intend to learn something from faculty collaboration in the use of rubrics in general and from the use of the problem-solving rubric, in particular. Thus, the findings from the direct assessment of this project are more heavily weighted toward what we learned from the process of engaging faculty teams in the scoring of student work using the problem solving rubric than on actual data points. The data did indicate that, overall, students’ demonstrated problem-solving skills improved from the pre-assignment to the post-assignment. This was true for students in both the control and the experimental courses. This finding was consistent when the courses were regrouped according to students’ perceptions of whether a course was “more” or “less” transparent, rather than experimental or control, based on reported scores on the transparency survey. Figures 1 and 2 below indicate the percent of change from students’ rubric score on pre-assignments at the beginning of the course to their performance on post-assignments at the end of the course.

The graphs demonstrate that, although average rubric scores improved over time for all students in this project, the ability to draw conclusions from comparing courses (either control versus experimental or “less” versus “more” transparent) was difficult. Figures 1 and 2 suggest that students in courses with higher levels of transparency (whether labeled experimental or more transparent, respectively) demonstrated greater percent improvement in rubric scores over time, specifically in their ability to “define the problem” and to “identify strategies” for problem solving. But across other rubric dimensions, the students in the control or “less” transparent courses appeared to demonstrate greater improvement over time.

Mixed results should not be perceived as a failure. The practical reality for campuses engaging in direct assessment using rubrics as highly articulated as the AAC&U VALUE rubrics work is that an initial pilot may reveal messy data. It takes time for faculty to become proficient and comfortable with scoring and it also takes time for faculty to allow the rubric to inform assignment design. Faculty in this project were taking on the tasks of both understanding the rubric for scoring and understanding its utility for assignment design within the span of a number of months. They were also, concurrently, learning best practices with regard to transparent teaching practices. These caveats are not intended to excuse mixed data, but they are intended to provide insight in order to encourage faculty to dig into data points that might not be in the intended direction or fall short of expectations. Direct assessment is a learning process that often, helpfully, starts with a pilot. Faculty in this project provided the means toward piloting the problem-solving rubric, both on their own campuses and nationally. Their collaborative efforts provided a number of insights and considerations that can be of help to faculty who may be exploring the use of this rubric on their campus. The following are a number of those insights gleaned from both faculty feedback on the direct assessment process and my own reflections from working with the project teams.

- Rubrics can be instruments for transparency, as well as tools for assessment. The depth and breadth of articulation within the problem-solving rubric (and all other VALUE rubrics) helps to accomplish two essential practices of transparent teaching—to clearly articulate the intended outcome and to communicate how students will be evaluated. The first page of the rubric details the meaning of problem solving, while the rows and progress points of the rubric itself help students to understand how they will be evaluated and how to improve.
- Applying different disciplinary lenses to the same rubric and forming examples helped clarify how the rubric could be applied across disciplines. Though the VALUE rubrics were intended to be common tools applied across disciplines, interpreting them as such is not always easy or obvious. In the case of the problem solving rubric, concerns were raised...