



Council for Aid to Education (CAE) Board of Trustees Statement on the Role of Assessment in Higher Education

The Council for Aid to Education is committed to helping American colleges and universities measure and improve learning outcomes for their students. This requires a wide variety of tools appropriately matched to diverse missions, goals, and purposes of each institution.

We support improving assessment, especially assessment of student learning outcomes in undergraduate education. The goal of undergraduate learning assessment should be to help faculty and administrators institutions use measures to improve teaching and learning. The Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) is one tool designed for this purpose, focusing on certain aspects of undergraduate education that are deemed important by higher education leaders and private sector leaders alike -- critical thinking, analytical problem solving, and written communication.

We strongly believe that a national testing regime is not appropriate for America's higher education system. The greatness of American higher education rests in its independence, diversity of missions, and commitment to teaching, research, and service of the highest quality. A one- size- fits- all testing regime would run counter to the historical success of our postsecondary education sector, inject opportunities for inappropriate political intrusion, and weaken its future ability to innovate and compete in multiple ways.

The most important step any of us can take, including the Commission on the Future of Higher Education, is to contribute to the development of an array of sophisticated methods for assessing student learning--an array that will be appropriate for the laudable variety of missions of higher educational institutions. [Each campus should create a mix of locally designed curriculum-embedded, and nationally normed assessments. We should encourage colleges and universities to assess student learning as a vital performance measure in enhancing instructional effectiveness.](#)



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