

A number of issues facing U.S. postsecondary education---47 million high school drop outs, poor student success rates in college, declining resources and rising costs add up to what economists call a commons problem. They are very difficult to solve and can tip over into a permanent crisis, a tragedy of the commons. No matter what solutions are proposed over the next decade, however, it is safe to predict the need for much morer evidence-based decisions particularly focused on improvement of teaching and learning. All of this places a greater need to assess student learning outcomes.

This presentation will present the lessons learned in developing and adapting one performance assessment instrument, the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) for international use. Performance assessment is an attractive testing paradigm that is gaining traction in the United States and OECD countries for competency testing. Performance assessments require students to use their cognitive abilities to construct responses to realistic problems. Moreover, they can be used for both formative and summative assessment. Examples of performance assessments will be presented.

The benefits and costs of using a value added approach will be discussed. As well as the possible benefits and challenges of an individual, student-based assessment model. The CLA and other competency assessments will also be set in the context of the larger education reform movement in the U.S. In this context, illustrations of how faculty can benefit from performance assessments tied to ancillary tools placed on the Internet-based Open Education Resource (OER) will be discussed. Finally, the challenges associated with comparison between countries will be discussed.