LEAP

Action Steps for Advancing Transfer Student Success:

Lessons Learned from Cross-Institutional Collaborations

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION. Initiating Institutional Change in the Transfer Context 1

CASE STUDIES

1. **Inviting a Broad Range of Faculty Participants in Campus Change Efforts**
   Pierce College and California State University–Northridge 6
2. **Creating a Culture of Trust through Ongoing Conversations**
   Salt Lake Community College and University of Utah 8
3. **Aligning Valued Campus Work with Project Priorities**
   Ivy Tech Community College–Central Indiana and Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis 10
4. **Clarifying Shared Learning Expectations across Transfer**
   University of Wisconsin–Fox Valley and University of Wisconsin–Oshkosh 12
5. **Leveraging Campus Efforts That Are Already Underway**
   Mount Wachusett Community College and Fitchburg State University 14
6. **Establishing Data Sharing Agreements**
   Blue Ridge Community College and James Madison University 16
7. **Connecting Project Efforts to Statewide Workshops**
   Elizabethtown Community and Technical College and University of Louisville 18
8. **Introducing Deliberate Campus Change Efforts**
   University of Wisconsin–Waukesha and University of Wisconsin–Parkside 20
9. **Building Faculty Capacity through Collaborative Work**
   Middlesex Community College and University of Massachusetts Lowell 22
10. **Scaffolding Professional Development Activities over Time**
    J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College and Virginia Commonwealth University 24

CONCLUSION. Lessons Learned for Sustainable Change 27

Degree Qualifications Profile Overview 30

About the Authors 33

About the Quality Collaboratives Project 34

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INTRODUCTION

Initiating Institutional Change in the Transfer Context

AAC&U launched Quality Collaboratives (QC): Assessing and Reporting Degree Qualifications Profile Competencies in the Context of Transfer in 2011 as a three-year project that engaged educational, assessment, and policy leaders in student learning outcomes assessment and transfer pathways. With funding from Lumina Foundation and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the QC project was organized through AAC&U's current signature initiative, Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP), which champions a twenty-first-century liberal education for all college students. During the project, two- and four-year transfer partner institutions within nine states—each already engaged, prior to the start of the project, in learning outcomes assessment work—beta tested different ways to assess proficiencies articulated in Lumina Foundation's Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP). The DQP, now in its second version, benchmarks "what degree recipients should know and be able to do"[1] at the associate's, bachelor's, and master's degree levels, and offers scaffolded learning expectations to guide paths between and among transfer partners (see page 30, below).

This publication features campus work from twenty institutions involved in QC—campuses with collaborative relationships that worked together as two- and four-year "QC dyads." The ten participating campus dyads hailed from California, Indiana, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Utah, Wisconsin, and Virginia (two other states—North Dakota and Oregon—participated in the project at the state system level). Project participants in these dyads saw already-established working relationships between their institutions gain strength as they connected faculty teaching and learning practices with assessment of authentic student work, interacted with senior academic leaders supporting the work, and engaged with policies related to student learning and success in the context of transfer. Campuses entered the QC project in various ways, including through state- or system-wide initiatives, in response to institutional strategic plans, in support of general education reform projects, and with the goal of refining transfer processes. Each dyad

1 Cliff Adelman, Peter Ewell, Paul Gaston, and Carol Geary Schneider, *The Degree Qualifications Profile* (Indianapolis, IN: Lumina Foundation, 2014), 3.

approached transfer student success through various means and with a different campus and state culture serving as a backdrop.

This publication is anchored by a flowchart, laid out on pages 4 and 5, that reflects lessons learned from the campus-based work in which the QC dyads engaged. The flowchart is meant to serve as a guide for campus practitioners seeking to initiate transfer-based change efforts on their campuses. The reader can follow the columns in the flowchart from left to right, starting with three major points of consideration when **initiating a new project** on campus, as gleaned from QC: (1) set a **collaborative tone** early in the process, (2) proactively coordinate and **connect multiple initiatives**, and (3) **maximize engagement** based on assessment and collaborative capacity. These consideration points are augmented by a set of suggestions for conducting an environmental scan, prior to the project, to strengthen the work on campus. The reader can follow each of the three points down their respective columns to three **outcomes** from the QC project: (1) increased levels of **respect and trust among colleagues;** (2) **sustainable, scalable projects** embedded in and connected to institutional goals and other related initiatives; and (3) increased understanding and new avenues to extend project work more broadly, **engaging larger groups of stakeholders.**

In between these points of consideration and project outcomes are key action steps taken by the various QC campus partners to implement assessment in the transfer context. These action steps reflect a culminating list of collective lessons learned throughout the QC project. For instance, QC campus team leaders learned that assignment design, assessment, and student learning were some of the best entry points for faculty engaged in the professional development workshops embedded in the project. Rather than introducing the DQP right away, dyad leaders learned that it was best to start with what matters most to faculty—student success—and integrate the DQP at a later stage of the project.

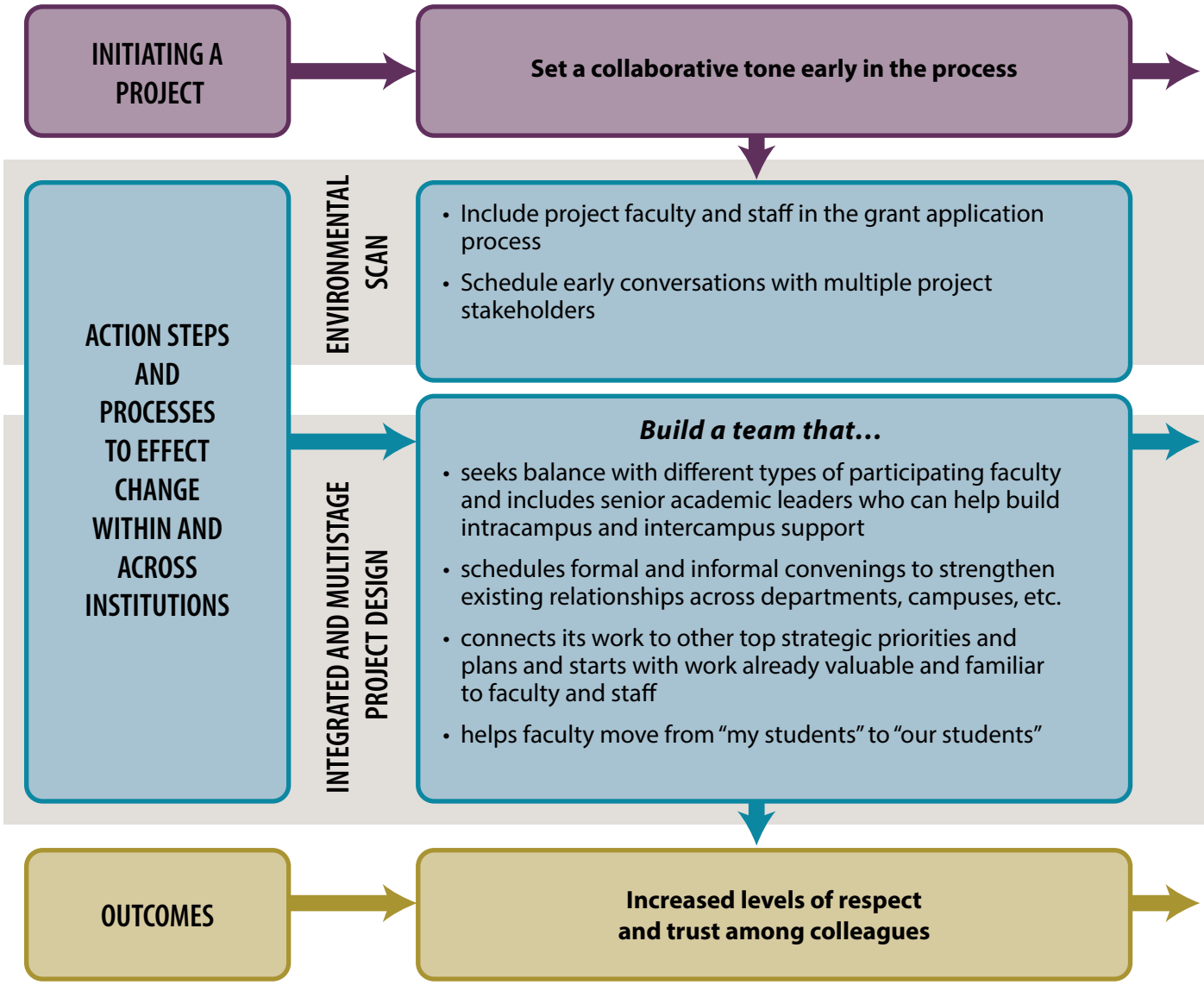
Each action step (eleven in total) correlates with a case study in the following pages. (In one instance, a dyad's case study addresses two action steps, and readers will find that the case studies generally speak to more than one action step.) Written by QC dyad leaders, who are listed as contacts in this publication, these case studies represent campus change efforts that unfolded over the course of the three-year project. Longer versions of these case studies reside on AAC&U's website at **www.aacu.org/qc/casestudies**.

AAC&U is currently compiling and uploading resources from different multicampus projects. These resources are available by theme under the "Browse Resources" section on our homepage. Curated

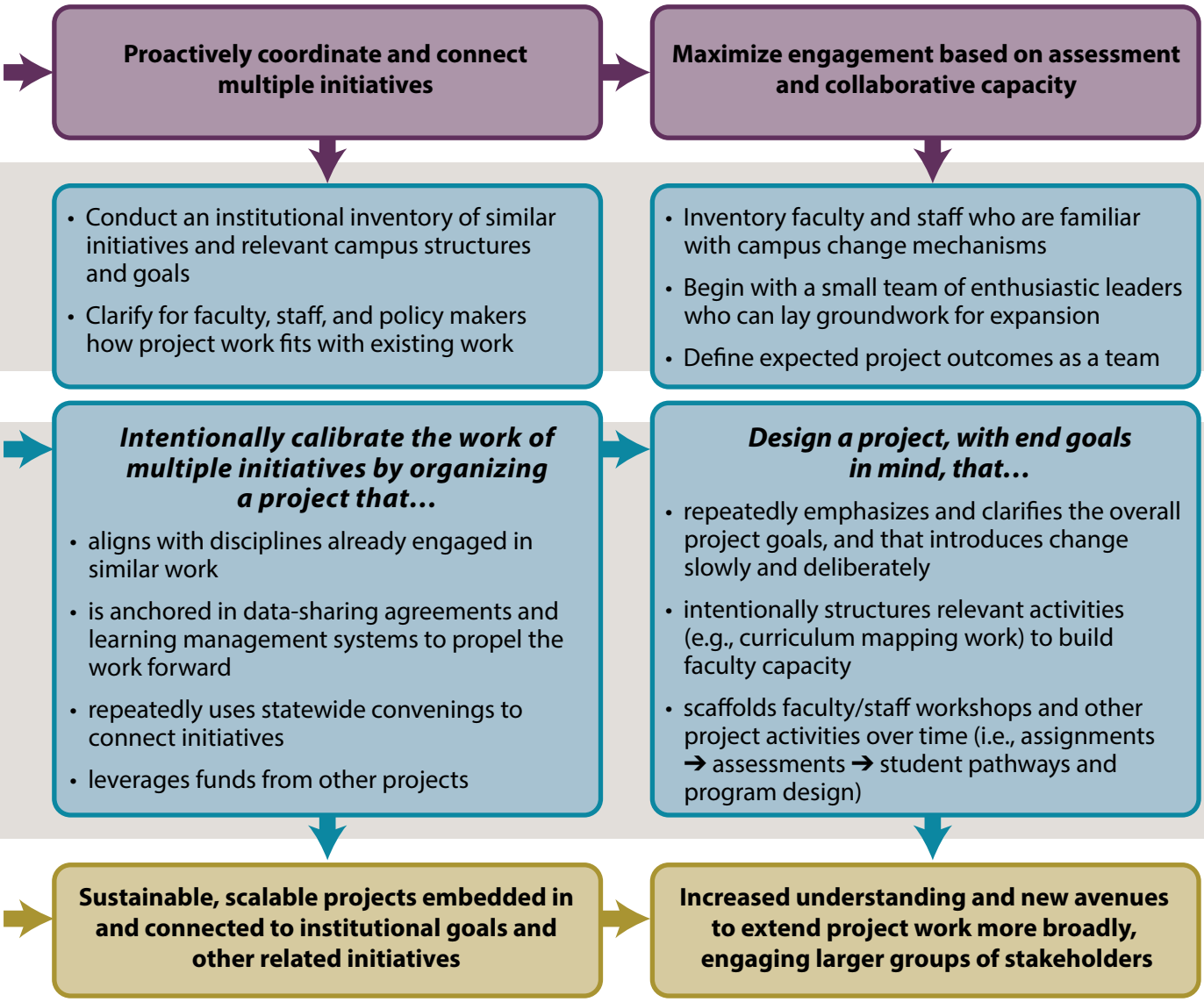
resources from the QC project and its Faculty Collaboratives project demonstrate lessons learned and offer tools in support of campus change efforts nationwide. The Faculty Collaboratives project supports a national network of faculty and administrative leaders engaged in progressive efforts for student learning, retention, and success. We hope this publication, along with a companion publication that is intended for campus practitioners working on assessment issues,[2] is a useful addition to these resources as well as a helpful tool for practitioners seeking to initiate institutional change within the transfer context.

2 Gary R. Brown and Terrel L. Rhodes, *Assessment Practices for Advancing Transfer Student Success: Collaborating for Educational Change* (Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2015).

Campus Change Processes and Action Steps



for Advancing Transfer Student Success



CASE STUDY 1

Inviting a Broad Range of Faculty Participants in Campus Change Efforts

Build a team that … seeks balance with different types of participating faculty and includes senior academic leaders who can help build intracampus and intercampus support

INSTITUTIONS: Pierce College and California State University–Northridge

CONTACT: Elizabeth Adams, associate vice president of undergraduate studies (California State University–Northridge)

The California State University–Northridge (CSUN) and Pierce College QC dyad created themes within general education (GE), inviting a broad range of faculty across contract and tenure lines to connect across subject areas and GE sections to highlight interdisciplinary thinking. The team recruited faculty leaders committed to heading up the QC project and initiated three thematic GE "Paths"[3]: Global Studies, Social Justice, and Sustainability. Faculty and campus team leaders selected these three themes to represent broad interdisciplinary topics found across GE courses.

Campus team leaders asked faculty to submit courses for inclusion in the Paths. To be included, courses needed to demonstrate alignment with three or more of the team-identified student learning outcomes (SLOs) for a particular Path (with most Paths having six SLOs). As incentive, dyad leaders offered faculty small stipends to adapt their courses to the Paths of their choice (provided each course still fit the original course outline in the catalog). Within each path, dyad leaders also arranged faculty development working groups for faculty to provide input on the Paths and SLOs and to connect within and across departments.

The CSUN and Pierce teams met often while building the Paths on their home campuses. In order for the project to succeed, the campus teams needed to acknowledge where their work intersected (e.g., shared students, the GE structure, and the desire to increase student success) and where it diverged (e.g., larger numbers of full-time faculty at CSUN and less money initially available at Pierce).

3 The dyad opted to use the term "Paths" because CSUN's career center already had a product called "Pathways."

From the beginning, there was much enthusiasm about the project among faculty across departments, disciplines, and contract or tenure lines. Critically, from its initiation, the project included adjunct faculty, who teach many of the courses at both institutions. Dyad leaders also had multiple conversations with faculty governance on both campuses to mitigate concerns that the project had not gone through the faculty governance process. (Often, enthusiasm and concern came from the same departments.)

When students complete the lower-division portion of the Path at Pierce, their accomplishment is designated on their transcripts so they can "finish" the Path within upper-division GE courses at CSUN. (CSUN offers a minor in sustainability and is working to finalize a minor in civic engagement for students in the other Paths.) Students at CSUN also formed a GE Path Student Association during the 2014–15 academic year, and the number of paths was expanded to six. Faculty and student learning communities have thrived, especially within the three original Paths, and all Paths have events, speakers, and symposia that are well attended.

CASE STUDY 2

Creating a Culture of Trust through Ongoing Conversations

Build a team that … schedules formal and informal convenings to strengthen existing relationships across departments, campuses, etc.

INSTITUTIONS: Salt Lake Community College and University of Utah

CONTACTS: Ann Darling, assistant vice president and senior associate dean of undergraduate studies (University of Utah) and Barbara Grover, vice president for institutional effectiveness (Salt Lake Community College)

The Salt Lake Community College (SLCC) and University of Utah dyad began with a system-level attempt to redirect a process of curricular change at the university's School of Business that looked like it might interrupt smooth transitional pathways for SLCC students. By refining the dyad's primary objectives through ongoing conversations, the project team (consisting of eight faculty members across the two institutions) fostered a culture of respect and trust while creating four core business courses at both institutions, with a set of common learning outcomes, signature assignments, and assessment metrics.

The process was anything but linear, easy, or efficient. At moments, it wasn't even pleasant. But, because the project leaders and participants continued to meet and talk, the work was ultimately highly efficacious, resulting in the respect among colleagues necessary for strong cross-institutional partnerships as well as a shared understanding that "your students are our students." Most important, the project built trust and developed a common language about student learning.

After reflecting on their shared experiences, dyad participants articulated four lessons learned that they believe made the project valuable. These lessons, described more fully on AAC&U's website in the case study *Conversations along a Crooked Path*, include

1. **Let project objectives evolve:** The project did not end up where the team originally thought it would, but it ended up where it needed to be for faculty to move forward collaboratively.

2. **Get the right people on the team:** Team members changed over time, but finally stabilized into a group of faculty, program administrators, and assessment practitioners who bonded and created shared understandings that will be invaluable in the years to come.
3. **Create a common language:** SLCC and University of Utah project participants needed to spend time listening to each other to appreciate their respective values and experiences. Only then could they talk openly with each other about their students' learning.
4. **Keep talking:** No matter how crooked the path or how elusive the goals seemed to be, the team kept conversations going by holding regular lunch meetings. Because of these efforts, their collaborations continue to this day.

CASE STUDY 3

Aligning Valued Campus Work with Project Priorities

Build a team that … connects its work to other top strategic priorities and plans and starts with work already valuable and familiar to faculty and staff

INSTITUTIONS: Ivy Tech Community College–Central Indiana and Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis

CONTACTS: Kathy Johnson, interim executive vice chancellor and chief academic officer, and Mel Wininger, senior lecturer in English (both of Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis)

The Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) and Ivy Tech Community College–Central Indiana QC team believed that their colleagues would better appreciate the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) if the practice of exploring its competencies emerged from work already underway and if that work directly benefited participants in their institutional roles. The team built on an ongoing project among writing faculty to identify shared values across the IU and Ivy Tech systems. The QC project facilitated focused and local work on curricular alignment between the campuses; it cultivated faculty networks and fostered respect for the independence and interdependence of both institutions and faculty.

With the DQP in view, the project focused on two transfer issues: in general education, student readiness for the move from first-year composition to advanced written communication across disciplines; and within a specific major, student readiness for the move from the preengineering track to bachelor's degree programs. Over the course of two years, the team investigated those issues using artifacts of student learning to identify, understand, and describe competencies and achievements. In each case, Dynamic Criteria Mapping (DCM) provided a central tool for investigation. In DCM, faculty generate "criteria," or characteristics they value in student work; they then create a "map" of relationships across the criteria. The map is intended to be dynamic, periodically revisited and redrawn to represent the emergence of new conditions and criteria. In the dyad's QC project, the map served as the basis for follow-up discussions about using assignment frameworks to bring general education and program-specific standards into greater alignment. The DQP, which project leaders presented as a tool offering common language and benchmarks for standards at the associate's degree level, reinforced the criteria identified by each map.

Faculty in both writing and engineering reported tangible benefits of participation in the project, including the opportunity to network with colleagues teaching the same course at different institutions and the immersion in rich dialogue about student work that might not arise in an intramural discussion. Across domains, faculty identified considerable commonality in the aspects they valued in student work (e.g., parsimony, organization, and creativity). The project has resulted in small but significant modifications to Ivy Tech curricula for writing and preengineering, and IUPUI faculty are now more aware of how the competences expected of Ivy Tech students translate into four-year program achievement.

CASE STUDY 4

Clarifying Shared Learning Expectations across Transfer

Build a team that . . . helps faculty move from "my students" to "our students"

INSTITUTIONS: University of Wisconsin–Fox Valley and University of Wisconsin–Oshkosh

CONTACTS: Martin Rudd, campus executive officer and dean (University of Wisconsin–Fox Valley) and Carleen Vande Zande, associate vice chancellor for curricular affairs and student academic achievement (University of Wisconsin–Oshkosh)

During the QC project's initial phase of professional development, faculty members from the University of Wisconsin–Fox Valley and the University of Wisconsin–Oshkosh, a two- and four-year partnership, reviewed the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) competencies to clarify student pathways for shared civic learning.[4] Faculty at each institution created new courses based on the DQP competencies, as well as on the civic learning and engagement outcomes from *A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy's Future*.[5] At the end of the project's five semesters, faculty members reviewed each other's courses using the DQP framework to identify how course outcomes and assessments aligned with the DQP and to create service-learning designations and civic engagement themes for transfer programs. In addition, faculty participated in two culminating discussion sessions where they critiqued the DQP 2.0 civic learning competencies and constructed learning outcomes that they would suggest for civic learning.

The dyad's team leaders hoped to increase cross-campus collaboration, emphasizing that the project served a collective group of students and extending discussions beyond the original project focus. They are now looking at the expansion of degrees from Oshkosh to the Fox Valley campus in select areas, developing the concept of the transfer center advisor, and working with community partners to identify community contexts for student learning experiences. This work will be sustainable thanks to structures and

4 Cliff Adelman, Peter Ewell, Paul Gaston, and Carol Geary Schneider, *The Degree Qualifications Profile* (Indianapolis, IN: Lumina Foundation, 2014), 31.

5 National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, *A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy's Future* (Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2012).

guidelines (developed through shared governance) that support faculty work related to civic learning. Both campuses share system transfer policies and are using existing transfer guides to ensure that student work is evaluated equitably on each campus. Ongoing assessment of student work and course review will sustain the civic learning outcomes work from the QC project. Faculty dialogue on student learning outcomes across the campuses is set to continue, and faculty will also continue engaging in interdisciplinary discussions, seminars, and faculty development activities focused on student learning and on building faculty engagement with civic and global learning and related pedagogies.

The DQP prompted faculty at both campuses to devote time to reviewing expectations for student learning shared across institutions. Collaboration with outreach offices, alumni offices, and student clubs and organizations enriched the design of learning experiences related to civic learning and service learning.

CASE STUDY 5

Leveraging Campus Efforts That Are Already Underway

Intentionally calibrate the work of multiple initiatives by organizing a project that . . . aligns with disciplines already engaged in similar work; leverages funds from other projects

INSTITUTIONS: Mount Wachusett Community College and Fitchburg State University

CONTACT: Chris Cratsley, director of assessment (Fitchburg State University); Ruth Slotnick, director of assessment (Bridgewater State University, previously Mount Wachusett Community College); Michelle Paranto, assistant dean of curriculum and instruction (Mount Wachusett Community College)

Mount Wachusett Community College and Fitchburg State University each entered the QC dyad with active, cross-disciplinary efforts underway to transform their general education curricula and improve learning outcomes assessment. These efforts coincided with the statewide Massachusetts Department of Higher Education Vision Project goals of "achieving higher levels of student learning through better assessment and more extensive use of assessment results" and "providing students with the knowledge, skills and dispositions to be active, informed citizens."[6] The QC dyad participated in this statewide effort through Student Learning and Civic Learning task forces; the Davis Foundation–funded Advancing Massachusetts Culture of Assessment project; legislatively funded Performance Incentive Funding grants; and a pilot partnership between twelve states, the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association, and the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) known as the Multi-State Collaborative to Advance Learning Outcomes Assessment.

This QC dyad built on these initiatives by leveraging existing faculty and staff leadership, scholarship, and interest in outcomes assessment in the areas of written communication, civic engagement, information literacy, and quantitative reasoning. A thirty-two-member cross-institutional team of tenure-track and non-tenure-track faculty, faculty librarians, transfer advisors, and campus administrators had

6 Massachusetts Department of Higher Education, "What Is the Vision Project?", accessed August 25, 2015, http://www.mass.edu/visionproject/vision.asp.

the freedom to adapt and modify existing assessment frameworks and tools like the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) and LEAP VALUE rubrics.[7] Team members identified appropriate disciplinary courses and assignments as mechanisms for collecting student work, assessed the work using their modified rubrics, and developed both revised assignments and tools to help their peers revise their own assignments.

Faculty and staff autonomy in the use of the DQP and rubrics as "construction materials" that could be selected and adapted to meet institutional needs was essential to the success of the project. This autonomy, as well as the connection to existing campus work, ensured that faculty and staff would take leadership in driving the process of assessment and curricular revision. The QC work culminated with a Professional Day, hosted by Fitchburg State in spring 2015, that convened all faculty from both institutions in disciplinary clusters. The rubrics, assignments, and assignment development tools produced through the QC dyad have provided the foundation for cross-institutional collaboration on learning outcomes assessment.

7 VALUE, or Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education, is one of AAC&U's signature projects and part of the association's signature initiative, Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP).

CASE STUDY 6

Establishing Data Sharing Agreements

INSTITUTIONS: Blue Ridge Community College and James Madison University

CONTACT: Linda Cabe Halpern, vice provost for university programs (James Madison University)

Intentionally calibrate the work of multiple initiatives by organizing a project that . . . is anchored in data-sharing agreements and learning management systems to propel the work forward

Prior to the start of the Quality Collaboratives project, Blue Ridge Community College (BRCC) and James Madison University (JMU) had a strong, established relationship. The dyad started aligning the Degree Qualifications Profile with general education outcomes on their respective campuses when they encountered an unexpected barrier with regard to data sharing. To support project goals related to tracking the success of transfer students from four selected majors, the team needed to share individual student records across the two institutions. The Commonwealth coordinating body for higher education expressed concerns about protecting students' identities when uploading grades and assessment results to a database. To address these concerns, the team reached beyond the typical campus channels to change existing policy, working with the Virginia Commonwealth's Attorney General to institute a signed agreement between the two institutions. The team addressed the FERPA issues, ultimately strengthening the final agreement.

Once the team crafted and signed the agreement to track transfer students across institutions, thus redefining the data sharing process, they removed student identities from records in the database by creating a linking number for each record. Although this process placed the dyad somewhat behind in relation to the original project schedule, because of the longstanding trust between the two institutions, the team was able to create space to work through the appropriate steps and align faculty and programs to propel the work forward.

As the project moved forward, team leaders from both institutions worked together to ensure that each participating faculty member had a disciplinary "match" from the other institution—noting the difference in faculty structures (JMU has many more faculty members than BRCC, and BRCC faculty

often have broader course responsibilities than JMU faculty). These faculty members worked together to develop signature assignments and course-level assessments, and to strengthen relationships between the institutions. Other notable achievements included expanding the project to more academic majors and dedicating funds for collaborative intercampus teams to prepare course activities and assignments. The data-sharing agreement additionally contributed to project sustainability by permitting the two institutions to gather data on future groups of transfer students. These efforts will fortify student success for transfer students and are deepening and enriching the collaborative partnership between the two institutions.

CASE STUDY 7

Connecting Project Efforts to Statewide Workshops

Intentionally calibrate the work of multiple initiatives by organizing a project that … repeatedly uses statewide convenings to connect initiatives

INSTITUTIONS: Elizabethtown Community and Technical College and University of Louisville

CONTACT: Martha Wolfe, professor of biology (Elizabethtown Community and Technical College)

The Kentucky QC project connected its dyad, Elizabethtown Community and Technical College and the University of Louisville, to statewide workshops that focused on shared practices and student transfer. The goal of the project was to determine the transfer readiness of associate degree-holding biology students. Focusing on common course outcomes, the team developed processes to facilitate transfer—for example, requiring biology transfer students to meet with a biology faculty member at the University of Louisville. The team also encouraged dialogue between faculty from both institutions working toward a seamless transfer pathway.

At the project's start, biology faculty at both institutions had already developed program outcomes for associate and baccalaureate degrees while "tuning"[8] their respective biology learning outcomes. QC grant activities included curriculum mapping and the use of a common assessment for transfer students. While these assessment data indicated that associate degree students' scores were compatible with those of university students, the QC team has begun revising the assessment instrument to incorporate critical thinking scenarios and writing samples with the goal of creating a tool that can be used statewide.

One of the best results of this project was increased communication between community college and university faculty. The project benefited from two statewide workshops, one for Kentucky Community

8 Lumina Foundation's Tuning initiative "encourages participants to develop explicit statements of a discipline's core areas of learning by engaging in a recursive sequence of definition and revision based on increased awareness of the needs of other stakeholders." For more information, see "What Is Tuning?", Lumina Foundation and National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment, last accessed August 25, 2015, http://degreeprofile.org/press_four/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/What-is-Tuning.pdf.

and Technical College System (KCTCS) associate degree biology faculty and another that included biology faculty from KCTCS and four-year institutions within the state's Professional Learning Community (PLC). These workshops allowed faculty a chance to discuss how they might create valid assessments, develop best practices, and revise course outcomes. The KCTCS workshop initiated development of e-portfolios for various biology courses, which will be used to calibrate course outcomes for current and newly hired tenure-track and adjunct faculty. Ensuring and enhancing quality, these e-portfolios will also create consistency across the state in meeting course objectives. The PLC enabled faculty from across the state to discuss shared issues, including the establishment of degree pathways from KCTCS institutions to four-year colleges and universities. Continuing work will not only facilitate student transfer, but ensure that learning outcomes in the associate degree curriculum are continually revised as university curricula change. The team is aiming to make these workshops sustainable, with the goal of holding annual workshops at rotating sites throughout the system.

CASE STUDY 8

Introducing Deliberate Campus Change Efforts

Design a project, with end goals in mind, that … repeatedly emphasizes and clarifies the overall project goals, and that introduces change slowly and deliberately

INSTITUTIONS: University of Wisconsin–Waukesha and University of Wisconsin–Parkside

CONTACTS: Peggy James, professor of political science, and Jim Robinson, director of the Teaching and Learning Center (both of University of Wisconsin–Parkside)

In 2013, the University of Wisconsin–Parkside and the University of Wisconsin–Waukesha partnered to use the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) to establish a framework that maps courses within the Bachelors of Applied Arts and Sciences (BAAS) by learning outcomes and skills proficiency. This two-year/four-year partnership was unique: campus partners responded to a new structure in the UW system and created a degree conferred by the two-year institution using a combined curriculum provided by both institutions. One challenge to successfully launching this new degree was to create a working partnership ensuring that students would not just accumulate credits from each institution, but would have a fully integrative and seamless educational experience. To accomplish this, QC dyad leaders needed to introduce change by building "doors" through which a large and diverse group of stakeholders across both institutions could enter in order to apply and understand project work.

DOOR 1: START WITH THE FAMILIAR

Starting with Bloom's Taxonomy as it related to both institutions' existing course learning outcomes within the BAAS program, team leaders created an integrative framework populated by Bloom's learning outcomes.[9] Each instructor reviewed a partial snapshot of his or her course and considered how it could be integrated into the BAAS program.

9 Benjamin S. Bloom, ed., *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* (New York: Longman, 1984).

DOOR 2: ADD A NEW FRAMEWORK TO THE OLD

The team took the vetted framework and created an overlay based on benchmarks for the associate's and bachelor's degree across the five proficiency domains named in the DQP. This mapping of the BAAS in relation to the DQP demonstrated how course learning outcomes progress through proficiency domains toward degree completion. It also revealed strengths and weaknesses in the BAAS, levels of proficiency development and achievement at different stages of the curriculum, and potential learning gaps.

DOOR 3: MOVE FROM THE CONCEPTUAL TO THE APPLIED

The team held three day-long professional development sessions (one at each institution, and a third combined session) with participating instructors, advisors, and administrators to fine-tune the mapping. The sessions resulted in improved connections between courses, as well as between each course and the overall program; they also provided opportunities for participants to view each course with new eyes. The team repositioned some learning outcomes on the map after receiving feedback from instructors. Participants could see how learning maps across the curriculum, without the artificial boundaries of course titles and credit hours.

DOOR 4: SPREAD THE WORD

After completion, the Waukesha/Parkside model and accompanying assessment, based on DQP proficiencies, was successfully adopted by all two-year campuses participating in the BAAS program across the University of Wisconsin system. The team attributes this success to the close collaboration between institutions, instructors, advisors, and administrators.

CASE STUDY 9

Building Faculty Capacity through Collaborative Work

Design a project, with end goals in mind, that . . . intentionally structures relevant activities (e.g., curriculum mapping work) to build faculty capacity

INSTITUTIONS: Middlesex Community College and University of Massachusetts Lowell

CONTACTS: Charlotte Mandell, vice provost for undergraduate education (University of Massachusetts Lowell) and Elise Martin, dean of assessment (Middlesex Community College)

Underscored by existing articulation relationships within four high-volume transfer programs—biology, business, criminal justice, and psychology—the Quality Collaboratives (QC) project provided University of Massachusetts Lowell (UML) and Middlesex Community College (MCC) faculty teaching in these programs the opportunity to collaborate over a two-year period to develop, implement, evaluate, improve, and reevaluate cumulative assessments in their courses. The project built faculty capacity as participants worked collaboratively to integrate and assess quantitative fluency, one of the intellectual skills highlighted in the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) that both institutions had recently identified as an institutional priority for student learning.

During a yearlong series of structured meetings, faculty collaborated within and across discipline-based groups to design assignments that would generate assessment artifacts. Assignment development was informed by the Quantitative Literacy (QL) VALUE rubric,[10] to which the UML/MCC team mapped DQP benchmarks for associate- and baccalaureate-level performance. In order to ensure that faculty were deeply invested in the results of the assessment process, the faculty members who developed the assignments also participated in the teams that scored student work using the assessment tools.

10 To access and download AAC&U's sixteen VALUE rubrics, see http://aacu.org/value-rubrics.

At project meetings, faculty discussed contextualized applications for QL within each program and the use of backward design and scaffolding in the development of assignments.[11] At the final project meeting, faculty worked in disciplinary groups to assess artifacts, share data, and discuss assignment improvement strategies. Project funding allowed faculty to continue engaging in the project the following year to develop and implement their revisions and reassess results, and over 90 percent of participants opted to continue. Project leaders were granted state-level funding to expand the reach of this work to other programs and learning outcomes. Currently, Massachusetts public colleges and universities are engaged in state-level Academic Transfer Pathways work to ensure consistency between community college courses commonly accepted for transfer at baccalaureate-granting institutions. While such consistency has long been based upon course descriptions and content, faculty serving on these Academic Transfer Pathway teams, including UML and MCC faculty from the QC project, are building capacity for including shared outcomes as an essential part of transfer practice.

11 Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe, *Understanding by Design* (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1998).

CASE STUDY 10

Scaffolding Professional Development Activities over Time

INSTITUTIONS: J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College and Virginia Commonwealth University

CONTACT: Scott Oates, director of assessment and institutional effectiveness (Virginia Commonwealth University)

Design a project, with end goals in mind, that … scaffolds faculty/staff workshops and other project activities over time (i.e., assignments → assessments → student pathways and program design)

The Quality Collaboratives (QC) project was fortunately timed for J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College (JSRCC) and Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU). JSRCC, under the aegis of the Virginia Community College System (VCCS), was looking to improve success rates of students transferring to baccalaureate degree programs in Virginia. Complementing this goal was an objective in VCU's five-year strategic plan calling for an increased number of transfer student pipelines. In addition to addressing these high-level priorities, QC project leaders would help advance faculty development projects under way at each campus by learning to scaffold workshop activities at an appropriate pace.

The centerpiece of the JSRCC/VCU Quality Collaborative was a weeklong summer institute, featuring hands-on workshop sessions where faculty from each campus worked in pairs to align course materials, instructional methods, and assignment designs to program-level learning outcomes. These faculty, who taught individual and linked courses articulated within the transfer agreement (at the course and general education path levels), applied Lumina Foundation's Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) in order to compare and contrast their courses and identify alignments to be strengthened, gaps to be closed, and redundancies to be eliminated. The institute concluded with each faculty member developing and submitting an "action-research" plan for conducting the revised course and deploying a key assignment that would be collected for assessment. During the institute, the QC project team learned not to lead with the DQP as the primary framework for alignment work; faculty initially set the DQP aside but became receptive to it as a paradigm after spending time working on internal and external alignment.

The JSRCC/VCU QC leaders hoped that their QC project would help make the task of integrating faculty development, curriculum design, and assessment a priority at participating campuses and would help those campuses sustain attention to expectations for and evidence of student learning in the context of transfer. Project leaders learned that in order to succeed at the desired scale, they would need to recruit larger numbers of faculty participants and integrate project goals into promotion and tenure guidelines (which guide faculty behavior at VCU) and contract stipulations for full-time teaching (which direct faculty priorities at JSRCC). As the QC dyad leaders continue to promote fresh initiatives on their campuses, they will aim to secure from executive leadership the leverage and incentives necessary to address the impediments of contract and tenure requirements, and to sustain the work amid the swirl of changing administrative priorities.

CONCLUSION

Lessons Learned for Sustainable Change

The brief case studies featured here (and the longer versions available online at **www.aacu.org/qc/casestudies**) illustrate promising approaches to institutional collaboration and change, captured in the flowchart's recommended action steps. Transfer partners participating in the Quality Collaboratives (QC) project revealed multiple ways in which faculty and their colleagues were able to collaborate across institutional and departmental boundaries to place faculty at the center of the transfer process and to facilitate student success.

When establishing sustainable campus change efforts, project participants found that it was critical to engage a diverse group of stakeholders, including contingent faculty members. Non-tenure-track faculty are the new faculty majority and "it's becoming increasingly unrealistic" to keep these faculty members at the margins of such efforts.[12] When establishing project teams, it's also important to engage faculty, staff, and administrators who are familiar with campus change mechanisms and who can lay the groundwork for further practitioner engagement.

Initiative fatigue often prevents campus practitioners from engaging deeply in new projects. Clarifying the work and conducting an inventory of relevant campus structures and goals may help to bring practitioners on board. Calibrating the work of multiple initiatives across disciplines already connected to similar work may also help (see the Mount Wachusett Community College/Fitchburg State University dyad case study). Fitting campus work into statewide convenings of disciplinary groups (see the Kentucky dyad case study) provides faculty the opportunity to work cross-institutionally on valid assessments, and revise course outcomes and degree pathways. Connecting new campus projects with statewide initiatives can also be a way of leveraging additional funds.

12 Ann Ferren, Rebecca Dolinsky, and Heather McCambly, "Collaborative, Faculty-Led Efforts for Sustainable Change," *Peer Review* 16/17, no. 4/1 (2015): 31.

From the start of the project, QC dyad leaders scheduled formal and informal meetings and focused on what matters most to faculty and staff: student learning and student success. Team leaders introduced change efforts slowly, via faculty and staff workshops. The Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) provided a framework for meeting curricular and assessment needs, along with other "construction materials" including the LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes (or ELOs, a set of proficiencies for twenty-first-century liberal learning)[13] and the VALUE rubrics (which accompany the LEAP ELOs and are used to assess authentic student work).[14] Putting these construction materials in conversation with each other, campuses mapped DQP benchmarks onto the VALUE rubrics (see the Middlesex Community College/University of Massachusetts Lowell dyad case study). Campus partners also mapped the DQP benchmarks onto learning outcomes associated with, for instance, the Bachelors of Applied Arts and Sciences degree in the University of Wisconsin System, which uses a combined curriculum from two institutions for a degree conferred from the two-year institution (see the University of Wisconsin–Waukesha/University of Wisconsin–Parkside dyad case study).

Campus team leaders reported over and over again that project work strengthened their already-established relationships. College students in the United States are more mobile than ever, making strong transfer partnerships critical to student success. In *The Quality of a College Degree: Toward New Frameworks, Evidence, and Interventions,* one of two reports emerging from the QC project, Humphreys, McCambly, and Ramaley argue for collaborative responses to complex problems in higher education, underscoring the importance of teamwork within and across disciplines, institutions, and regions.[15] The efforts highlighted in this publication illustrate this type of collaborative culture for student learning, based on respect and trust, in which many faculty are already deeply engaged. As noted in the Ivy Tech Community College–Central Indiana/Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis dyad case study, faculty networking across transfer institutions with colleagues who teach in the same disciplines leads to "rich dialogue about student work that might not happen in an intramural discussion."

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13 LEAP, or Liberal Education and America's Promise, is AAC&U's signature initiative that champions a twenty-first-century liberal education for all students in higher education. For more information, see http://www.aacu.org/leap.

14 VALUE, or Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education, is a campus-based assessment initiative sponsored by AAC&U as part of its LEAP initiative. For more information, see http://www.aacu.org/value.

15 Debra Humphreys, Heather McCambly, and Judith Ramaley, *The Quality of a College Degree: Toward New Frameworks, Evidence, and Interventions* (Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2015).

The QC project also featured cross-disciplinary, faculty-driven collaboration (see California's innovative Paths program) that offers students the opportunity to choose from interdisciplinary minors based in general education courses. As Ferren, Dolinsky, and McCambly have noted, establishing what Watson and Watson have called "collaborative and participatory" campus relationships "may take more time than top-down mandates, but it allows for the iterative process through which ideas are tested and refined, group trust is established and membership is expanded, and initiatives become embedded and sustainable."[16]

QC project participants across the states certainly encountered challenges and barriers—some of which are documented in this publication. The preceding pages also evince much success over the three years of the project, as well as many lessons to share with colleagues embarking on similar work. Collaborative change is possible, as this publication, the in-depth QC report *Collaboration for Student Transfer: A Nationwide Degree Qualifications Profile Experiment*,[17] and the companion publication *Assessment Practices for Advancing Transfer Student Success: Collaborating for Educational Change* illustrate.[18] The campus change efforts established during the QC project have positioned participating transfer partners to sustain and assess positive outcomes related to student success and have laid the groundwork for broader change across higher education, if campus practitioners build on the lessons presented in this publication and its companions.

16 Ann Ferren, Rebecca Dolinsky, and Heather McCambly, "Collaborative, Faculty-Led Efforts for Sustainable Change," *Peer Review* 16/17, no. 4/1 (2015): 30, with reference to William R. Watson and Sunnie Lee Watson, "Exploding the Ivory Tower: Systemic Change for Higher Education," *TechTrends* 57, no. 5 (2013): 45.

17 Terrel L. Rhodes, Susan Albertine, Gary R. Brown, Judith Ramaley, Rebecca Dolinsky, and Heather McCambly. *Collaboration for Student Transfer: A Nationwide Degree Qualifications Profile Experiment* (Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2015).

18 Gary R. Brown and Terrel L. Rhodes, *Assessment Practices for Advancing Transfer Student Success: Collaborating for Educational Change* (Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2015).

DEGREE QUALIFICATIONS PROFILE OVERVIEW

A template of proficiencies required for the award of college degrees at the associate's, bachelor's, and master's levels[19]

Knowledge

At each degree level, every college student should demonstrate proficiency in using both specialized knowledge from at least one field **and** broad, integrative knowledge from arts and sciences fields. **Both kinds of knowledge** should be pursued from first to final year, providing opportunities for **integration across fields and application to complex problems**—in the student's area of emphasis, in out-of-school settings, and in civil society.

BROAD AND INTEGRATIVE KNOWLEDGE

Key areas include the sciences, social sciences, humanities, arts, and global, intercultural, and democratic learning.

In **each area**, students

- Learn key concepts and methods of inquiry
- Examine significant debates and questions
- Make evidence-based arguments

In **addition**, at each degree level, students

- Produce work that integrates concepts and methods from at least two fields

SPECIALIZED KNOWLEDGE

Students demonstrate depth of knowledge in a field and produce field-appropriate applications drawing on both major field and, at the BA level and beyond, other fields. Students learn

- Discipline- and field-specific knowledge
- Purposes, methods, and limitations of field
- Applied skills in field
- Integrative skills and methods that draw from multiple fields and disciplines

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19 This chart summarizes Lumina Foundation's Degree Qualifications Profile, released in 2014. This release is informed by feedback from faculty and leaders from hundreds of colleges, universities, and community colleges that worked with the "beta version" of the document, which was published in 2011. The full Degree Qualifications Profile is available for download at http://www.luminafoundation.org/resources/dqp.

Intellectual Skills

Students hone and integrate intellectual skills across the curriculum, applying those skills both to complex challenges within major fields and to broad, integrative problem-solving challenges in general education and in civic, global, and applied learning. Skills include

- Analytic inquiry
- Use of information resources
- Engaging diverse perspectives
- Ethical reasoning
- Quantitative fluency
- Communication fluency

Civic and Global Learning

Students acquire knowledge required for responsible citizenship both from their formal studies (see knowledge and skills, above) and from community-based learning, and **demonstrate their ability to integrate both forms of learning in analyzing and addressing significant public problems and questions, in both civic and global contexts**. Civic learning may be demonstrated through research, collaborative projects, and/or field-based assignments.

Applied and Collaborative Learning

Students demonstrate their ability to **integrate and apply** their learning (see knowledge and skills, above) in complex projects and assignments, including collaborative efforts, that may include research, projects, practicums, internships, work assignments, performances, and creative tasks.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Heather McCambly is project coordinator for the Pathways to Results and Finish Up Illinois initiatives at the Office of Community College Research and Leadership in Chicago, Illinois. Previously, she was program associate in the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Student Success at the Association of American Colleges and Universities. A passionate advocate for educational equity, McCambly has dedicated her career to increasing college access and success for nontraditional, low-income, LGBTQ, and racial and ethnic minority students. McCambly received an MA with honors in educational leadership and policy from Portland State University in 2013. Her research has centered on the equity implications of performance-based budgeting and funding systems, intersectional identity and student success, and equity-centered change on the community college campus. McCambly worked on the policy thread of the Quality Collaboratives project.

Terrel L. Rhodes is vice president for quality, curriculum, and assessment at the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), where he focuses on the quality of undergraduate education, access, general education, e-portfolios, and assessment of student learning. He was a faculty member for twenty-five years. He is the leader of VALUE (Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education), AAC&U's faculty-driven assessment project on student learning. He also leads the VALUE/Multi-State Collaborative, a twelve-state, one hundred–campus project utilizing the VALUE rubrics to examine benchmarks for quality learning performance at two-year and four-year institutions. For the past six years, he has lead AAC&U's e-portfolio initiatives to enhance student learning, including the annual E-Portfolio Forum. Rhodes was co-leader of the QC assessment strand and overall lead for the Quality Collaboratives project.

ABOUT THE QUALITY COLLABORATIVES PROJECT

Part of the Association of American Colleges and Universities' (AAC&U's) ongoing Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) initiative, **Quality Collaboratives** was a three-year project (2011–14) designed to improve faculty assessment of student learning outcomes within the context of student transfer. Using Lumina Foundation's Degree Qualifications Profile as a common reference point for quality, project participants from two-year and four-year campuses in nine states focused on assessment practices, faculty leadership and development opportunities, and policies related to student learning and success. Pilot efforts stemming from the project are currently underway on campuses in each of the nine participating states, and system leaders are using the results to inform the development of new policies, frameworks, and models of faculty development that are appropriate for their entire systems. The Quality Collaboratives project was supported by funding from Lumina Foundation and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE) is a campus-based project sponsored by AAC&U as part of its LEAP initiative. VALUE is developing an approach to assessment that is based on examples of student work saved over time in an e-portfolio and completed through a student's curriculum and cocurriculum. Teams of faculty developed sixteen rubrics for AAC&U's LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes, which all students need for success as citizens and employees and for fulfilling lives. The VALUE rubrics are used to help institutions demonstrate, share, and assess student proficiencies and accomplishments at progressively more advanced and integrative levels of learning.

Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) is a national advocacy, campus action, and research initiative that champions the importance of a twenty-first-century liberal education—for individuals and for a nation dependent on economic creativity and democratic vitality. LEAP responds to the changing demands of the twenty-first century—demands for more college-educated workers and more engaged and informed citizens. Today, and in the years to come, college graduates need higher levels of learning and knowledge as well as strong intellectual and practical skills to navigate this more demanding environment successfully and responsibly. Launched in 2005, LEAP challenges the traditional practice of providing liberal education to some students and narrow training to others. Through LEAP, hundreds of campuses and several state systems are making far-reaching educational changes to help all their students—whatever their chosen major field of study—achieve a set of Essential Learning Outcomes fostered through a liberal education.

ABOUT AAC&U

The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) is the leading national association concerned with the quality, vitality, and public standing of undergraduate liberal education. Its members are committed to extending the advantages of a liberal education to all students, regardless of academic specialization or intended career. Founded in 1915, AAC&U now comprises more than 1,300 member institutions—including accredited public and private colleges, community colleges, research universities, and comprehensive universities of every type and size. AAC&U functions as a catalyst and facilitator, forging links among presidents, administrators, and faculty members who are engaged in institutional and curricular planning. Its mission is to reinforce the collective commitment to liberal education and inclusive excellence at both the national and local levels, and to help individual institutions keep the quality of student learning at the core of their work as they evolve to meet new economic and social challenges.

Information about AAC&U membership, programs, and publications can be found at www.aacu.org.

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