



Association
of American
Colleges and
Universities

FALL 2008 VALUE INITIATIVE OVERVIEW

As institutions in higher education today are asked to document the quality of student learning and to raise retention and graduation rates, the AAC&U VALUE (Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education) Initiative will begin to define, document, assess, and strengthen student achievement of the AAC&U Essential Learning Outcomes in undergraduate education. Recognizing that there are no standardized tests for many of the essential outcomes of an undergraduate education, the VALUE Initiative will develop ways for students and institutions to collect convincing evidence of student learning:

- drawn primarily from the work students complete through their required curriculum,
- assessed by well-developed campus rubrics and judgments of selected experts, and
- organized in electronic portfolios (eportfolios) that can be organized and presented in ways appropriate for different audiences.

As a part of the AAC&U VALUE Initiative, the AAC&U staff, the VALUE advisory board, and faculty experts will conduct a national audit to identify best practices for achieving and assessing essential learning outcomes in the context of the required college curriculum, while also assembling a collection of rubrics for ascending levels of accomplishment. Investigating the range of outcomes and the criteria considered critical for assessing student achievement of each Essential Learning Outcome will uncover the extent to which there are similarities among campuses. By identifying outcomes in terms of expectations for demonstrated student learning among disparate campuses, a valuable basis for comparing levels of learning through the curriculum will emerge. This will be especially useful as students, parents, employers, and policy makers seek valid representations of student academic accomplishment.

In addition, as a part of the AAC&U VALUE Initiative, faculty experts across the nation, facilitated by the AAC&U Initiative Manager, will develop template metarubrics through which eportfolios can be used to demonstrate, share, and assess student accomplishment of the Essential Learning Outcomes. These template metarubrics will be used to evaluate eportfolios on the twelve VALUE Project Leadership Campuses. Template metarubrics revisions will be done based on feedback from campuses.

Also, three VALUE Project National Review Panels of:

- Faculty experts
- Eportfolio experts
- Employers
- Administrators
- Legislators
- Accreditors
- Parents
- Students

will review eportfolios shared from the twelve VALUE Leadership Campuses using the revised template metarubrics and provide final feedback for revisions of the template metarubrics.

The project will result in a number of specific products:

- an audit of best practices to foster and assess Essential Learning Outcomes
- template metarubrics
- commissioned reports or articles about outcomes, practices, and assessments, especially for areas not covered by standardized tests
- a leadership group of diverse eportfolio institutions to serve as models and resources for others
- a set of presentations and materials for AAC&U summer institutes, working conferences and current and future campus-based projects

For more information, please visit acu.org/value or email our VALUE Initiative Manager, Wende Morgaine at wendem@gmail.com. Funding provided by the Fund for Improving Postsecondary Education and the State Farm Foundation.