# The Call for Student Affairs Assessment Professionals and Units

## And Other Strategies for Improving Assessment in Student Affairs

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***Abstract***: This article explores deeper roots for assessment within student affairs to find historical context that influences our current efforts and expectations. Reflecting on these efforts, the authors identify persistent challenges to meet the calls for assessment in student affairs. This article proposes strategies for improving assessment in student affairs.

***Keywords***: student affairs assessment, assessment, evaluation, measurement, improvement

Assessment in student affairs has three main goals In alignment with the field's focus of improvement and accountability: (a) improving students' experiences, learning and development, wellbeing, and success, (b) improving business needs, including employee wellbeing and operations, and (c) being accountable to students, families, and taxpayers that student affairs is a good steward of resources. This article examines the field is able to achieve these goals by following the principles of an effective assessment cycle. First, the authors dig into the field's deeper roots to understand the context in which strategies have been implemented to advance assessment in student affairs. Then, it reflects on the evidence to identify persistent challenges. Finally, this article provides strategies for improving assessment in student affairs related to terminology, expectations, and staffing.

### Exploring the Deeper Roots of Assessment in Student Affairs

It is often acknowledged that assessment in student affairs has deep roots that begin with *The Student Personnel Point of View* (*SPPV*) published by the American Council on Education (ACE, 1937; e.g., Hanson, 1991). Similar to bamboo, which spends years establishing roots before finally breaking ground, the roots of assessment in student affairs developed over decades before Upcraft and Schuh (1996), who are credited with beginning "to blossom the sub-field" (Henning, 2016, p. 4) of assessment in student affairs. Yet significant contributions predate Upcraft and Schuh's publication. A closer examination of the 1980s and early 1990s reveals substantial writings that contribute to assessment in student affairs and continue to shape assessment practices today.

**1980s—Moving from a Culture of Improvement and Accountability to Justification**

Around the beginning of the 1980s, two significant efforts began shaping assessment in student affairs. First, the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) was founded in 1979, responding to a desire for standards of practice and graduate-level education that "reflected the values and goals of the field, rather than having external forces dictate these measures" (Wells & Dean, 2024, p. 30). In 1985, CAS adopted its first set of standards and guidelines, which embedded "Evaluation" as the last set of standards, and the organization has included assessment-related standards since (Wells & Dean, 2024). The second significant effort was the publication of a comprehensive textbook for the field of student affairs, *Student Services: A Handbook for the Profession* (Delworth & Hanson, 1980). This seminal textbook became a foundational series for the field, widely used in many Higher Education and Student Affairs (HESA) graduate preparation programs.

Notably, the first edition of *Student Services* featured a chapter on "Assessment and Evaluation" (Lenning, 1980), which provides a glimpse into how professionals viewed assessment during that time. This chapter introduced key concepts, reviewed various models, and offered practical recommendations for engaging in assessment. Drawing from evaluation literature outside of the student affairs field (Owens & Evans, 1977; Stake, 1973), Lenning (1980) outlined 16 "skills and competencies needed" (p. 258), such as to:

- "identify the purposes and audiences for one's evaluation" (p. 259),
- "describe resources and processes to be used in achieving one's objectives" (p. 259),
- "identify available resources for conducting the evaluation" (p. 259),
- "establish and apply criteria for the selection of an evaluation specialist" (p. 259), and
- "apply various types of evaluation findings" (p. 260).

Lenning emphasized that student affairs practitioners "need to know enough about statistics [to] communicate with a statistics expert when needed" (p. 260), and they also need "to appropriately interpret and apply any statistical data that are gathered" (p. 260).

These comments indicate that while Lenning (1980) believed practitioners should be engaged in the process, he did not think they needed to know how to perform advanced measurement and statistical analyses. This sentiment persisted in the second edition of *Student Services* (Lenning, 1989), showcasing that Lenning and others during this time recognized that measurement and statistical analysis were outside the scope of student affairs practitioners' responsibilities. The chapter laid an early foundation for the need to integrate multiple types of expertise and positions to advance assessment in student affairs. Lenning concludes the chapter with "if assessment and evaluation activities are well-planned and spaced appropriately, such activities can contribute greatly to program improvement, support, and accountability" (p. 261), which ties assessment with improvement and accountability as early as 1980.

However, by the mid-1980s, the tone surrounding accountability started to shift. Publications began to stress the urgency of assessment, warning that "if we are to survive through the next century... it is imperative that we support research and evaluation that examines our services and programs and what impact they have on students" (Brown, 1986, p. 195 as cited in Abler & Sedlacek, 1986). This change mirrored broader societal changes in higher education under the Reagan Administration from 1981–1989. Reagan's legacy towards public education has been described as "demagogically fann[ing] discontent with public education… bash[ing] educators and slash[ing] education spending …[and leaving] the nation's educators dispirited and demoralized" (Clabaugh, 2004, p. 259). This criticism combined with reduced funding likely drove the field from a *culture of improvement and accountability*, with proactive intentions, to a reactive *culture of justification*. This may have been when the association between assessment and threats began, fostering anxiety, fear, and ultimately resistance by student affairs practitioners.

### 1990s—Learning and Measurement

In response to the culture of justification, the 1990s saw two significant developments. First, a number of declarations emphasized that student affairs contributes to the educational mission through co-curricular learning experiences. Second, this decade witnessed substantial publication efforts focused on teaching assessment as measurement, to equip practitioners with the skills of collecting data that would justify the work.

#### *Student Learning Through Co-Curricular Experiences*

During the 1990s and early 2000s the field published multiple articles, books, and philosophical statements that emphasize student affairs' contributions to student learning. This era challenged the field to focus on its contribution to the educational mission, positioning student learning as its central responsibility. It became clear that supporting students' basic needs and wellbeing to enable academic persistence was not enough.

In 1991 Erwin published *Assessing Student Learning and Development*, which was "designed for higher education faculty, student affairs professionals, and administrators" (p. xv) to approach the assessment process for "higher order reasoning and affective development outcomes of education, in addition to knowledge outcomes" (p. xvi). Through his holistic lens, he elevated student affairs professionals as educators alongside faculty.

The call for reimagining the educational mission gained more momentum with Barr and Tagg's influential article in 1995, which addressed all college educators, including instructional faculty and student affairs professionals. They described and argued for a paradigm shift in higher education stating: "the paradigm that has governed our colleges is this: A college is an institution that exists *to provide instruction*. Subtly but profoundly we are shifting to a new paradigm: A college is an instruction that exists *to produce learning*" (p. 13). Shortly after, professional organizations authored philosophical statements that further defined the fields' educational contributions, included *The Student Learning Imperative* (American College Student Educators International [ACPA], 1996), *Powerful Partnerships: A Shared Responsibility for Learning* (American Association for Higher Education et al., 1998), and *Learning Reconsidered: A Campus-wide Focus on the Student Experience* (ACPA & NASPA, 2004). These documents emphasized collaboration across campus and framed student learning as a shared, holistic endeavor.

#### *Teaching Practitioners Measurement*

The 1990s also brought a renewed and surging interest in assessment efforts, as evidenced by numerous publications, including textbooks such as *Assessing Student*

*Learning and Development* (Erwin, 1991), *Puzzles and Pieces in Wonderland: The Promise and Practice of Student Affairs Research* (Beeler & Hunter, 1991), *Assessment in Student Affairs* (Upcraft & Schuh, 1996), and *Student Affairs Research, Evaluation, and Assessment* (Malaney, 1999). These titles illustrate a conflation of the terms assessment, evaluation, and research, a trend also reflected in the evolving chapter title in *Student Services*. Initially named "Assessment and Evaluation" in the first and second editions (Lenning, 1980, 1989), the title was revised to "Assessment, Evaluation, and Research" in the third edition (Erwin, 1996). This shift suggests a field-wide response to the growing demand for justification with measurement emerging as the centerpiece. Distinguishing the purposes of assessment, evaluation, and research became less relevant; measurement was needed to produce data that would justify the field. The emphasis transitioned from *why* to *how*.

Publications during this time were designed to equip student affairs practitioners with measurement skills, a task previously encouraged to be done in partnership with measurement experts in the 1980s. For example, in the NASPA edited monograph, *Puzzles and Pieces in Wonderland* (Beeler & Hunter, 1991), student affairs practitioners were told they must "assume new roles on campus. [To] lead in conceptualizing, planning, coordinating, conducting, and disseminating our assessment efforts" (Hanson, 1991, p. 82). Similarly, the third edition of *Student Services* urged practitioners to integrate measurement, research, theory development, and assessment into their roles (Erwin, 1996). In fact 57% of the chapter's pages were devoted specifically to measurement, delving into both quantitative and qualitative methods. These texts made practitioners' responsibility for measurement evident.

To us–the authors, this shift of expecting student affairs practitioners to measure during a culture of justification is no surprise. In our experience in the field of student affairs, when higher education is in crisis and asks *how*, the answer is student affairs and its people, regardless of their prior education or experience. Said plainly, when a crisis strikes, the student affairs army is called, and we answer the call. Examples of this are plentiful. After a mass shooting on campus, we personally know professionals in career services who shifted their entire job to a social work-like focus supporting the victims and their families for the remainder of the semester. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we know student affairs professionals with no medical background who managed campus testing centers for COVID as if they were healthcare administrators. During a natural disaster, we know student affairs professionals that opened and staffed dining facilities, convocation centers, and student unions to feed and provide shelter to students, faculty, staff, and community members who lost everything, because it was days before experts like the Red Cross could arrive. So when there was a crisis to justify our field, student affairs practitioners were similarly called upon to take responsibility for measurement. It's a pattern. We answer the call because there's a need. It's in our professional ethos.

### 2000s to Present—Attempts to Meet Calls for Assessment in Student Affairs

Student affairs practitioners put forth momentous effort to answer the call for assessment in alignment with their professional ethos. Professional organizations sought to communicate the expectations, faculty and professional organizations aimed to educate graduate students and practitioners, and graduate students and practitioners worked to integrate assessment into their practice. The student affairs army was galvanized.

These well-intended efforts unfolded against a heightened culture of justification that was driven by national and global events. For example, the Great Recession prompted some organizations to provide guidance on how institutions should approach cutting budgets (e.g., Eduventures, 2009), calling for university leaders to consider using the winter term to "begin targeted actions to eliminate, reduce, and combine programs that do not meet standards" (p. 2). Scholars positioned the *why* of assessment in a similar tone—data collected through assessment is needed to ensure that a case can be made for not cutting student affairs programs and services (e.g., Blimling, 2013; Elkins, 2015). These fear- and justification-driven narratives echoed those in the mid-1980s (e.g., Brown, 1986).

In response to all of this pressure, there were significant efforts to advance assessment in student affairs. This section will review four significant efforts: (a) professional standards and competencies, (b) higher education and student affairs (HESA) graduate preparation programs, (c) hiring individuals to coordinate assessment in student affairs, and (d) professional development; the section will close with reflections on these attempts.

***Professional Standards and Competencies***

Student affairs practitioners are expected to demonstrate a wide range of competencies in their practice, which are communicated in professional standards (Finney & Horst, 2019a, 2019b). All of these standards address assessment. The most widely utilized standards and competencies were developed by the three professional organizations: ACPA, NASPA, and CAS. The ACPA Commission on Assessment and Evaluation (CAE) developed the *Assessment Skills and Knowledge Content Standards for Student Affairs Practitioners and Scholars* (i.e., *ASK Standards*; ACPA CAE, 2006), and ACPA and NASPA partnered to publish the *Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Educators* (i.e., *ACPA/NASPA Competencies*; ACPA & NASPA, 2010, 2015). ACPA and NASPA focused on standards and competencies for student affairs professionals. CAS created functional area standards, addressing what a department, or unit, needs to do to be successful; these are known as *CAS Standards* (2023). This section will review each and how they attempt to guide practitioners in meeting the call for assessment in student affairs.

**ASK Standards**. In response to an "increased interest in fiscal and learning accountability in higher education" and a lack of consensus regarding the necessary knowledge and skills for student affairs assessment, ACPA's Commission on Assessment for Student Development (CASD; now known as the Commission for Assessment and Evaluation [CAE]) introduced the *ASK Standards* in 2006. These standards were developed to guide student affairs practitioners on what they "need to know in order to do assessment" (ACPA CASD, 2006, p. 3). In many ways, the *ASK Standards* intersect the two efforts that evolved during the 1990s by framing assessment as focusing on student learning outcomes and measurement. In fact, the standards specify advanced statistical and measurement expertise to be "among the necessary responsibilities of student affairs professionals" (p. 2). This included "sample size estimation, variance estimation, confidence intervals, ratio and regression estimation, and appropriate analytic responses to non-responses and missing data" (p. 7), and the "ability to analyze and interpret data using the appropriate univariate and multivariate statistical techniques" (p. 8). By articulating the knowledge and skills needed for assessment, the *ASK Standards* sought to mobilize student affairs practitioners to embed assessment into their daily practice. The *ASK Standards* have not been updated, likely due to the emergence of the *ACPA/NASPA Competencies*.

**ACPA/NASPA Competencies**. In 2009, ACPA, NASPA, and CAS, began to collaborate on developing the *ACPA/NASPA Competencies* (ACPA & NASPA, 2015), which outlined 10 areas of professional practice in student affairs—one of which was assessment. Each competency was defined by three levels of ability: foundational, intermediate, and advanced (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). The intent of the competency task forces was to emphasize that all student affairs educators should demonstrate foundational knowledge, skills, and dispositions across the competency areas (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). The competencies remain relevant to the field and how we define and approach assessment work, because they are updated to reflect the evolving needs of the field; they underwent a revision in 2015 and the next expected update is in 2025.

Within the "Assessment, Evaluation, and Research" competency, foundational outcomes include the ability to "facilitate appropriate data collection for system/department-wide assessment and evaluation efforts using current technology and methods" (p. 20) and "assess the legitimacy, trustworthiness, and/or validity of studies of various methods and methodological designs (e.g., qualitative vs. quantitative, theoretical perspective, epistemological approach)" (p. 20). Notably, the initial development of the competencies was informed by an ACPA publication, *Professional Competencies: A Report of the Steering Committee on Professional Competencies* (2007), which stated, "we are now moving towards the expectation that each student affairs professional be able to develop and conduct [their] own assessment" (p. 3). It underscored how the competencies represent a continuation of the field's commitment to building capacity for assessment.

**CAS Standards**. CAS has become a leading organization to help functional areas with their improvement efforts. Their standards suggest that effective assessment practice is achieved through the collective efforts of a functional area's staff. For example, the standards to "analyze and interpret data using appropriate methods" and "use data to demonstrate achievement" (CAS, 2023, p. 46) are an organizational responsibility, not an individual one. CAS Standards are a unique effort in the field to help meet the calls for assessment, because they provide an organizational lens to the work.

The current assessment standards "addresses the functional area's approach to assessment, including how it is conducted, analyzed, and used" (2023, p. 36). These standards are currently subdivided into the following:

- 4.1: Assessment Culture, Plans, and Processes
- 4.2: Goals, Outcomes, and Objectives
- 4.3: Implementing Strategies to Achieve Goals and Outcomes
- 4.4: Gathering Evidence and Data
- 4.5: Review and Interpreting Findings

- 4.6: Reporting Results and Implementing Improvement

This list demonstrates that CAS defines assessment as a process, encouraging practitioners to embrace assessment as a holistic activity integrating planning, gathering and reflecting on data, and improvement planning.

Regular updates are made to the CAS General Standards to reflect emerging thinking on best practices in the field. For example, after the publication of *Assessment in Student Affairs* (Upcraft & Schuh, 1996) “the CAS General Standards responded [...] by broadening the assessment-related statements” (Wells & Dean, 2024, p. 36). More recent revisions include the addition of “Assessment Culture” to the previously titled “Assessment Plans and Processes,” signaling a recognition of the calls for cultivating widespread engagement in, and organizational commitment to, assessment. In the 2023 revisions CAS also refined language throughout the standards to “discern between student learning outcomes and program outcomes” (p. 42) and introduced standards regarding program theory and implementation fidelity. Since CAS Standards are regularly updated, it heavily influences the field in defining assessment practices and how to meet the call as a functional area.

### ***HESA Graduate Program Preparation***

Calls for standardizing graduate-level curriculum for HESA preparation programs are long standing. In fact, CAS was established in part to respond to these calls and has a long history of providing master’s level HESA program standards (Wells & Dean, 2024). These standards include expectations for the curriculum to include assessment and the growing need for student affairs educators to engage in this work. The CAS Standards and Guidelines for Master’s Level HESA Professional Preparation Programs, last revised in 2019, states that “the curriculum of programs of study must include (a) foundational content areas, (b) professional content areas, and (c) supervised practice” (CAS, 2023, p. 787). The professional content areas are further divided into five subcategories: (a) student learning and identity/psychosocial development theories; (b) student characteristics and effects of higher education on students; (c) individual and group strategies; (d) organization, governance, and administration of HESA; and (e) assessment, evaluation, and research. While assessment, evaluation, and research is distinguished as its own professional content area, three other professional content areas use assessment-related terms, such as assessing, assessment, evaluate, evaluating, evaluation, or measurement (see Table 1). This demonstrates that the expectation for practitioners to engage in assessment efforts is woven throughout the curriculum, clearly communicating to rising student affairs practitioners that assessment is a part of their professional responsibilities.

### ***Coordinating Assessment in Student Affairs***

To mobilize and sustain assessment efforts in student affairs, some divisions began hiring full-time professionals to advance the work. The first documented instance of a centralized student affairs assessment specialist was in 1981 at the University of Texas at Arlington (Bresciani, 2023; Kayne, 2024; Moxley, 1988). Over the following decades, the number of these positions grew, reaching 40 institutions by 1999 (Malaney), and 123 after another 20 years (Student Affairs Assessment Leaders [SAAL], 2019). Despite this growth, there is mixed consensus about hiring such positions. For example, the original *Professional*

**Table 1.** *Professional Content Areas that Include Assessment-Related Words*

| Professional Content Area | Standard |
|---|---|
| Subpart 5b.1<br>Student Learning and Identity/Psychosocial Development Theory | Programs must provide learning opportunities so graduates are able to use and critique appropriate theory to understand, support, and advocate for student learning and development by *assessing** needs and creating opportunities for learning and development. |
| Subpart 5b.2<br>Student Characteristics and Effects of Higher Education on Students | Programs must include content focused on how student learning and learning opportunities are influenced by student characteristics and by collegiate environments so that graduates can design and *evaluate* learning experiences for students. |
| Subpart 5b.3<br>Individual and Group Strategies | The program's curriculum must include content, techniques, and methods of advising, supporting, and helping, as well as skills for *assessin*g, designing, implementing, and *evaluating* developmentally appropriate strategies with individuals and organizations.<br>Programs must include content for graduates to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to design and *evaluate* effective educational interventions for individuals and groups. The content must include ways for graduates to identify and appropriately refer students who need additional resources. |
| Subpart 5b.5<br>Assessment, Evaluation, and Research | Program curriculum must include the study of *assessment*, *evaluation*, and research that centers on evidence-based practice to [for] accountability and continuous improvement. Content must include *assessment* planning and design; outcome development; qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods, and critical data collection and analysis methods; *measurement* of learning processes and outcomes; *assessment* of environments and organizations; *measurement* of program and environment effectiveness; effective reporting; critiques of published studies; integration of social justice; and *assessment* and change management strategies.<br>Program content must include opportunities for graduates to learn how to critique a study or evaluation and be able to design, conduct, and report on a sound research study, *assessment* study, or program evaluation, all grounded in the appropriate literature to improve professional practice and student learning. |

* emphasis added for assessment-related words appearing in this table

*Competencies: A Report of the Steering Committee on Professional Competencies* (ACPA, 2007) specifies that "the emphasis on the development of assessment skills within the field of student affairs eliminates the notion that the solution to accountability is simply hiring one student affairs professional to address assessment" (p. 3). Yet a year later, there were enough professionals with full-time jobs coordinating assessment in their division that SAAL was founded (Biddix et al., 2020; Elkins, 2015).

Regardless of consensus about hiring such a position, in 2013, Livingston and Zerulik wrote an article that described the "emerging role of assessment coordinators in student affairs divisions" (p. 15). They described the role as one to (a) create and manage assessment teams with representatives from each department in the division, (b) ensure assessment is a divisional priority among senior leaders, (c) provide professional development to build staff capacity for assessment, and (d) review and provide feedback on assessment projects and reports. These responsibilities can be summarized as capacity building, with a heavy focus on professional development, and project management, which is "planning, organizing, and directing the completion of specific projects" (Joubert, 2024). Divisional assessment teams played a key role by creating a captive audience for professional development and fostering accountability for assessment projects.

To support these full-time professionals, Yousey-Elsener, Bentrim, and Henning edited two editions of *Coordinating Student Affairs Assessment* (Henning et al., 2024; Yousey-Elsener et al., 2015) intended to "provide resources for those starting assessment offices or those newly appointed to student affairs assessment coordinator positions" (2015, p. xxiii). They argue that the "primary role of an assessment coordinator is to be a capacity builder–one who builds the assessment knowledge and skills capacity for a division of student affairs and ultimately allows staff members in the division to perform their own assessment" (Bentrim & Henning, 2015, p. 1). Capacity-building efforts remain a high priority for those coordinating assessment in student affairs, as evidenced by the most recent edition having an entire chapter devoted to it. This chapter, *Building Capacity, Talent, and Professional Development*, states that "it is valuable for every professional to build their assessment skills regardless of their functional area or role" (Kruchen-Spaulding & Cyr, 2024, p. 139).

Despite these growing resources, evidence suggests that centralized student affairs assessment positions remain uncommon. The same year that the 2019 SAAL Landscape Study found that 123 institutions employed full-time professionals to coordinate student affairs assessment, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) shared that there were 2,679 4-year degree granting institutions (NCES, 2022), which is where the vast majority, if not all, of these roles are employed. This means that only 4.6% of institutions were found to have full-time student affairs assessment professionals. Assuming this could be a low estimate due to a low response rate, the numbers are still bleak. If we assume a 50% response rate, then 9.2% of institutions employed full-time student affairs assessment professionals; this rate is similar to previous studies of student affairs research offices (e.g., Beeler & Oblander, 1989; Johnson & Steele, 1984). If we assume a 20% response rate, then it would have been 23.1% of institutions. Regardless, these numbers make it clear that divisions predominantly rely on student affairs practitioners for assessment efforts.

### ***Professional Development***

Since the early 2000s, the field has seen a significant increase in professional development opportunities to support practitioners wanting to learn and implement assessment efforts on their campus. Episodic and easy-to-access opportunities such as conferences, webinars, and massive open online courses (MOOCs) were developed (Kruchen-Spaulding & Cyr, 2024) by a host of professional organizations.

In-person conferences emerged as a major avenue for professional development. For example, the Assessment Institute in Indianapolis began in 2000, and now includes a dedicated track for student affairs programs and services (Biddix et al., 2020). A few years later, ACPA launched its first Student Affairs Assessment Institute in 2003 and NASPA debuted the Assessment and Retention Conference in 2004 (now the Assessment, Persistence, and Data Analytics Conference; Biddix et al., 2020). Virtual opportunities also became prominent as technology advanced. In 2016, SAAL created a monthly webinar series, called Structured Conversations (SAAL, n.d.-c), and a MOOC for Applying and Leading Assessment in Student Affairs (SAAL, n.d.-a), both of which still exist today.

Beyond conferences, resources such as the SAAL Blog (SAAL, n.d.-b) and the *Journal for Student Affairs Inquiry, Improvement, and Impact* (*JSAIII*; previously the *Journal of Student Affairs Inquiry*, n.d.) have emerged. Functional area professional associations have also contributed to these efforts through assessment committees, such as the Association of College Unions International's (ACUI) Assessment, Evaluation, and Research Program Team (ACUI, n.d.). These initiatives underscore the vast attempts to equip student affairs professionals to engage in assessment.

## Persistent and Unintended Challenges

After four decades of efforts to emphasize the importance of assessment, persistent and unintended challenges endure. As the field approaches 45 years of calls to actualize assessment practices, we must pause to reflect on the evidence of these efforts. Despite continually educating student affairs professionals on basic assessment practices, increases in practitioners' comfort and proficiency with assessment remain limited. Today, student affairs practitioners continue to express "hesitation, fear, and indifference" towards the practice of assessment (Kayne, 2024, para. 1). Darby Roberts, a respected leader in the field, aptly notes that "fear is one of the biggest barriers to developing an assessment culture" (2024, p. 129). Evidence from the 2024 SAAL Landscape Survey underscores stagnation, with respondents indicating significant obstacles with inadequate training, insufficient data literacy, and a lack of colleagues' understanding of assessment (Brooks Nelson et al., 2024).

These persistent challenges seem like a constant–something that can only be resolved through more educational efforts to address practitioners' knowledge and skill gaps. But this historical review showed us that there may be different resolutions. For example, when we began our historical exploration, we did not anticipate finding literature that did not expect student affairs educators to possess strong skills in measurement (Lenning, 1980, 1989). This finding shocked us. It prompted us to wonder: how much of our current approach is shaped by being stretched too thin to pause, reflect, and determine whether these efforts are truly effective? Furthermore, how much is because we have done what is in our control rather than trying to influence change?

While this exploration of our roots is not exhaustive, it reveals essential missing context on why strategies were developed and underscores that today's challenges have persisted. If we are professionals committed to improvement and evidence-informed decisions, we must ask: Why aren't we further along? Why do successes feel so isolated? Why do practitioners remain hesitant, fearful, and indifferent? After reflection, we posit there are persistent and unintended challenges due to the language used in assessment efforts and the expectations of student affairs educators.

**Language Used in Assessment Efforts**

Our history reveals that language inconsistencies are one of the persistent challenges in advancing assessment in student affairs. Despite attempts to define and differentiate assessment-related terminology, clarity of these terms remains elusive. We argue that the field's lack of language consistency contributes to practitioners being confused, overwhelmed, and frustrated about assessment. The confusion around assessment language is not new. Others have noted that "the lack of a common language for [assessment] practice" (Timm et al., 2013, p. 3) can lead to confusion, which can "be frustrating and discouraging" (p. 3). Ardion (2018) highlights how first-generation students learning the jargon of higher education "sometimes [feel] nervous, insecure, overwhelmed, frustrated, and panicked" (p. 56) when faced with a lack of knowledge about specific terminology. Similarly, we believe student affairs educators likely experience negative emotional responses when faced with confusing assessment language. Strine-Patterson (2022) argues that the language we use "unintentionally disinvite[s] most student affairs professionals from engaging" (p. 62) in assessment efforts. Simplifying this language is a necessary next step to improve assessment in student affairs.

***Measurement is the Common Tool for Assessment, Evaluation, and Research***

Assessment, evaluation, and research have been closely linked since the 1990s, and though professionals have sought to clarify these terms (e.g., National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA), n.d.-a; Rehr et al., 2024; SAAL, 2024b) confusion persists. We believe the coupling of these three words reflects that measurement (i.e., the methodological process) is their common foundation. In fact, Stitt-Bergh and colleagues (2018) argued that "the typical assessment model foregrounds methodological process above almost all other aspects" (p. 28), and we expand this argument to include that the methodological process overshadows all other aspects of assessment, evaluation, and research. Measurement is so paramount, Strine-Patterson (2022) further demonstrates that the word *assessment* is simultaneously used as a synonym for *measurement* and to reference the entire assessment cycle. She argues "if assessment is [...] equated to measurement, and leaders do not see [assessment] as a process for quality improvement efforts [...] then we will never realize continuous improvement and accountability" (p. 63). Learning that assessment, evaluation, and research were coupled together during the 90s when measurement became paramount, it appears these terms were used as synonyms, like assessment and measurement (Strine-Patterson, 2022), during a crisis to justify. Therefore, it is a worthwhile endeavor to review these terms and definitions to determine their continued utility (or not). This may allow the field to set down the unproductive debate about their differences and move towards clear and concise language.

**Assessment and Evaluation**. Let's start with where the field does seem to find consensus. Definitions of *evaluation* consistently use *judge* or *judgments* (e.g., CAS, 2023; Henning &

Roberts, 2016; Lenning, 1980; NILOA, n.d.-b; SAAL, 2024b). However, clarity dissipates when evaluation is compared to the traditional assessment cycle–particularly in the final step of "closing the loop," or the process of using data to make improvements (e.g., Finney et al., 2021; Henning & Roberts, 2016, Stitt-Bergh et al., 2018; Suskie, 2009; Yousey-Elsener, 2013). The process of deciding what improvements to make inherently requires making judgments based on the measurement results. This leaves us to conclude that evaluation is not a separate process, but simply a substep of the traditional assessment cycle.

We are not the first authors to make this observation. Bresciani (2010a) noted at least one other author "considers evaluation as part of the assessment process" (p. 321; i.e., Suskie, 2004). The *ASK Companion Guide* (Timm et al., 2013) states that "evaluation is presented as a construct within the assessment process and is no longer described as a stand-alone component" (p. 5). With the goal of making assessment-related terminology more clear and concise, we recommend using evaluation exclusively to describe the final step in the assessment cycle rather than presenting it as a distinct process.

Some may argue that evaluative judgments, such as those made by external reviewers during a department review process, are separate from the assessment process, necessitating keeping the term evaluation in our professional lexicon. However, we contend that such judgements are not separate processes. Implementing external reviewer recommendations is not mandatory; instead their evaluations are a data point for student affairs professionals to incorporate into their assessment process.

While eliminating the use of *evaluation* seems like a straightforward way to simplify language, the debate to elevate evaluation alongside assessment persists, adding to the confusion. For example, in the recent *CAS General Standards Contextual Statement* (2023), the authors share updates to the assessment section, including adding "evaluation to the title" (CAS, 2023, p. 42) to reflect that assessment is not "merely the collection of data to describe how a program or service is functioning" (p. 42). Ultimately, this title change was not implemented, and a reference to this near change in the introduction was missed (L. Crain, personal communication, September 7, 2023). National leaders involved in the revisions of the CAS Standards also influence other national organizations that continue to define assessment and evaluation as separate, but clearly related, constructs. For instance, NILOA includes "evaluates" (p. 1, NILOA, n.d.-a) in their definition of assessment and "assessments" in their definition of evaluation, which reads, in part, as "using collected information (assessments) to make informed decisions" (p. 2, NILOA, n.d.-a). This lack of clarity is long standing, as Bresciani (2010a) noted nearly 15 years ago, concluding that "definitions [of assessment and evaluation] do vary in their meaning and thus "confusion" is present for some" (p. 322). However, this confusion is not inevitable.

During the 2024 SAAL Open Course, the long-time course manager and instructor, Joseph (Joe) Levy, alludes to the importance of not using assessment and evaluation to define each other (SAAL, 2024b). Yet, efforts to clarify these terms have often resulted in only minor modifications to definitions with no uniform attempt to simplify the language. Historically, the field has approached student affairs practitioners from a deficit-based perspective (due to their lack of understanding) and subsequently provided them glossaries or lists of terms that distinguish constructs (e.g., assessment and evaluation) but rely on circular definitions. Adopting an asset-based perspective requires the field to simplify our language. Instead of elevating evaluation as a separate process, it should be relegated to the last step of the assessment cycle. This approach would reduce confusion and shift the focus from blaming student affairs educators to addressing the root cause of the field's linguistic complexity.

**Assessment and Research**. Research and assessment are often discussed together due to their shared reliance on measurement. At times, the field has approached these terms as synonymous. For instance, the initial professional competencies report, observed the recent "publication of a plethora of assessment books" (ACPA, 2007, p. 3), citing titles such as *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research* (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Creswell, 2003), and *Qualitative Research: A Personal Skills Approach* (Shank, 2002) alongside assessment texts such as *Assessment in Student Affairs: A Guide for Practitioners* (Upcraft & Schuh, 1996). Despite this coupling, there is broad consensus that assessment and research serve distinct purposes (Marsden & Ekert, 2018).

*Research* is defined by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in Title 45 (2023) as "a systemic investigation…designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge" (p. 137). Similarly student affairs literature highlights research's emphasis on generalizability and measurement, noting that data collection is central to its purpose (e.g., Henning & Roberts, 2016; Timm et al., 2013). Across definitions, research is consistently framed as the pursuit of generalizable truths applicable across multiple contexts.

Conversely, *assessment* is typically defined as using evidence for the purpose of accountability and improvement at an institution (Lenning, 1980; Ewell, 2009; Upcraft & Schuh, 1996). Strine-Patterson (2022) further argued that "assessment is a leadership process" (p. 64) for "quality improvement efforts and sharing impact stories regarding student experiences, learning and development, wellbeing, and success" (personal communication, October 17, 2024). Ultimately, assessment is local in context, concerned with a campus, which underscores the distinction between assessment and research.

While the distinction in purpose between assessment and research is clear and consistent, their shared methodological tools often blur these boundaries. This overlap invites confusion (Bresciani, 2010b), necessitating a deliberate effort to disentangle the methodological process from assessment.

**Assessment and Measurement**. While the field has attempted to clarify the relationship between measurement and assessment, these efforts often fall short of providing the needed precision. To give one example, *Assessment in Practice: A Companion to the ASK Standards* (i.e., *ASK Standards Companion*; Timm et al., 2013) includes a glossary of terms, such as (a) *assessment*, (b) *assessment cycle*, (c) *assessment plan*, (d) *measure or assessment measure*, (e) *measures*, and (f) *pre-post test/assessment.* Unfortunately, some of these definitions further blur the distinctions. For example, the glossary defines *measure* as "instruments, devices, or methods that provide data" (p. 87) and *pre-post test/assessment* as "administering the same assessment before and after a program, service, training, etc." (p. 87). This raises the logical question: What differentiates a measure used before and after an experience from a pre-post test/assessment? Greater clarity could have been achieved by using consistent terminology, such as *measure* rather than *assessment* in the term and definition of pre-post test/assessment. This is only one example of many that exemplify two larger issues: (a) definitions generally do not provide intended clarity, and (b) the field uses "assessment as a synonym for the methodological process" (Strine-Patterson, 2022, p. 62), which exacerbates confusion.

To further explore how the field explicitly and implicitly equates assessment with measurement, we explored how HESA graduate programs teach assessment. The recent "Syllabi Project" conducted by the ACPA CAE; NASPA Assessment, Evaluation, and Research Knowledge Community (AERKC); and SAAL analyzed HESA assessment course syllabi across master's and doctoral programs. Their findings revealed a "lack of a clear student affairs assessment curriculum" (ACPA CAE et al., 2024, p. 4) across graduate preparation programs. However, the report also highlighted that assessment courses have a clear "prioritization of technical knowledge" (Rehr et al., 2024, p. 95) with "nearly two-thirds of syllabi (64%) ha[ving] a specific focus on [measurement] methods [and] the vast majority (93%) incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methods" (ACPA CAE et al., 2024, p. 6). These results suggest that "instructors clearly value [measurement] design and data collection" (Rehr et al., 2024, p. 95) over the broader scope of assessment.

Notably, only 5.4% of identifiable learning outcomes on course syllabi indicated that students would learn to articulate learning and development outcomes as a result of the course (ACPA CAE et al., 2024). Since assessment starts with articulating goals, objectives, and outcomes (e.g., Finney et al., 2021; Strine-Patterson, 2022; Suskie, 2009; Yousey-Elsener, 2013), courses that fail to teach this foundational skill cannot be deemed assessment courses. One logical conclusion is that some courses labeled as assessment courses are rebranded research methodology courses without curriculum changes, continuing to perpetuate the centrality of the methodological process in assessment.

We extended this inquiry by analyzing 14 foundational and heavily utilized HESA assessment texts from the past 50 years, including those identified by the Syllabi Project. Chapters and pages of these texts were thematically coded to determine the proportion of each text that addressed different aspects of the assessment cycle (i.e., planning, measurement, and using results) or other related topics. Results showed that nearly half of all pages were devoted to *measurement* (46.8%), and pages on *planning* (8.5%) and *use of results* (7.6%) were significantly less represented, despite their critical roles (see Table 2).

While methodological rigor is essential, these findings suggest its dominance in the literature minimizes other critical aspects of the assessment cycle. These findings mirror critiques of assessment efforts in HESA: that the methodological process overshadows defining goals, outcomes, and objectives; intentionally designing theory- and evidence-based strategies to achieve them; and using findings for improvement efforts

(Stitt-Bergh et al., 2018; Strine-Patterson, 2022). For a more detailed breakdown of the methods for this analysis and the list of texts examined, see the Appendix.

Our analysis also identified categories of integrated and special topics (5.7%) including “Post-Graduation Outcomes,” and “Assessments in General Education, Co-Curricula, and Other Settings.” Many of these special or integrated topics emphasize strategies and approaches to support collaborative measurement efforts. While these discussions are undoubtedly valuable, we have differentiated them from chapters aimed at teaching student affairs practitioners how to conduct measurement itself—what we have classified explicitly as “measurement” in our analysis.

To enhance clarity for general student affairs practitioners, we strongly recommend that leaders and practitioners stop using the term assessment as a synonym for measurement. Assessment is a holistic activity that, in its simplest form, integrates (a) planning, (b) the methodological process, and (c) using results for improvement efforts and storytelling. When assessment is reduced to the methodological process alone and disconnected from goals, objectives, and outcomes, then “student affairs professionals collect and celebrate any data. They focus on what they can easily measure rather than on what measures can inform their practice” (Strine-Patterson, 2022, p. 62). By intentionally using the term assessment to describe a holistic process, we can elevate the importance of planning, measurement, and using results as equally critical components of assessment efforts. This shift demands equal emphasis in textbooks, syllabi, and professional development, ensuring a more balanced and impactful approach to assessment in student affairs.

### ***Formative and Summative Assessment***

Naturally, we wondered if terminology exists that might help advance the work beyond our recommendations to reduce unnecessary terminology (i.e., evaluation) and consistently use existing terminology (i.e., assessment, measurement). Since student affairs works on the assessment process in the higher education environment, we were curious if we could learn from our Pre-Kindergarten–12th Grade (PK-12) colleagues about the assessment terminology used to clarify assessment efforts in their educational environment.

Since assessment in student affairs is largely guided by professional standards, we started by reviewing the professional standards for PK-12 education. The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), through its Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (inTASC), created the Model Core Teaching Standards that “outlines what teachers should know and be able to do to ensure every PK-12 student reaches the goal of being ready to enter college or the workforce” (CCSSO, 2013, p. 3). Specifically, the assessment standard states, “The teacher understands and uses multiple methods of assessment to engage learners in their own growth, to monitor learner progress, and to guide the teacher’s and learner’s decision making” (p. 30). The first essential knowledge states that “The teacher understands the differences between formative and summative applications of assessment and knows how and when to use each” (p. 30), and the first performance states that “The teacher balances the use of formative and summative

**Table 2**. *Number and Percentage of Pages in HESA Assessment Textbooks by Category*

| Category | # | % |
|---|---|---|
| Assessment Cycle Components | | |
| Measurement | 1,777 | 46.8 |
| Planning | 321 | 8.5 |
| Use of Results | 290 | 7.6 |
| Other Assessment-Related Topics | | |
| Introductions & Conclusions | 468 | 12.3 |
| Special & Integrated Topics | 215 | 5.7 |
| Research | 186 | 4.9 |
| Equity, Ethics, Integrity | 167 | 4.4 |
| Leading & Coordinating Assessment | 118 | 3.1 |
| Program Review, Professional Competencies & Accreditation | 109 | 2.9 |
| Effectiveness & Benchmarking | 75 | 2.0 |
| Collaboration with Faculty & Campus Partners | 70 | 1.8 |
| Total | 3,796 | 1000 |

assessment as appropriate to support, verify, and document learning" (p. 30). Clearly, the PK-12 field is using the terms *formative* and *summative* to clarify their assessment efforts.

These terms are rarely defined or used in student affairs assessment-related professional development experiences and textbooks. For example, the SAAL Open Course (SAAL, 2024a) makes no mention of the distinction between formative and summative assessment. In the three most common assessment textbooks (ACPA CAE et al., 2024), formative and summative assessment are not included in terminology lists (see Henning & Roberts, 2024, p. 47–48; Schuh, et al., 2016, p. 4–8). While each of these texts may briefly mention formative and summative assessment elsewhere (e.g., Henning & Roberts, 2024, p. 87 & 309), the importance of distinguishing between formative and summative assessment for our work is not clear. The near absence of these terms sends a message to learners that the difference between formative and summative assessment is not critical to their understanding or engagement in assessment. Yet, we believe that using formative and summative assessment terminology in student affairs could be helpful to advance assessment efforts.

**Formative Assessment**. Lenning (1980) noted that formative assessment may be “a potentially more useful concept” (p. 234) for student affairs practitioners, because it is “designed to provide useful information during the conduct of a program, process, or learning experience that can be used to make changes as the program/experience proceeds” (Timm et al., 2013, p. 86). For example, in the PK-12 school setting a teacher may administer a weekly short quiz to identify which students need additional help (i.e., a change in the plan). For student affairs practitioners, formative assessment can inform the plan for current students to achieve engagement objectives, perception objectives, or learning and development outcomes (Strine-Patterson, 2022).

The reality is that student affairs practitioners engage in many types of formative assessment without thinking of it as assessment. For example, every division of student affairs has goals and outcomes related to students having good psychological wellbeing so that they are mentally able to engage in learning. Given this, practitioners regularly communicate about campus resources that support psychological wellbeing, such as the counseling center (e.g., during orientation and in residential community spaces). The intent is that students will learn there are resources for mental health and utilize those resources when needed. If a student affairs practitioner learns that a student is struggling with their mental health but feels stigmatized by using the counseling center, then the practitioner knows the plan needs to change for this individual student. The practitioner works to de-stigmatize using the counseling center and be alongside the student to schedule an appointment. This may take the practitioner multiple check-ins with a student. It may take walking the student over to the counseling center themselves. The point is, the practitioner will identify that the student in front of them needs a different plan to achieve the outcome, and they will change the plan. In this example, the practitioner uses formative assessment. Student affairs practitioners are experts at knowing when an individual student or groups of students needs a different plan, and they modify plans every day to meet students’ needs using formative assessment.

**Summative Assessment**. Summative assessment is “designed to provide useful information at the culmination of a program, process, or student learning experience” (Timm et al., 2013, p. 87). In the PK-12 school setting, these are year-long learning outcomes for each grade that are measured in a state-mandated test or final exam (e.g., Advanced Placement). In student affairs, summative assessment is focused on the year-to-year trend data and community-level outcomes (Strine-Patterson, 2022), which in turn informs department and divisional improvement planning and storytelling.

Summative assessment is what field, division, and department leaders seek, and it stems from the culture of justification. Using the same example we used in formative assessment, the division wants to demonstrate that students who engage in mental health strategies (e.g. counseling) are more likely to achieve academic success and graduate than those that do not. They want to have year-to-year metrics on these outcomes so that they can demonstrate their contribution to the educational mission of the institution. Although they care about individual students, they trust student affairs practitioners to address individual needs. Field, division, and department leaders need macro-perspective, summative assessment to advance organizational improvement and storytelling to respond to external stakeholders, like the board of trustees.

Reflecting on assessment's deeper roots in student affairs, decades of messaging from leading professional organizations' standards, competencies, and guiding documents, which call for assessment as a means to justify—requiring summative assessment–seems to have resulted in the near absence of professional development and literature on formative assessment. For example, CAS General Standards state that functional areas are required to "use data to demonstrate achievement" (2023, p. 46). Similarly, the *ACPA/NASPA Competencies* for "Assessment, Evaluation, and Research" includes an intermediate skill to "determin[e] the institution's, the division's, or the unit's accomplishment of its missions/goals, re-allocation of resources, and advocacy for more resources" (ACPA & NASPA, 2015, p. 21). Most recently, NASPA released *The Compass Report: Charting the Future of Student Affairs* (2022) that outlined five imperatives for the field, and the first is to "*Strengthen data capacity and highlight evidence about the impact of holistic student support programs and activities,"* (p. 26):

> Faced with questions about whether the value of higher education justifies its cost, we must highlight how our work contributes to some of the biggest issues affecting students' persistence and completion outcomes [...] Student affairs professionals should be equipped to collect, analyze, and communicate the impact of data relevant [...] at each institution. (p. 26)

The use of summative assessment to inform future improvements is also included in some standards. For example, the "Student Learning & Development" competency indicates that practitioners should possess foundational skills to "assess teaching and learning, and incorporate results into future practice" (ACPA & NASPA, 2015, p. 31); "future" alludes to the next semester or academic year—for future cohorts and students. There is no corresponding foundational, intermediate, or advanced level that indicates student affairs professionals should be able to engage in assessment efforts for the current semester, and current cohorts and students. Together, the focus on justification and future improvement implicitly communicates that student affairs professionals need to engage in summative assessment, not formative.

This focus on summative assessment is so pervasive across higher education that the NILOA released a report on the *Grand Challenges in Assessment: Collective Issues in Need of Solutions* (Singer-Freeman & Robinson, 2020) in which "immediate improvements" is listed as one of the grand challenges, stating:

> Assessment findings should be used to direct immediate pedagogical improvements. Too often, assessment findings are not utilized to direct immediate pedagogical improvements, in part because the work of closing the loop in student learning outcomes assessment is too slow to benefit the [measured] students. (p. 6)

The lack of attention that student affairs gives to formative assessment was also reflected during a recent SAAL Structured Conversation, where Levy acknowledged the field's summative focus by stating, "[we] focus so much on helping the future students... We're [going to] make this change in hopes of this intervention being better for the next round of students" (SAAL, 2023a, 39:37). He went on to seemingly call for a reinvigoration of formative assessment, particularly within the equity-centered assessment context. In discussing the removal of barriers influencing student success, Levy noted "what about those students right now that are experiencing those barriers? ...[W]e can't ignore the now" (SAAL, 2023a, 39:57).

We recommend the field increase the usage of formative and summative assessment terminology to intentionally describe the work. Adding formative and summative assessment to student affairs' terminology is a promising way to help the field advance the work, in addition to our recommendations for reducing unnecessary terminology (e.g., evaluation) and consistently using existing terminology (e.g., assessment, measurement).

**Expectations of Student Affairs Educators**

Our historical review highlights a second persistent, and likely unintended, challenge to advancing assessment in student affairs. These well-intended efforts communicate an unrealistic expectation: that student affairs educators bear full responsibility for all facets of the assessment cycle, including the methodological process, alongside all of their other responsibilities. However, measurement is not why they entered the field (EAB, 2011; Henning & Roberts, 2016); they are overwhelmed by their assessment responsibilities and do not feel prepared to engage in the work (Hoffman, 2015; Schuh et al., 2009, 2016).

In addition to the expectations of student affairs educators to engage in assessment, they have a primary responsibility to support students' basic needs–the foundational elements of students' hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943). This primary responsibility was minimized during the 1990s when student learning was prioritized as the field's way to contribute to the educational mission. However, students cannot achieve growth needs, such as cognitive learning and self-actualization, without meeting their basic needs, such as psychological, safety, and belonging. These days, supporting students' basic needs is at the forefront of student affairs educators' minds. For example, the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NCES, 2023) found that in 2019–2020, 22.6% of undergraduate and 12.2% of graduate students experience food insecurity, and 8% of undergraduate and 4.6% of graduate students experience homelessness. Recently, *The Student Mental Health Landscape* (Wiley, 2024) found that 80% of college students are struggling emotionally and 48% needed more help since the pandemic. They also found large numbers of students have anxiety (59%), burnout (58%), and depression (43%). Finally, student affairs educators are working on students' basic need to belong (Strayhorn, 2018), and projections show that the diversity of students, along with their sense of belonging needs, will continue to grow for decades to come (ACE, 2024).

Knowing that assessment cannot be educators' first priority, we believe that assessment also creates a negative emotional response for them because (a) they are unable to complete assessment-related tasks since they "have too much work for one person to complete" (Rickey, 2024, p. 57), and (b) they are typically blamed for their lack of knowledge, value, or effort when assessment does not meet expectations or are unrealized. We argue this is misplaced blame and perpetuates student affairs educators' frustration by overlooking the central issue—the field has yet to adopt realistic expectations for assessment that align with their primary responsibility of meeting the needs of current students. In fact, NASPA (2022) found that 68% of student affairs professionals may leave the field because of “hidden responsibilities that are not transparent in job descriptions or communicated up front” (p. 23). While this does not specifically say assessment-related expectations are hidden responsibilities, there is evidence that only 27.1% of student affairs job postings require assessment-related competencies (Hoffman & Bresciani, 2010). If we know that professional standards and guiding documents (e.g., NASPA, 2022) state and imply that all student affairs professionals should engage in assessment efforts, then it appears that assessment is a hidden job responsibility for almost three-quarters of professionals.

Student affairs employee wellbeing and retention is suffering (e.g., Kim, 2021; Marshall et al., 2016; Naifeh, 2019; NASPA, 2022; Rickey, 2024), and these high expectations are coupled with other wellbeing challenges. HESA is currently experiencing an “understaffing epidemic” (Kim, 2021) where practitioners are working nights and weekends because they do more than one job. Data also shows that 70% of practitioners think the salary and compensation do not align with the responsibilities and may prompt them to leave the field (NASPA, 2022). The recent College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR) survey found that 40% of student affairs professionals are likely to search for a new role in the next year (CUPA-HR, 2023), and NASPA found that almost a third “do not know if they will continue working in the field in the next 5 years” (p. 22).

If they are already on the edge of leaving, because they are expected to work too much for too little pay, our expectations for them to engage in summative assessment to justify their job, their functional area, and their division might be their final straw to leave. “Not only do most student affairs administrators not have the time to devote to assessment, but many do not have an interest in doing assessment or the skills necessary [...], or know how to use assessment results once they have them” (Blimling, 2013 p. 8). The recent *Compass Report* (NASPA, 2022) shared that just over a third (36%) of student affairs practitioners who expect more assessment and evaluation responsibilities in the next five years feel “adequately prepared” for those additional responsibilities; just under half (47%) feel somewhat prepared, though it is unclear how social desirability bias may play into these results. Yet, the field continues to expect practitioners to build their “data analysis and assessment capacities to better understand the scale and impact of student supports” (NASPA, 2022, p. 26) to ultimately justify their work and the field.

We agree with NASPA (2022) that “challenges, if unaddressed, threaten the sustainability of the profession, as some individuals may determine that the requirements of their student affairs roles are too demanding, and the experiences do not meet their expectations” (p. 22). If we know that student affairs professionals (a) do not enter the field with an interest in assessment and measurement, (b) do not feel prepared for these responsibilities, (c) do not have time to engagement in assessment efforts, and (d) have a negative emotional response to assessment that is likely a compounding factor to work satisfaction—when do we address these challenges? When do we adopt realistic expectations for student affairs educators to engage in assessment?

## A Call for Investing in Student Affairs Assessment Professionals and Units

We believe the field struggles with pragmatism and identifying what is realistic compared to the idealized version of assessment. To realistically advance the field, we argue that student affairs must change how it structures responsibilities for assessment. A new approach to these responsibilities requires a significant shift from focusing on student affairs educators' perceived deficits to the structural misalignment between expectations and realities. This requires focusing on student affairs educators' strengths and investing in full-time student affairs assessment (SAA) professionals and units.

We contend that Strine-Patterson's (2022) Multilevel Assessment Process (MAP) provides a strategy for altering our expectations for how student affairs practitioners engage in assessment, because it better represents planning, reflection, improvement planning, and storytelling alongside measurement. While the MAP delineates the unique and intersectional responsibilities of student affairs professionals (i.e., divisional leaders, departmental leaders, and student affairs educators), it does not address how SAA professionals can uniquely contribute to and alongside student affairs practitioners.

In part, we contend this is because the field has not figured out the unique role and responsibilities of SAA professionals as a functional area, meaning a team of people. Thinking about how PK-12 leverages formative and summative assessment terminology, we believe this language can be the key to addressing our persistent challenges to actualize assessment in student affairs. This terminology provides a means to differentiate the responsibilities of student affairs educators from SAA professionals.

The field has been asking student affairs educators to be experts at summative assessment. This is like asking the public school teacher to focus on their students' education, social wellbeing, and emotional wellbeing, while simultaneously proving the value of public education. Rather, public school teachers focus on students in their classroom with formative assessment—knowing their individual efforts contribute to the summative efforts done by someone else in central administrative offices.

Within student affairs, those central offices should be SAA units. We agree that "assessment coordinators use specialized knowledge [and] speak a language unfamiliar to most others" (Roberts, 2024, p. 126) and that "the solution to accountability is not simply hiring one student affairs professional to address assessment" (ACPA, 2007, p. 3). We will never meet the calls for assessment by continuing to place summative assessment expectations on student affairs educators and one assessment professional who tries to coordinate those efforts. It is not realistic for individual coordinators to build the capacity of those who remain overworked, underpaid, and have different priorities. It is also a waste of assessment professionals' education and unique skills to hire them as divisional project managers for assessment. Assessment professionals have "specialized knowledge" (Roberts, 2024, p. 126) with technology, data collection and analysis, and supporting data interpretation and utility for decision-making and storytelling efforts. To establish and maintain a culture of summative assessment, "leadership for assessment in student affairs needs to be more consistent" (Schuh & Gansemer-Topf, 2010, p. 3).

While literature is beginning to drop hints that coordinators of student affairs assessment should have a team, such as “Structures to Organize and Implement Assessment” (Cebulksi, 2024) and “Supervising People in Assessment” (Shefman & Radimer, 2024), there are no articles that articulate why a team of SAA professionals could change the way in which we approach assessment in student affairs and subsequently how that would change our expectations to be realistic for student affairs educators. This article makes that case. We argue that a SAA unit, with a team of professionals, can give student-facing departments more time to work with and focus on students. Divisions need to invest in SAA units for summative assessment efforts, including “personnel [and] funding” (Schuh & Gansemer-Topf, 2010, p. 10) to centrally and integratively support the division and its departments to meet the calls for assessment in student affairs.

Some functional areas have moved in the direction of hiring an individual responsible for assessment within a department, serving a single unit’s needs rather than the division. The reasoning is well intended, however these positions can perpetuate some of the same challenges as student affairs educators leading summative assessment efforts. For example, these positions can act alone and in isolation from other departmental, divisional, and institutional assessment efforts because they focus on one department’s agenda (Sandeen & Barr, 2006). Cebulski amplifies that “tensions arise when departmental priorities do not align with those set by the division” (2024, p. 72).

Moreover, unit-focused assessment positions may be charged to collect data that justifies budget requests. The ACPA/NASPA Competencies (2015) states that an intermediate skill level in Assessment, Evaluation, and Research includes the “use of assessment and evaluation results in determining the …re-allocation of resources, and advocacy for more resources” (p. 21). While it is logical to invest in well-performing programs based on evidence, this practice inherently puts departments in competition with one another for financial resources, and not all departments will have enough funding for a unit-focused assessment position. Even if every department could fund such a position, it would likely create a divisional culture of entrenchment that stifles collaboration, improvement, and divisional storytelling. These departmental positions can detract from the overall goals.

SAA professionals must be centrally organized, resourced, and empowered to allow them to lead *summative assessment efforts*. This article seeks to demonstrate how a dedicated unit of SAA professionals, regardless of institutional size, can advance assessment efforts that department and divisional leaders want, while allowing student affairs educators to lean into their passion and expertise for working directly with students and facilitating *formative assessment efforts*. This kind of approach is in alignment with how assessment efforts were initially talked about in the first and second editions of *Student Services* (Lenning, 1980, 1986). To help reimagine how SAA professionals and student affairs educators can uniquely contribute to assessment, this next section will give examples of responsibilities by utilizing formative and summative assessment terminology and the framework of the MAP (Strine-Patterson, 2022).

**Responsibilities of Student Affairs Assessment Professionals**

Considering a focus on summative assessment utilizing the framework of the MAP (Strine-Patterson, 2022), two examples of responsibilities that SAA professionals should assume are related to (a) goals, objectives, and outcomes, and (b) data strategy.

***Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes***

SAA professionals need to be experts in supporting the division and its departments with writing summative, or community-level (Strine-Patterson, 2022), goals, objectives, and outcomes. After divisional priorities are established, based on the division's mission and strategic plan, SAA professionals should work alongside division and department leaders to write these summative goals, outcomes, and objectives. Student affairs practitioners often struggle with writing measurable objectives and outcomes that are results oriented–demonstrating if efforts, or strategies, result in advancing students' experience, learning and development, wellbeing, or success. Student affairs practitioners are so good at getting things done, likely driven by their personal ethos, that the outcomes and objectives they write can become a measurable to-do list that is not focused on measurable results. Therefore, SAA professionals must work alongside division and department leaders to transform their intentions into meaningful measures that can inform their practice. Education and experience in the field of student affairs, education, or curriculum and instructional design are helpful to support these efforts.

***Data Strategy***

SAA professionals also need to be experts in strategic thinking about data by creating an integrated divisional and departmental "data strategy" (M. Glass, personal communication, March 11, 2024). This includes data flow management from data collection to utility across the division and institution. We recognize this is not an easy or quick task, because "student affairs organizations have struggled to move beyond conducting individual, disparate assessment projects to developing and maintaining an integrative assessment program that permeates all areas" (Barham, Tschepikow, Seagraves, 2013 p. 73). We want to give two examples of what an "integrative assessment program" can look like for a division of student affairs with a SAA unit to lead a centralized and comprehensive data strategy through a strategic survey plan and data collection in third-party systems.

**Strategic Survey Plan**. In the current model, student affairs educators are likely managing multiple surveys to collect summative evidence about their efforts. However, the data that one department wants is often data another department wants, such as sense of belonging data. These data about sense of belonging are also wanted by the division to communicate a comprehensive, cohesive, and succinct divisional story; however, data in the hands of one department cannot contribute to these other efforts.

The duplication of measures is also probably occurring at the same time, because multiple departments think about similar timeframes for their survey administration (e.g., 6-week survey, end of semester survey). Students receiving an onslaught of surveys hurts everyone, because it suppresses their response rates due to both *survey fatigue* and *survey confusion* (Eggleston, 2024). If one of the primary goals of assessment is to improve the student experience, surveys are part of that experience. Therefore, a key function of the centralized SAA professional team is to ensure a cohesive and integrative data strategy to reduce the number of surveys and increase the impact they have for departments, the division, and the institution.

In addition to benefiting the student experience, centralizing survey efforts benefits departments. It still enables the department to get the data they need, because the results can be disaggregated for their student participants, but it gives the added benefit of providing a control group that the department would not have working in isolation. While it is likely that department surveys have some formative assessment measures, SAA professionals are skilled at survey design and administration, and therefore able to advance the summative assessment needs for the division and multiple departments while simultaneously integrating a singular department's formative assessment needs. This also provides a clear example for why a centralized SAA unit is advantageous over a decentralized structure.

Centralized survey planning is not only applicable to home-grown surveys. Participation in national surveys should also be strategically planned on a cycle. For example, many campuses administer the National Survey for Student Engagement (NSSE) every three years in the spring semester. If the department of residence life administers a national survey every two years during the spring semester, then every sixth year these two surveys are going to be administered at the same time. That sixth year, both surveys will likely see their response rates decrease. While overlapping survey administrations never completely go away, a strategic measurement plan from an SAA unit can significantly reduce this issue. Additionally, these national surveys often allow a small set of institutional items, which could be developed to benefit multiple departments and the division.

**Third-Party and Home-Grown Application Data Collection**. Technology is advancing to allow institutions to collect data from third-party and home-grown applications, and institutions are building data warehouses to store and connect these data to support data-informed decision making and storytelling. Departments across student affairs have a plethora of these applications, and these data can contribute to data warehouses for producing data analytics and visualizations (e.g., Boren et al., 2024, SAAL, 2023b; Strine-Patterson & Brooks Nelson, 2024).

Most student affairs departments have at least one application to support their unit's niche administrative processes, which used to be managed through paper filing systems. Because departments use these applications to streamline administrative processes, they do not generally consider that data is collected through these systems that can be leveraged for assessment purposes. Since data collection is not at the forefront of their mind when setting up these applications, the data forms and fields within the applications are not always structured to collect the right data.

SAA professionals need to work alongside student affairs practitioners within departments to understand the department's administrative needs alongside the department, division, and institutional data collection needs. This practice of deep understanding and reflection may lead to restructuring some application forms and fields to equilaterally meet administrative and data collection needs. Some divisions may consider SAA professionals co-managing or managing applications that are utilized by multiple departments. This is one example of how student affairs can begin to embrace the work necessary for data analytics (NASPA, 2022), which ultimately supports turning data into information that supports improvement planning and storytelling.

**Responsibility of Student Affairs Educators**

As reviewed earlier, the CAS Standards for HESA graduate programs have outlined assessment efforts in multiple areas of preparation (see Table 1), but these standards have not differentiated the ways in which practitioners should engage in formative assessment and utilize summative assessment results. Three professional subparts of these professional standards are focused on practitioners' direct work with students, therefore they are prime places to emphasize the ways in which practitioners should engage in formative assessment efforts (i.e., Subparts 5b.1, 5.2, and 5b.3). Subpart 5b.5: Assessment, Evaluation, and Research, is largely focused on summative assessment efforts and should be realigned with professional content to be addressed in HESA doctoral programs. Expecting these summative-related assessment efforts to be learned within a 2-year practitioner-focused master's program is unreasonable. Master's level practitioners should learn to use evidence-based results from research and summative assessment efforts, alongside implementing their own formative assessment efforts.

That being said, if we consider a student affairs educator's work to focus on formative assessment utilizing the framework of the MAP (Strine-Patterson, 2022), two examples of responsibilities that student affairs educators should assume are related to evidence- and theory-based program development and planning, and implementation fidelity.

***Evidence- and Theory-Based Program Development and Planning***

The field is seeing an increased call for individual practitioners to integrate broader theory into their program development efforts, as well as their everyday practices (Manning, et al., 2012; Schuh et al., 2010). Students, parents, and stakeholders expect that student affairs professionals are knowledgeable about best practices, and current theories and research related to the services they provide (Carpenter, 2001). Many argue that student affairs professionals have an ethical obligation to design programs that are firmly grounded in evidence and theory (e.g. Finney & Horst, 2019a; Finney et al., 2021; Pope et al., 2019). Bresciani (2010b) found that even for those who understand how to engage in assessment practices, "without an understanding of theories, [student affairs educators] were having difficulty" (p. 86) engaging in assessment.

The recent updates to the CAS Standards (2023) further emphasize the importance of theory-driven practices, incorporating guidelines for using program theory to clarify cause-and-effect relationships between program activities and desired outcomes (CAS, 2023). Program theory is "the construction of a plausible and sensible model of how a program is supposed to work" and it "clarifies the set of cause-and-effect relationships" connecting activities that students engage in to the intended outcomes (Bickman, 1987, p. 5). This approach ensures that strategies and interventions align with established research and best practices, contributing to effective and meaningful student learning and development. For example, when creating a leadership development program, practitioners working in a student leadership center might use the Social Change Model of Leadership Development (Dugan, 2006) to plan workshops for student club and organization leaders that build self-awareness and foster collaborative skills. By integrating established theories and research into their planning, professionals ensure that their programs are intentional and *capable* of achieving the outcomes.

Program planning, also known as program mapping, involves aligning program components with their intended outcomes, often using tools like facilitation guides (Kerr et al., 2020), program differentiation (Dane & Schneider, 1998), and logic models (e.g., Kekahio et al., 2014). This process helps ensure that every component of a program contributes to its overarching goals. For instance, in a career readiness workshop, mapping might involve linking specific activities—such as resume reviews and mock interviews—to broader outcomes like improved confidence in the job search process. By creating a detailed roadmap, student affairs educators can identify which aspects of their program are most likely to drive success. A helpful question for practitioners might be: "What part of this program would you bet your car on achieving these results?" (Finney & Buchanan, 2020). Such reflective mapping allows professionals to focus resources on strategies that are most likely to yield impactful outcomes, avoiding the inefficiency of untested methods.

***Implementation Fidelity***

Ensuring that programs are implemented as designed—known as *implementation fidelity*—is critical for achieving the intended outcomes of a given program (Finney et al., 2021). In practice, implementation fidelity is critically important for student affairs educators to engage in formative assessment. If implementation fidelity results demonstrate the intended program was not implemented, then any measures about the program are not reliable or interpretable. For example, if student learning outcome measures demonstrate that students did not learn as a result of the program and no implementation fidelity evidence was collected, then student affairs educators cannot know if learning did not occur because the intended program was not implemented or because the intended program was implemented and did not produce the intended results.

This responsibility is particularly important when programs are delivered by individuals that did not develop the program, such as peer leaders, because variations in facilitation can affect the program quality. For example, if peer mentors are trained to deliver a wellness workshop using a structured guide, then student affairs educators must monitor whether the guide is followed consistently by observing sessions, collecting feedback, or using fidelity checklists. If student affairs educators find the guide is not being followed as intended, then they can use results for formative assessment purposes to quickly make adaptations that deliver the intended program for the next group of students.

The most recent updates to the CAS Standards (2023) emphasize the importance of program theory and incorporate guidelines for collecting implementation fidelity data (CAS, 2023). While program theory undergirds program development and execution, implementation fidelity regards the extent to which the programs are implemented as designed (Dhillon et al., 2015). Maintaining high implementation fidelity not only protects the integrity of the program but also provides credible evidence during department reviews. By prioritizing fidelity, professionals ensure that their programs truly reflect the evidence-based designs they were built upon.

## Our Closing Argument

Every student affairs practitioner is charged with and involved in efforts to help students' experiences, learning and development, wellbeing, and ultimately success. In this aim, every practitioner needs to use data (Kruchen-Spaulding & Cyr, 2024; Parnell, 2021), but they should not be expected to create summative data to defend our field.

Using formative and summative assessment terminology alongside the framework of the MAP (Strine-Patterson, 2022), we can begin to conceptualize how SAA professionals can provide a unique and intersectional contribution to assessment in student affairs. Below we offer acknowledgement and recognition to student affairs educators for the load they have been carrying and present a final appeal to department, divisional, and assessment leaders to work towards adopting strategies outlined in this article.

### Our Declaration of Love

This is personal for us. All of the authors graduated from HESA masters programs and have maintained deep connections to the lived experiences of those serving in a student-facing role. We see the challenges to simultaneously navigate students' rising basic needs, mental health, and social wellbeing alongside summative assessment expectations to justify the work. The slow pace of change to shift organizational expectations and structures can make us all feel defeated. In many ways, this article is our love letter to you, the student affairs practitioner–we see you and the weight you are carrying.

As student affairs practitioners who have shifted to full-time student affairs assessment roles, we hear you explain that you were late to an assessment meeting because you were counseling a student whose sorority sister recently committed suicide. Or providing support to students recently displaced due to a fire or financial emergency. Or navigating pressures of developing and implementing institutional free speech policies, their ramifications, and ongoing student protests. Or desperately trying to increase capacity of the campus pantry while your department is operating with 50% of the usual full-time staff. In this context, we have collectively become frustrated and confused at the expectation placed on you to create stellar social and educational student experience, manage regular crisis response, and become measurement-savvy professionals because "the future of the field is in jeopardy" (Henning, 2016, p. 15)… all while earning a modest salary. It is aspirational—not realistic. We deeply hope that this article proposes a way to give you back time and energy, by investing in other professionals to help advance assessment efforts and defend our field's critical work.

### Our Argument of Advocacy

This article is also a plea to consider how our current approach may be part of the problem, as challenged by Richard Dunsworth, a member of the Board of Trustees for the Higher Learning Commission, at the 2024 Assessment Institute (2024). We used to have a plethora of students entering HESA programs for our graduate assistantships, and now as graduate enrollment is declining (Knox, 2023), some HESA programs have been closed or paused (Rehr et al., 2024). Further, 68% of senior student affairs leaders indicate hiring and retaining talent is a current critical issue (NASPA, 2024). We used to hear student affairs professionals recruiting undergraduates into the field; now, we hear them discouraging undergraduates who express an interest. Our biggest threat to sustaining the field of student affairs is not external–it's internal. If we don't have people entering the profession, then we don't have a field. This article demonstrates the well-intended efforts to answer the calls of assessment in student affairs have likely had unintended consequences, which unfortunately coincided with the growing and evolving needs for students' mental health and wellbeing that were not anticipated.

Regardless of institution size, every department wants more staff to do the work. When you, as leaders, have limited funds and everyone wants more people, centralizing the assessment efforts–even by starting with one position–can give every department more time for their staff to work directly with students. Even in small schools, where you may have 2,000 students and less than 20 student affairs professionals, you may not think that you should invest in a SAA professional. As authors, we disagree. We believe there is value in even part-time support to allow your student affairs professionals to focus on their expertise of working directly with students, because all 20 of those staff want more time and are shouldering assessment efforts.

Days before we finalized this article, NASPA President Amelia Parnell reshared 2024 Top Issues in Student Affairs (NASPA, 2024), in which senior student affairs leaders indicated that determining the impact of student affairs and providing staff assessment-related professional development were very important (67% and 47%, respectively). As authors working full-time in student affairs assessment, we are among the biggest champions of assessment work, but let's not translate that to the backs of practitioners whose backs are already breaking. Our ability to advance assessment in student affairs, while recruiting and retaining a talented workforce, is not going to improve unless we change our expectations and approach to this critical work.

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**Appendix**
**Thematic Analysis of Foundational HESA Assessment Texts**

This appendix provides results from a thematic analysis of 14 foundational HESA assessment texts from the past 50 years (see Table 1A). Chapters of each text were coded into categories—Planning, Measurement, Using Results, and Introductions & Conclusions—to determine what proportion of each text addresses measurement versus planning, using results, or other relevant themes. The percentage of pages dedicated to each category was calculated to illustrate focus distribution (see Table 2A). Texts were selected based on criteria such as timeframe (post-1974), relevance to student affairs educators, scholarly credibility, and use in graduate-level curricula. Chapter titles, and where needed, headings and chapter content details, guided categorization. Chapters on methodology were categorized under Measurement, while those discussing strategic planning or goal-setting were assigned to Planning. This coding highlights how assessment literature has shaped and potentially reinforced an emphasis on methodological rigor.

**Table 1A**. *Foundational HESA Assessment Texts Analyzed*

| Book # | Title | Author | Year Published |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Assessing Student Learning and Development: A Guide to the Principles, Goals, and Methods of Determining College Outcomes | Erwin | 1991 |
| 2 | Assessment in Student Affairs: A Guide for Practitioners (1st ed.) | Upcraft & Schuh | 1996 |
| 3 | Student Affairs Research, Evaluation, and Assessment: Structure and Practice in an Era of Change | Malaney | 1999 |
| 4 | Assessment Practice in Student Affairs: An Applications Manual | Schuh & Upcraft | 2001 |
| 5 | Assessment Essentials: Planning, Implementing, and Improving Assessment in Higher Education | Banta & Palomba | 2014 |
| 6 | Five Dimensions of Quality: A Common Sense Guide to Accreditation and Accountability | Suskie | 2014 |
| 7 | Using Evidence of Student Learning to Improve Higher Education | Kuh et., al. | 2015 |
| 8 | Student Affairs Assessment: Theory to Practice (1st ed.) | Henning & Roberts | 2016 |
| 9 | Assessment in Student Affairs (2nd ed.) | Schuh et., al. | 2016 |
| 10 | Student Affairs by the Numbers Quantitative Research and Statistics for Professionals | Sriram | 2017 |
| 11 | Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide | Suskie | 2018 |
| 12 | Research Methods and Applications for Student Affairs | Biddix | 2018 |
| 13 | Student Affairs Assessment, Evaluation, and Research: A Guidebook for Graduate Students & New Professionals | Wise & Davenport | 2019 |
| 14 | Student Affairs Assessment: Theory to Practice (2nd ed.) | Henning & Roberts | 2024 |

**Table 2A**. *Percentage of Pages in Foundational HESA Assessment Texts by Category*

| Category | Book # | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | |
| Benchmarking and Effectiveness | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 4.4 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 11.7 | 3.7 | 0.0 | 2.0 |
| Collaboration with Faculty and Campus Partners | 10.2 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 9.4 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 5.2 | 2.8 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 1.8 |
| Equity, Ethics, Integrity | 0.0 | 3.5 | 0.0 | 5.9 | 8.9 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 2.5 | 7.3 | 0.0 | 10.3 | 0.0 | 7.8 | 12.4 | 4.4 |
| Introductions and Conclusions | 21.2 | 0.0 | 27.8 | 10.6 | 9.1 | 17.5 | 25.5 | 10.2 | 11.3 | 14.1 | 7.8 | 8.4 | 18.3 | 10.0 | 12.3 |
| Leading and Coordinating Assessment | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 5.9 | 5.1 | 12.4 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 6.8 | 0.0 | 8.6 | 2.8 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 3.1 |
| Measurement | 61.2 | 75.0 | 49.4 | 49.5 | 43.7 | 10.3 | 10.6 | 75.7 | 49.2 | 66.7 | 0.0 | 31.8 | 51.2 | 25.3 | 46.8 |
| Planning | 0.0 | 0.0 | 10.5 | 12.5 | 14.5 | 9.4 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 13.0 | 0.0 | 16.4 | 17.8 | 7.1 | 13.5 | 8.5 |
| Program Review, Professional Competencies, and Accreditation | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 1.1 | 0.0 | 6.0 | 0.0 | 3.5 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 10.3 | 0.0 | 7.1 | 16.5 | 2.9 |
| Research | 0.0 | 21.5 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 6.7 | 0.0 | 48.9 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 19.2 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 8.8 | 4.9 |
| Special and Integrated Topics | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 3.3 | 3.0 | 17.5 | 14.9 | 3.7 | 6.2 | 0.0 | 23.3 | 9.2 | 0.0 | 7.7 | 5.1 |
| Use of Results | 7.5 | 0.0 | 12.4 | 11.4 | 9.1 | 17.5 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 6.2 | 0.0 | 18.1 | 15.6 | 4.7 | 5.9 | 7.6 |
| Total | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

*Note*. See Table 1A for the HESA assessment text title associated with each book number