Using institutional evidence of effective practices and conditions to improve student learning outcomes

Long Beach, California
October 2008
Wabash National Study details

- 49 institutions
- 15,000 students to date
- Longitudinal
  - Follow one class for at least 4 years
- Purpose
  - To identify teaching practices and institutional conditions that promote critical thinking, moral reasoning, openness to diversity, leadership, psychological well-being, need for cognition
Wabash National Study

• Larger institutions
  - Brandeis University
  - Butler University
  - Delaware State University
  - Fairfield University
  - Millersville University
  - North Carolina A&T State University
  - Salem State College
  - San José State University
  - University of Kentucky
  - University of Michigan
  - University of North Carolina Wilmington
  - University of Notre Dame
  - University of Rhode Island
  - Worcester Polytechnic Institute
  - Worcester State College

• Community colleges
  - Ivy Tech Community College
  - Kirkwood Community College
  - Community College of Rhode Island
Wabash National Study - Small Colleges

- Allegheny College
- Alma College
- Alverno College
- Augustana College
- Bard College
- Bard College at Simon’s Rock
- Bennington College
- Blackburn College
- Carleton College
- Coe College
- College of the Holy Cross
- Columbia College (SC)
- Connecticut College
- Drew University
- Franklin College
- Gustavus Adolphus College
- Hamilton College
- Hampshire College
- Hobart & William Smith Colleges
- Hope College
- Lasell College
- Marlboro College
- New College of Florida
- Oxford College of Emory
- Prescott College
- Ripon College
- Vassar College
- Wabash College
- Warren Wilson College
- Wheelock College
- Whittier College
What surveys and tests do students take?

- Survey questions on
  - Long-term goals and aspirations
  - High school and college experiences
  - Economic and social background

- Outcome surveys and tests
  - CAAP Critical Thinking Test
  - Defining Issues Test
  - Need for Cognition Scale
  - Ryff Scales of Psychological Well-Being
  - Miville-Guzman Universality-Diversity Scale
  - Socially Responsible Leadership Scale
  - Additional short scales
Good teaching and high-quality interactions with faculty

- Students report that they
  - Have faculty who are interested in teaching
  - Have faculty who are good at teaching
    - Give clear explanations, summarize material well, use good illustrations, use class time effectively, and have command of what they are teaching
  - Have faculty who are interested in helping students grow personally and professionally
  - Get prompt feedback
  - Have meaningful interactions with faculty outside of class

- Unique positive impact on 24/28 outcome measures
  - High = 28%; Moderate = 72%; Low = 1%
Academic challenge and high expectations

- Students report that they
  - Work hard both in terms of quantity and difficulty
  - Get exams and assignments that require them to write and think
  - Are asked challenging questions by faculty and students
  - Are asked to integrate, synthesize, and interpret information and ideas

- Unique positive impact on 24/28 outcome measures
  - High = 18%; Moderate = 82%
Diversity experiences

• Students report that they
  - Attend lectures and debates on political and social issues
  - Participate in multicultural awareness workshops
  - Have meaningful conversations and interactions with students and staff who are different from themselves

• Unique positive impact on 17/28 outcome measures
  - Negative impact on academic motivation
  - High = 3%; Moderate = 83%; None = 14%
Good Teaching and High Quality Interactions with Faculty + Academic Challenge and High Expectations + Diversity Experiences = Effective Learning Environment
Diversity Experiences → Openness to Diversity

Challenge → Curiosity

Good Teaching → Critical Thinking
Good Teaching

Challenge

Diversity Experiences

Critical Thinking
Moral Reasoning
Well-Being
Leadership
Need for Cognition
Diversity
Literacy
Task

1. Audit
   - Review and make sense of the evidence
     - What story do the data tell?

2. Communication
   - How will you share this story with campus constituencies?

3. Action
   - What practical consequences follow from the data?
Documents

- Audit/Communication/Action questions to guide discussion
- Typical University fact sheet
- First-year outcomes data for Typical U
- Information on good practices at Typical U
- Action Plan worksheet for groups to complete