Assessing Student Learning

The first edition of Assessing Student Learning has become the standard reference for college faculty and administrators who are charged with the task of assessing student learning within their institutions. The second edition of this landmark book offers the same practical guidance and is designed to meet ever-increasing demands for improvement and accountability. This edition includes expanded coverage of vital assessment topics such as promoting an assessment culture, characteristics of good assessment, audiences for assessment, organizing and coordinating assessment, assessing attitudes and values, setting benchmarks and standards, and using results to inform and improve teaching, learning, planning, and decision-making.

Praise for the Second Edition of Assessing Student Learning

"All of us engaged in assessing student learning will benefit from Linda Suskie’s continued work to define and refine assessment concepts and strategies. She asks, and answers, the hard questions we all need to address to plan and implement a successful assessment program."

— RANDY L. SWING, executive director, Association for Institutional Research

"Once again, Linda Suskie provides a clear and comprehensive guide to assessment. Her truly commonsense approach distills vast amounts of scholarship on the topic and provides excellent examples of good practice. This book will be an invaluable resource for faculty and administrators working on assessment."

— MADELEINE F. GREEN, vice president for international initiatives, American Council on Education

"This book is a self-contained manual to assist anyone with the implementation of outcomes-based assessment. I highly recommend it to all of my students because Linda Suskie illustrates each step in great detail and answers common assessment questions clearly. I own two copies of the first edition, because one is always in use by one or more of my colleagues."

— MARILEE J. BRESCIANI, associate professor, Administration, Rehabilitation, and Postsecondary Education, and codirector, Center for Educational Leadership, Innovation, and Policy, San Diego State University

THE AUTHOR

LINDA SUSKIE, internationally acclaimed writer, speaker, trainer, and consultant on higher education assessment, is a vice president of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

Cover design by Michael Cook

Linda Suskie

second edition

Assessing Student Learning
Assessing Student Learning
Assessing Student Learning
A Common Sense Guide
SECOND EDITION
LINDA SUSKIE
FOREWORD BY TRUDY W. BANTA
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To my husband, Steve, and our children, Melissa and Michael, whose love
and support made this book possible; and
To the thousands of college and university faculty, administrators,
and staff members whose passion for excellence in teaching and learning
continually inspires me
Linda Suskie is a vice president at the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, an accreditor of colleges and universities in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Prior positions include serving as associate vice president for assessment and institutional research at Towson University and as director of the American Association for Higher Education’s Assessment Forum. Her over thirty years of experience in college and university administration include work in assessment, institutional research, strategic planning, and quality management.

Suskie is an internationally recognized speaker, writer, educator, and consultant on a broad variety of higher education assessment topics. She has been an active member of numerous higher education professional organizations and groups and contributes frequently to books and journals.

Suskie has taught graduate courses in assessment and educational research methods and undergraduate courses in writing, statistics, and developmental mathematics. She holds a bachelor’s degree in quantitative studies from Johns Hopkins University and a master’s degree in educational measurement and statistics from the University of Iowa.
Linda Suskie is one of the busiest assessment consultants in the country today—and for good reason. She confers with faculty groups on campuses, responds to individual e-mail messages and to questions posed on listservs, and makes keynote addresses tailored to the needs and interests of those in her audience. And at the same time she is imparting knowledge, experience, and wisdom, she is listening carefully to the content of the questions and comments she is receiving. Later she reflects on what she has heard and may adjust her thinking about an issue. At the very least, she adds yet another example to her rich repository so that she will have a new response and another illustration the next time she hears a familiar question.

Suskie’s thoughtful, reflective approach to continuous improvement in her work in assessment, as well as her generosity in sharing her experience with others, is apparent in this second edition of *Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide*. Instead of simply updating the references and some of the content in the original, she undertook an extensive reorganization that makes this edition an even more valuable resource.

As Suskie points out in the Introduction, this book is “short on background and theory.” It is not intended to advance the state-of-the-art in cognitive psychology, organizational development, program evaluation, curriculum design, pedagogical theory, or educational measurement, all of which underlie the practice of outcomes assessment in higher education. Instead she has used clear, accessible language to illustrate as no other current work does how concepts from these disparate bodies of knowledge come together to create a new branch of assessment applied in college and university settings. The book provides an excellent introduction for