Direct Assessment
The Journey So Far
Southern New Hampshire University
Southern New Hampshire University Panelists

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What is “Direct Assessment”?  

- Provision of Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA) 

- Provides that instructional programs that use direct assessment of student learning, or that recognize the direct assessment by others of student learning, in lieu of measuring student learning in credit hours or clock hours, may qualify as eligible programs [to award federal financial aid] if the assessment is consistent with the institution’s or program’s accreditation.
A Few Things to Notice…

- Two routes: Direct assessment or recognition of direct assessment by others
- “In lieu of measuring student learning in credit hours or clock hours” BUT the application must specify the equivalent number of credit or clock hours
- Approval by the Department contingent on approval by accreditor
Why Pursue “Direct Assessment”? 

- Commitment to access
- Foster connections between college and the workplace
- Need: Most students are working adults on the low end of the wage skills
- Appropriateness: College for America is a direct assessment program
- Opportunity
- Provide clear evidence about what college graduates know and can do
College for America at Southern New Hampshire University (CfA)

- AA in General Studies degree
- No courses
- Students earn the degree when they have mastered 120 competencies
- No grades
- Students either master a competency or have “not yet” mastered
- Students move at their own pace (within limits)
How Do Students Demonstrate Mastery?

- Students demonstrate mastery by completing Projects
  - Authentic, engaging tasks
  - Involve multiple competencies from different areas
- Projects come in different sizes
- Each Project is evaluated by a trained Reviewer using an analytic rubric
- Rubrics are binary (“yes” or “not yet”) with multiple criteria
  - Students can revise and resubmit until all criteria satisfied
- Once a student satisfies all rubric criteria, s/he has demonstrated mastery of the associated competencies
Where Are The Faculty?

- “The student must interact with the faculty member on a regular and substantive basis to assure progress within the course or program.” 34 CFR 668.10(a)(iii)
- Traditional faculty role has been disaggregated and re-distributed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Role</th>
<th>CfA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support/advising</td>
<td>Learning Coaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum development</td>
<td>Instructional designers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivery</td>
<td>Curated resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of student work</td>
<td>Trained Reviewers</td>
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</tbody>
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Challenges of “Direct Assessment”

- How do we “translate” non-credit hour programs into credit hour equivalents in a way that:
  - Fits with other provisions of Title IV
  - Reduces potential for fraud and abuse
  - Does not simply replicate the credit hour system
  - Works with existing procedures and software
Questions?
Title IV Eligibility

Partnership With the Department of Education
Financial Aid Systems

- All standard eligibility requirements apply

- Full-time status as described by 34 CFR 668.10
  - Full-time/half-time equivalency

- Cost of Attendance

- Non-standard Term
  - (12) 6-month periods

- Standard eligibility for disbursement criteria applicable
Enrollment Monitoring

- Required for proper Pell Grant disbursement
  - Less than ½ time, half-time, ¾ time & full time
- Necessary to measure continued engagement in competencies
- Needed to determine eligibility for subsequent disbursements
  - “In progress” competencies not considered for NEW disbursements
- Crucial for accurate R2T4 calculations
- Essential for SAP completion rate measurement
Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP)

- Measured after every 6-month term
  - To provide a one term probationary period for unsuccessful students
- No GPA requirement
  - Grade scheme
- 75% completion rate requirement

- Maximum Timeframe
  - 150% of published length of program
  - Not allowed to transfer credits from other programs
  - No repeat courses

- Appeals
Withdrawals

- Withdraw from program not competencies
  - Official vs. Unofficial
  - Drops vs. withdrawals
- Documented Academic Activity
- Return to Title IV (R2T4)
- Refund of cost within first 2-week period
Questions?