assessment processes and results across departments and over time. Faculty members within each program typically define and measure achievement of their goals. There is no way to ensure objectivity within the program or consistency across programs. A best practice adopted by some institutions is blind evaluation in which student submissions are collected from multiple sections of a course and multiple faculty members review a single student’s work.

## VI. TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION: INCREASING INVESTMENT AND EMERGING SOLUTIONS

Technology can provide significant returns on investment for richer insight into institutional performance, reduced time and effort over existing manual activities, and more informed decision-making. Recognizing this potential for improvement, a majority of institutions are reporting increased investments in assessment technology and services.

*“Technology is the key to collecting, storing, and reporting our outcomes data.”*

- Provost, Kaplan University

Technology can play numerous supporting roles including managing processes; gathering, storing, and organizing evidence; analyzing data; reporting and distributing results; and enabling collaboration and consensus building.

SELECTED POTENTIAL ROLES OF TECHNOLOGY TO SUPPORT ASSESSMENT EFFORTS

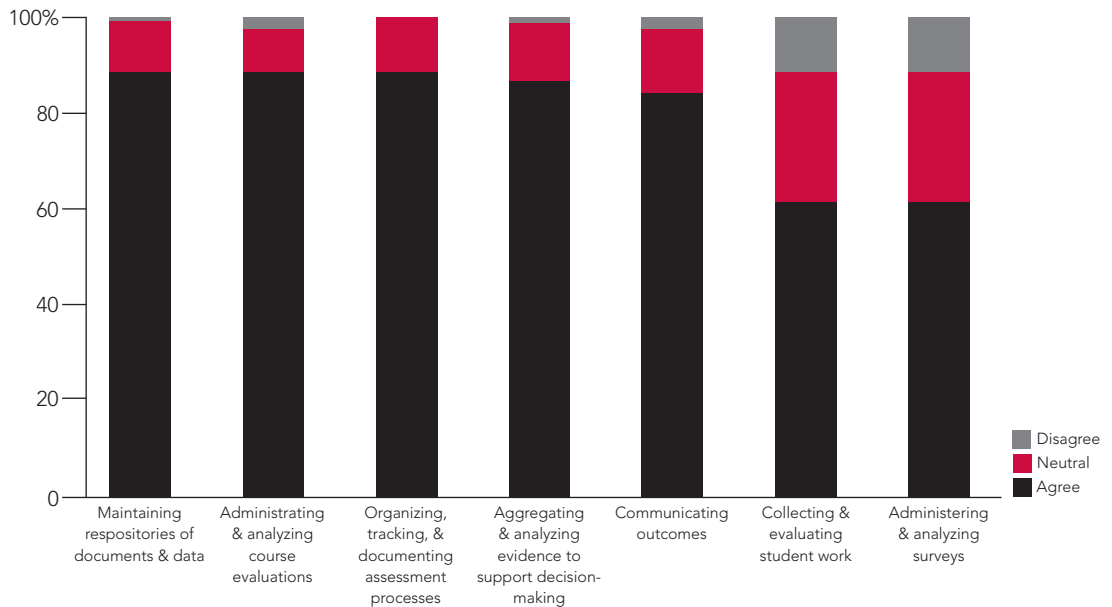
	Assessment Management	Measurement Tools	Monitoring and Reporting	Collaboration
RATIONALE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to organize, monitor, and document structured processes for planning and assessment</li> <li>• Necessary to organize continuous improvement processes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to gather organic forms of evidence and data from multiple sources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need for visibility into outcomes, activities and institutional progress</li> <li>• Need to draw from multiple measures of outcomes to provide a singular, rich view of performance</li> <li>• Reduce effort and time for creating reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical to enable collaboration within units and across the university, specifically in light of shared governance model within universities</li> </ul>
BENEFITS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved visibility into assessment plans and progress</li> <li>• Reduced management times and cost</li> <li>• Increased confidence in assessment efforts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced effort over paper-based methods</li> <li>• Quicker access to data for faster decisions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Richer performance insight from multiple sources</li> <li>• Quicker access to insight to impact learning sooner</li> <li>• Reduced time and cost for accessing data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More sustainable outcomes assessment activities</li> <li>• Reduced time coordinating during in-person meetings</li> <li>• Avoid <i>reinventing the wheel</i> for each new assessment activity</li> </ul>
FEATURES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Process management tools</li> <li>• Data and documents repositories</li> <li>• Planning and alignment tools</li> <li>• Outcomes communication tools</li> <li>• Curriculum planning tools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survey data collection, administration, analysis</li> <li>• Online course evaluations</li> <li>• Collecting and evaluating student work</li> <li>• Standardized test reporting and administration ePortfolios</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aggregation and analysis of outcomes evidence and activities to support evidence-based decision-making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content management</li> <li>• Portals</li> <li>• Wikis</li> <li>• Social networking</li> <li>• Communications tools</li> </ul>

Just more than half of institutions in Eduventures' survey will budget for technology and/or consulting services to support outcomes assessment efforts by the end of 2010. Institutional demand will drive continuing advancements in the technology available to support assessment. Given that fully 75% of these funds will come from the central budget, we expect the continued development of solutions focused on meeting diverse institutional needs across multiple academic and administrative units.

Despite the broad range of benefits and the maturity of technology supporting continuous improvement in other sectors, technology's role in outcomes assessment is still being defined in higher education. Most institutions use technology to maintain repositories of documents and data, and in many cases use software that may not be optimized for the task. For example, institutions use their accreditation management system to facilitate the organization and analysis of assessment data and management of documents. Anecdotal evidence suggests that institutions are beginning to replace non-optimized software with specialized assessment products.

*One reason technology's role has yet to be fully defined is that institutions are still defining their assessment strategies.* For many institutions, the first iteration of the assessment plan is to leverage existing, in-house data to measure outcomes. This accounts for the fact that institutions are least likely to use technology to collect and evaluate student work or administer surveys. Instead, institutions focus on existing systems and evidence as the basis of analysis. Most institutions are just beginning to gather new forms of evidence that often require new technology systems or integration efforts to connect multiple systems.

Percent of Respondents Agreeing, Disagreeing or Neutral with Statement that their Institution will Leverage Technology Between Now and 2010 to Support Various Activities



Universities identifying and collecting evidence of student work speak to the benefit of using new technologies. Some institutions, for example, are using ePortfolios to collect and evaluate student work against institutional standards. They allow institutions to track achievement of outcomes or competencies with student documents in a single location for streamlined analysis and reporting against standards. This same technology can effectively support not only summative assessment, but also formative assessment at the individual student level. ePortfolios also allow for rubric-based evaluations and help faculty provide more targeted feedback to students or initiate remediation on behalf of students.

*"We use technology to connect different parts of the institution. It's valuable to connect the institutional research data with our student learning data."*

- Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, Long Island University

One of technology's most significant potential contributions to assessment is to link data held in disparate systems across the campus, effectively enhancing every department's ability to gather and analyze outcome-related evidence.

## VII. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

After more than a decade of increasing requirements and growing assessment activity, the majority of academic leaders still effectively place their institutions in the *just getting started* or *moderately progressed* stages. Other mission-based organizations have improved their performance, agility to respond more quickly to a changing environment, and capacity to demonstrate accountability through the adoption of systematic assessment practices. Higher education could achieve comparable results by adapting and adopting similar practices. What needs to happen to enable this transformation?

### 1. Institutions must seize this window of opportunity to shape outcomes assessment.

As the costs and strategic importance of higher education increase, so too will demands for increased accountability. By demonstrating success in driving measureable improvements based on identified goals and collected measures, institutions have the best prospects of retaining control over outcomes assessment and maintaining its integrity and value.

### 2. Membership associations, accrediting bodies, and other stakeholders must play catalytic roles in encouraging, identifying, and sharing best practices in assessment.

Faculty and administrators need to understand what is working and what is not, guided both by informal sharing and more systematic evaluation of best practices. Closer collaboration between institutions and partners is necessary. Consider technology as one example. Collaboration between institutions and technology partners will help shape the vision for assessment technology in higher education. Effective technology solutions will evolve, informed by continued experimentation and practice.

### 3. Lessons must be learned from assessment and continuous improvement practices, processes, systems, and technology in other industries.

Other mission-driven institutions, such as healthcare, have successfully created assessment systems that meet demands for accountability and improvement. Continuous improvement and performance management have matured in many industries and offer benefits in higher education.

Based on past trends, we expect continued progress in outcomes assessment across the higher education industry, to the benefit of institutions and their stakeholders.

## Eduventures, Inc.

Prudential Tower  
9th Floor  
800 Boylston Street  
Boston, MA 02199  
617-532-5622  
[www.eduventures.com](http://www.eduventures.com)  
[info@eduventures.com](mailto:info@eduventures.com)