

Promoting a Culture of Shared Assessment Results

By Don Sutherland

In its [accreditation standards](#), the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) expects that member colleges and universities have a "clearly defined mission and goals that are... publicized and widely known by the institution's internal stakeholders"; that they engage in the "consideration and use of assessment results" for educational and institutional effectiveness; and, that institutions possess "clearly documented and communicated planning and improvement processes that provide for constituent participation, and incorporate the use of assessment results." Put simply, assessment activities, use of assessment results, and communication of assessment outcomes are an integrated process.

Without assessment activity, there can be no communication or use of assessment results. Without communication, there can be no coherent or documented use of assessment results. Without use of assessment results, institutional planning, resource allocation, and student achievement is inconsistent and haphazard.

Considering the important role communication of assessment results plays, with whom should institutions share assessment results and how should they do so?

The National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA) has developed a [transparency framework](#) that provides guidance. That framework focuses on six components of student learning assessment: student learning outcomes statements, campus plans for obtaining evidence of student learning, availability of assessment resources and training, ongoing assessment activities, evidence of student learning, and use of student learning assessment outcomes.

Finally, just as MSCHE has explicitly embedded assessment into all of its standards, institutions could benefit from developing a formal and robust communications plan aimed at sharing assessment outcomes. Such communications plans would document that assessment results are being shared with the institution's constituents in an intentional fashion, that the results are being examined and discussed in a regular fashion, and that assessment outcomes are impacting the institution's planning, resource-allocation, student achievement, and promoting its overall improvement.