

# New Paper Aims to Invigorate Promise of Degree Qualifications Profile

January 17, 2013

With great fanfare and big names in the student learning world behind it, the Lumina Foundation two years ago [unveiled its Degree Qualifications Profile](#) with the hope that it would prod faculty members and college leaders to better define and drive their students to show what they should know and be able to do at various degree levels. Despite experimentation on scores of campuses and by accreditors and others, the profile's impact has been muted, and in [a new paper released today](#) by the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment, two of the crafters of the profile, Peter Ewell and Carol Geary Schneider, seek to give faculty members and administrators reasons (and tools) to embrace its use.

Both Ewell's paper, which is the core of the document, and Schneider's afterword, subtly concede that the degree profile has not been fully accepted or understood. Ewell offers a "tasting menu" of practical ways that faculty members and institutions can develop "the needed assignments, examination questions, and projects that enable the collection of meaningful evidence of student mastery," the profile's underlying goal. Contrary to the widely assumed view (from some faculty critics) that the profile is designed to lead to a standardized, reductionist way of capturing student learning, Ewell writes, "engaging assessment in the context of the DQP requires faculty to be much more systematic and intentional than is currently the case at most colleges and universities."

Schneider more pointedly seeks to understand and explain why the degree profile "faces very real challenges" on campuses, which she attributes largely to faculty fears about standardization and the fragmented way (in departments, programs, etc.) learning is delivered on many campuses. The profile, she writes, "is a bold effort to help higher education move beyond credit hours to competency and beyond the fragmented learning too many students experience to intentionally preparing students to integrate and apply their learning to unscripted problems and responsibilities."