

Intersection



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4th Annual AALHE Conference

June 2-4, 2014 in
Albuquerque, New
Mexico

Keep watching the
AALHE website for
more information!

Call for Proposals

The Association for the Assessment of Learning in Higher Education (AALHE) is now accepting proposals for presentations at its **Fourth Annual Conference**, to be held **June 2-4, 2014 at the Hotel Albuquerque in Albuquerque, New Mexico.**

AALHE 2014 CONFERENCE THEME

“Emergent Dialogues in Assessment”

In the last decade, the higher education sector has been confronted with increasing skepticism about its effectiveness and quality from government agencies and employers, as well as from prospective students and their families. In the face of such criticism, higher education's response has been very weak, as illustrated by the inclusion of assertions that these skeptics should trust us, the production of weak and misleading reports on institutional quality, and accreditation-based assertions of quality based on criteria that miss the point of the skeptics' criticism. While we assert quality in many ways, we rarely do it in a way that answers the central, critical question these skeptics want answered: will graduates be able to function and succeed in the world after graduation? Colleges and universities can no longer avoid answering that question, nor can they try to answer it with surrogate measures.

The demand for answers that are both rigorous and practical is being exacerbated by fundamental changes in student demographics and the way higher education institutions “do business.” Growing adult/returning student populations, more diverse student bodies with more diverse needs, and an increasingly challenging economic environment will force higher education to be more flexible and accountable, but with fewer resources. In this environment assessment practitioners can play a major role in evaluating and developing response strategies like translating learning into credit (e.g. prior learning assessment), “direct assessment programs” (e.g. competency-based education), and emergent learning environments (e.g. adaptive learning).

Call for Proposals Deadlines

Proposals may be submitted through February 15, 2014.

Proposers will be notified of acceptance, modification requests, or rejections by March 14, 2014.

Call for Proposals... *continued from page 1*

Clearly, the time of learning-centered, outcomes-based assessment is finally at hand. But are we ready for it? Are our colleges and universities? As assessment professionals, how do we move our institutions forward and position them for the transitions facing higher education? How are we already building the foundations for such work?

As in prior years, session proposals will be subjected to blind peer review by multiple readers, using the following criteria:

Strand Connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging Different Constituencies • Developing Assessment Champions • Deriving Meaning from Data • Measuring Learning from Different Sources • Assessing Institutional Outcomes • Competency-based Learning Assessment • Supporting New Learning Environments • Assessing Co-curricular Learning • Designing Assessment That Serves Internal and External Needs
Focus	Proposal focuses on the dynamics of effective assessment, and does not simply address the mechanics.
Engagement of Session Participants	Proposal includes specific audience engagement strategies to facilitate interaction and dialogue.
Session Outcomes	Proposal has clearly identified learning outcomes for the session described.
Presenter Qualifications	Presenter(s) has requisite knowledge and experience about the topic proposed.
Prepared Materials	Proposed handouts, session plan, media and/or other learning materials are of high quality and are specifically focused to the proposed session and anticipated audience.

Please follow this hyperlink for the [AALHE Proposal Submission Form](#). Simply complete and return the Word document via email. Proposals may be submitted by email to conference@aalhe.org through February 15, 2014. They will be reviewed as quickly as possible, and proposers will be notified of acceptance, modification requests, or rejections by March 14, 2014.

You need not be a member of AALHE to submit a proposal; however, all presenters must register for the conference (Non-members registration will include a one-year membership).

We look forward to reviewing your proposal!

AALHE Professional Development Webinar Series

To register for this webinar, please click on the webinar title below. We hope that you will join us!

[Using Credit Hour Compliance to Forward Authentic Assessment](#)

Thursday, February 6, from 11:00 am to 12:00 pm Eastern

This webinar will outline how one institution was able to launch a university-wide assessment system through the successful implementation of a credit hour compliance audit process. The webinar will provide the three-phase plan and audit form, as well as a discussion of challenges and strategies developed by the presenters, as comprising an example from which other institutions can build their own credit hour compliance and assessment systems.

Presenters:

Dr. Marsha Watson, Vice Provost

Dr. Kathleen Gorski, Director of Assessment

National Louis University

You can also paste this link in your browser to register:

<https://www3.gotomeeting.com/register/893997438>

Call for Proposals for the AALHE Professional Development Webinar Series

AALHE has always intended to be an organization where members learn from members. One important strategy through which AALHE has tried to facilitate that learning has been our Annual Conferences; another more recent method is through the establishment of this member newsletter. We also now have the opportunity to turn that intention into reality through the launch of the AALHE Professional Development Webinar Series. Our first webinar, *Faculty Engagement in Assessment Across Institutional Contexts*, was offered in September 2013 (still available at <http://aalhe.org/resource-room/webinars>); the second webinar in the series, *Using Credit Hour Compliance to Forward Authentic Assessment*, will be offered to members on Thursday, February 6, 2014, from 11:00 am to 12:00 pm Eastern. If you can't participate in the webinar, the live recording and PDF will be available on the AALHE website, so you can view it at a more convenient time.

Just as with the Annual Conference, we want all our members to have the opportunity to share what they have learned about the practice of higher education assessment through this series. Therefore, the AALHE Board of Directors would like to invite all members to propose topics and panelists for future webinars. The Member Services Committee has identified two basic types of webinars they would like to consider:

1. Single topic webinars with one to three panelists. (These types of webinars can be based on successful sessions offered at previous AALHE Annual Conferences.)
2. A webinar series comprised of an ongoing two to four part webinar that proposes to build participant knowledge about a specific assessment practice or approach.

Submit your ideas, along with a few paragraphs of content description that address one of these two options, via email to Catherine Wehlburg, Chair of AALHE Member Services Committee, at c.wehlburg@tcu.edu. Webinar proposals may also be submitted through Jamie Wigand, AALHE Executive Administrative Assistant, at jwigand@aalhe.org.

We are looking to schedule the webinars quarterly at this time, but will increase our offerings as the opportunity arises. We welcome and look forward to the contributions and participation of all our members in the AALHE Professional Development Webinar Series.

What's the Problem?

David Dirlam

Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Accreditation, Virginia Wesleyan College

Programs that find assessment boring often get there by asking the wrong questions. Have you had programs describe assessment problems (or goals) like those below?

- Does our major meet our learning outcomes?
- The aim of our assessments is to assist with college accreditation.
- Does our curriculum support our program's mission?
- We don't have an assessment problem.

Years ago when I taught 40% of the psychology courses at a small college, I asked my students in all my courses to come to Friday classes with a research project related to the chapter they had just studied. Many of the first answers were "I want to show that..." I interrupted them at that point with "Research is hard. You have to work with a seasoned researcher to create a careful plan to get data. You have to go through a more or less tedious process of collecting data. You have to engage in various ways of analyzing and interpreting the data. Then you have to put it all on paper and disseminate your results to people. If you already know the answer, it's just not worth the trouble."

"The reason why people get inspired is that they discover principles or innovations that other people don't know. Discovery is so exciting that it can be seriously habit-forming. Fortunately, it is one habit that serves others."

Over the next few terms of courses, the questions got progressively better, resulting in problems like "Would neural satiation show whether rhythms and melodies are organized in the same part of the brain?" or "Should appliance instruction manuals separate or integrate pictures for multiple functions on control panels?" or "Does the development of children's word usage follow a similar sequence to the historical development of English?" Those were interesting problems for several reasons:

1. We did not know the answer before doing the research.
2. Statistical significance of differences would be calculable.
3. There was a plan for interpretation.
4. The answers would lead to follow-up research questions.

In recent years I have conducted hundreds of developmental interviews with program faculty members—a process where we collaborate to create the faculty members' theory of the development of their expertise. These collaborations begin by asking each expert to discriminate the following types of learning:

- Beginning learners take a few minutes to try an activity.
- Fundamental learners take a few months to learn about the field.
- Practical learners take a few years to get good enough to earn a living in it.
- Inspiring learners take decades to make contributions to it.

One difference between practical and inspiring learners became clear: if learners are still at the practical level a decade out, they can't wait for the weekend or retirement, whichever comes first. The reason why people get inspired is that they discover principles or innovations that other people don't know. Discovery is so exciting that it can be seriously habit-forming. Fortunately, it is one habit that serves others.

Assessment gets interesting when programs ask questions like "Would adding enhancement W to several course improve our student learning outcomes?" or "Which types of students would profit most from changing course sequence X to sequence Y?" or "How long will it take before the effect of enhancement Z begins to fade?" Once hooked on such questions programs will seek assessment help on their own.

Introduction: 2014 AALHE Leadership

Marsha Watson, 2014 AALHE Past-President

Vice Provost for Institutional Effectiveness & Accreditation, National Louis University

Because they were deeply committed to collaboration, the AALHE Founding Board of Directors wrote into the organization's ByLaws a collaborative leadership structure in the form of a tripartite Board Presidency. The result has been that at all times, a President, Past-President, and President-Elect, together with the Board's Executive Secretary, serve the organization as a collaborative Executive Committee. This structure ensures that the organization will never find itself without an executive officer(s) to lead it, and perhaps more importantly, that the organization will always enjoy the benefits and continuity of experienced succession.

Every year on the day before the Annual Conference, the full Board of Directors selects a President-Elect from the current Board membership. Each of the President positions require one year of service, so the total service commitment of an AALHE President is three years (one year each as President-Elect, President, and Past-President). In addition, the Past-President serves as Treasurer. The Executive Secretary is also appointed by the full Board, but the term of service for this Board Officer is not limited (the current President cannot simultaneously serve as either Executive Secretary or Treasurer, although the other two Presidents may serve in multiple officer roles).

The President positions rotate on the first of January. As I now rotate to the position of 2014 Past-President, it is my sincere pleasure to announce that Eric Riedel, our 2013 President-Elect, has assumed the position of the 2014 Board President, while Tara Rose was selected in June 2013 as 2014 President-Elect by the Board of Directors. Both Eric and Tara were members of the Founding Board of AALHE, and have tirelessly served the organization since the first days. The Board expects that the organization will continue to flourish under their leadership.



Eric Riedel, 2014 AALHE
President



Tara Rose, 2014 AALHE
President-Elect



Marsha Watson, 2014 AALHE
Past-President

The Three Effectiveness Questions

David Eubanks

Associate Dean of Faculty for Institutional Research & Assessment, Eckerd College

Let us know your success stories!

Email info@aalhe.org with stories, comments, questions, or proposed articles for the newsletter.

When talking about assessment with faculty or administrators, it's easy to fall into a mode we might call the "technical," which lead the conversation into the paperwork, bureaucracy, and accreditation requirements. This can be counter-productive if the intent is to actually make a difference in the practice of teaching and learning. There is an alternate mode of engagement that can be used to disarm expectations that the conversation will consist of "your reports are due at the end of the month," and "we need to set benchmarks for these goals." It can be accomplished by asking three jargon-free questions. They are framed below as if addressing faculty members, but it's easy to customize them for administrators.

What do we want our students to learn?

Even if there is a list of stated goals already, this is a good question to lead with. The goals on the paper may not be what the faculty actually care about. By engaging them with their own motivations at the beginning of the conversation it focuses on the actual goal of all the bureaucracy.

What do we know about that?

This is the assessment question in disguise. Rather than ask "what assessment data do you have?" the question above is broader, taking into account the fact that the most important information is probably not written down anywhere. This opens the door for observations that have no formal basis, and might be useful to develop into systematic assessments. It also leads to an evaluation of how trusted and useful the current formal assessments are. We shouldn't fall into the trap of thinking just because we gathered data that it means anything.

How can we improve?

By this point, this question should ask itself; it's a natural consequence of discussing a topic we care about in the context of our knowledge about the current situation. Only by taking action can we make a difference, so it's important that we capture the ideas that come from this conversation and commit to a certain course.

These questions can and should be used in the context of assessment goals, plans, and reports, but these are secondary documents that are used to nudge the discussion along ("I see that you listed technical writing as a goal last time. Do we still care about that? What do we know about it?") Assessment leaders can turn conversation based on these three questions into plans and reports, needing only to supply the necessary formatting, technical language, and background to be complete. This exercise is often best when done with a group of faculty in the room together, with the ideas marked up on a whiteboard. When you're done, take some photographs to include in the report. The whole approach is to make the exercise more like a liberal arts assignment and less like a business plan.

Get involved...

There are many opportunities for members to get involved in AALHE!

Here are a list of current committees and contact information if you would like to volunteer:

Member Development: This committee focuses on developing recommendations for managing expansions and retention of membership. Contacts: Jeremy Penn jeremy.penn@ndsu.edu and Shari Jorissen shari.jorissen@waldenu.edu

Member Services: AALHE conducts various evaluative processes at its conferences which provide member-driven suggestions for services. This committee analyzes feedback against the AALHE Strategic Plan and selects the most useful suggestions to develop into member service initiatives. Contacts: Catherine Wehlburg c.wehlburg@tcu.edu and David Eubanks eubankda@eckerd.edu

Grants (sub-committee of Strategic Planning & Budget): This subcommittee develops recommendations for grant projects that arise from the AALHE Strategic Plan. Contacts: David Jordan david.m.jordan@emory.edu and Robert Pacheco rpacheco@miracosta.edu

Conference Event & Planning: Members of this subcommittee will work in concert with the Conference and Events Committee to provide logistical support before, during, and after the Annual Conference. This may include preparing the conference schedule, program, and other materials, staffing the registration desk during the conference, acting as participant liaisons with the hotel, distributing and collecting materials and evaluations, and so on. Contact: Susan Wood sandrusw@nmsu.edu

In addition, we need assistance in the following areas...

The **newsletter** is always looking for folks to assist with writing articles and editing. Please contact David Eubanks if you are interested in assisting with the newsletter: eubankda@eckerd.edu

Webinars: Our quarterly webinars are archived copy will be available on the AALHE website at: aalhe.org/resource-room/webinars. If you have ideas about possible webinar topics and/or would like to be a presenter, please contact the Member Services committee.



AALHE

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Comments? Questions? Ideas?

About AALHE Please contact: Info@AALHE.org

About the AALHE Newsletter Please contact: David Eubanks (eubankda@eckerd.edu)