

# ON THE CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN OBJECTIVE AND SELF-REPORTED MEASURES OF STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

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## Excerpted from Pascarella and Terenzini (1991)

Because developing objective tests of student learning and skills can be extremely time-consuming and costly, the use of self-reported outcomes is widespread. A growing body of research over the past 30 years examines the adequacy of self-reported measures of learning and skill development as proxies for objective measures of the same traits or skills. Results vary depending on the traits and instruments examined. However, correlations for individual test takers on the order of .50 to .70 are reported between self-reports and objective criterion measures on such instruments as the ACT Comprehensive Test, the College Basic Academic Subjects Examination, and the Graduate Record Examination. These results support the efficacy and desirability of a multiple-indicator assessment strategy.

## Excerpted from Pace and Pike

There is growing evidence supporting the correlation between test performance and self-reported learning and growth. The social science literature (Pace, Pike, Pascarella & Terenzini) indicates that student self-reports have only moderately positive correlations with objective measures when used to gauge the learning or skill of *individuals*, but when aggregated to compare the performance of *groups*, the reliability of self-reported measures is quite high and is generally considered to be a valid measure of real differences in learning between *groups* (Anaya 1999; Pace 1985; Pike 1995, 1996, Terenzini et al., 2001).

## Excerpted From:

Kuh, G. D. (2005). Using student and alumni surveys for accountability in higher education. In J. C. Burke (Ed.), *The Many Faces of Accountability*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Under the right conditions, student self-reports of their behavior and college experiences are both valid and reliable (Baird, 1976; Berdie, 1971; Gershuny & Robinson, 1988; Kuh et al., 2001; Pace, 1985; Pike, 1995; Pohlmann & Beggs, 1974; Turner & Martin, 1984). The most important factors are whether respondents have the information to provide accurate answers (Wentland & Smith, 1993) and whether they are willing to do so (Aaker, Kumar, & Day, 1998). People generally tend to respond accurately when questions are about their past behavior within a reasonably recent period of time (Converse & Presser, 1989; Singleton, Straits, & Straits, 1993) and the items avoid sensitive, potentially embarrassing matters (Bradburn & Sudman, 1988). All things considered, self-reports are likely to be valid and appropriate for use in quality assurance and performance improvement systems provided five general conditions are met (Bradburn & Sudman, 1988; Brandt, 1958; Converse & Presser, 1989; DeNisi & Shaw, 1977; Hansford & Hattie, 1982; Laing, Swayer, & Noble 1989; Lowman & Williams, 1987; Pace, 1985; Pike,

1995, 1996). They are: (1) the information requested is known to the respondents; (2) the questions are phrased clearly and unambiguously; (3) the questions refer to recent activities; (4) the respondents think the questions merit a serious and thoughtful response; and (5) answering the questions does not threaten, embarrass, or violate the privacy of the respondent or encourage the respondent to answer in socially desirable, rather than truthful, ways. Many assessment instruments meet these criteria (Borden & Zak Owens, 2002).

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