Forging a Partnership with Your Assistant

When Stephen Ainlay became dean of the College of the Holy Cross, he inherited an assistant with a long history in the dean’s office who was able to mentor him on the history and culture of the institution and who “let me see early on what the benefits of a partnering relationship—as opposed to some sort of hierarchical relationship—really could be,” Ainlay says.

The assistant worked with Ainlay for two years before she retired. When it came time to hire a new assistant, Ainlay emphasized the partnership aspects of the position to candidates. With the help of the outgoing assistant, he hired Deborah Neal, who was also interested in a collaborative relationship. Ainlay and Neal worked together for nearly eight years (until Ainlay became president of Union College) on far-reaching changes, including faculty hiring, an electronic file system for faculty tenure and promotion, and a comprehensive curriculum review. Academic Leader spoke with them about their partnership and how others might benefit by adopting a similar arrangement. Here are some insights from those conversations:

**Partnering is a gradual process.**

Each partnership is unique. Some develop more quickly than others, and some are more successful than others based on the compatibility of the people involved and their willingness to share responsibilities.

In order to get to the point of shared responsibilities, a dean must have confidence in his or her assistant. “There is a process of time and a sort of increasing of responsibilities that allows the partners to develop trust, which is absolutely critical—trust that [the assistant] is going to keep things confidential, trust that that person is going to actually fulfill the expectation you have when you give [him or her] autonomy. That’s something that happens by gradual testing that is almost unnoticed in the day-to-day operations,” Ainlay says.

**Set aside time to work on the partnership.**

“One of the complications is finding time for our partnership. We know that in our personal lives, relationships need nurturing and attention. The same can be said about a work partnership, but we often don’t have time for that. We tend to be so caught up in the day-to-day responsibilities that we don’t take the time to think about the different things we can be doing to enhance the partnership. I think that once you’ve committed to a partnership, you also have to commit to taking the time to be attentive to it and reflect on whether it’s working or not,” Neal says.

There needs to be a constant dialogue between partners. Some of this should occur in regularly scheduled meetings, but partners also must be open to casual conversations. “It is critical to this partnership to have time—we usually found it at the end of the day—to talk about which committees were meeting, what needed to happen; and I was able to count on complete follow-through. It’s not just a matter of a manager saying, ‘These things need to be done.’ In a true partnership relationship, [the assistant] begins to anticipate because she knows enough about the process to be able to anticipate what needs to be done even before it’s said,” Ainlay says.

**Establish the assistant’s authority.**

“It’s important that the dean is able to communicate that the assistant is an extension of the dean, more or less, and that with that comes a certain amount of authority,” Neal says. To indicate this authority to others, an assistant should have an office that allows him or her to be able to work without constant inter-

---

**In This Issue**

2 Assessment Methods Should Match Institutional Goals

3 Setting Academic Priorities, Identifying Signature Programs

4 GMU’s Alternate Paths to Tenure Reward Teaching and Administration

6 Taking a Holistic View of Student Retention

8 Parting Shot: ‘Assessmania’ and ‘Bureaupathology’ in Higher Education
Learning outcomes assessment, once a “spontaneous, authentic intellectual activity” focused on understanding student learning and seeking ways to improve the learning experience, has in the past 20 years become an activity driven largely by accreditation requirements, with little regard for an institution’s unique missions, says Karl Schilling, associate director for the Center for Teaching and Learning at Miami University in Ohio.

“Early on, institutions were creating their own instruments, and as assessment has progressed and the stakes have gotten a lot higher, I think there has been a tendency for institutions to turn to test makers rather than developing their own notions of how they want to do assessment. Most institutions think about assessment now as a means to appease the accreditors, not necessarily as a way to learn about their own institutions. Because the stakes have become so high,” Schilling says.

Many institutions rely on standardized tests that provide easy-to-understand statistics, thinking that that will satisfy accreditation requirements; however, accrediting agencies don’t really have a standardized notion of what assessment should be. “Most regional accrediting agencies are very open. They want the institution to reflect upon itself, and that’s really the key thing that’s supposed to happen in accreditation,” Schilling says.

One of the dangers of focusing on reviews by accrediting agencies is neglecting assessment and then trying to make up for lost time by engaging in assessment activities as the institution’s 10-year review approaches, resulting in assessment that does not provide the institution with much useful information, Schilling says. A better approach would be to think of ways to gather evidence specific to the institution (or department or academic program) to determine how well it is meeting its intended goals and to suggest ways to improve the teaching and learning process.

At Miami University, Schilling and his colleagues paid a sample of first-year students to maintain portfolios of their work over four years. The students wore beepers and when contacted wrote down exactly what they were doing at that moment. “We began to understand how students use their time,” Schilling says.

Some of that information was surprising. For example, the notion of recommending that students spend three hours working on a course for every hour spent in class was not supported by the results of this study.

The approach used by Schilling and his colleagues provided a more precise picture of how students use their time than would have been obtained from an end-of-class questionnaire. Such an instrument might ask students how much time they spend studying for a test, for example. But because of the fact that they have no vested interest in it, students may or may not answer the question honestly, or they may not recall well enough to answer accurately.

“One of the dangers of focusing on reviews by accrediting agencies is neglecting assessment and then trying to make up for lost time by engaging in assessment activities as the institution’s 10-year review approaches, resulting in assessment that does not provide the institution with much useful information, Schilling says. A better approach would be to think of ways to gather evidence specific to the institution (or department or academic program) to determine how well it is meeting its intended goals and to suggest ways to improve the teaching and learning process.”
Setting Academic Priorities, Identifying Signature Programs

What are your institution’s signature programs—those programs that epitomize your institution’s mission and define its distinctiveness in the marketplace? It’s a question that every institution should address, particularly when faced with increasing competition and decreasing resources, says Jonnie Guerra, vice president for academic affairs at Cabrini College in Pennsylvania.

Cabrini College is currently in the process of setting its academic priorities by defining its signature programs (i.e., selecting programs for targeted investment over the next five to 10 years) with the help of an outside consultant. Academic Leader recently spoke with Guerra and Carol Guardo—-independent consultant and former president of the College of St. Benedict, Great Lakes Colleges Association, and Rhode Island College—about the process and how other institutions might undertake a similar process.

Collect data, solicit candidates

Before selecting signature programs, the institution must do a significant amount of “homework,” gathering data on the number of full-time and part-time faculty, faculty compensation, faculty teaching assignments, enrollment numbers, cost per student credit hour in each program, retention patterns, and graduation rates.

“You need to ask, ‘Is this academic area receiving the kind of support that you would expect in this kind of institution?’” Everything doesn’t need to be normative, but you want to make that choice deliberately, not by default,” Guardo says.

The next step is to solicit candidates for signature program status. These can be discipline-specific programs or programs that span numerous departments and majors, such as experiential learning programs or first-year experience programs.

“‘Signature’ does not mean it’s limited to a major. I know of an institution that has made experiential learning its signature element, and the institution has begun by increasing its efforts in international education and undergraduate research as part of making experiential learning its signature element. It really is institution specific. You have to look at the particular makeup of that institution programmatically and in terms of the educational philosophy that that institution is trying to convey,” Guardo says.

Questions asked of each signature program candidate at Cabrini fall into three categories: resources, demand, and impact. “There were not as many candidates as I had initially imagined. I think there were departments that realized that they simply didn’t have the numbers to qualify for consideration for signature status, so they didn’t put forward a proposal,” Guerra says.

Even those programs that did not submit a proposal have developed signature elements. For example, Cabrini does not have a large number of students enrolled in its foreign-language program, but the program has developed a series of introductory and intermediate courses designed specifically for students in education, business, social services, and the health professions. “That was a way for them to do something that is distinctive even though they could not currently become a candidate for signature program status,” Guerra says.

Selection process

Choosing programs for signature status should involve a diverse group of stakeholders. At Cabrini, this group includes the dean of academic affairs, department chairs, key faculty members, the president, the academic affairs committee, and the entire board of trustees.

The academic council, which is made up of all the department chairs and key administrators, developed the signature program criteria. The final selection of signature programs falls to Guerra. “I’m not sure that we’re actually going to bring everything to a vote of every governance body at the college. I think that we certainly will have conversations with the appropriate governance bodies—the academic council, the curriculum committee, and the full faculty—but ultimately I will most likely draft a proposal and get feedback on it, and hopefully get the endorsement of the various groups. But if not every group is willing to endorse this, the board [of trustees] has already endorsed it in principle, and we’ll move ahead on it,” Guerra says.

This decision-making process will vary by institution, but, Guardo says, “I think it’s very important for your board of trustees to know that this is under way, because it is a basic policy question when you’re talking about mission and market.”

Resource reallocation

Signature program designation is an internal distinction that helps determine resource allocation and is usually not used to market programs to the public. However, those designated as signature programs might receive more resources to raise their visibility. These may include developing a financial aid strategy tailored to the signature programs or endowed professorships.

Identifying signature programs can be a great help with fund-raising. Marketing, communications, and fund-raising staff at institutions that have identified signature programs feel that they can be more effective in their fund-raising efforts when they can tout a specific program rather than more amorphous priorities, Guardo says.

Although signature programs may attract more attention and funding, identi-
GMU's Alternate Paths to Tenure Reward Teaching and Administration

Until recently, George Mason University’s tenure requirements were typical of most research institutions: research was the primary activity; teaching and service, though important, were secondary. Over the past six years, GMU has created new paths to tenure that recognize the different types of contributions that faculty can make to the university.

Currently, GMU has four paths to tenure: the traditional research emphasis; one that recognizes “genuine excellence in teaching”; one that is equal parts research, teaching, and administration; and one in which the faculty member splits his or her time within a discipline and at the university level—working on faculty development, grant proposal writing, and other activities that benefit the institution as a whole.

The first two options are open to all tenure-track faculty, and faculty members do not have to formally choose an option until they come up for tenure, “although if they haven’t made the decision beforehand, they may find the documentation rather difficult,” says Laurie Fathe, associate provost for educational improvement and innovation.

Faculty who choose to take up research as their primary activity comprise the majority of those on the tenure track at GMU, but the number of faculty choosing other options has grown. Currently, about 20 percent of faculty who come up for tenure at GMU do so in the area of genuine excellence in teaching. These faculty members tend to be in disciplines that emphasize teaching, including the College of Education and a relatively new undergraduate unit called the New Century College, which features integrative interdisciplinary learning communities, portfolio assessment, and other innovations. (Half of New Century College faculty seek tenure on genuine excellence in teaching.)

If a faculty member demonstrates excellence in research and teaching, he or she may be tenured within both categories, provided both the faculty member’s department and the provost’s office approve. This distinction results in a larger salary increase than for those who get tenured in a single category.

The other two paths are limited to specific faculty members and are negotiated individually based on specific institutional needs. Faculty hired with a significant portion of their jobs represented by administrative duties might fall into the one-third research, one-third teaching, one-third administrative tenure path. Faculty who are on this path include the director of the writing center and the director of the composition program.

The Program for Innovative Education, which began this year, hires faculty specifically for their disciplinary education expertise. Each of these faculty members works half-time within an academic department on curriculum development, general education classes, and any education issues related to the department. Each also works half-time at the university level on faculty development, grant proposal writing, and other educational issues that affect the university.

“The hope is that at some point all of our significant-sized departments will have one of these people in the department,” Fathe says.

Having a faculty member in this category means that the department has a member who focuses on some of the courses that do not always get the attention they deserve, such as general education classes. “You have somebody who’s thinking not just about making the class function but making it function well, thinking about assessment, keeping up with [innovations] within the discipline, attending disciplinary education conferences, and keeping us on the cutting edge on the teaching as well as the research side,” Fathe says.

Choosing a tenure path is an individual decision, but it may also be influenced by the norms within the discipline and the department. “There are places where thinking you want to go up for tenure on genuine excellence in teaching would be absolutely normal, and there are places where people would shake their heads about it,” Fathe says. “I think some of that is discipline specific, and some of that goes along with the character of the discipline at the institution.”

The tenure review process for each tenure path is the same and “would be familiar to anyone in academia. It’s just that the content is different,” Fathe says.

Each faculty member is required to produce a portfolio of his or her work, which is judged first at the department level, then at the college level, and finally by the provost. Tenure criteria for the research-intensive path are generated within the department “based on local parameters, local history, and local convention,” Fathe says.

Conversely, the tenure criteria for genuine excellence in teaching are the same across the university and are more clearly defined than the research tenure guidelines in most departments, in part because department chairs asked for specific criteria “to help them help their faculty negotiate the process,” Fathe says. “What we’re talking about here is still so far from the experience of most faculty members that it’s going to be a generation until [tenure based on genuine excellence in teaching] is familiar enough so that people are comfortable in localizing [the criteria].”

According to the university’s guidelines, in order to earn tenure based on genuine excellence in teaching, what the
ASSISTANTS...From Page 1

ruptions, as well as some control of resources.

“Authority ultimately has to do with resources,” Ainlay says. “I wish I had been more thoughtful in giving some real resources to Debbie for her to manage autonomously. Most executive assistants end up helping with the budget in all sorts of ways, but they often don’t have control over it. They usually are doing a lot of management of those budgets for the person they report to. I actually think there would be opportunities to give some real autonomous share of those resources that that person feels he or she can use to initiate programmatic changes.

“By way of example, Debbie was particularly interested in working with administrative assistants in academic departments. She would come to me, and we would talk about what we wanted to do. I would authorize it, and we would do it. She would often take the lead on it. In retrospect, it was kind of silly of me not to just give her the resources to allow her to take that on as an initiative of her own where she had the resources without having to consult with me. I think that would have symbolically elevated her status and made her a [more] coequal partner than was the case. If you’re not constantly thinking about these symbolic and structural considerations, you’re probably not living out the partnership as fully as you would like.”

Create professional opportunities for assistants.

Unlike faculty and administrators, assistants often have few professional development opportunities, which can be “very isolating,” Neal says. She would like to see a venue for assistants to share best practices.

“That kind of professionalization will go a long way toward creating a structure in which partnerships can flourish,” Ainlay says.

Benefits

Creating partnerships with assistants can

• streamline processes and improve efficiency
• encourage initiative
• improve job satisfaction and retention.

Contact Stephen Ainlay at ainlays@union.edu and Deborah Neal at dNeal@holycross.edu.

GMU...From Page 4

faculty member does in the classroom cannot be limited to just his or her class. It must have a broader impact and must be shared with others at the university, published in journals, and presented at conferences. “If it’s not something somebody else can build on, it’s not useful for tenure—the same as one would say for research,” Fathe says.

Although the number of faculty pursuing tenure on the genuine excellence in teaching path is growing each year, Fathe is not worried that a disproportionate number of faculty members will pursue this path, believing that they will merely follow the path that most closely matches their skills and interests. “There are people in higher education who are phenomenally good researchers, and there are people who are phenomenally good teachers. I think the overlap in those two areas is not often as great as purported. And higher education has said everybody should look almost identical to each other, which organizationally doesn’t make a lot of sense,” Fathe says.

Outcomes

Presumably, the new focus on teaching will improve student learning, but “it’s hard to say,” Fathe says. “It’s particularly hard to say at this institution because we’re growing by almost a thousand students a year. So any effect from this is almost swamped by institutional growth.”

The effects on faculty and departments are clearer: Providing faculty with different tenure options has allowed faculty to make to the university contributions that more closely match their talents and interests. It also has enabled departments to hire people they might not have been able to hire in the past because their work didn’t fit neatly into the research-focused tenure path.

Advice

The impetus of developing alternate tenure paths came from Peter Stearns, who became provost six years ago, but it wouldn’t have been accepted if it had not met some needs, and it took a while for faculty to be convinced that the provost was serious about making changes, Fathe says.

Clearly, having an academic leader who champions the idea can make a big difference, but there must be dialogue on campus about this issue before changes can occur. Fathe recommends asking, “What is important on this campus?” and “What are we trying to accomplish?”

“I think a lot of times [the answers to these questions are] assumed, and yet when you have people start to articulate them, you find that there isn’t the common agreement you might have expected. People have a lot of different perspectives on what the institution is doing and what it should be trying to do,” Fathe says.

Alternate tenure paths can come about within departments, “but the broader the participation, the broader the impact,” Fathe says. “I think one of the advantages we had at George Mason was that it happened at the institutional level, so there could not be a perception of a privileged or disadvantaged class.”

Contact Laurie Fathe at lfathe@gmu.edu.

Contact Laurie Fathe at lfathe@gmu.edu.
Taking a Holistic View of Student Retention

Distance education has opened up opportunities for more nontraditional students than ever. With this increase in nontraditional students and the growing use of online course delivery methods comes a need to develop student retention strategies that are tailored to these students’ experiences, which often are quite different from those of traditional-age students in face-to-face settings.

To better understand her institution’s student retention efforts and to begin looking for ways to improve practices, Linzi Kemp, area coordinator for Business Management and Economics at the State University of New York, Empire State College, conducted a workshop within the Center for Distance Learning involving faculty, student services professionals, and instructional technologists. The survey took a holistic look at practices affecting student retention at Empire State. Kemp found this to be an important exercise because much of the research on student retention relates to traditional students, while the average age of students at Empire State is 36, and they often take much longer than four years to complete a bachelor’s degree.

Kemp and her colleagues looked at existing practices that affect student retention and put them into the following categories to help decide how to allocate resources for retention efforts and to find areas that needed improvement:

- **Star**—Practices that need investment (time and/or money) to retain students. These included a student community that supports learning, student orientation and services, and instructor/mentor (adviser) training support.
- **Cash cow**—Established and successful practices that retain students. These included open admission, good mentoring, timely personal attention to students, perception of quality online courses and instruction, affordable tuition, small classes, and flexibility.
- **Question mark**—Practices that may or may not retain students (dump or invest?). These included unsupervised student discussion, Web-only courses, and group contacts versus individualized contacts with students.
- **Dog**—Practices that don’t retain students. These included asynchronous-only technology, incorrect or misleading information, unfriendly website, inadequate instructor technology skills, and transfer credit confusion.

The results of this workshop were advisory, but it encouraged dialogue among people who have an impact on student retention. “I think one of the things that came out of it, which wasn’t a surprise, was the acknowledgment that we’re all involved in student retention,” Kemp says. “Every person whom the student is coming in contact with and every engagement the student has with the process can retain students or cause students to give up. I think in any situation we need to consider that the student is dealing with many different people in many different departments, and rather than seeing those as separate people in separate departments, we need to understand that the students’ experience is the one unifying thing for the college, and that people within the college need to exchange ideas and considerations and come together to see the students as a whole rather than as a set of separate parts that we do things to—trying to form a community of people within the college that supports students.”

Kemp found it important to emphasize the practices that have a positive effect on student retention and look for ways to improve upon them. “How can we positively take action to retain students? That’s where the analysis can start. Once we’ve analyzed and classified, what can we do about these practices and processes in order to make things better for the students and therefore retain more students?”

Kemp has also looked at retention within individual courses and has found that the role of student mentors (academic advisers) is critical. One practice that Kemp has found helpful is monitoring student participation and, when necessary, engaging the student in a three-way conversation with the instructor and mentor. The mentor plays an important role because often he or she knows more about what is going on in that individual adult student’s life than the instructor, Kemp says.

Contact Linzi Kemp at Linzi.Kemp@esc.edu. ▼

Schilling recommends that institutions identify a problem and ask questions such as, “What are we trying to achieve?” and “What evidence do we have that matches that?” This evidence can be gathered through interviews, assessing random examples of students’ work, or other methods. The important thing is to match the assessment questions and instruments to the institution’s mission, Schilling says.

At Miami University, assessment occurs among groups of people interested in specific issues, such as critical thinking. “Every institution has innovators. It’s important to make sure somehow that those innovators come up with ideas for how we can better capture what we’re doing and be able to display it to the public. Otherwise, we’re going to get what George Bush is doing to the K-12 sector, which is just not a good way to teach young kids. It’s not the politics of it; it’s just the approach that the administration chose to use,” Schilling says.

Contact Karl Schilling at schillkl@po.muohio.edu. ▼
fying key programs will inevitably result in reallocation of resources. “When you do your initial analysis, you look at all your resources—faculty resources, facilities, financial resources—that go into the academic areas. Maximizing these allocations is an ongoing process. One might stop allocation entirely to a given area and phase that out in order to put those resources elsewhere. I think most institutions are looking at reallocation rather than adding more resources,” Guardo says.

Reallocation of resources is bound to cause conflict, which is why it is important to base decisions on an analysis of facts such as cost analysis and 10-year enrollment projections. The analysis from an outside expert can add credibility to resource reallocation decisions. “There are things that people will hear more easily coming from somebody who is external,” Guerra says.

Although the selections have not yet been made, this process has caused departments to think more critically about their programs. “I have found that departments that have recognized that they aren’t going to be considered signature programs have nonetheless taken steps to improve, and I think that has been very beneficial—that they are more interested in developing some of the characteristics of signature programs, I do think there can be inertia in higher education. There are people who have done things the same way their whole lives, and they don’t have a whole lot of incentive to do things differently. When you introduce this new concept into the environment, it does shake things up. People can’t be complacent, so they respond,” Guerra says.

Contact Jonnie Guerra at jguerra@cabrini.edu and Carol Guardo at cguardo@cox.net.

The following comments from Barbara Rarden, a consultant, are in response to last month’s Parting Shot titled “It’s Merely Academic” by John N. McDaniel.

I say “Yes and Amen” to the idea that universities and colleges should have to accept transfer credits between accredited schools, whether the accrediting bodies be regional or national. As a taxpayer I’m sick of the idea that I’m funding student financial aid so that students can be forced to take the same course twice when a receiving school decides not to accept the credit. I’m convinced that the refusal to accept transfer credits really boils down to a revenue enhancing ploy for the receiving school. (After all how can we make money if we only charge for the courses the students truly need?) I’m fed up with the snobbery of our local universities in the State of Florida, telling students that courses taken at schools that are nationally accredited are inferior to courses taught at regionally accredited schools. Pretty funny response given the common course numbering of the courses, same textbooks, same curricula and, in many cases, same instructors who are adjuncts teaching in both environments!
‘Assessmania’ and ‘Bureaupathology’ in Higher Education

By Thomas R. McDaniel, PhD

This is not a rant. As a college administrator, I am fully aware of the importance of assessment, and the bureaucratic efficiencies mandated in higher education in our country today. However, I do think it is important for academic leaders to be able to step back from the fray and the daily demands of administration and think about the philosophical and educational implications of the standards movement in higher education. Most college and university administrators are keenly aware of the standards movement in K-12 public school education, a dominant theme of contemporary education reform that has now moved to the college campus.

This movement has created a significant amount of controversy, with strong proponents on both sides of the issue. Many argue that it is essential for colleges and universities to embrace the standards movement and to verify their educational value (which now comes at what may seem an extraordinary cost to the public) by way of comprehensive and sophisticated assessment systems. In the public school sector, this is often announced to the public by so-called “report cards” for schools, required by the sweeping federal legislation known as No Child Left Behind.

In higher education, we are now finding similar reform movements accompanied by increasing demand for quantitative proof (or at least some evidence) to justify the high cost of a college education. Some argue that this has now become the primary responsibility of accrediting agencies—not only regional accrediting bodies but also the myriad of specialty accreditations for an extensive array of professional and disciplinary curricula. This alphabet soup of accrediting agencies includes such formidable bodies as NASAD (art), NASM (music), NLNAC (nursing), NCATE (education), FIDER (interior design), and AACSB (business), to mention but a few. These agencies have done much in recent years to base accreditation processes and decisions on “outcomes” rather than “inputs.” The major concept here is that a college and its programs should be measured not by the qualifications of its faculty, the claims made in catalogs or on syllabi, or the library and other resources in the institution, but rather by student performance in both qualitative and quantitative measures of achievement.

For institutions of higher learning, the consequence of this paradigm shift has been the creation of a wide range of assessment procedures—many of them emphasizing the quantitative side of the equation—to provide these agencies with the outcome evidence required to show that the accreditation standards have been met. Some argue that such measures are essential to convince a skeptical public that there is value in the educational commodity for which they are paying a premium. Others point out that the accrediting agencies are serving a purpose that they are uniquely qualified to provide and that may well stem the tide of heavy-handed governmental impositions of accountability.

Questions

These arguments may indeed be true. Nonetheless, it seems to me appropriate for educational leaders to reflect on a number of questions that follow from this now reigning concept of accountability and accreditation:

1. Are the premises of the accountability movement in higher education justified? This is to say that there may be reason to question the notion that outcomes should replace inputs, that quantitative score keeping is the best way to determine the value of educational services, that the public is truly skeptical of the utility of investment in a college education, and that government is ready to leap into the breach if accrediting agencies do not save the day. This is also to question the premise that standards established by external agencies—which are granted the authority to close or sanction programs or entire institutions—should guide (or even control) the mission, policy, and curriculum of higher education.

2. Are the requirements for assessment—and the vast bureaucratic mechanisms required to generate the data—worth the cost and effort? This question should be considered within the context of any individual institution of higher learning, but there is reason to contend that the scarce resources of an institution might better serve the mission of the institution in some other activity or enterprise. To answer this question it would be necessary to calculate the cost of personnel, hardware, software, committee structures, report generation, etc., and determine if the cost justifies the commitment and resources allocated. However, as long as accrediting agencies have the power to demand such outcome evidence, institutions may have no alternative. Are there any possible alternatives?

3. In the long run, does this kind of outcomes-based accountability lead to improvements in educational institutions? Accrediting agencies typically go beyond merely requiring the collection and reporting of data to insist that institutions aggregate, disaggregate, and analyze data and from that process determine specific improve-