

August 2020



Assessment During A Crisis: Responding to a Global Pandemic

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Executive Summary

In March 2020, institutions abruptly pivoted to remote instruction, sending students, faculty, and staff away from college campuses in response to COVID-19. This report provides an overview of findings from NILOA's national survey of assessment-related changes made in Spring 2020 in response to COVID-19; couples those findings with other reports released from March through July; and provides guidance in the form of “do’s” and “do not’s” for higher education and the field of assessment—looking beyond Fall 2020 toward what needs to be done. While reading the full report and/or specific sections of interest is strongly encouraged, the executive summary provides a high-level overview of select findings in truncated form.

NILOA COVID-19 Survey Finding Highlights

In June 2020, NILOA launched a survey to capture a snapshot of assessment-related changes made during Spring 2020 in response to the sudden shift to remote instruction and to help determine remaining professional development needs. The brief questionnaire focused on changes that were made, potential impacts of those changes on assessment culture, and the role student voice and equity concerns did or did not play in Spring decisions.

Changes Made

- 97% of respondents made changes of some kind during Spring 2020 in response to COVID-19.
- Changes included modifying assignments and assessments, flexibility in assignment deadlines, shifting to pass/fail, and modifying assessment reporting deadlines.
- Less often made changes included acceptance of alternative assignments, modifying the assessment reporting process, modifying course evaluations, shifting to credit/no credit, and changes to assessment roles and responsibilities.
- The majority of institutions made between 3 to 4 changes.

Concerns Raised

- 75% of respondents felt the changes would not negatively impact the assessment culture of their institution.
- The 25% with concerns worried about increased work demands, shifting assessment further away from teaching and learning, and accuracy of measures of learning.

How Decisions Were Made

- Respondents agreed that assessment-related changes were undertaken to address student needs.
- Concerns about students' differential access to technology, alongside concerns about students' ability to learn in remote environments were determining factors in making decisions about what to change.
- Respondents also agreed, however less strongly, that equity concerns drove decisions. However, information gathered from students was less likely to influence decisions on what to change, and students were less likely to be asked to identify their needs prior to decisions being made.

Changes that Should Continue to Support Learning

Survey respondents indicated five areas of change that should continue beyond Spring 2020:

1. Increased Flexibility
2. Empathy and Use of Student Voice

3. Alternative Measures
4. Addressing Inequities
5. Planning for the Future

Remaining Professional Development Needs

42% of respondents stated that all of their professional development needs had been met either in the Spring or over the summer. Remaining needs included:

- Alternative Assessment Examples
- Best Practices for Assessing Online
- Student Affairs Assessment in Remote Settings
- Qualitative Assessment Support and Examples

Part II: Intersections with other Survey Reports and Findings

Other survey reports found similarities in changes made, along with increased use of student feedback in an effort to look internally as opposed to benchmarking externally, when making decisions on how best to support students, faculty, and staff. Concerns that existed pre-COVID were amplified, basic student needs were not met, and the rates at which they were not met were nearly double for students of color; raising concerns on students' ability to engage in learning based on Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs. What is most concerning, is that in the NILOA survey for Spring 2020, concerns about equity, including student voices, and listening to those voices before making changes was something with which less than 30% of respondents strongly agreed. Yet, 90% of university presidents reported being very concerned about the inequitable impact on minority students, while only 45% felt they were successful in ensuring equitable access (Inside Higher Ed, 2020).

Part III: Do's and Don'ts for the Future

1. Do not forget that we are in a pandemic. Still. Do not forget that it is also an inequitable pandemic.
2. Do not cause further harm. Do not support, enable, or endorse policies that perpetuate further inequities or fuel negative perceptions of students.
3. Do not ask students for their approval of a decision that has already been made. Instead, engage with them in advance to help determine a solution.
4. Do not require a higher-level of proof of learning in an online class than you would normally require in a face-to-face setting.
5. Do not forget that this is not the educational experience students wanted or expected. Nor is this a test of online education. And in case you were wondering, it still will not be "online education" in the Fall. It will continue to be a derivative of emergency remote teaching and learning.
6. Do use learning outcomes as a guide and means to design and focus educational offerings.
7. Do listen to student voices AND respond accordingly.
8. Do modify assignments and assessments in ways that are flexible, utilize low-bandwidth, and are based in the principles of equitable assessment.
9. Do be aware of and address systemic inequities.
10. Do engage in trauma-informed and healing-centered pedagogy and assessment.

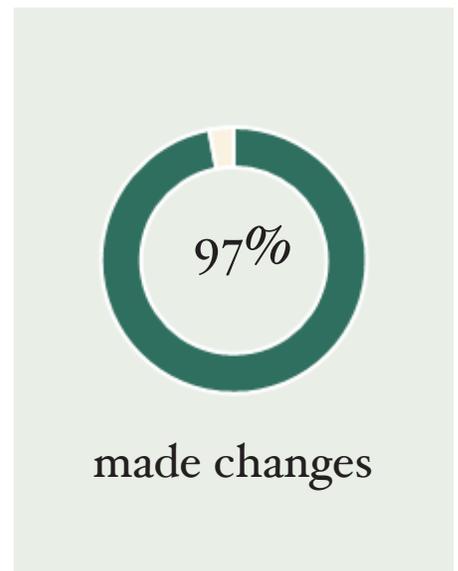
Assessment During a Crisis: Responding to a Global Pandemic

Natasha A. Jankowski

In March 2020, institutions abruptly pivoted to remote instruction, sending students, faculty, and staff away from college campuses in response to COVID-19. Immediately, various organizations created resources, webinars, and administered surveys to capture, document, and inform the massive changes unfolding in real time. Free resources were plentiful and virtual, creating a sea of overwhelming options. At the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA), we joined in, holding weekly webinars including two community check-ins where we synthesized what we were hearing and learning from the shifting ground below our professional feet. We released targeted information and tools focused on supporting conversations for Fall 2020 planning including virtual assignment design conversations, transparency of learning outcomes, telling the story of the decisions that were made with support of communication toolkits, and using curriculum mapping and alignment in future program planning (NILOA, 2020a; 2020b; 2020c). We curated a Google doc of resources compiled from various groups and organizations, regularly updating materials as conversations changed and new issues emerged. I joined in the experience of pivoting to remote instruction, moving my Spring 2020 graduate class to a virtual situation while students were away for Spring Break, not knowing at the time that the class prior had been our last class together in person.

To support the pivot, sharing of resources was rampant, and while the possibility of a Fall that looked somewhat familiar was on the horizon a resurgence of the virus was close behind. Nipping at the heels of the virus spread came protests against police brutality, systemic racism, and racial inequality raising the banner that Black Lives Matter; as well as the looming specter of a national election in November. We find ourselves now entering August, the virus is surging, and Fall 2020 is questionable in terms of what it will look like and who will come.

Due to where we now find ourselves, this report is designed to accomplish three separate goals. The first, is to provide findings from NILOA's national survey of assessment-related changes made in Spring 2020. The second, is to couple those findings with the multitude of other reports and survey findings on COVID-19 released from March through July to provide a synthesis of the current landscape of information. The last is to provide guidance in the form of "do's" and "do not's" for higher education and the field of assessment moving forward—looking beyond Fall 2020 toward what needs to be done.



NILOA COVID-19 Survey Findings

In June 2020, NILOA launched a survey designed to capture a snapshot of assessment-related changes made during Spring 2020 in response to the sudden shift to remote instruction and to help determine remaining professional development needs. The brief questionnaire focused on changes that were made, potential impacts of those changes on assessment culture, and the role student voice and equity concerns did or did not play in Spring decisions. A total of 834 responses were received, which led to a cleaned data set of 813 responses. For information on the respondents and analyses see Appendix A, for a copy of the questionnaire see Appendix B.

66%

of respondents indicated more than one assessment-related change in response to COVID-19.

Of the respondents, 97% made changes of some kind during Spring 2020 in response to COVID-19. That number is in alignment with other surveys reporting 96% of respondents making some type of adjustment to their assessment activities in response to the pandemic (Rice, 2020). The remainder of the findings in this section focus upon the 787 responses—the 97%—who made changes of some kind.

While 97% indicated that changes were made, what sort of changes occurred? The most often mentioned change was *modifications to assignments or assessments* and *flexibility in assignment deadlines* (Figure 1). All the changes listed in Figure 2 are in alignment with those identified in other survey reports on COVID-19 (Blankstein, Frederick, & Wolff-Eisenberg, 2020; Means et al, 2020; Rice, 2020, Watermark, 2020).

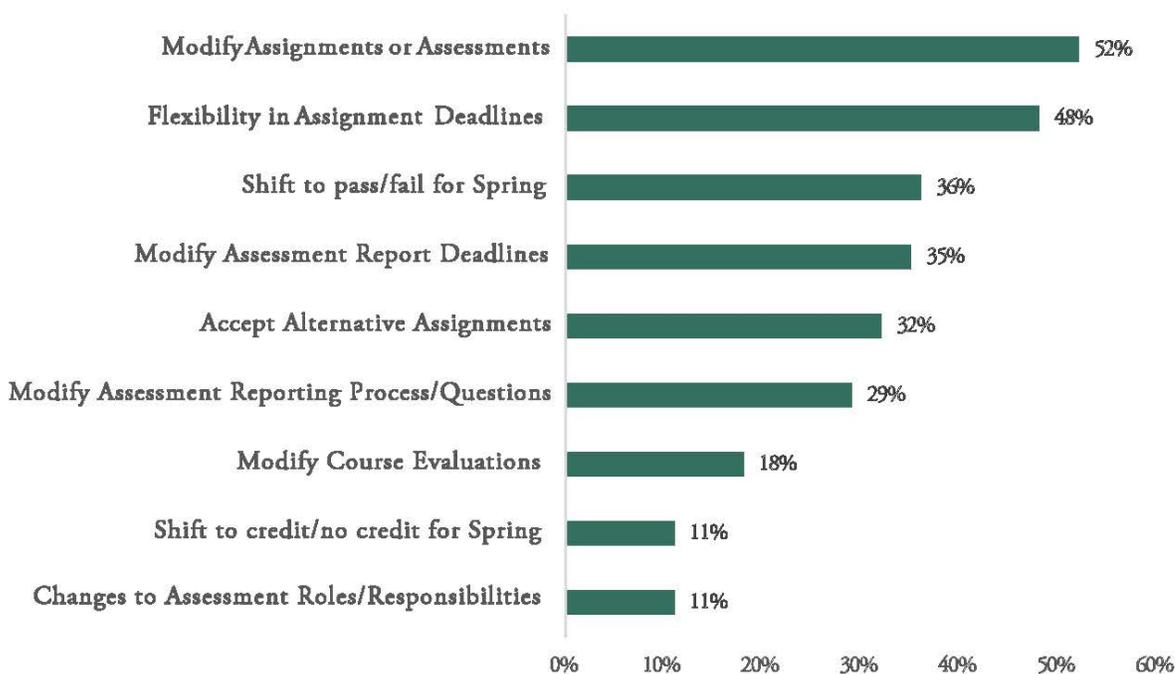


Figure 1. Changes made in Spring 2020 in response to COVID-19.

However, 116 respondents indicated that “other” changes were made. In analyzing the responses in the “other” category, the comments provided additional clarification on respondent selections. For instance, course evaluations would not be used for personnel decisions, or administrators would only see the faculty course evaluations if faculty gave approval—an approach in alignment with an American Sociological Statement (2020) on the faculty review and reappointment process during COVID-19, endorsed by over 50 different disciplinary associations. Respondents shared requirements about pass/fail options, explaining that it was not a mandatory shift automatically applied for all students, but an option provided to students with a decision date much later in the semester, in some cases, made after students saw their final grade. Others shared additional questions that were asked of graduating seniors, explained how they suspended program reviews for the semester, listed the additional surveys created to examine student and faculty experiences, raised concerns about labs and clinical assessments, and expressed disappointment that faculty group scoring of student work would now occur virtually. Only 3 respondents indicated that assessment had simply been cancelled.

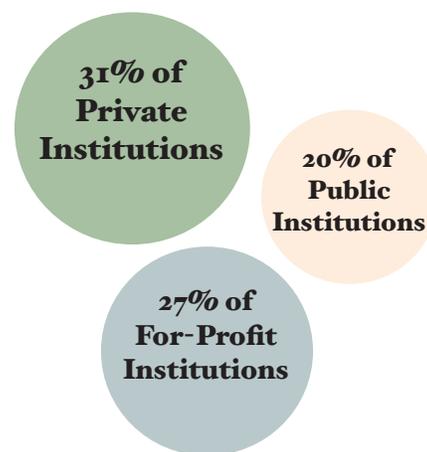
Of the 787 institutions that reported changes were made, 66% identified more than one assessment-related change in response to COVID-19 with the majority making between 3-4 changes. However, and surprisingly, there was no consistency in the combinations of changes made, no groupings or clustering of responses, and no relationship between the types of changes made and answers on perceptions of those changes and/or how those changes were made. There were differences by variables of interest such as selectivity, Minority-Serving Institution status, urbanicity, residential campus, and institutional type.

Differences in Assessment-Related Changes

Due to the inequitable impacts of COVID-19 on race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status, survey responses were examined on institutional selectivity and Minority-Serving Institution variables to explore whether constructs of prestige, perceptions of quality, and systemic racial inequities limited institutional change options. As indicated in Table 1, inclusive institutions were more likely than selective institutions to provide flexibility in assignment deadlines, while selective institutions were more likely than inclusive institutions to shift to pass/fail or credit/no credit, modify assignments, accept alternative assignments, and modify assessment reporting processes.¹

1. Regarding public, private and for-profit institutional differences, the initial data run indicated numerous statistical differences between for-profit responses and those of public and private institutions. However, there were only n = 11 for-profits in the data set, suggesting caution in sharing of the differences. Thus, the only item shared is where there was a statistically significant difference between public and private institutions.

Modified Course Evaluations



Public institutions were the least likely to modify course evaluations.

Changes Made	Inclusive	Selective
Modify Assignments or Assessments	63%	75%
Flexibility in Assignment Deadlines	67%	57%
Shift to Pass/Fail	41%	57%
Accept Alternative Assignments	37%	47%
Modify Assessment Reporting Process or Questions	34%	42%
Shift to Credit/No Credit	11%	20%

Table 1. Statistically significant changes made in Spring 2020 in response to COVID-19 by institutional selectivity.

Table 2 outlines statistically significant differences between changes made by Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) compared to Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). PWIs were more likely than MSIs to modify assignments or assessments, modify the assessment reporting process, and modify course evaluations. However, MSIs were more likely to shift to credit/no credit options for students than PWIs. On all other identified changes, no statistically significant differences were found.

Changes Made	Minority-Serving Institutions	Predominantly White Institutions
Modify Assignments or Assessments	63%	70%
Modify Assessment Reporting Process or Questions	32%	39%
Shift to Credit/No Credit	20%	14%
Modify Course Evaluations	18%	25%

Table 2. Statistically significant changes made in Spring 2020 in response to COVID-19 by Minority-Serving Institution or Predominantly White Institution.

Given concerns about connectivity issues, bandwidth, and Internet access for rural students, responses were examined by urban and rural institutions. Rural institutions were more likely than urban to modify course evaluations, but less likely than urban institutions to shift to pass/fail and modify assignments or assessments (Table 3).

Changes Made	Urban	Rural
Modify Assignments or Assessments	70%	64%
Shift to Pass/Fail	53%	33%
Modify Course Evaluations	22%	31%

Table 3. Statistically significant changes made in Spring 2020 in response to COVID-19 by Rural or Urban location.

Due to possible differences in Spring assessment-related changes for residential campuses that had to send students home, and non-residential campuses that did not, responses were examined by

residential status (Table 4). Residential campuses were more likely than non-residential campuses to provide flexibility in assignment deadlines, shift to pass/fail, accept alternative assignments, and to modify assessment reporting processes and course evaluations.

Changes Made	Non-Residential	Residential
Flexibility in Assignment Deadlines	47%	58%
Shift to Pass/Fail	41%	55%
Accept Alternative Assignments	38%	45%
Modify Assessment Reporting Process or Questions	34%	41%
Modify Course Evaluations	20%	27%

Table 4. Statistically significant changes made in Spring 2020 in response to COVID-19 by Residential and Non-Residential status.

In addition to the variables explored thus far, differences have been consistently seen by institutional type in prior NILOA surveys (Jankowski, Timmer, Kinzie, & Kuh, 2018; Kuh, Jankowski, Ikenberry, & Kinzie, 2014; Kuh & Ikenberry, 2009). When examining changes made by Associate, Baccalaureate, Master, Doctoral, and Special institutions, statistically significant differences were found for each choice item except for modification of assessment reporting processes (Figure 2).

- Associate degree granting institutions (33%) were *least likely* to accept alternative assignments, while Master’s institutions (50%) were the *most likely*, however, Associate degree granting institutions (74%) were *more likely* than all other types to be flexible in submission deadlines for assignments.
- Doctoral institutions (75%) and Specialized institutions (85%) were *more likely* than other institutional type to modify assignments or assessments, while Specialized institutions were *most likely* to report changes to assessment-related roles and responsibilities (24%).
- Master’s degree granting institutions (21%) were *more likely* to shift to credit/no credit than Associate degree granting institutions (10%), while Doctoral degree granting institutions (57%) were *more likely* than Baccalaureate (45%) and Associate (38%) to shift to pass/fail for the Spring semester/term.
- Baccalaureate degree granting institutions (54%) and Associate degree granting institutions (51%) were *more likely* than all other types to make changes to the timing and submission of assessment reports, while Baccalaureate degree granting institutions (33%) were *more likely* than Associate (13%) to modify course evaluation questions.

Changes Made in Spring 2020 in Response to COVID-19

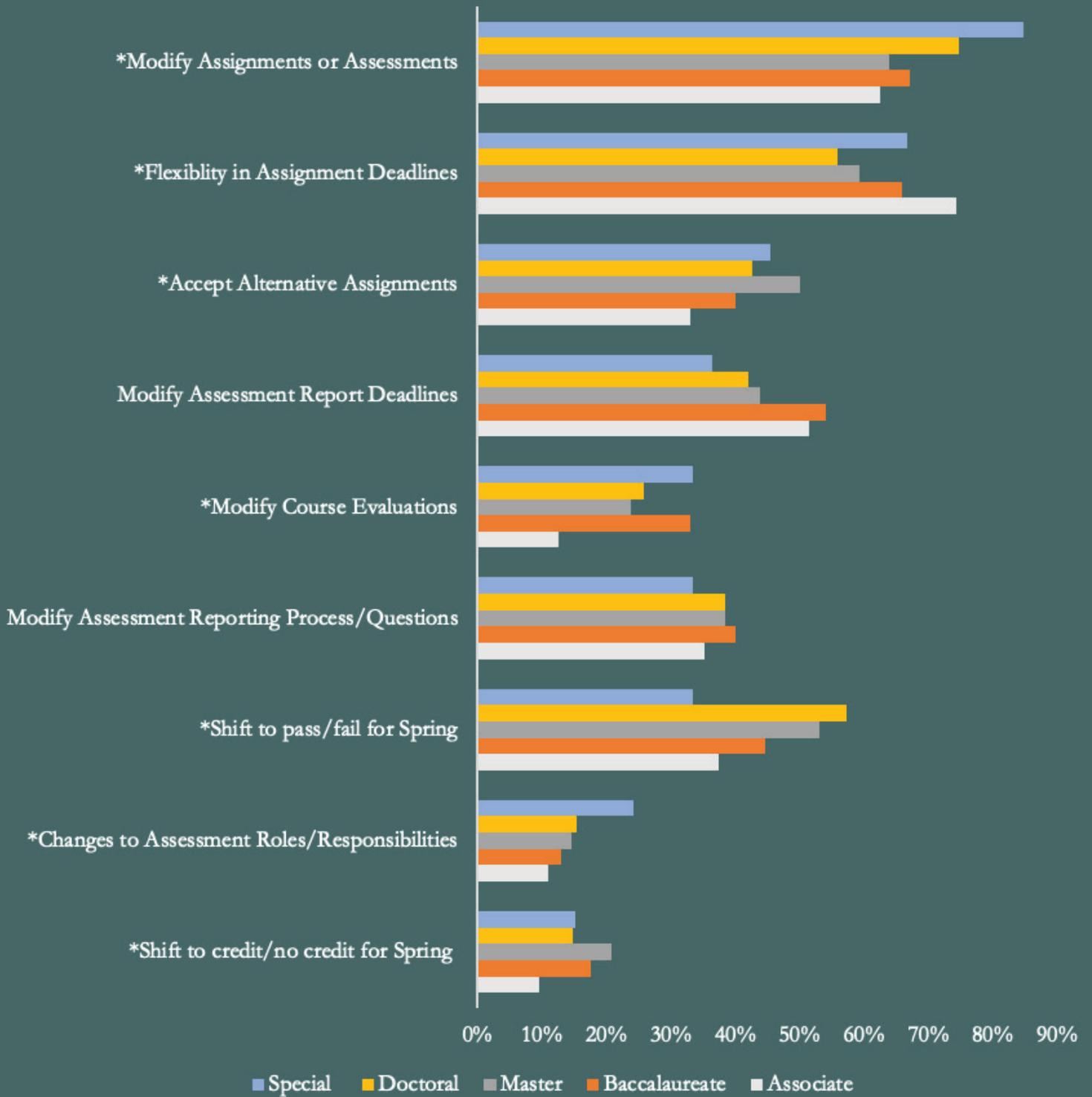


Figure 2. Changes made in Spring 2020 in response to COVID-19 by Institutional Type, * indicates a statically significant difference.

Concerns about Impact of Changes

While various assessment-related changes were made in response to COVID-19 during Spring 2020, the questionnaire inquired as to whether respondents were concerned about any possible negative impacts of those changes on the assessment culture of the institution. Our concern was whether certain decisions would be perceived as or serve to set back assessment culture development or reinforce perceptions of assessment as a compliance activity. Thankfully, 75% of respondents were NOT concerned that the changes made in response to COVID-19 would negatively impact the culture of assessment at the institution, while 25% were concerned.

- Associate degree granting institutions (29%) were *more concerned* about potential negative impacts to assessment culture than all other institutional types.
- Faculty were *more concerned* (29%) about negative impacts than administrators (21%) and assessment professionals (21%).
- Non-residential campuses (29%) were *more concerned* than residential campuses.
- Public institutions (26%) were *more concerned* than private (15%) and for-profit institutions (18%).
- No differences were found by institutional selectivity, MSI/PWI, or rural/urban.

For respondents who indicated concern, an open-ended follow-up question inquired as to what the concern might entail. Of the 137 respondents indicating concern, 120 provided responses. Concerns focused on three main areas: ability to meet increased work demands; separation of assessment from teaching and learning; and issues of measurement and data accuracy.

Increased work demands. Respondents reported feeling overworked, mentioning that prior to COVID-19 they were already operating beyond capacity and that current demands and requirements pushed them over the limit. Concerns were raised about mental health, ability to stay focused and meet work-related requests and needs, and that without constant attention the work of assessment would be stalled. In-person meetings with faculty and administrators were cancelled, shifting attention away from group dialogue on assessment data and onto assessment professionals to review data and provide direction to departments, colleges, and the institution. Respondents expressed concerns that upon return to campus, assessment would remain the purview of the office of assessment and not something done collectively throughout an institution, stalling and setting back cultural development on the role and purposes of assessment over time.

29%

of faculty were concerned about negative impacts of assessment-related changes on assessment culture.

29%

of associate degree granting institutions were concerned about negative impacts on assessment culture.

Assessment divorced from teaching and learning. Respondents shared that in the abrupt emergency pivot to remote instruction, assessment was pushed to the side, sending signals to faculty that assessment was not important or helpful in the shift to remote instruction, serving to distance assessment from teaching and learning. Professional development offerings focused on online instruction and technology, not on assessment or learning. As one respondent wrote, “without a focus on assessment, faculty are improving instruction based on what?” Others raised concerns that administrators pointed to assessment as something to which “overworked faculty have earned a pass on this year”, fostering feelings of uncertainty on where assessment fit within the institution or how it might restart when it is “now seen as optional by faculty.” As one respondent wrote, “It is a delicate dance of flexibility, compassion, normalcy, and compliance.”

Accuracy of measures of learning. With students’ attention drawn in various directions, respondents raised concerns about data being compromised, students cheating or falsifying work, and having accurate representations of learning from Spring 2020. Others raised concerns about issues of equity in demonstrating learning and faculty inflexibility to responsive and different measures. One respondent wrote, “before students even logged in remotely the first time, faculty believed academic standards were lowered, and that instead of making changes to how we assess students, they reverted to more historical means of testing, proctoring, and reducing perceptions of cheating as opposed to changing assessment to reflect reality.” Others lamented that the only time they were contacted by faculty was for information on preventing cheating and/or information on how to implement auto-graded multiple choice/completion assessments, another respondent stated, “rather than summative projects or practicums that better gauge skills-based learning—it is like faculty forgot everything they knew about meaningful assessment.”

Throughout the open-ended responses, a distinction was raised between the annual assessment reporting process at an institution versus the ongoing assessment of student learning in courses and programs. While assessment reporting processes were stalled or delayed, the assessment of student learning should be ongoing and was seen by respondents as instrumental to Fall planning; an important distinction between the reporting process and the improvement cycle that may have been missed by faculty and administrators in the pivot to remote instruction.

“It is a delicate dance of flexibility, compassion, normalcy, and compliance.”

-NILOA Survey Respondent

How Decisions Were Made

NILOA has been interested in exploring the relationship between equity and assessment (Montenegro & Jankowski, 2017) as well as placing the student in a more central role in assessment activities (Montenegro & Jankowski, 2020). For these reasons, a series of statements regarding possible drivers of assessment-related changes focused on students and equity were posed to survey takers (Figure 3). This is not to say these are the only drivers of decisions or groups with which to confer. Faculty and staff, and even health departments or state mandates/guidance were drivers of changes made in Spring 2020. Instead, the statements serve to draw attention to the need to consider equity and students in light of evidence of worsening equity gaps and magnifying of inequities for students (Gallagher, 2020; Mangan, 2020).

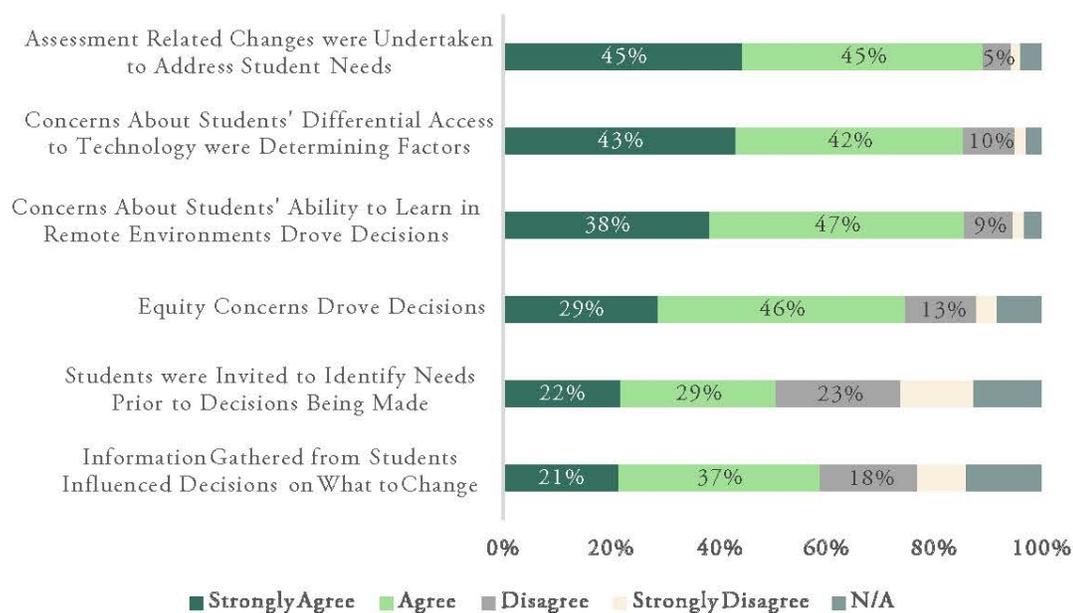


Figure 3. Responses for those who indicated that changes were made regarding strength of agreement with the student and equity statements.

Of concern, 8% marked “Not Applicable” that equity concerns drove decisions to make changes and 17% disagreed to varying degrees—meaning that a quarter of respondents did not agree that decisions made considered equity. Further, 37% disagreed and 13% marked “Not Applicable” that students were invited to identify needs prior to decisions being made. This may have been due to timing and some decisions—such as moving to remote—that would have been made without student involvement. Even among those that gathered information from students, 27% disagreed that the information influenced what to change.

The Data Dive Box on the following page provides a brief overview of various statistical differences in responses by variables of interest.

Data DiveBox

Addressing Students' Needs

Private institutions (50%) were more likely than public institutions (42%) to strongly agree, and Baccalaureate institutions (94%) were the more likely than all other institutional types to agree that changes were undertaken to address students' needs. No statistically significant results were found by position of respondent (administrator, assessment professional, or faculty), institutional selectivity, urbanicity, residential status, or classification as an MSI regarding assessment-related changes being undertaken to address students' needs.

Equity Driving Decisions

Faculty (36%) were more likely than administrators (26%) and assessment professionals (26%) to indicate that they strongly agreed that equity concerns drove decisions, while assessment professionals (18%) were more likely than administrators (11%) and faculty (10%) to disagree that that was the case. No differences were found by selectivity, residential status, or classification as an MSI. Private institutions (52%) were more likely than public institutions (44%) to agree, while urban institutions (30%) were more likely to strongly agree than rural institutions (22%) that equity concerns drove decisions. Lastly, Baccalaureate institutions (80%) were more likely than all other institutional types to agree that equity concerns drove decisions to make changes.

Differential Technology Access

Inclusive institutions (47%) were more likely than selective institutions (39%) to strongly agree that concerns for students' differential access to technology (including reliable Internet) were determining factors in making changes. Assessment professionals (16%) were more likely than administrators and faculty to disagree that was the case, while Master's institutions (52%) were the most likely to agree, and Doctoral institutions (35%) the least likely. No differences were found by MSI, control, urban/rural, or residential.

Ability to Learn in Remote Environment

Faculty (43%) were more likely than all other positions to strongly agree that concerns about students' ability to learn in their remote environments drove decisions to make changes. Inclusive institutions (43%) more likely than selective (35%) to strongly agree, and Baccalaureate (47%) were more likely to strongly agree than Doctoral institutions (31%). No differences were found by control, urban/rural, MSI, or residential status.

Identify Needs Prior

39% of faculty disagreed that students were invited to identify needs via survey, focus groups, phone calls, etc. prior to decisions being made. PWIs (40%) were more likely to disagree than MSIs (23%) that students were invited to identify needs prior, and Doctoral institutions were the most likely to indicate "Not Applicable" (16%) as a response. No differences were found by selectivity, control, urban/rural, or residential status.

Student Data Influenced Decisions

Minority-Serving Institutions (70%) were more likely than PWIs (57%) to not only agree, but strongly agree that information gathered from students influenced decisions on what to change. Baccalaureate (27%) and Master's institutions (27%) were more likely than doctoral institutions (17%) to agree. No differences were found by selectivity, residential status, urban/rural, position type, or control.

The good news is, 90% agreed that assessment related changes were undertaken to address students needs. Further, 85% agreed that concerns about students' differential access to technology were drivers of changes made, along with 85% agreeing that concerns about students' ability to learn in remote environments was a driver. Yet, only 51% agreed that students were invited to identify their needs prior to decisions being made, and only 58% agreed that information gathered from students actually influenced what to change.

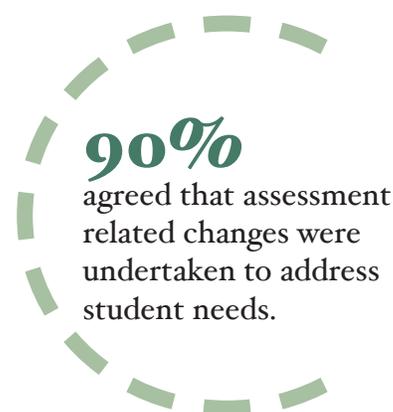
Changes that Should Continue to Support Learning

While various assessment-related changes were made in Spring 2020 in response to COVID-19, not all of the changes were temporary or should be. To determine which changes respondents wanted to see continue beyond Spring 2020, we posed an open-ended question and 358 respondents offered replies that fell into five different, but inter-related, categories:

1. Increased Flexibility
2. Empathy and Use of Student Voice
3. Alternative Measures
4. Addressing Inequities
5. Planning for the Future

Increased Flexibility

Increased flexibility included comments that focused upon providing additional options to students that reflect life's realities and broadened where faculty and the institution thought students were able to learn. They included additional options for student choice, with a focus upon course designs allowing flexibility of assessments per students' choices. Increased flexibility was also directed towards faculty who were able to try different methods when teaching or assessing student learning. It also included a focus on offering multiple learning options such as dual synchronized options to attend class in multiple ways because "some problems are beyond student control and we shouldn't cause harm because of that." Increased flexibility was also linked to a realization that the "whole mentality of you have to show up to learn in front of me so I can see you are paying attention means that your health is not as important as my class, and I just can't support that argument anymore."



“

One of our faculty members offered her students the opportunity to retake their exams online because of the shift to remote learning. Unsurprisingly, the students who retook their exams scored higher after reading the feedback from the first exam and having the opportunity to take it again. Not only did the students earn significantly higher grades, but the instructors course evaluation feedback also reflected that the students appreciated the support. When she compared both students' achievement and her past scores on course evaluations, both had improved from previous times she taught the course. If the goal of higher education is truly for students to learn, I would hope that our faculty who discovered new strategies to assist students achieve their goals would continue to offer them in the future. I also think that offering students more time to decide if they want to change their grade from a letter grade to pass/fail should be continued. After this experience, the deadlines seem pretty arbitrary; focused more on what's easiest to manage—in terms of institutional red tape—than what is most supportive of students and their needs.

-NILOA Survey Respondent

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Empathy and Use of Student Voice

Second only to comments on being flexible were statements supportive of increased use of student voice and a stronger commitment to empathy with students. Using student voices to make decisions, engaging in formative feedback and after-action review with students about what is working for them and what is not, and creatively solving problems in partnership with students were key elements of these comments. Additionally, shifting the mindset to engage with students to determine what is feasible and doable, as well as a desire to keep policies that were student-focused and supportive of student health, well-being, learning, success, finances, and engagement with the university community were commonalities. A focus upon compassion and concern for students showed itself, as one respondent wrote, “as though a bond grew between students and faculty as a result of the shared experience of actually having to learn together—I don't want to see that go away.” That bond appeared in end of term survey responses, where “It was like our faculty suddenly remembered that they actually care for students, so much so that the most common answer students reported in a survey at the end of the semester was that they hoped faculty remained as empathetic and understanding to the complexity in their lives as they were this Spring.” The greater attention paid to individual students and personal factors that impacted their learning positioned students as experts of their own experience.

“

We learned a lot in the crisis about how we can alter assessments to mitigate student anxiety and stress, focus them to desirable difficulties of content rather than undesirable difficulties of text anxiety or how to game multiple choice exams. Extended time on exams and deadlines for papers also helped with stress but didn't decrease performance—and many students didn't even use the extended time. The knowledge that they COULD take the time helped with stress. Let's carry forward these better practices.

-NILOA Survey Respondent

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Alternative Measures

Along with increased flexibility and newfound appreciation for and understanding of the student experience came the use of alternative measures of student learning including increased use of reflection and less reliance on exams. While there was a greater emphasis on multi-modal learning, there was a desire to stay away from proctoring, and instead embrace authentic forms of assessment; providing students with options on how best to demonstrate their learning. There was a marked shift away from “memorization exams to higher-level thinking assessments” with faculty commenting on how much more they enjoyed the new assignments and the information gained about students and their learning from them. Further, honing in on essential learning outcomes of a course meant that faculty better understood the role of assessment in course design and were more open to allowing students to choose the format of the assignment they wanted to submit; whether it was creating a podcast, writing a paper, or conducting a survey. Student affairs assessment identified a movement away from larger surveys to more “point-of-contact surveys and leveraging existing data”.

“

I felt that faculty started to shift from surface level assessments that students could easily answer with help from outside sources to assessments that required more critical thinking skills and assessed more than just facts. Online proctoring is only a requirement if we are testing rote memorization, but a new focus on assessment designs that foster integrity and support assessment as learning does not require dependency on remote test proctoring services which disproportionately marginalize minority students and students lacking technology resources. If nothing else, the COVID-19 remote learning experience helped get the conversations started about improving assessment practices to be about learning.

-NILOA Survey Respondent

”

Addressing Inequities

“Addressing inequities that face our students cannot go away after Spring” a respondent strongly declared. Addressing inequities involved utilizing universal design for learning, cultural concerns about students' well-being who have experienced years of inequities,

and a stronger mission “to identify as many barriers to equity as possible and do our best to eliminate said barriers.” The pandemic exposed inequities in student technology availability and economic circumstances. As one respondent noted, “Just because we have access to technology through university contracts doesn’t mean our students do and just because we offer it at a ‘discount’ doesn’t mean they can acquire it either. Students need free Wi-Fi and technology to actively participate in the university community.” Others agreed stating that “if it is a requirement to how we will assess students, we should give them the technology they need.”

“

COVID-19 helped us understand individual student needs rather than aggregate student needs, which allowed us the opportunity to look at diversity, equity, and inclusion in our assessment activities. I hope that remains a trend and stays a part of our institution’s assessment culture. I am not sure we could have shifted to it without the COVID crisis, but we have the opportunity now to have a unified, consistent, evidence-based “student first” culture that strongly encourages faculty to use more effective teaching and really know who our students are and what they need.

-NILOA Survey Respondent

”

Planning for the Future

The last category of responses focused on planning for the future with the desire to never be unprepared for this experience again. Emergency plans for events at the scale of the pivot to remote instruction, plans for moving fully online if needed in the future, widescale pedagogy training for all faculty, and plans to hire for teaching and learning were listed as possibilities. As one respondent stated, “Professors need to be strong in their teaching whether online or on the ground. Bad in person faculty were bad online teachers so what will we do about it in the future?” While faculty were more involved in teaching in the Spring 2020 semester than they had been in the past, many noted to the detriment of their research, students acknowledged the difference in faculty involvement and wanted plans to ensure a focus on teaching would carry over beyond the Spring semester.

Remaining Professional Development Needs

The last question in the survey asked all respondents, even those who reported no assessment-related changes being made, to indicate any unmet professional development needs and 355 respondents provided comments. Of those, 42% stated that all their professional development needs had been met either in the Spring or over the summer and some indicated that they themselves are responsible for providing professional development to faculty and staff.

Those who indicated remaining professional development needs listed managerial needs such as engaging and managing staff remotely, equity support through equity and anti-racist training on assessment and teaching practices, and technology issues such as video conferencing support and how best to facilitate online training. Specific topics of focus related to assessment including:

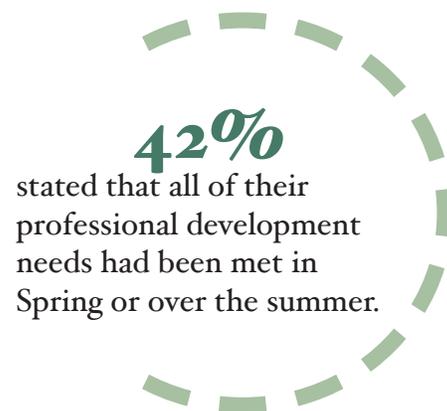
- Lab assessment online
- Alternative assessment examples
- Student Affairs assessment for a remote setting
- Qualitative assessment
- How best to handle student academic conduct in an online setting
- Best practices for assessing online
- Time to review and implement everything that has been learned

Open-ended responses also shared that professional development funds were cut, and that they miss opportunities to network and see colleagues. There was a general desire for collaboration with others to share and learn together—both internal and external to the institution. As one respondent wrote, “I need help connecting with our faculty development office and IT. I have no idea why I have been left out of the loop or on the side. Do I need to become a certified instructional designer when I already have the skills—don’t they see it is all assessment!?” Others shared their worries, concerns, loss, and fears. I appreciate and see you and thank you for your honesty.

Looking forward, future professional development needs included examples of how programs told the story of decisions made and lessons learned from Spring and Fall, along with resources and support to “explicitly move assessment away from standardized, centralized, uniform reporting, and toward contextualized, responsive processes.” Further, the urgency of addressing systemic barriers for students was raised in various ways, seeking guidance on how to use assessment data to “spur more challenging discussions about the systemic practices that we perpetuate that impact students’ access to and ability to succeed in higher education.”

Part II: Intersections with other Survey Reports and Findings

While seemingly everyone made changes, the magnitude of the shift and the focus of the changes differed. In a survey of 308 chief online officers in May 2020 undertaken by Quality Matters, “the typical institution had a week or two to convert over 500 courses to remote

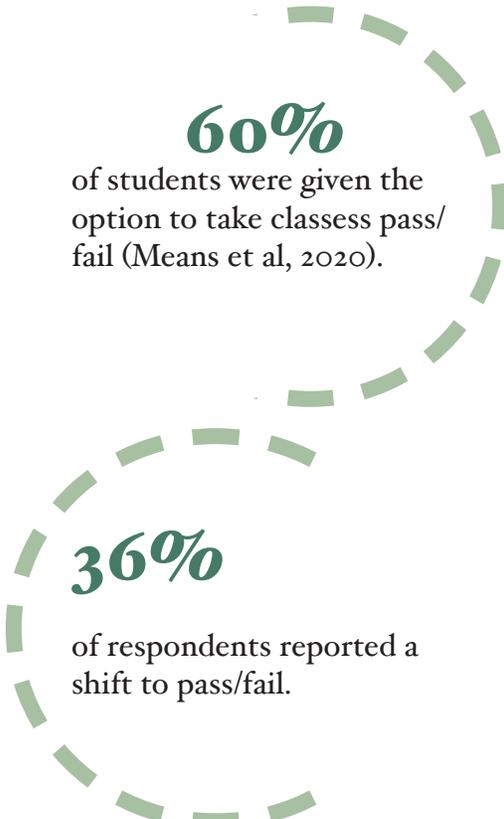


instruction, and that number rose to more than 900 at the typical regional public university and over 2,000 at enterprise institutions and research universities. Accounting for multiple sections of courses, which, in many cases, had their own instructors, syllabi, readings and activities, nearly doubles the number of courses to be converted” (Garrett et al, 2020, p. 8). Further, chief online officers, a position that one might think would exist at an institution more prepared for online instruction at scale, reported the pivot was challenging due to 75% of the faculty, along with 62% of students, having low levels of preparedness to engage online. 50% of the faculty had never taught online and instructional design staff was insufficient in size to handle the task, leaving 61% of faculty to take the lead in remote course redesign (Garrett et al, 2020). Those findings are similar to other surveys that reported 43% of students had not taken any online classes prior to the Spring semester with 21% having only taken one class prior (Means et al, 2020). Resources supported technology, professional development for faculty, and laptops for students, with less resources directed towards Internet access and accessibility accommodations for students, and little to no mention of learning or assessment as connected to the shift to remote instruction. Thus, the feeling reported by NILOA survey respondents of assessment being side-lined or not seen as useful to the pivot rings true elsewhere.

Further, while assessment professionals reported feeling overwhelmed and overworked in the NILOA survey, they were not alone. A member survey by the Association for Institutional Research (AIR) (2020) indicated overwhelming surges in the number of data requests to IR, including a deeper dive into disaggregated data and increased requests to survey students, faculty, and staff. Of note, the data collection and analysis process were internal looking to better understand “our students and our faculty”, not to look externally to how peers were responding or to benchmark policies, a shift which aligns with institutional leadership that reported that only 5% were engaged in peer benchmarking in the pivot (Inside Higher Ed, 2020).

Changes Made

Changes identified by respondents to the NILOA survey mirror other reports, although to differing degrees of change. For instance, 60% of students in a May-June survey reported being given the option to take their classes as pass/fail (Means et al, 2020), as opposed to the 36% of NILOA survey respondents who reported a shift to pass/fail. Further, the Watermark (2020) survey found that in response to COVID-19, 63% of respondents considered or implemented changes to grading policies and 40% of institutions “have or are considering reevaluation and adaptation to policies for transfer-in of external credits” (p. 33), which is in alignment with the reported flexibility shared within the



60%

of students were given the option to take classes pass/fail (Means et al, 2020).

36%

of respondents reported a shift to pass/fail.

NILOA survey responses. Further, students reported extensions of assignment deadlines and flexibility in submission timelines (Blankstein, Frederick, & Wolff-Eisenberg, 2020), which were the top two changes identified in the NILOA survey.

Much like the clarifying comments in the open-ended responses to modifications in course evaluations in the NILOA survey, 64% of respondents to the Watermark (2020) survey plan to use the results of course evaluations to inform changes to teaching and learning. The intention to use information from the Spring to inform future developments is echoed in the survey of university presidents in March, April, and June by Inside Higher Ed (2020), with 41% incorporating feedback from students and faculty to improve since Spring.

Assessment as a Priority?

The NILOA survey found that out of all respondents, only 3 (less than 1%) indicated that assessment had stopped altogether. However, an ongoing concern raised by those in the field is whether assessment will remain a priority. In the survey of 858 respondents from 706 different institutions conducted in May 2020 by Watermark, they found increased prioritization of assessing student learning that was expected to continue for Fall 2020. Supporting this finding, Rice (2020) reported a 49% increase in importance of assessment in Spring 2020, but 61% reported no change in resources either.

As reported in the NILOA survey, assignments were modified, and faculty offered additional flexibility to students. Watermark (2020) respondents indicated increased use of direct measures of assessment with 97% relying on student papers and assignments and 95% relying on rubrics. In support, 64% of students reported that they experienced frequent quizzes and assignments and flexible deadlines, but struggled with remote labs (Means et al, 2020) and completing field experiences like clinicals and teaching placements (Watermark, 2020). Students reported that collaborative (i.e., group projects), technical (such as labs), and specialized assignments (that required access to the library for instance) were the most difficult to complete, along with those that involved multi-media (such as creation of a video, podcast, or website) (Blankstein, Frederick, & Wolff-Eisenberg, 2020).

Means and colleagues (2020) found that students were more satisfied with their remote course when given assignments that asked them to express what they had learned and what they still needed to learn, and were given frequent quizzes to break learning into shorter chunks. The more faculty utilized these approaches, the more satisfied students were with the course at 68% satisfied versus 50% satisfied in courses without them. Of the eight recommended online teaching practices offered at the end of their survey report, the two with the most impact

**Only 3
respondents—
less than
1%—stopped
assessment
altogether at
their institution.**

for students were inclusion of personal messages to students about how they were doing in the course and course assignments that asked students to reflect on what they had learned and what they still needed to learn (Means et al, 2020), approaches that align with meaningful, authentic assessment practice.

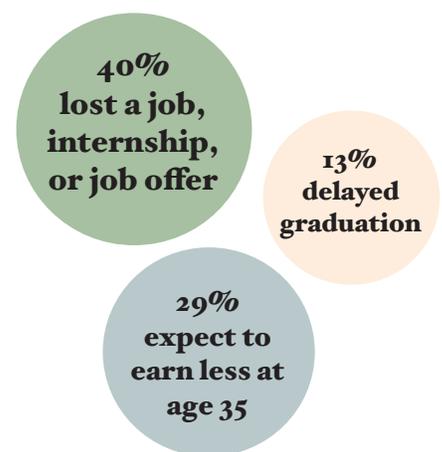
Student Feedback and Inequities

In the open-ended responses to the NILOA survey, respondents indicated a desire to continue listening to and incorporating the student voice in institutional decision-making. Watermark (2020) also reported a heightened valuing of student feedback in order to understand the current student experience, with 87% of participating institutions placing a high priority on using student feedback to understand and improve the student experience.

When students were queried about their experience, they reported difficulties in balancing school, work, and home responsibilities as found by Blankstein, Frederick, and Wolf-Eisenberg (2020) in a survey of 21 colleges and universities and 15,000 students. Further, students reported that it has hard to find a quiet space to study, with over 20% listing reliable access to Internet as a problem. Connectivity issues was also reported in a survey of more than 1,000 college students whose coursework moved from in-person to remote in the Spring, with data collected between May and June (Means et al, 2020). Findings stated that while 95% of students had Internet, 44% experienced connectivity issues that were serious enough to interfere with their ability to attend or participate in their courses and 23% experienced hardware or software issues. While 55% of students reported having a hard time finding a place to do their course, 54% had a hard time fitting the course in with their home and family responsibilities, 31% had a hard time fitting it into their work schedule, and 45% felt too unwell mentally to participate (Means et al, 2020).

Due to compounding factors, students are questioning whether to return to campus and what the impacts of the pandemic mean to them personally, physically, and mentally. A survey of 1,500 students at a large public institution that examined the causal impact of the pandemic on students' current and expected educational outcomes found 13% delayed graduation; 40% lost a job, internship, or job offer; and 29% expect to earn less at age 35, furthering socioeconomic divides (Aucejo et al, 2020). More troubling, challenges were not uniformly distributed across college students with minority students reporting higher levels of stress and need. White students were more able than their minority student peers to get access to computers and laptops which is concerning because, "it is clear that it would have been extremely difficult—if not impossible—to participate in higher education during the prior term without a computer or laptop" (Blankstein, Frederick, & Wolff-Eisenberg, 2020, p. 8).

Widening Inequities



Students experienced COVID differently by race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status (Aucejo et al, 2020).

The issues students are experiencing and grappling with today are not new, they have simply been exposed, exacerbated, and amplified (APLU, 2020). What is concerning is that in the NILOA survey for Spring 2020, concerns about equity, including student voices, and listening to those voices before making changes was something less than 30% of respondents strongly agreed with. Yet, 90% of university presidents reported being very concerned about the inequitable impact on minority students but only 45% felt they were successful in ensuring equitable access (Inside Higher Ed, 2020).

“ Due to the uneven impact COVID-19 is having on communities of color both in terms of infection rates and treatment, as well as in terms of accessibility and financial stress, we can easily foresee dramatic reductions in the number of minority and first-generation students who will be able to return to school next year due to family conditions. For those who are able to return, there will undoubtedly be a need for additional support including academic, financial, and emotional supports...(p. 5)...As we move forward as an industry into uncharted waters, the question will be not just how do we in public institutions of higher education respond to COVID-19, but how do we respond to the underlying, systemic challenges that have been long known but rarely successfully addressed? (APLU, 2020, p. 7). ”

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Concerns about mental health, well-being, housing, and food security were rampant in survey reports (Blankstein, Frederick, & Wolff-Eisenberg, 2020; APLU, 2020, Inside Higher Ed, 2020). Maslow's (1943) theory of human motivation presents an order in which needs need to be met for functioning well, let alone learning. The theory begins with three foundational needs: physiological needs such as food, water, sleep, and clothing; then safety needs such as personal security, employment, and health; followed by love needs such as friendship, sense of connection, and family. All of the foundational needs have been compromised for students, and some of our faculty and staff too, which leads to emergency reactions (such as leaving education) and requires additional support.

There are pandemic driven class, race and ethnicity inequalities in who lost jobs, who is more likely to get sick, and which students are also more likely to have a family member who lost a job, got/is sick, or died (Matthews, 2020). With so many compounding factors occurring to students at once, the Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium reported that students who were considering leaving an institution pre-COVID had those feelings amplified (Blaich & Wise, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c). Further, they report that 21% of students worry about having a safe place to sleep every night—a concern about a basic human need that is higher for students of color (Blaich & Wise, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c).

The compounding factors form a nightmare situation which a single “flexible” semester will not alleviate or address. In the Fall of 2019, 558 APLU members were surveyed with follow-up phone interviews in 2020, 68% reported concerns for student mental health and well-being, with 63% indicated diversity and inclusion efforts were a challenge (APLU, 2020). However, students of color have experienced a disproportionate impact on their mental health and well-being (Inside Higher Ed, 2020). In a survey of students, students who were also caregivers were doubly worried about physical and mental health, and students concerned with one basic set of needs (such as having enough food or money to buy food, afford rent or mortgage, or pay utility bills) were generally concerned about the entire set, with students who are Middle Eastern or North African, American Indian or Alaska native, and Black or African American reporting the highest levels of concern about their physical health (Blankstein, Frederick, & Wolff-Eisenberg, 2020, p. 13). Concerns that existed pre-COVID have been amplified, basic student needs are not met, and the rates at which they are not met are nearly double for students of color.

Part III: Do’s and Dont’s for the Future

After examining the findings from the NILOA survey of assessment-related changes in Spring 2020, along with the various reports that have been released between March and July exploring institutional, faculty, and student responses and experiences, I offer a list of 5 Do’s and 5 Do Not’s to help guide us through the uncertain Fall and onward to Spring.

Don’ts

1. Do not forget that we are in a pandemic. Still. Do not forget that it is also an inequitable pandemic.
2. Do not cause further harm. Do not support, enable, or endorse policies that perpetuate further inequities or fuel negative perceptions of students.
3. Do not ask students for their approval of a decision that has already been made. Instead, engage with them in advance to help determine a solution.
4. Do not require a higher-level of proof of learning in an online class than you would normally require in a face-to-face setting.
5. Do not forget that this is not the educational experience students wanted or expected. Nor is this a test of online education. And in case you were wondering, it still will not be “online education” in the Fall. It will continue to be a derivative of emergency remote teaching and learning.

To begin, the pandemic is not over. The triage response period in the Spring has passed, the full ripples from which remain unknown, but attempting to live, survive, and learn in a pandemic is ongoing. This

Concerns that existed pre-COVID have been amplified, basic student needs are not met, and the rates at which they are not met are nearly double for students of color.

means that expectations to maintain the same levels of productivity in research and teaching for faculty, and learning for students, is not only unhelpful, it is unhealthy, likely to fuel mental health issues, and preposterous during a pandemic. This does not mean that students are not learning, it means institutions cannot afford to act as though intentional instructional design will alleviate the concerns of family members getting sick, professors falling ill, mounting mental health issues, job and food insecurities, and other compounded disruptions and barriers that have been raised between students and their ability to have a singular focus on learning. Further, administrators must be mindful of the prolonged stress and fatigue of adapting to the shifting environment for their employees and students. Our faculty were sprinters and now have become marathon runners without the training, tools, and mental support to continue at the required pace.

While the Spring was not about online education or online learning but about learning in a pandemic during a quick pivot to remote instruction, the Fall is not “online learning” either. Students are not prepared to learn online in terms of meeting proper technology and bandwidth requirements, and best practices in online learning and assessment do not apply to current inequitable situations and pandemic lived circumstances. As one chief online officer wrote, “‘Underprepared students’ doesn’t exactly capture how I’d characterize the challenge—more like ‘students who didn’t sign up for online courses and were asked to engage with them, often in far from ideal circumstances’ “ (Garrett et al, 2020, p. 11). Instead, limping into the Fall together will be tired and stressed faculty and students, still not ready for learning online, which makes it all the more important to not do further harm through policies and practices.

As one NILOA survey respondent wrote, “Listening to student’s needs did not dominate our campus response to COVID. As a result, many students have withdrawn this quarter, expressing issues with technology, health services, housing, disability support services, and in-person connection to faculty. We did not understand their experience or who our students were.” Compassion and understanding of who our students are should drive decisions as opposed to starting from a point of assuming the worst of our students. Instead of designing learning to block perceptions of increased online cheating (Lederman, 2020) or assuming that because a pass/fail option is offered to students that they would disengage from their learning without the blunt force of a grade to drive them, built upon the perception that students do not want to or will not work hard or learn, we need to develop policies and practices that support and help students.

Such negative mentality towards students misses the connected and contextual nature of the student lived experience that directly impacts their learning. For instance, while a student may not have lost a job,

“Listening to student’s needs did not dominate our campus response to COVID. As a result, many students have withdrawn this quarter, expressing issues with technology, health services, housing, disability support services, and in-person connection to faculty. We did not understand their experience or who our students were.”

-NILOA Survey Respondent

the parent who is paying for the education may have and, thus, the student cannot afford to attend class at a specific time due to extra hours picked up at work that now conflict with their education; or maybe the student transfers and attends somewhere closer to home (Mangan, 2020). If we make the choice between family and living or education, given Maslow's hierarchy of needs mentioned prior, living will win over education. It need not be an either/or.

We have an entire generation of students living through “crisis-driven policy shifts” (Basken, 2020). Policies that punish students for making difficult choices, such as deciding to utilize a pass/fail option during a time of crisis, should not be carried forward. Concerns have already been raised as to whether institutions of higher education will accept pass/fail credit during the forthcoming “Corona swirl” (Neutuch, 2020; Reed, 2020; Fink, 2020). Matt Reed (2020) argues that while a single semester with an asterisk on it is not likely to do lasting harm, one that lingers may. The lingering means that there may be students who graduate with the majority of their time spent learning during a pandemic, bringing into question the signaling function of GPA (Reed, 2020). In the Spring semester, more than 150 institutions adopted a pass/fail grading system (Basken, 2020) and while assessment of student learning can provide relief to the noise added by pass/fail signaling in our traditional GPA-based system, the more important option is to do no further harm by adding additional barriers to student movement, options, and hard choices.

Do's

1. Do use learning outcomes as a guide and means to design and focus educational offerings.
2. Do listen to student voices AND respond accordingly.
3. Do modify assignments and assessments in ways that are flexible, utilize low-bandwidth, and are based in the principles of equitable assessment.
4. Do be aware of and address systemic inequities.
5. Do engage in trauma-informed and healing-centered pedagogy and assessment.

There is much that can be done. Even in the prior section focused on what not to do, there are things to do *instead*. We can continue to work collaboratively, sharing practices and resources with each other, and lifting each other up. While intentional educational design will not solve all problems, a clear focus on learning outcomes helps students focus their attention on what is most important. The Watermark (2020) survey reports, “Institutions should ensure that learning outcomes are clearly defined, that courses and curricula are designed around them, and that students have clear visibility into outcomes so they know what is expected of them and what they can expect from the course” (p. 13). That transparency will matter more to students now than ever.

The choice for students should not be either health and safety or school, work or education, or family or college. It need not be an either/or.

We can use curriculum maps in programmatic planning and advising, remain flexible, and modify offerings based on learning outcomes. In some ways, it is a return to assessment basics—being clear about what is most important for students to learn in the context of what is reasonable and doable for students and faculty.

Student voice can take on the mantle of feed forward as opposed to feedback on what is needed and what would be feasible during this time. Including student voice in the decision-making process, looking internally to see who our students are and what they need, will ensure connected and supportive learning environments. We should never again be surprised about our students' circumstances because we did not know who they were beyond aggregate numbers. Further, while student voices are used to feed forward our next steps, all the data collection and survey findings shared in this report were done via online or electronic surveys. If our only means of connecting with or gathering data from students is virtual or online, not by other means such as phone or mail, we do not hear from students without access to Internet or who have limited capacity to respond. They become invisible. To avoid missing important student voices, multiple data collection mechanisms should be employed, which will also help to avoid survey fatigue on the part of students.

Flexibility in assignments and assessments can serve to help support student learning. Coupled with trauma-informed and healing-centered pedagogy and assessment, faculty and staff can partner with students as producers of content, experts of their lived experience, and be active partners in solving the problem of demonstrating complex learning during a pandemic. Such adaptability began in the Spring and will likely continue forward, using low-bandwidth assignments that encourage co-creation and peer review. Students built and improved wiki pages on key topics. Instead of completing an archival research project, they gathered materials to submit to the archive about their COVID-19 experience. They can examine their Internet speed and engage quantitative reasoning skills and oral communication while advocating for themselves to customer service (Taylor, 2014), they can gather oral histories of their family, document through photography the way they see the world, engage in reflection, and even disaster analysis (Penn, 2015).

Lastly, we can address systemic inequities, beginning with simply accepting transfer credit regardless of what it is. With students likely to stay closer to home, shift institutions, utilize pass/fail or credit/no credit options (Fink et al, 2020) the sea of red tape before them is already boiling. In an April 16, 2020 statement by six Washington, D.C.-based higher education organizations, principles on acceptance of credit were shared indicating in part:

“Many faculty at my institution are reporting unsubstantiated claims in increases of cheating due to the remote conditions of taking tests and such. That can lead to bad policy decisions, but worse it divides our faculty and students further from each other.”

-NILOA Survey Respondent

1. Institutional policies and the evaluation of grades and credit should recognize the extraordinary burden placed on students during this time. Even in the best of cases, student dislocation and the need to change the very basic patterns of life impose challenges on our students that may have an impact on their performance.
2. Institutional policies and practices should recognize that traditional inequities are exacerbated in the current crisis and that “equal” treatment of students’ transcripts is unlikely to result in “equitable” outcomes.
3. Institutional policies and practices should, therefore, be as holistic as possible, taking into account the range of situational and behavioral circumstances in which our students find themselves.

- From Statement on Principles of Acceptance of Credit

Final Thoughts

Higher education is faced with a series of choices. The choice of whether to embed learning outcomes as an integral element of educational design, the assessment of which then provides information to faculty, staff, and students for learning, planning, and future directions. The choice of whether to address persistent systemic and systematic inequities—which existed before but have been clearly exposed. The choice of whether to transform; choosing systems over silos and doing right by students instead of blaming students for not intuiting how to navigate rules and structures that were never built to ensure their success.

Fall 2020 will be difficult and uncertain. The flexibility demonstrated in the Spring will likely carry over, and the field will continue to share with and learn from one another. May we act with grace and patience, with ourselves and our students, and continue to learn how to truly fulfill our institutional missions of teaching, learning and service.

Acknowledgements

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Appendix A. Survey Methodology and Sample

In May-June 2020, NILOA released a brief electronic questionnaire on COVID-19 assessment-related changes made in Spring 2020. The questionnaire was announced via the NILOA newsletter and shared on various assessment related listservs and through partner newsletters. A total of 834 respondents completed the survey. Upon cleaning the data, a total of 813 responses were retained for analysis. The 813 total responses included 624 different institutions and organizations with representation from all 50 U.S. states and two territories, as well as 18 international respondents from Algeria, Bahrain, Canada, Ecuador, India, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Mexico, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, and the United Kingdom.

The survey respondents were those with assessment as their primary job responsibilities (Table A). Several categories were collapsed into those in the table below, based on grouping together job functions and responses that were similar. As such, Administrators includes staff, except for librarians who were closer in response to faculty and whose responses are part of the faculty grouping. Assessment professionals also include Institutional Researchers with oversight of assessment and student affairs specific assessment professionals. There were 4 students who completed the survey as well, however, due to the small nature of the sample they are not included in further analyses for statistical significance in different responses, but differences in their responses from faculty, administrators, and assessment professionals are noted in the report narrative based on descriptive statistics.

Primary Assessment-Focused Role	Percent
Administrators	24%
Assessment Professionals (Academic and/or Student Affairs)	31%
Faculty	21%
Student	1%
Did not Identify	23%

Table A. Demographics of respondents.

Data were analyzed for descriptive statistics as well as for statistical significance on a variety of key variables. Of note, differences by regional accreditation were not examined as all regional accreditors (prior to the July 1 name change to accreditors) were flexible in allowing institutional responses and the pandemic was global in nature. As such, it is unlikely that in this survey, accreditation region would be a variable of distinctive interest. Instead, variables found to be impactful in other COVID-19 survey reports were examined including selectivity, urban/rural location, control, residential/non-residential, and institutional type in order to run the additional analyses. An option was provided for survey respondents to provide their institution name, which was shared by 574. For those respondents who provided their institution name (n=574), the institution IPEDS number was matched and additional information was attached to the survey responses.

Location

- 79% were urban (meaning cities or suburbs)
- 21% were rural (meaning towns or rural locales)

Selectivity

- 53% were inclusive in admissions
- 47% were selective in admissions

Residency

- 51% were residential campuses
- 49% were non-residential or commuter campuses

Highest Degree-Granted

- 24% Associate degree-granting institutions
- 15% Baccalaureate degree-granting institutions
- 23% Master's degree-granting institutions
- 32% Doctoral degree-granting institutions
- 6% Specialized degree-granting institutions

Control

- 66% were public
- 32% were private
- 2% were for-profit

Of note, 7% of respondents were from land-grant institutions, 13% from medical institutions, 3% from Historically Black Colleges and Universities, 8% from Hispanic-Serving Institutions, 14% overall from Minority-Serving Institutions, 1% from women's colleges, and there was 1 Tribal College respondent.

Appendix B. Questionnaire

NILOA COVID-19 Survey of Assessment-Related Changes Made in Spring 2020

Please read and click "Yes" below if you are willing to participate.

Purpose: As a result of COVID-19, the higher education landscape drastically shifted, including assessment related processes, practices, reporting mechanisms, and assessment of student learning itself. This survey, administered by the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA), is designed to capture a snapshot of assessment-related changes made during Spring 2020 in response to the sudden shift to remote instruction and to inform future professional development needs.

Confidentiality and Voluntary Nature: Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. The questionnaire will take approximately 3-5 minutes to complete. The study involves no foreseeable risks and you may exit at any point in time. Your responses will be confidential. This survey has been approved by the UIUC Institutional Review Board (IRB). If you have any questions or comments about the survey, please contact Dr. Natasha Jankowski at the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment: niloa@education.illinois.edu or (217) 244-2155.

* Do you agree to participate in this survey?

- Yes
 No

NILOA COVID-19 Survey of Assessment-Related Changes Made in Spring 2020

Welcome! Please note, due to the short length of this questionnaire, once you advance to the next page you will not be able to return to the prior page and/or modify previously submitted answers. Thank you for your participation and all that you do to support student learning.

* What is your primary role?

- Administrator
 Assessment Professional
 Faculty
 Student Affairs
 Student
 Staff
 Other (please specify)

* Institution Name. No institutional responses will be shared. Institution name is requested for NILOA researchers to connect responses with IPEDS data, based on institutional name, for variables on size, control, and type to disaggregate survey responses for analysis.

* What changes were made to assessment related processes and practices for Spring 2020? Select all that apply.

- None
- Modification of assessment reporting processes or reporting questions
- Changes to timing of submission of assessment reports
- Modification of questions on course evaluations
- Shift to pass/fail for Spring term/semester
- Shift to credit/no credit for Spring term/semester
- Changes to your assessment-related roles and responsibilities
- Modifications to assignments or assessments
- Acceptance of alternative assignments for Spring courses
- Flexibility in submission deadlines for assignments/assessments
- Other (please specify)

NILOA COVID-19 Survey of Assessment-Related Changes Made in Spring 2020

The following statements address possible drivers behind the assessment-related changes made in the prior question. Due to NILOA's focus in the past several years on equity and assessment, as well as student involvement in assessment, the statements focus specifically on the possible decision drivers of equity and student needs. For each statement, indicate degree of agreement from Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree or N/A.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
Assessment-related changes were undertaken to address student needs.	<input type="radio"/>				
Equity concerns drove the decisions to make changes.	<input type="radio"/>				
Concerns about students' differential access to technology (including reliable Internet) were determining factors in making changes.	<input type="radio"/>				
Concerns about students' ability to learn in their remote environments drove decisions to make changes.	<input type="radio"/>				
Students were invited to identify needs (via survey, focus group, phone calls, etc.) prior to decisions being made.	<input type="radio"/>				
Information gathered from students influenced decisions on what to change.	<input type="radio"/>				

NILOA COVID-19 Survey of Assessment-Related Changes Made in Spring 2020

Are you concerned the changes made in response to COVID-19 will negatively impact the culture of assessment at your institution?

- Yes
- No

NILOA COVID-19 Survey of Assessment-Related Changes Made in Spring 2020

If yes, in what ways?

NILOA COVID-19 Survey of Assessment-Related Changes Made in Spring 2020

What changes, if any, would you like to see continue past the Spring semester to support student learning during COVID-19?

NILOA COVID-19 Survey of Assessment-Related Changes Made in Spring 2020

What professional development needs have not yet been met for you?

About NILOA

The National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA), established in 2008, is a research and resource-development organization dedicated to documenting, advocating, and facilitating the systematic use of learning outcomes assessment to improve student learning.

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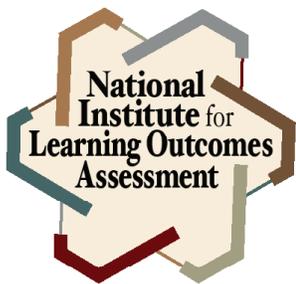
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