A History of Assessment: WWII to Present
Overview

- Tracing several themes that have impacted assessment
- Assessment and Accreditation
- Particular challenges for Community Colleges
Early Forms of Assessment

- Middle Ages – Students performed for their Master’s peers. Failure meant students were certified to teach and their masters weren’t send additional students.
- Recitation and Disputation were the norm.
- Students were ranked by skill and punished for bad performance.
- Later borrowed written examinations from Chinese.
Initially borrowed heavily from the European models

Middle States formed (1921)

Grew in new directions as psychology developed as a field

- Pennsylvania Study (1928-1932): Tested HS, College students on how learning could be measured. (12hrs, 3200 items!)
- Proved it could be done
Early Assessment in the US

- Development of the GRE (1937)
  - Administration in Grad Schools
  - Focus on General Education (6hrs)
  - Became a measure for readiness for Grad School
    - Led to an era of Test Providers
    - Mostly internal use of testing.
The Impact of WWII

GOVERNMENT

- Thousands of Soldiers coming back from the War led to the GI Bill (1944)
- This was the first massive investment in individual students. (vs Morrill Act)
- Belief was Education = Patriotism

ACCREDITATION

- Government became interested in its investment (Started using Accreditation)
- 1946 Periodic review started
- 1950 Community Colleges accredited under special circumstances
Higher Education Act

- HEA (1965) was part of the Great Society
  - Grants and Loans for Low Income Students
  - Academic Libraries
  - Community Colleges

- Further investment brought little more scrutiny

- However, educational attainment was still seen as a proxy for citizenship and psychological health
Carrots and Sticks

- By the Seventies many schools were undergoing financial troubles and they became more dependant on Federal money.
- Student protests changed the way education and educated people were seen.
- IHEs became much more diverse.
- Faculty began to question the ability of multiple choice tests to capture learning beyond correlations.
In the 1980s Federal involvement in higher education changed – increasing need for justification

Series of Reports on Higher Ed 1984-85

- Access to quality Undergraduate Education
- Integrity in the College Curriculum
- Involvement in Learning
- To Reclaim a Legacy

Learning needed to be student centered and that students, faculty and institutions should be striving to improve
New Purposes of Higher Ed

- 1989: Commissions started requiring student assessment as part of accreditation
- Pulling aspects of business into looking at higher education
  - Continuous Improvement
  - Value Added
- Higher education increasingly seen as a private, rather than a public, good
  - State systems being tying performance to funding
Current State

- 1994 discussions were in place about a national exam for college students
  - CHE formed to oversee accrediting bodies
- Schools attempted to reclaim by developing their own assessments
- By 1998, fully 94% of institutions survey or plan to survey learning outcomes across the curriculum
Current State

- 2005 No Child Left Behind...in college?
- Government again putting pressure on Accrediting Associations to be harder on colleges
  - Lack of Rigor
  - Lack of Consistency
  - Lack of Public Information
  - Lack of Accountability
Current State

- 2008 Reaccreditation of HEA
  - 110 new rules added about assessment and accreditation
  - Continued to move standards out of the hands of institutions and faculty into government hands

- CHE reviewing the accreditations of individual institutions
Summary of Tensions

- For what purpose is higher education?
  - Public vs. Private good
  - Vocationalism vs. General Education
  - Value Added

- Student vs. Institution

- Individualization vs. Standardization

- Internal vs. External Control
Specifics for Community Colleges

- Who controls the standards
- Metrics
  - Retention and Grad Rates
  - Course Load
  - Transfers
  - Value Added
  - Reasons for Attending
- Victims of our own successful sales pitch