

PARTNERING TO CREATE THE CONDITIONS FOR STUDENT SUCCESS: THINKING SYSTEMICALLY

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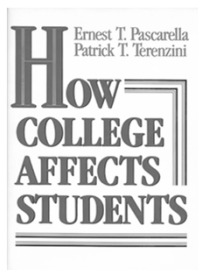


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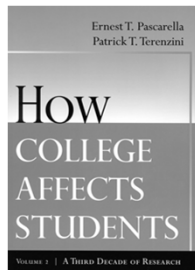
Things to Come!

- *CliffsNotes (sic!)* review of what we know about things that promote student learning and success
- A distillation: Six Characteristics of Effective Learning Experiences
- Implications for thinking and practice
- Some myths about student retention
- Assessment and student learning and success

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Vol. 1: 1970-1990



Vol. 2: 1990-2003

- **35 Years of research on college effects on students**
- **More than 5,000 books, journal articles, misc. reports**

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Questions Driving the Reviews for Both Volumes of *How College Affects Students*

1. Do students change during the college years?
2. How much of that change is due to college?
3. Do different kinds of institutions have different effects?
4. Do different experiences have different effects?
5. Does the same experience have a different effect for different kinds of students?
6. What are the long-term effects of college?

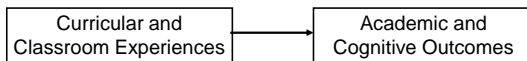
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“Success” in, and Benefits of, a College Education

- Persistence into the next year and, ultimately, completion of a degree
 - Increased knowledge and higher-order thinking skill development
 - Increased personal and interpersonal maturity
 - More developed moral reasoning skills
 - Formation and/or revision of attitudes and values
 - Economic and occupational rewards
 - Enhanced quality of life
- Focus on the range of influences on these outcomes.

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A Modest Map



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Curricular and Classroom Effects on Academic and Cognitive Learning

Instructional approaches

- **Supplemental Instruction** (Effect size = +15 %ile pts)
- **Information technology-enhanced instruction** (+12 %ile pts)
- **Collaborative/cooperative learning** (+18 to 20 %ile pts)
- **Active learning** (+10 %ile pts)
- **Service learning** (+, but size unknown)
- **Undergraduate research experiences** (+, but size unknown)

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Curricular and Classroom Effects on Academic and Cognitive Learning

Effective instructor behaviors:

- **Clarity and understandableness** (e.g., uses examples, identifies key points)
- **Expressiveness/enthusiasm** (e.g., speaks emphatically, maintains eye contact, displays interest in topic/subject)
- **Preparation and organization** (e.g., provides outlines, clear objectives, uses class time effectively, makes connections, signals transitions)
- **Availability and "approachability"**
- **Frequency and quality of feedback to students**
- **Demonstrated concern for, and rapport with, students**

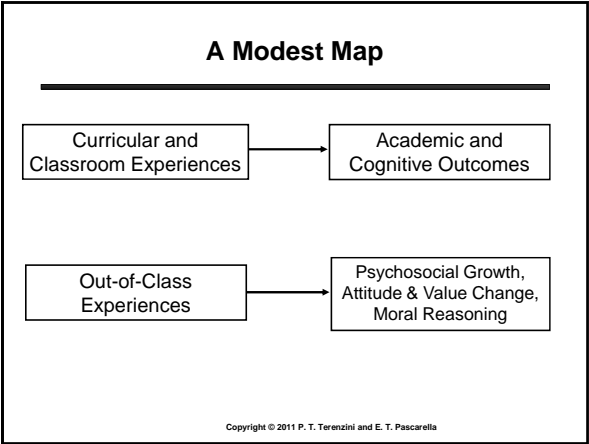
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Curricular and Classroom Effects on Academic and Cognitive Learning

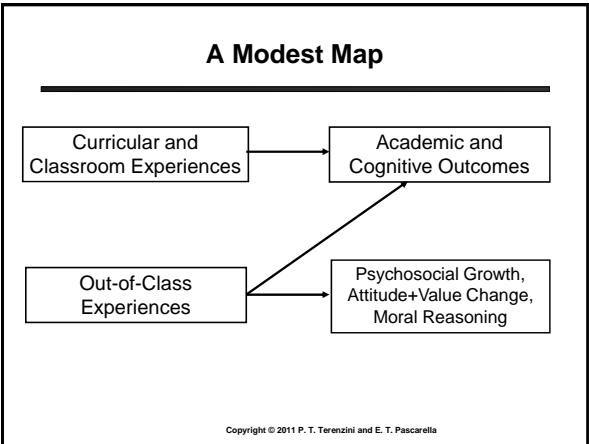
The Curriculum: The most effective ones are:

1. **interdisciplinary**,
2. **have an integrated core**, that
3. **emphasizes links** across courses and ideas.

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- ### Out-of-Class Influences on Changes in Psychosocial Areas, Attitudes, and Moral Reasoning
-
- Interactions with peers, particularly those from a different racial/ethnic background
 - Interactions with faculty members
 - Community service (generic)
 - Cultural awareness workshops
 - Leadership development courses and experiences
 - Involvement in co-curricular activities
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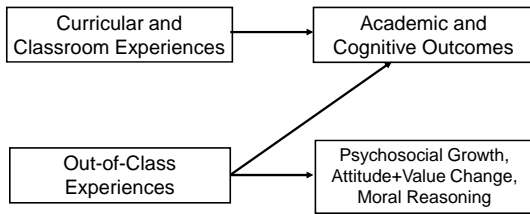


Out-of-Class Effects on Academic and Cognitive Learning

- Quality and level of student effort/engagement (+)
- Interactions with peers (+)
- Interactions with faculty members (+)
- "Diversity" experiences (+)
- Community Service (esp. when "Service Learning") (+)
- "Developmental" academic advising
- On-campus work (+ if less than 15-20 hours)
- Fraternity membership (reduced)
- Revenue-producing intercollegiate sports (reduced)

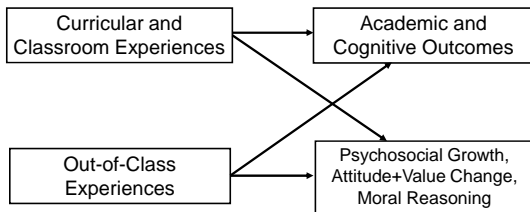
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A Modest Map



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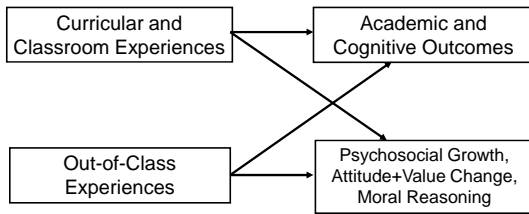
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**Curricular and Classroom Effects
on Changes in Psychosocial Dimensions,
Attitudes and Values, and Moral Reasoning**

- Selected courses (e.g., women’s studies, diversity and ethnic studies courses)
- Learning in multiracial-ethnic classrooms
- Service learning
- Environment within major department
- Active and collaborative teaching methods
- Study abroad

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**Learning Involves Interlaced Influences,
Settings, and Outcomes**

- Multiple influences, operating in
- Multiple settings, affecting
- Multiple outcomes

Characteristics of Experiences That Promote Student Learning

1. Entail encounters with challenging ideas and people
2. Require active engagement with those challenges
3. Occur in a supportive environment
4. Emphasize meaningful, real-world activities
5. Involve relational, interpersonal activities
6. [Invite or promote reflection and analysis]

Virtually ALL student experiences that influence learning and change involve one or more of these characteristics.

And they are found virtually everywhere, unbounded by time or place.

The Moral of the Story

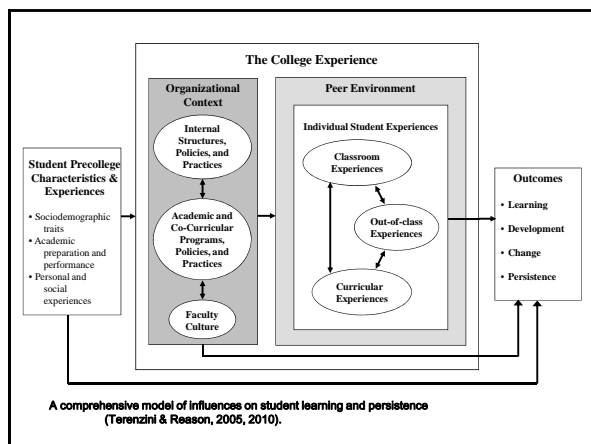
- ◆ *What* an institution, division, or unit does is less important to student learning and development than that *whatever* it does has one or more of the characteristics of effective learning experiences.
- ◆ “. . . there are many roads to becoming an educationally engaging institution.” (Kuh et al., 2005)

Administrative & Programmatic Myopia

A Potentially Debilitating Focus on the Parts

- ◆ Operational concentration on “My Area/Unit”
- ◆ The search for “Best Practices”

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Implications for Teaching, the Curriculum, and Administration

1. Align what we do with what we know. Focus on student success, NOT retention. Use the six characteristics as touchstones for designing, developing, and evaluating the curriculum, programs, and teaching.
2. Augment and complement student learning through students' out-of-class experiences as a source of significant influence on cognitive growth (as well as psychosocial development, persistence, and degree completion).
3. Forget looking for silver bullets. Think systemically and collaboratively.
4. Start early. Re-think the first year and the transition to it.
5. Embrace assessment as just part of good teaching and education. All effective data use is local.

Some Myths about Student Retention

- ◆ Attrition is a student problem, not an institutional one.
- ◆ It wouldn't be a problem if we admitted "better" students.
- ◆ Most students drop out because of poor grades.
- ◆ Most students drop out for financial reasons.
- ◆ It's the faculty's job to teach students, not to "retain" them.
- ◆ Improving retention means lowering academic standards.

Sources:

Cuseo, J., & Farnum, T. Seven myths about student retention. (on-line)

Nelson, J. (2012). Faculty day of scholarship. Presentation to the faculty of Louisburg College (NC). March 23, 2012.

**Why is Assessment Important?
Reasons for Skepticism about
Higher Education's Effectiveness**

- ◆ Rising attendance costs & growing debt burdens
- ◆ Inequities in enrollment and graduation rates
- ◆ Unacceptably low persistence and degree-completion rates
- ◆ Graduates underprepared or underemployed
- ◆ Faculty who devote more time to research than teaching
- ◆ Large classes, particularly in lower-division courses
- ◆ Dissatisfaction with the quality of teaching
- ◆ Colleges and universities are not producing what's promised: Educated people prepared for the workforce.

Skepticism Has Led to Tough Questions

- ◆ What does your institution contribute to your students' learning and development?
- ◆ Do your graduates know what you think the know?
- ◆ Can they do what your degrees imply?
- ◆ How do you know those things?
- ◆ What evidence do you have to support the claims you make in your recruiting and admissions materials and annual reports?

Is the return worth the investment???

So, Why Assessment???

Much Better Reasons for Assessment: The Internal Benefits

1. Strengthening the case for the institution's and academic and student affairs divisions' contributions to the academic mission and priorities of the institution. "We deliver!"
2. Reviewing and improving programs and services
3. Improving retention, degree completion, and enrollment management
4. Informing programmatic and budgetary decision- and policy-making within and across VP divisions
5. Establishing comparative and competitive advantage
6. Enhancing funding initiatives and alumni and public relations
7. Demonstrating mission and goal attainment and institutional effectiveness for both accreditation and accountability

(Adapted from Peter Ewell)

Principles of Good Practice for Assessment

Outcomes assessment efforts will be most effective when:

1. They begin with an institution's mission statement and goals.
2. Recognize that learning is multidimensional, integrated, and manifested over time.
3. Program goals are explicitly and clearly stated.
4. Attention focuses on both outcomes and the factors shaping them.
5. They are systematic, on-going, and part of a broad, integrated plan and effort to promote educational effectiveness, financial efficiency, and fiduciary responsibility.
6. They engage people from across the campus community.

Through rigorously designed assessment, educators meet their responsibilities to their students, the institution, and its other stakeholders.

Source: American Assoc. for Higher Education, *Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning* (1992).

Outcomes and Instruments (Wabash National Study of Liberal Education*)

- ◆ Effective Reasoning & Problem Solving:
 - Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP)
 - Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal (WGCTA)
 - California Critical Thinking Skills Test (CCTST)
- ◆ Well-Being:
 - Ryff Scales of Psychological Well-Being (6 dimensions):
 - Self-acceptance
 - Personal growth
 - Purpose in life
 - Positive relations with others
 - Environmental Mastery
 - Autonomy (sense of self-determination)
 - Five measures of physical well-being

More Outcomes and Instruments

(Wabash National Study of Liberal Education*)

- ◆ **Inclination to Inquire and Life-long Learning:**
 - Need for Cognition Scale (NCS; 18 items)
 - Positive Attitude Toward Literacy Scale (PATL; 6 items)
- ◆ **Intercultural Effectiveness**
 - Miville-Guzman Universality-Diversity Scale (M-GUDS; 15 items)
 - Openness to Diversity/Challenge (ODC; 7 items)
- ◆ **Leadership**
 - Socially Responsible Leadership Scale (SRLS; 68 items)
- ◆ **Moral Character (Reasoning)**
 - Defining Issues Test 2 (DIT-2; several dimensions, each with 12 items)

Still More (!) Outcomes and Instruments

(Wabash National Study of Liberal Education*)

- ◆ **Orientations Toward Life and Career** (21 items in 4 scales from Cooperative Institutional Research Program (HERI's CIRP):
 - Contributions to the Arts Scale (3 items)
 - Political and Social Involvement (11 items)
 - Professional Success (5 items)
 - Contribution to Science (2 items)
- ◆ **Political Orientation** (1 item)
- ◆ **Academic Motivation Scale** (8 items)

*For a summary of these measures, see:
http://www.education.uiowa.edu/crue/publications/documents/WNSLAE_Research_Methods_Draft_March2008.pdf

Some Guides to "Getting it done"

1. **Remember:** Increased effectiveness – not accountability – is the purpose.
2. The key issue is not whether to assess and make judgments, but rather the quality of the evidence to be used.
3. Remember the purpose of assessment – increased instructional, programmatic, and institutional effectiveness. The most appropriate standard for judging study "rigor" is probably "reasonableness" in design, methods, and interpretations.
4. Inventory data already available on students.
5. Start small (but succeed!).

More Guides to "Getting it done"

6. Have a long-term assessment plan. Know what you want to know and why it's important to know it. (How will it make a difference?)
7. Don't try to assess or evaluate everything every year. The plan should have a reasonable and do-able schedule re. time, staff, and other resources. (**What? Why? Who? How? and When?**)
8. Mobilize support; lay the political foundations:
 - Establish trust; allay fears of negative evaluations.
 - Be publicly clear about what assessment is not intended to do.
 - Make the case that really important things can be "measured" (see #1).
 - Involve those with a stake in the development and implementation of studies, and in the interpretation of their findings.
 - Cultivate the support of recognized "opinion leaders."
 - Be sensitive to the timing of activities.
 - Understand that assessment is inherently a set of compromises (organizational, methodological, political).

Still More Guides to "Getting it done"

9. Don't expect everyone to buy-in early (or ever). Buy-in will come when people see some benefit in doing so.
10. Provide assessment findings that are:
 - methodologically sound,
 - recognized as relevant to important issues, and
 - usable.
11. Remember that information is power, and power in a democratic society is inherently political. Do your homework.
12. Be willing and prepared to compromise.

"If you're gonna play the game, boy, . . . you gotta learn to play it right."

1. "Know your enemy."
2. Do your homework. Know the evidence, the research literature!
3. "Know yourself." (Be prepared to compromise.)
4. "Focus on student learning. Period." (Liz Whitt)
5. Keep your eye on the substantive prize. Don't get lost in the mechanics - the processes and procedures of assessment.
