Becoming More HIP: Assessment Trends in High-Impact Learning Practices and Student Success

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INTRODUCTION

For more than a decade, High-Impact Practices (HIPs) have been recognized on college campuses as powerful strategies for supporting student learning and success. HIPs are "active learning practices… that educational research suggests increase rates of student retention and student engagement" (Kuh, 2008, p. 9), and promote deeper learning, higher grades, and other desirable student outcomes (Kinzie & Kuh, 2018). A common feature of all HIPs is that they offer students opportunities to make "their own discoveries and connections, grapple with challenging real-world questions, and address complex problems – all necessary skills if students are to become engaged and effective members of their communities" (Kinzie, 2012, para.1). Since George Kuh (2008) identified the original set of HIPs more than a decade ago, institutional leaders, faculty, staff, and administrators have intentionally incorporated them into strategic plans, woven them into the curriculum and co-curriculum, and provided faculty and staff opportunities for professional development to design and implement them. As HIPs implementation continues to spread, it is important to ensure that they are done effectively and that students derive maximum benefit from these experiences. In this chapter, we thus explore current and future directions of HIPs assessment.

Discussions of how best to assess HIPs, given their importance and potential to support student achievement, have been unfolding over the past decade at the Assessment Institute in

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Indianapolis, the various conferences and summer institutes sponsored by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), on college campuses, and elsewhere. In this chapter, we offer a definition and some foundational background on HIPs as context for a discussion of current HIPs assessment trends and strategies in higher education. We then address approaches to five key questions about HIPs assessment: How do institutions assess HIP implementation for quality? How do we track and document participation in HIPs? How do we leverage HIPs assessment to address issues of access and equity? How do we assess the impact of HIPs on student success? How do we assess student learning from HIP experiences? Throughout the chapter, we note specific tools and practical ways in which various institutions are effectively planning, implementing, and assessing HIPs to improve student learning and success.

HISTORY

The Practice of HIPs: A Legacy for Student Learning and Success

Through the Liberal Education and America's Promise program, AAC&U has endorsed research that identifies teaching and learning strategies that have substantial educational benefits for all students as "high impact." The initial list of ten practices first appeared in AAC&U's 2007 report, *College Learning for a New Global Century* (AAC&U, 2007). Kuh fully delineated the concept of HIPs, drawing on research from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), in the 2008 AAAC&U monograph, *High-Impact Educational Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access to Them, and Why They Matter*. The ten HIPs he discussed included: 1) First-Year Seminars and Experiences, 2) Common Intellectual Experiences, 3) Learning Communities, 4) Writing-Intensive Courses, 5) Collaborative Assignments and Projects, 6) Undergraduate Research, 7) Diversity/Global Learning, 8) Service/Community-Based Learning, 9) Internships

and Field Placements, and 10) Capstone Courses and Projects (Kuh, 2008). In 2017, ePortfolios were added as an eleventh HIP (Kuh, 2017; Kuh, Gambino, Bresciani, Ludvik, & O'Donnell, 2018).

The research carried out by Kuh and his colleagues at Indiana University's Center for Postsecondary Research (CPR) indicated that "students who reported doing one or more of these practices benefited in various desired ways. In fact, the differences between those who did an HIP and those who did not were so large that we reanalyzed the data" (Kinzie & Kuh, 2018, para. 5). Based on CPR's research findings, Kuh recommended that universities "make it possible for every student to participate in *at least two high-impact activities* during his or her undergraduate program, one in the first year, and one taken later in relation to the major field" (2008, p. 19). He added that "the obvious choices for incoming students are first-year seminars, learning communities, and service learning" (2008, p. 19). More recent scholarship has revealed that students who participate in 5-6 HIPs have higher gains in all areas than students who do not participate in any, or who participate in 1-2 or 3-4 HIPs (Finley & McNair, 2013). Finally, there is even more impact when students participate in combined HIP opportunities—for example, a first-year seminar with a community engagement focus or a study abroad experience with a service learning component.

Kuh and O'Donnell (2013) have attributed the impact of HIPs to eight common characteristics: 1) expectations set at appropriately high levels; 2) significant investment of time and effort over an extended period of time; 3) increased interaction with faculty and peers about substantive matters; 4) experiences with diversity, wherein students interact with others different from themselves; 5) frequent, timely, and constructive feedback from instructors and peers; 6) periodic, structured opportunities for students to reflect on and integrate learning; 7)

opportunities to discover relevance of learning through real-world applications; and, 8) public demonstration of competence. The more these markers are present in an HIP experience, the more students are likely to achieve.

CURRENT TRENDS: WHAT'S TRENDING IN HIPS ASSESSMENT?

The efficacy of HIPs continues to be validated by practitioners, champions, and extant research. A guiding value for HIPs is that they must be "done well" to lead to deep learning and other benefits (Kuh & O'Donnell, 2013). One important assessment trend is thus examination of the quality and fidelity of HIP practice. Finley and McNair (2013) have further challenged us to examine who is participating in HIPs and to leverage findings to address inequities. Tracking and disaggregating participation data to determine who has access and how HIPs can be offered equitably to all students is thus another key trend. Recent sessions at the Assessment Institute have also addressed questions of how to scale HIPs opportunities to achieve equity and maximize participation. Finally, institutions are developing authentic approaches to assessing what students learn from participating in HIPs. We will discuss each of these trends, with examples drawn from Assessment Institute presentations and elsewhere.

Assessing HIPs' Quality and Fidelity

Assessment can help us to ascertain whether we are offering our students genuinely valuable HIPs experiences. As McNair (2017) has argued, HIPs offered without attention to fidelity and quality are empty promises. And as use of HIPs continues to increase across all institutional types, it becomes even more important to ensure that they are being done well. To address this issue, several institutions have developed fidelity measures or "taxonomies" to track consistency of implementation. California State University, Dominguez Hills, for example, designed taxonomies to describe the most effective practices for such experiences and programs as early

alert, first-year experience, intrusive advising, learning communities, peer mentoring, supplemental instruction, summer bridge programs, orientation, and undergraduate research (O'Donnell, 2015).

The 2018 inaugural HIPs in the States conference at California State University, Dominguez Hills included notable presentations from other campuses that had created taxonomies for assessment purposes. At the University of Wisconsin Colleges, a multi-disciplinary team developed scalable taxonomies to incorporate HIPs into a new degree program. For the undergraduate research taxonomy, presenters reported aligning undergraduate research experiences with best practices across disciplines, types of research opportunities, and student achievement levels. At IUPUI, each unit with responsibility for a HIP constructed a taxonomy to serve as a framework to guide course design, implementation, assessment, and improvement. (See rise.iupui.edu/taxonomies.) The Learning Communities program developed a pre-semester planning document and post-semester reflection survey aligned with the taxonomy; these were distributed to all faculty teaching learning community sections. Collecting pre- and post-semester plans and reflections provided additional dimensions of feedback to both faculty and the program to guide professional development and program improvements.

As HIP programs are taken to scale to address issues of equity and access, tools like taxonomies can help ensure that high-quality experiences are developed and delivered. Taxonomies can identify the most effective aspects of HIPs to guide their design and implementation. When coupled with additional assessment tools and professional development, fidelity assessment can support consistency and effectiveness of HIP practices.

Tracking and Documenting Participation in HIPs

Determining best practices for accurately collecting, documenting, and disaggregating data on HIP participation can help us understand which students are benefiting from these experiences. Kuh's (2008) initial research on HIPs caused a number of institutions to merge and expand existing programs to encourage greater participation. Unfortunately, these efforts frequently occurred without consideration for tracking participation at an institutional level. Inaccurate or inaccessible data on participation in HIPs makes it particularly difficult to assess the impact of HIPs on student learning, as Kuh, O'Donnell, and Schneider (2017) have noted. Because HIPs are often not recorded on traditional transcripts, they can be untraceable by traditional tools of institutional research, like federally reported IPEDS data or campus-based Student Information Systems. Sara Finney (2018) addressed a similar issue when discussing implementation fidelity during her track keynote at the 2018 Assessment Institute. Determining the effectiveness of an intervention, such as an orientation program, is impossible if the student did not receive the intervention. Similarly, we cannot assess attainment of specified learning outcomes of a service learning experience or learning community if no documentation exists that the student actually participated.

Many institutions use NSSE both to track the frequency of student participation in HIPs and to understand the effects of engagement on student success. NSSE asks respondents about their participation in six HIPs, enabling campuses to correlate levels of student participation in HIPS to a variety of student outcomes (see Hahn & Hatcher, 2015). California State University San Marcos, for example, used NSSE data to identify groups of students less likely to participate in HIPs (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2017). Similarly, the University of Toronto developed a series of dashboards demonstrating that students who participated in the

recommended number of HIPs reported greater engagement in quantitative reasoning and student-faculty interaction (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2017).

Other institutions have developed their own instruments that allow students to self-report HIP participation. Sweat, Jones, Han, and Wolfgram (2013) used an internally developed self-report instrument to collect data for their study of student participation in HIPs by ethnicity. But the use of self-report measures as a means to collect data on participation in HIPs has been called into question. Kolek (2013) found that about half of students who self-reported that they had completed a service learning course or program had not enrolled in any of the university's designated community-based learning courses. Many plausible explanations exist for such a discrepancy, including student misunderstanding of survey items or miscoded information in an institutional database.

While self-report instruments are one method of documenting student participation in HIPs, several other methods might provide more accurate records. In a presentation at the Assessment Institute, Croxton and Moore (2018) discussed a comprehensive effort at the University of North Carolina Charlotte to collect data from the University Library, Student Affairs, and other campus offices. This data collection initiative was designed to connect engagement in co-curricular activities, including HIPs, with outcomes such as GPA and retention. Coordinated institution-wide data collection initiatives such as these may become more popular as a way to obtain the information necessary for the assessment of HIPs.

Many institutions are also implementing co-curricular transcripts, which document learning activities that occur outside the classroom. Indiana State University offered an example of a co-curricular transcript at the Assessment Institute. The university's locally developed system receives data from a wide variety of programs across the campus, stores engagement data

with other student metrics, and provides data visualizations to help internal stakeholders understand the relationship between engagement and other outcomes (Dalrymple, Ferguson, & Miklozek, 2018). Co-curricular transcripts could be one method to both document students' participation in HIPs and collect data necessary to begin assessing student learning outcomes.

Tracking participation is a necessary first step in the institution-wide assessment of HIPs. At the very least, institutions that set goals for expanding the number of participants may be satisfied by exploring growth over time. Institutions often begin HIP initiatives with much broader goals, however, such as improving retention rates or enhancing student learning (Kuh et al., 2017). Those responsible for program or institution-wide assessment, therefore, should aim to move beyond simply tracking participation in HIPs and toward more meaningful assessment of implementation and learning outcomes.

Leveraging HIPs Assessment for Equity and Access

In assessing participation in HIPs, questions of equity and access are critical. Where do the disparities lie? Finley and McNair (2013) found that historically minoritized and underserved students significantly benefit from participating in HIPs and that participating in multiple HIPs had cumulative, intensifying effects. The unfortunate reality, however, is that these communities of students do not participate at high levels. Intentional efforts are necessary to engage traditionally underserved and underrepresented students and to build in equitable access and opportunity. In the 2017 Assessment Institute HIPs track keynote address, McNair shared AAC&U's important work on *Becoming a Student-Ready College: A New Culture of Leadership for Student Success*. This publication reinforced the need for campus leadership to escape deficit-minded thinking about incoming students, specifically those we have historically considered "underprepared." Rather than embrace such thinking, McNair recommended that we equip

ourselves to meet our students' needs. Instead of asking what students are lacking, she advised, we should identify the barriers to student success for underserved and underrepresented students and determine what we can offer proactively.

If HIPs can indeed narrow achievement gaps and improve the effectiveness of students' educational experiences, what then might we consider as ways to intervene to support equity and inclusive excellence? Institutions are beginning to mount intentional efforts to create equal access to HIPs. For example, some campuses offer financial aid to first-generation students who might not participate equally in study abroad experiences (Kinzie, 2012). Introducing transfer and underserved students to HIPs early and often, and exploring and debunking myths that may impede student participation in HIPs can also assist in equity efforts (Hansen & Kahn, 2018). Combining curricular and co-curricular experiences where student affairs and academic affairs collaborate to make HIPs more widespread and readily available (Hansen & Kahn, 2018), and disaggregating data to identify those who need encouragement to participate can aid in setting and attaining equity goals (McNair, 2017; Thorington Springer, Hatcher, & Powell, 2018).

Scaling HIPs

Scaling individual HIPs to serve more students can increase participation and further address issues of equity and access. When using this approach, it is thus important to ensure that students who will benefit the most and/or are less likely to participate in HIPs are included. For example, at IUPUI, students with high levels of unmet financial need, a risk indicator, can receive institutional aid in the form of a Pledge Grant if they agree to participate in a first-year learning community or the Summer Bridge program. Several early orientation sessions are reserved for Pledge Grant recipients to ensure that seats in learning communities and Summer Bridge are available. Gaps in Pledge Grant enrollment can be identified by disaggregating HIP tracking data

by markers relevant to the institution's student population like race/ethnicity, gender, first-generation, and/or Pell status. Outcomes assessment data should be similarly disaggregated to identify groups that benefit at high levels from HIP participation. Such analyses can identify and guide actions to reduce inequities.

Disaggregating HIPs assessment data to identify gaps in student participation, along with strategies to support traditionally underserved populations, is an assessment trend that can help to ensure equity in higher education. Better understanding the barriers to participation and offering incentives and rewards for underserved populations to participate is an institutional tactic that can support student success. Providing resources for scaling HIPs to allow greater access, paired with mechanisms for encouraging underserved students to participate in HIP experiences, can help reduce equity gaps.

Direct Assessment of HIP Learning

In addition to indirect measures of student gains like NSSE, institutions are using authentic assessment approaches and direct measures of student learning to determine the impact of HIPs. ePortfolios, for example, are both a HIP and a direct, authentic assessment tool that provides opportunities for students to engage in a "meta-high-impact practice" (see Kahn, this volume). With thoughtful guidance, students can bring together evidence of learning from multiple HIPs in their ePortfolios, and engage in metacognitive reflection to deepen and integrate their learning. Those assessing ePortfolios can thereby gain insight not only into *what* students learn from HIPs participation, but *how* they learn (Kahn, this volume). Tools like the AAC&U VALUE rubrics can also provide important insight into student learning from HIPs. The VALUE Institute, a partnership between AAC&U and the CPR, provides direct measures of student learning using the VALUE rubrics (AAC&U, n.d.). Under a fee-for-service model similar to NSSE, institutions

can submit student artifacts that are scored by trained reviewers and receive reports by rubric dimension, comparison with institutions participating nationally, and disaggregation by demographic variables.

FUTURE TRENDS: WHAT'S IN THE PIPELINE?

Emerging trends in HIPs assessment are beginning to answer some important questions. The most pressing issue currently discussed at the Assessment Institute and nationally is how we can implement high-quality HIPs at scale and provide equitable access to all students. Other new questions tie into this theme—how can we embed HIPs into all levels of the institution so students participate in at least one HIP each year, whether in the curriculum or the co-curriculum? How can institutions best support HIPs at scale? Taking HIPs to scale is resource-intensive, making it important to identify the variables that influence student learning outcomes. As they incorporate these variables, programs and institutions may need to restructure and redesign HIPs. Using HIP taxonomies to assess quality and fidelity and connect specific attributes to student learning outcomes is one approach to consider. Once key HIP attributes that increase student success outcomes are identified, HIP programs and practices can be combined and redesigned to maximize impact while making efficient use of resources.

To support this work, some institutions are rethinking organizational structures, sometimes bringing together HIP units that are distributed across a campus. IUPUI, for example, has recently launched an Institute for Engaged Learning in its Division of Undergraduate Education to bring together all campus HIP units under one organizational structure.

Any discussion of future trends in HIPs assessment would be incomplete without consideration of professional development. To bring HIPs to scale with quality, investment in and development of faculty and staff are key. If we are to successfully respond to employers'

needs for graduates who have more than classroom experience, and if we believe that HIPs can help prepare our students for job opportunities, we will need professional development to ensure that HIPs are done well—with intentionality, fidelity, and quality.

Faculty participation in the assessment of HIPs is another future trend that supports HIP quality. Involving faculty in the assessment of learning outcomes associated with HIPs, using a tool like a VALUE rubric, can help faculty gain insight into student learning experiences. Though this understanding, faculty can make ongoing, incremental changes that deepen student learning. For such work to succeed, however, institutions must prioritize, incentivize, and reward participation in HIPs and HIPs assessment.

CONCLUSION

The value and effectiveness of high-impact educational practices have been recognized by researchers and practitioners. When done well, HIPs contribute to deep learning, student engagement, retention, timely degree completion, and satisfaction and also prepare students for life after graduation. As we work to continually improve the delivery of HIPs, assessment should aim to ensure fidelity, quality, and access, to build in equity models, and to look closely at impact on student success and learning outcomes. Simply tracking HIPs to determine student participation may be a thing of the past. Continuing to create and expand our HIP assessment methods and tools is essential. Using the various assessment strategies discussed in this chapter can help us design, implement, and improve HIPs with attention to institutional cultures and needs.

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SUMMARY OF MAIN TRENDS

- Institutions are developing tools for assessment of the fidelity of HIP implementation in order to assure that they are "done well."

- Tracking and documenting participation in HIPs is key to assessing learning outcomes and identifying who has access and who lacks access.

- Institutions are moving to address inequities in access to and participation in HIPs.

- Institutions are going beyond indirect measures of HIP outcomes and are beginning to use authentic assessments like ePortfolios and VALUE rubrics.

- Institutions are reconsidering organizational structures and practices, including professional development, to ensure that HIPs are being implemented in intentional ways campus-wide.

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- How might we better understanding how variables related to HIP quality and fidelity influence student learning outcomes?

- How might we use data collected on HIPs to determine the institutional support needed?

- Would institutions benefit from assembling campus-wide assessment teams to identify improvements that might enhance the effectiveness of HIPs for student learning?

- What might intentional efforts to improve access to and equity in HIPs on your campus look like?

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