The Big Goal

Increase the percentage of Americans with high-quality degrees and credentials* from the long-standing rate of 39 percent to 60 percent by the year 2025

*Lumina defines high-quality credentials as degrees and certificates that have well-defined and transparent learning outcomes that provide clear pathways to further education and employment
The Quality Question

Quality = Student Learning
What is Tuning?

Tuning, a faculty–driven response to the Bologna process, is the process of "harmonizing" higher education programs and degrees by defining student learning outcomes by subject area.
Tuning Origins

- Faculty response to calls for greater quality in EU higher education
- The Bologna Process
  - 145 institutions, 33 countries in Europe
  - 132 institutions, 18 countries in Latin America
- Imitated in Latin America, North Africa, Australia
Summary of Tuning Steps

1. Define the discipline “core” with student learning outcomes
2. Map employability
3. Consult stakeholders and engage students
4. Hone “core” discipline and learning outcomes
5. Draft degree profiles
Step 1: Define the discipline “core”

- Builds on existing learning outcomes work where appropriate ("reference points").
  (ex. SACS, ABET, BoK, professional/learned societies, etc.)

- Focuses on “meaning of degrees:”
  What should students know, understand and be able to do?
  Are outcomes well-defined? How will knowledge, skills and abilities be assessed?

- “Ratchets” expectations higher as students progress
Step 2: Map employability

- Who employs your graduates, and in what occupations?
- Identifies targets of consultations
- Informs faculty about “consumers” of degree holders
Step 3: Consult Stakeholders

One approach:
Two survey instruments, with faculty input and advice:
   Survey to rank important general competencies:
   1. Faculty in the discipline
   2. Students
   3. Graduates
   4. Employers
   Survey to test discipline committee’s degree-level descriptors and active learning outcomes
   1. Faculty only

Another approach:
Focus groups
Step 4: Hone “core” discipline

• Incorporate findings from surveys of general competencies / transferable skills

• Incorporate feedback from other faculty in the discipline into thinking about degree-level descriptors and discipline-specific learning outcomes

• Ensure competencies are written so they ratchet up expectations and can be assessed
Step 5: Draft degree profiles

• Using the discipline “core” as a foundation, write a statement differentiating your program from others.
• The statement should be grounded in learning outcomes that can be clearly defined and measured.
What could competences look like?

An example of some competences, rated on *importance* and *level developed by degree*

**MN biology**

**General competences**
- Ability to identify, pose, and resolve problems
- Ability to act with social responsibility and civic awareness

**Subject specific competences**
- Recognize evolution as a unifying theme across biology
- Develops numerical, statistical, and graphical models to represent and simulate biological mechanisms
What Tuning is about

- **Standards, not standardizing**: After the “core” of learning for the discipline is defined at each degree level, there will be plenty of room for program differentiation.
- **Faculty control of the discipline**: Faculty consult stakeholders, which builds credibility with policymakers and the public. Ultimately, faculty define the discipline.
- **Fostering academic autonomy and flexibility**: Faculty are free to develop student learning through whatever curricula they believe work best but they agree to focus on achieving the agreed-upon learning outcomes in the way most appropriate to the institutional context, demographics, etc.
Why Do We Tune?

- Accountability and transparency
  - Improve faculty-led accountability systems to satisfy accreditors, funders, policy-makers, and other stakeholders
  - Assure quality for internal (students) and external (transfer institutions) stakeholders
  - Make clear to all stakeholders what a degree holders “knows, understands, and is able to do”
  - Improve attainment through transparency of requirements, outcomes, and opportunities for degree holders
Why Do We Tune?

• Changing focus from credits to learning
  - Recognition of student learning wherever achieved
  - Ensure that transfer students are properly prepared for next institution and course of study

• Transfer and articulation
  - Instill confidence in institution receiving transfer student
  - Establish mutual respect through transparency

• Join an international effort
What does Tuning add?

• Involves talking about student learning across different institutions (to get consistency among institutions)

• Creates meaningful relationships between faculty members from different institutions and sectors (talking to people from all sectors, share experience and ideas)

• Increases focus on general competencies – existing approaches mainly focus only on subject matter mastery
What does Tuning add?

• Involves employers/alumni + faculty/students in thinking about what degrees represent

• Shifts focus from what’s taught to what students must accomplish

• Makes explicit the implicit expectations of previous work

• Ties the academic process to academic, workforce and societal expectations

• Led by faculty and a defense against accountability from above
What’s in it for advisors?

- Clarity of the need for courses relative to fields of study and degrees – the classic “why do I have to take...” question
- Improvement of articulation and transfer – now based on learning and not credits
- Changes the conversation from “what is being taught to you” to “what are you learning”
- Introduces employment more explicitly into conversation
Lumina’s Tuning Pilot

• Three states – MN, IN, UT
• Seven disciplines – history (x2), chemistry, biology, graphic design, education, physics
• Started April 09; to conclude Dec 09
• Teams to produce competences, surveys, reflection on feasibility and process, suggestions for next steps
# Early Tuning results: Teamwork (interpersonal and interaction skills)

**Importance (1=None, 2=Weak, 3=Considerable, 4=Strong)**

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**Level to which developed (1=None, 2=Weak, 3=Considerable, 4=Strong)**

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Early Tuning results: Oral/written communication

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Early Tuning results: Critical thinking (ability to be critical and self-critical)

### Importance (1=None, 2=Weak, 3=Considerable, 4=Strong)

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Texas Tuning

• Four engineering disciplines, begun in April ’10
  Civil, industrial, electrical, mechanical
  Desire for greater articulation for transfer between community colleges and bachelor degree granting institutions

• Preparation for faculty training included sessions with deans/dept. chairs, provosts, and employers

• TX expressed desire to expand to other disciplines
Qualifications frameworks

- Similar reform as Tuning, but driven by defining degree levels by student learning outcomes, not by disciplines
- Example – What should a student know, understand, and be able to do as a problem-solver as a associate’s degree holder? A bachelor’s degree holder? Master’s degree holder?
- Tuning and qualifications frameworks support each other and one naturally clarifies the need for the other
- Lumina is drafting a framework (Degree Qualifications Profile) and looking at options to pilot the framework
- At some point, explicit connections to the Tuning efforts will be required
Three Pieces for Tuning II (and some evaluation)

- Returning/new state pairing(s)
  - Pair current state with new state and undertake new disciplines ("high volume") as well as those of special interest
  - Potential to engage for-profit institution

- Regional organization
  - Use region as way to expand number of states and disciplines

- Professional society
  - Use professional society to gather faculty in discipline and extend reach to national level

- Need for evaluation
Questions?
Comments?
Critiques?

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