Confronting the Business Lens for Accountability of General Education

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Abstract

Many constituents who hold higher education accountable for the quality of student learning approach the conversation with the same lens in which they hold a business accountable for a quality product. This paper addresses the differences and similarities between measures of success used in business and higher education within the context of general education, particularly that of information literacy. Understanding how the public may be holding higher education accountable for what could be considered learning that is general to any institution may help to re-frame how faculty and administrators plan the delivery and evaluation of general education, particularly information literacy.

Introduction

The calls for public accountability in higher education will continue regardless of personnel changes in federal or state governments, accrediting bodies and institutions of higher education.   The public wants to know how well students are able to read, write, quantitatively reason, critically analyze, and communicate coherently through the spoken word (Banta & Associates, 2002; Bresciani, 2006; Huba & Freed, 2000; Kuh, Kinzie,

Schuh, & Whitt, 2005; Maki, 2004; Mentkowski & Associates, 2000; Riordan & Roth, 2005; Suskie, 2004). It is these basic skills, often referred to as general learning or general education, for which the public desires higher education faculty and administrators to be held accountable. The disciplines, for the most part, seem to regulate themselves through their own professional associations, particularly those that invite external critique of quality. For example, business programs invite external critique of quality through the AACSB process; engineering programs through ABET, and chemistry through its professional organizations. While there are professional associations that address issues of quality of general education, there is no one association that holds higher education faculty and administrators accountable for the quality of general learning.

In holding higher education faculty and administrators accountable for the quality of general student learning, public officials and other external constituents are not ignorant of the complexity of educating citizens (Bresciani, 2008a; Bresciani, 2008b). Many higher education officials have spent a great deal of their time and energy educating politicians and other constituents about the complexities of delivering and evaluating general student learning. While explaining the complexity of delivering and evaluating general learning still continues, so does the public demand for some type of understanding around the quality of student learning.

Historically, higher education officials offered easy to measure indicators such as retention rates and graduation rates then scorned the use of such measures to compare institutional quality as insufficient. While there is no doubt that these indicators do nothing more than to serve as descriptive characteristics of institutional type, the higher

education world has done little to offer an effective replacement for the "quality conversation". Thus, this manuscript intends to approach the quality of education conversation from the perspective of many who are holding us accountable. This paper seeks to describe the way in which a business would be held accountable for the quality of its "products". In turn, we seek to apply this business model to the discussion about the quality of general learning, and in particular, the quality of information literacy.

Rationale for this Approach

Before describing an oversimplified approach of how businesses frame their conversations for accountability, we first must explain why this is an important framework for us to understand. Those who have been holding us accountable for the quality of higher education have been calling for measures of comparable quality in higher education for decades. During this time, many higher education leaders have disregarded this call to accountability, either thinking it would go away or simply considering that those demanding this information simply did not understand the complexities of a higher education system. Discussing whether these assumptions are true is not the authors' purpose. Rather, the authors take the perspective that both of these assumptions are false. In other words, we are approaching this discussion in a manner where we posit that (a) accountability is here to stay and (b) that those calling for accountability fully understand the complexities of higher education.

In approaching this conversation, we adopt Stephen Covey's (1989) notion that it is important to first seek to understand before seeking to be understood. Taking this approach, we drop our defensive posture around accountability and attempt to understand the perspectives of those who are demanding accountability. This approach requires us to

understand the framework of those who are requiring accountability from us. We need to study the way our external constituents frame the quality conversations.

In selecting a quality framework for our external constituents, we chose that of a typical business. While not all of the external constituents demanding accountability from higher education institutions are doing so with a business lens, we posit that many are. The authors' contend that a business judges the quality of its products in order to promote high levels of consumption; thus inferring a high level of satisfaction with the product.

If we, as educators, do not better understand the framework of those holding higher education accountable, we will be less likely to convey any information to the satisfaction of those constituents. Rather than explaining how complicated higher education is and why its quality is not comparable, we need to seek to understand the lens in which our constituents view us. If we can better understand that lens, we can better build a bridge from the higher education world to the business world. In using the business world language to build that bridge, we can begin to collaboratively design solutions for improving not only the quality of higher education, but access to it and the affordability of higher education.

Context of a Business Lens of Accountability and its Comparison to Higher Education

In framing this conversation, we posit questions that appear to be prominent in the discussion of the quality of a product generated by a business and compare it to the discussion of quality in higher education.

What is our product?

When a business begins, it identifies a product that it intends to design and deliver. For example, a restaurant considers its product to be the food it creates. The restaurant may also consider its service to be a product as it may have a specific way to deliver the food. While "product" may be a harsh term to use, higher education has a product - student learning. As a matter of fact, there are several products in higher education such as research, community economic stimulation, and global and local service. However, for purposes of this paper, we will only concern ourselves with the product of student learning. Note that we are not using number of degrees conferred or number of students graduated as the product. The student is also not the product in this conversation; the student is the interactive, dynamic consumer. Rather, the actual learning that the student consumes and is able to apply is the product.

How well do we organize ourselves to design and deliver the product?

In businesses, the conversation tends to be around how well the business is organized to deliver the highest quality product at the most cost-effective price. Continuing with the restaurant example, there are the chefs, who have creative license to create, design, or borrowing others' designs, put together the "product". The chefs work in concert with the service staff who delivers the "product" with a personalized flare to the consumer. Management oversees this process, ensuring cost-effectiveness, sequencing of events, timely delivery, quality, and overall consumer satisfaction. All are organized with great precision to appear that the product has been designed and delivered seamlessly and flawlessly to the consumer. All parties involved, particularly the management staff have the same goal in mind - - a cost-effective, profitable, high quality, personalized dining experience for the consumer. The consumer is interacting with the

server in this experience, discussing the quality of the product (both service and food), asking for adjustments in service and food based on his/her individual needs and desires, and rewarding the servers with tips, praise, and perhaps suggestions for improvement.

In public higher education, we do not typically organize ourselves in this manner, especially with regard to general learning. While some organizations may have discipline-based conversations that address high quality, cost-effective, seamless learning, most faculty and administrators do not have conversations about how well they organize themselves to deliver the highest quality general learning at the most effective price. The deliverers (e.g., faculty, academic staff, and co-curricular specialists) of general learning are often not in the same department or building, and sometimes, they are not even in agreement with the goals. There is often no management overseeing the creative design, timely delivery, course sequencing, or evaluation of the general learning. In addition, there is typically little interaction with the students about how well the learning is meeting their needs and expectations. And the students may not even be aware of the feedback mechanisms they have to request adjustments in their learning or to offer ideas for improvement.

Now, add to the complexity of designing general learning, the concern about students transferring in basic skills or general education courses from other institutions. To illustrate, we return to our restaurant example and consider the quality control issues of the management when consumers bring in their own bottle of wine for their own dinner. The manager becomes concerned about a cut in profit when consumers bring in their own bottle of wine. So, to discourage this behavior, he may decide to simply not allow this or charge a very high corkage fee. The chef, the designer of the meal, becomes

concerned that the wine won't complement the food selection. She may discourage this by asking the manager not to allow this behavior or may simply worry that the entire meal will be ruined by the poor selection of wine, even before knowing what the wine is that has been brought in by the consumer. The servers become nervous because they may be unsure of the quality of the wine or the pairing order. They are unsure when to serve the wine, what glass to pour it in, or whether to decant it. They simply may not know how to incorporate that wine into their already well designed process for delivering the meal.

How similar is this example to the way we approach students transferring into our institutions the general education or basic skills course that they took at another institution? Are we concerned about losing tuition revenue that could be generated from students enrolling in that general learning at our institution? Are we concerned about the quality of the learning that the student is transferring in? What about the curriculum sequencing challenges that may be posed? How would English courses transfer in affect our writing across the curriculum programs?

Successful businesses are very focused on how well they organize themselves to design and deliver their products. All members of the organization are focused on the goals they are trying to accomplish. They are mindful of costs while being mindful of quality. They are attentive to their consumers' needs and desires and they collaborate closely to ensure that the consumer is unaware of all the steps that are taken in order for the consumer to have the best experience possible. In addition, members of successful businesses interact with their consumers so that they can deliver a personalized positive experience. In the restaurant example, the consumer is not a passive consumer but an

interactive consumer contributing to the overall quality of the experience.   Can you imagine how differently we would move in our jobs if we were to organize ourselves in this similar manner to design, deliver, and evaluate general learning?

What does quality of our product look like?

Consider how well we are able to identify quality general learning. Employers and graduate schools who are consumers of our general student learning, give us plenty of feedback about how well our graduates are able to read, write, problem solve, quantitatively reason, and critically analyze. Do we depend on the consumers of general learning to give us feedback on our general learning and then design curriculum to meet those expectations? Or do we have our own institutional or professional standards for the type of general learning that we expect our students to demonstrate?

Returning to the restaurant example, quality of the food and the service is determined by professional standards. However, quality or at the very least, preference for quality is also determined by the consumers in the manner in which they select restaurants to dine. Furthermore, preferences are exercised by balancing quality and costs, as well as balancing quality, cost, and access to location. For example, we love consuming great food and wine and we happen to know where we can find the best coffee in the world as well as the best biscotti. However, we balance the decision to consume based on the balance of quality, cost, and access.

Before exploring these concepts further, let us first discuss how quality is identified. We are consumers of the biscotti and coffee but evidence of the quality of the coffee and biscotti is not identified in the act of consumption; it is evidenced in the interaction of the consumer and the designer or server. As we consume the biscotti, we

discuss the criteria of "good" with the server or perhaps the one who created the biscotti. The creator of the biscotti may explain why they differed from what constitutes industry standard and we may explain that while we respect that decision, we were looking for the industry standard. We may go back and forth in conversation, making requests, learning more about the entire experience. During this experience, the server or designer may facilitate our awareness of quality as we experience it. This contributes to our understanding of quality and the uniqueness or lack thereof of the experience we just had.

Similarly, learning is not merely consumed by the student. Learning is an interactive process that must be facilitated by the instructor and perhaps the ones who designed the entire learning experience. It is not merely in the act of teaching where learning is evidenced, nor is it merely in the act of evaluating the learning (Banta & Associates, 2002; Huba & Freed, 2000; Huber, 1999; Hutchings, 2001; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2005; Kreber, 2001; Loacker, & Mentkowski, 1993; Mentkowski, 1991; Mentkowski, 1998; Mentkowski, in press; Mentkowski & Associates, 2000; Riordan & Roth, 2005; Suskie, 2001); it is the interaction of the teaching, the process of learning, and the evaluation of that learning were the evidence of quality is discovered.

Now, back to our restaurant example; the criteria for the best coffee and biscotti are often defined by industry standards. However, we can't afford to fly to those locations to consume the best of the best. So, we apply the industry standard criteria and begin to look for the best coffee and biscotti within our regions as we simply don't have the luxury of leaving the region. Furthermore, given that we are college professors, we now add the criteria of cost. We know where we can find the best coffee in town. However, we can't afford to drink that coffee on a regular basis so we have found the

best, most affordable coffee that is in an area that we can easily access. Furthermore, there are two coffee shops that have equally good coffee, equally accessible locations, and are about the same price. However, we prefer one coffee shop over the other. Why? They greet us by name when we walk in; we like the personalized service even though the place is not as beautifully decorated and as clean as the other. Here is where we fully exercise our personal preferences using a different set of criteria yet not without regard to criteria for quality.

Why couldn't we argue that the same would be true for students selecting where they would consume their general learning? Well, for the most part, some of those holding institutions of higher education accountable for student learning assume that most students can afford to shop around the country for the best education. That is not a sound assumption upon which to proceed.

Secondly, most students don't have access to what constitutes quality general learning. Even if we determined that tests scores were the best way to evaluate and compare student learning (which would ignore the teaching part of the learning, the process of learning, and just focus on the evaluating; and which we have already determined is not the most informed way in which to evaluate quality), publicized standardized test scores tell the students very little about the quality of learning. Students would have to know what criteria of learning are actually being measured by those test scores and determine whether that type of learning is what they want to experience. They would need to know all of this before making an informed choice. And where would the students go to learn what the criteria is behind the test scores? Would the students even

understand what they were reading if the test scores were deciphered and would they then know what decisions to make?

Let's go back to our restaurant example for further illustration. Sommeliers, wine experts, know what it means when a bottle of wine is given 88 points from *Wine Enthusiast,* a wine journal, versus what it means when it gets 88 points from *Wine Advocate,* another wine journal. However, as consumers of the wine, we didn't know what that meant. So, we had to go to those wine journals to see how the ratings are designed and to learn the criteria that go into the point systems. Even after we accessed the detailed criteria, we had to get another sommelier to help us understand how to interpret it all. "Why don't they just publish the individual criteria for the wine?" we asked the sommelier. He smiled and responded, "I guess they expect the consumer to learn the meaning behind the score and then determine whether they value the criterion being compared." That certainly places responsibility on both the consumer and the one providing the comparison data, doesn't it? Imagine if we created such a system for general learning.

How do we address variance in quality of the raw materials?

Whenever we discuss the comparison of quality of student learning to that of a business, we get the understandable criticism of the variance of quality in the raw materials that go into creating and delivering the product. The best restaurants get the first pick of the produce of the day; they invest a great deal in professional development of their service staff; and they keep their sommeliers and chefs updated with the best technology and latest trends. They also provide the creators of the meal with time and other resources to experiment with making the good stuff even better. Furthermore, the

better the quality of the product and the higher the consumer appreciation of that product, the more the entire restaurant team is recognized and rewarded.

Institutions of higher education vary as well in the preparedness of their students to learn, in the quality of the professional development they provide to instructors, and in their ability to invest in and apply the latest research for improving the design of general learning. However, in restaurants, these variances are readily identifiable and even celebrated. Managers are not ashamed of these variances. Rather, they incorporate them into their marketing plans; they are reflected in their evaluations and ratings; and they are even reflected in the cost of consuming their products; as well as in the rewards and recognition of the employees. Why are we, in higher education, trying to all look the same when businesses work so hard to differentiate themselves? Why are we so afraid to reward the team that produces the best quality of student learning?

How well do we guarantee quality in our product?

Whenever we dine in a restaurant, we have noticed that the higher quality the experience, the more readily the quality of the experience is guaranteed. For example, if you are served a wine that doesn't agree with you, instead of forcing it upon you, the server offers to replace it with a different wine; no charge. The server talks with you a while, discusses your needs and desires. The server may even call in the sommelier to offer additional advice and eventually, you get a replacement glass that fits better with your overall dining experience.

In higher education, if an engineering student needs to learn technical writing but is offered literary writing instead, do we allow her to replace that literary writing course with the technical writing course free of charge? Or do we simply force her to make do?

What would it look like if we guaranteed our general student learning? What would it mean if students could re-take classes where the evidence of their learning was of poor quality or did not fit their overall educational needs?

Applying the Illustration to Information Literacy

So, what does this mean for information literacy, particularly as it is framed within general learning? How might we reframe calls for accountability in the information literacy area from a business perspective? Is business an appropriate lens through which to view information literacy learning? Although some librarians might chafe at the idea of information literacy learning as a commodity, the business framework is a useful one, for reasons mentioned earlier in this paper. In addition, librarians must realize that the commodity of information literacy is of critical importance to a variety of "consumers".

For example, information literacy learning is a key element of many career paths. This assertion can be supported by basic career search tools. For example, one may use the job title "librarian" as a surrogate for information literacy learning in the O*Net database. Using this database, one can determine that the top-ranked skills for a librarian are shared by a wide variety of careers, some of which include the following: criminal investigators, immigration and customs inspectors, correctional officers, medical scientists, anesthesiologists, veterinarians, orthodontists, family and general practitioners, surgeons, athletic trainers, respiratory therapists, speech-language pathologists, counselors, psychologists, social and community service managers, industrial safety and health engineers, postmasters and mail superintendents, fire inspectors, farm and home management advisors, animal trainers, administrative services managers, financial

managers, recreation workers, travel guides, teachers, education administrators, instructional coordinators, curators and clergy. This brief example gives insight the wide variety of career fields, and by extension academic disciplines, that rely on the commodity of information literacy learning. Certainly, one might expect that this limited example is only a small fraction of the stakeholders interested in information literacy learning. Having illustrated that the "product" framework may be applied in this way to information literacy, let us take the thought questions of the product framework one-by-one in the context of information literacy.

What is our product?

Our product is information literacy learning. Librarians, both independently and in collaboration with disciplinary faculty, have long worked to teach information literacy skills—the ability to locate, evaluate, and use information effectively and responsibly. In the last two decades, librarians have embraced a paradigm shift from teaching to learning and have worked to facilitate information literacy learning in students. In recent years, they have explored the assessment of student information literacy skills and many recognize the importance of viewing assessment and learning as inseparable—indeed effective assessment can produce learning—both of information literacy content and the metacognition required for lifelong learning.

To apply a business accountability lens to information literacy learning, we must also move beyond general definitions of information literacy, such as the ability to locate, evaluate, and use information. To define a product fully you must also describe it within a context. In higher education, information literacy learning can be tailored to a variety of contexts, including individual disciplines, career paths, or life skill areas. For

example, finding, weighing, and applying information looks differently to a scientist and a humanist, a lawyer and a businessperson, a parent seeking a diagnosis for a sick child and a philanthropist researching charities. Such tailored, customized definitions of information literacy are more meaningful to stakeholders and lend themselves more easily to concrete assessment and accountability.

How well do we organize ourselves to design and deliver information literacy learning?

As was stated earlier, disciplinary faculty often find it challenging to align personnel, effort, and resources to produce learning in student majors and especially general learning. Librarians also have significant challenges—a dearth of resources is only one. Teaching librarians often feel alone in their efforts to produce information literacy learning or even to define what information literacy learning looks like on their campus. They often struggle to have information literacy learning articulated as a core library goal, let alone a campus wide outcome. Even those who have been successful integrating information literacy into institutional goals, including general education outcomes, frequently struggle to staff for-credit courses or generate substantive information literacy collaborations with disciplinary faculty. Instead, information literacy instruction is offered as opportunities arise rather than on a strategic basis or for the best support of student learning. Rarely are students, beyond those included in small library advisory committees, included in these discussions. Even less often are employers, graduate faculty, or other citizens included in the design and delivery of information literacy learning. In sum, for most campuses, neither the design of

information literacy learning experiences nor the organization of partners in information literacy teaching and learning are ideal to produce student learning.

Consider then a more businesslike approach to producing information literacy learning. In an effective business, various personnel and departments work together to design and deliver a product. In higher education, the same is required. To successfully produce information literacy learning, personnel and departments within institutions must share responsibility. First, librarians need to be more deeply integrated into academic disciplines, extending the traditional "liaison" or "outreach" role to curriculum partner. Such partnerships will allow for greater integration of information literacy into general education courses and major course sequences and should ultimately result in greater contextualization of information literacy into the disciplines. Next, librarians need to work more closely with career service units and internship coordinators to tailor information literacy instruction to employment contexts and meet employer needs. Finally, greater collaboration between librarians and student support services will ensure that student information literacy learning is customized to the context of citizenship requirements and life skills.

What does quality information literacy look like?

For most librarians, information literacy learning is defined by the Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education and adapted to the context of individual institutions. While the Standards do an adequate job of defining information literacy, they do not describe what high quality learning really "looks like". Consequently, even librarians with a great deal of experience and expertise sometimes hesitate when asked to describe exactly what a high student ability to locate information

looks like, what a student with top-notch evaluation skills actually does, or what expert

student use of information is comprised of. Certainly, librarians know what information

literacy is, but many struggle to explain what quality information literacy learning really

looks like either in student performance of learned skills or in the products of those

performances, especially in language students, faculty, administrators, employers,

graduate faculty, and other citizens understand.

Because it is sometimes difficult to articulate exactly what information literacy

learning looks like in the context of student life, academic disciplines, the workplace,

graduate school, and the "real world," it is also difficult for teach information literacy

skills in these contexts. Students learn better when they know what it is they are intended

to learn, and it is difficult to assess the quality of information literacy learning when

descriptions of what that learning looks like are neither readily available nor agreed upon.

If one applies the business framework to this problem, a solution arises. Why not

work with the stakeholders (students, disciplinary faculty, employers, and citizen groups)

of information literacy to define it in those contexts? Together, librarians and local

government or veterans groups can describe the information literacy skills a citizen needs

to search out current candidate information, evaluate the trustworthiness of the

information sources, and make judgments about how to vote in an election. Graduate

faculty and librarians can collaboratively analyze what citation tracing behaviors and

tools are most appropriate for graduate students who need to follow the scholarly

dialogue and identify seminal publications on a research topic. Librarians and hospital

administrators can team up to determine how physicians can set up alerts to keep current

on leading edge medical research, and evaluate it based on clinical criteria, and apply it in

their practices. Once information literacy learning is clearly articulated and contextualized, it can be meaningfully integrated by both librarians and a variety of partners throughout curricula and support services.

How do we address variances in the quality of raw materials?

As was stated previously, variance in student preparedness, quality of professional development for librarians and faculty, and ability to invest in and apply new teaching and learning research all impact the quality of student learning. However, diversity is not a weakness; rather differences in higher education are to be protected and celebrated. In order to address variances in the area of information literacy, individual institutions must customize their approach to information literacy learning to the needs and strengths of their students. That does not mean that all institutions cannot excel in producing information literacy learning—it means that quality information literacy learning will look different in different institutional settings. The critical issue is that information literacy learning must align with the overall learning that a student attending that institution desires and expects, as well as their future employers, graduate faculty, or fellow citizens. Consequently, information literacy learning produced by a program that prepares students for careers in agriculture and to work on family farms will look different from one that develops psychology majors that will immediately enter graduate school—the student paths are different, consequently the learning should be tailored to fit. Certainly, some institutions produce students with similar goals and needs, and in those cases, similarities in information literacy learning are appropriate. The key to success is a fit between learning needs and learning achieved.

How well do we guarantee quality of information literacy learning?

Given the many challenges of producing information literacy learning, the idea of guaranteeing that learning may seem premature or even impossible. However, consider what a guarantee says to the students, employers, graduate faculty, and citizens that will consume this commodity either directly or indirectly. A guarantee conveys competence and confidence—of the librarians and faculty who deliver the information literacy learning and the students who receive and co-create it. If we believe that information literacy learning is critical for our students' lifelong learning and development, then we must be confident and competent enough to accept the challenge of articulating what information literacy learning is, designing and delivering it effectively, describing what it looks like at a high level of quality, recognizing and rewarding those who produce high quality learning in a way that is aligned with their institutions, and finally guaranteeing it.

An "information literacy learning guarantee" is far from an impossible goal. However, achieving this goal requires collaboration, planning, and competent assessment. Once librarians successfully collaborate with stakeholders to define and describe information literacy in a particular context, the next step is to form a plan, or learning map, to ensure that components of the customized information literacy content are included in student learning experiences, both in and out of the classroom (Maki, 2004).

Ideally, each component or skill is addressed in multiple learning experiences, such as courses, service learning projects, or other campus activities. Such mapping better ensure that the skill will be learned and therefore, we can better "guarantee" the learning. For example, perhaps the first time students encounter a skill, they are simply introduced to it. Later, the skill is reinforced, and before graduation students have been

provided with sufficient experience to master the skill. During early exposures, students

are formatively assessed to track their skill development. By the end of their college

careers, a summative assessment is administered. A detailed summative assessment of

information literacy learning can be used to develop a profile of what students in a

particular program or institution know and are able to do with regard to information

literacy. And there you have it. The students know what they have learned, and so do

their parents, graduate faculties, employers, and fellow citizens. Through collaboration,

planning, and assessment, a commitment to learning is made and the agreement to

demonstrate results is fulfilled. Of course, to truly guarantee student learning, one more

step is required. What is that final step? To stand behind the student assessment profile

by offering no-cost "re-learning" opportunities to those graduates who do cannot produce

the learning the college has promised. Such a guarantee would make an unprecedented

statement about the organization's commitment to learning and their students…one that

the consumers of student learning could both respect and trust.

Questions to Consider

If this business to general learning illustration resonates with you, than perhaps you

may want to examine your purpose for general learning and as you do, consider the

following questions.

- o What is our product?
- o How well do we organize ourselves to design the product?
  - How well do we design the student learning experience?
- o How well do we organize ourselves to deliver the product?

- How well do we understand all the components of student success as we deliver the opportunities for students to learn?

  o With whom do we partner in the design and delivery?

    - How well do we collaborate with the co-curricular and other support structures to enhance the student learning?

  o What does quality of our product look like?

    - What does quality student learning look like?

  o How do we know it exists?

    - How do we know students are learning what we expect them to learn?

  o How do we compare ourselves to others so that that quality in that product can be identified across competitors?

    - Are we comparing quality of the evidence of learning? Or are we comparing institutional characteristics?

    - How well do we communicate what the quality of learning indicators mean? How well do we help others interpret the meaning so they can make decisions about their learning?

    - How well do we distinguish differences in quality that are intentionally and purposefully designed?

  o How do we address variance in quality of the raw materials?

- How well do we adjust the learning experience based on student inputs, faculty differences in teaching abilities, or variances in instructional materials?

o How well do we reward those who are the highest producers of this product?

- How are faculty recognized and rewarded when there students consistently learn what is expected of them?
- How well are academic and student support staff rewarded for supporting improvements in student learning?

o How well do we guarantee quality in our product?

- Do we guarantee the quality of learning in our students as long as the students do their part in the learning process?

o What are the return or exchange policies?

- If a student doesn't learn what is expected of him or her and they have shown evidence that they contributed to the learning process, can they come back to learn again for free?

o How well do the consumers of the product judge its quality?

- How well do employers, graduate school faculty, and citizens judge the quality of the student learning?

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