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New Report and National Initiative Focus on College Admission for 21st Century Learning

New study looks at the use of performance assessments for both k-12 learning and college admission, placement and advising; lays foundation for first-ever national initiative to align k-12 performance assessment with higher education

PALO ALTO, CA— As states, districts, and schools are expanding instruction to include the competencies associated with college, career, and civic readiness, they are also developing ways to measure mastery of these deeper learning and higher-order thinking skills. These measures include performance assessments, such as portfolios, capstone projects, and senior defenses, alongside classroom performance. Meanwhile, more than 900 colleges have made standardized tests optional in their admissions processes and are looking for additional ways to recognize an array of student accomplishments. As a result of this expansion in the k-12 arena, a growing number of colleges are seeking more ways to include these broader portfolios of student work in their admission processes, and several consortia of colleges have emerged to encourage and help develop new methods for recognizing student accomplishments.

A new report, *The Promise of Performance Assessments: Innovations in High School Learning and College Admission*, looks at how these assessments, which focus on the kind of learning students will need to be successful in our innovation economy, are being used to inform college admission, placement, and advising decisions, as well as how they are being used to leverage deeper forms of learning at all levels. The report describes a number of highly effective k-12 performance assessment systems in the United States and abroad and includes an appendix on current state policies supporting performance assessment. The report also discusses how college curricula and assessments are changing to foster deeper learning, and describes innovative college admission systems incorporating these assessments.

"Many colleges have signaled an interest in using performance assessments in their admission process that include authentic demonstrations of what students can do to apply their learning to real world problems," said Linda Darling-Hammond, LPI President and CEO and report co-author. "And, while it is not a simple thing to expand the data used for college admission, there is widespread recognition that these kinds of assessments are necessary to leverage and better

represent the development of college-ready skills in high school. Such assessments also have promise for more effectively reflecting the achievements and potential of historically underserved students."

"Performance assessments are not new and can take many forms, from essays to longer-term projects such as senior capstones., said EducationCounsel managing partner and co-founder Scott Palmer. "As a growing priority for k-12 education, performance assessments have the potential to help transform teaching and learning by increasing project-based learning, improving student engagement and personalization, and helping students develop an array of deeper learning skills. And as higher education increases its use of performance assessments in admissions and placement, it creates the opportunity to improve access and diversity, and to create a virtuous cycle to help improve k-12 education and college success."

The report was released [at a conference](#) hosted by the Center for Enrollment Research, Policy and Practice at the University of Southern California. It is the first research to be produced through [Reimagining College Access \(RCA\)](#), a national initiative of the Learning Policy Institute and EducationCounsel that brings together for the first time k-12 and higher education policy and practice leaders (see list below) to recognize high-quality k–12 performance assessment systems and enable higher education institutions to understand and recognize evidence from such systems (as they do with International Baccalaureate and Advanced Placement programs, for example).

RCA includes three task forces:

1. The Recognition Task Force will create standards and a process for recognizing high-quality k-12 performance assessment systems at the national and/or state level.
2. The Technology Tool Task Force will develop or adapt a technology-based platform to capture student performance, assessment information, and portfolios so they can be used in admission, placement, and advising decisions.
3. The Leading Places Network Task Force will design and support a network of leading states, districts, and higher education institutions to enable k–12 school systems with strong performance assessment systems to engage more deliberately with postsecondary institutions and policymakers to strengthen those systems and expand their use.

The project will release a white paper on the work of the task forces this summer.

For more information on Reimagining College Access, please visit:
<https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/promise-performance-assessments>

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Recognition Task Force Chairs

Mike Reilly, American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO)

Paul Leather, Center for Innovation in Education (CIE)

Technology Tool Task Force Chairs

David Hawkins, National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC)

David Ruff, Great Schools Partnership

Leading Places Network Initial Brain Trust

Dan Gordon, EducationCounsel

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Participating Organizations

2Revolutions

ACT, Inc.

American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO)

American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU)

Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U)

California Community College Chancellor's Office

Center for Innovation in Education (CIE)

College Board

College Transition Collaborative

Colorado Department of Education

ConnectEd

Del Lago Academy

Digital Promise

EdImagine

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Education First

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Envision Learning Partners

Farmington Public Schools
Great Schools Partnership
Harvard Innovation Lab
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Internationals Network for Public Schools
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New Haven Academy
New York Performance Standards Consortium
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Raikes Foundation
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