

Measuring Higher Education's External Effectiveness

By Don Sutherland

With accreditation expectations and public demands increasing on institutions of higher education, there is a growing need for colleges and universities to gain insight into their external effectiveness. External effectiveness concerns post-graduate outcomes related to careers and society.

At present, employment and wage data is a major focus of such measurement. However, such data has its limitations. Research by Maria Cristiana Martini and Luigi Fabbris suggested that some of the employment related indicators have more relevance than others. In "Beyond Employment Rate: A Multidimensional Indicator of Higher Education Effectiveness" (Springer, November 21, 2015), they found that assessment of education experience at graduation was inadequate and that job satisfaction rated by employed graduates was also insufficient.

Based on their research, they concluded that the "dimension of employability may be best represented by the employment rate of graduates at 6 months and 1 year after graduation" and that "personal fulfillment may be represented by the repeatability rate of the educational experience computed 6 months and 3 years after graduation." Their research also suggested that "professional empowerment may be represented by the rates of job-major (perceived) consistency and graduates' average satisfaction of the competencies they gained at the university" with the "optimum measurement time" being one year following graduation.

Finally, they pointed out that understanding of external effectiveness of colleges and universities would be increased from obtaining information from stakeholders beyond college graduates and over periods of time beyond three years. Such stakeholders include, but are not limited to, employers, policy makers, and students' parents.