

Optimizing Integrative Learning by Connecting Curriculum and Assessment

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ABSTRACT

Students may acquire deep knowledge or discover a life-defining interest in a course or lab, only to lose it in a flurry of memorization during exam week for courses they experience as unconnected. Our broader goal is for students to gradually integrate and transfer what they learn across the curriculum and co-curriculum in order to develop creativity and imagination, contribute original ideas, and exercise expertise as professionals. Is this a bridge too far? Determining institution-wide student learning outcomes is often a first step, yet a faculty-driven, coherent curriculum is necessary for students to start connecting their new knowledge, developing skills, and responsibilities as a learner. Thus, teaching in the disciplines and departments implies creatively connecting broad learning goals and outcomes to what faculty already teach, assess, and judge as quality student work. The speaker discusses how students who participate in curriculum-embedded, assessment-as-learning can improve their academic achievement. She illustrates how academics who use assessment as a bridge to collaborative inquiry on the curriculum can discover where a department might optimize students' integrative and applied learning.