

# *So much assessment, so little improvement:*

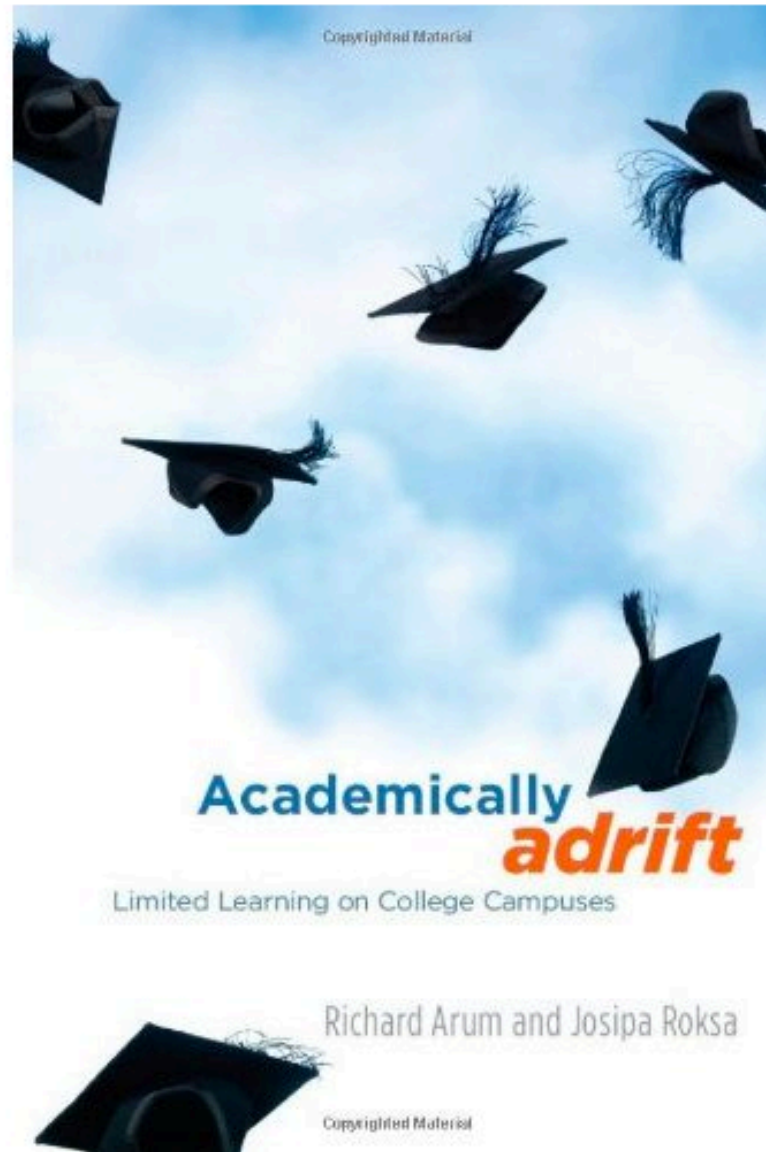
*Lessons from the Wabash Study*

Canadian Assessment Forum on  
Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

May 2011

# Overview

- *Academically Adrift* - No learning in college!
- What we have found in the Wabash Study
- What to make of these findings
- Lessons about using evidence to improve student learning



# 45% Of Students Don't Learn Much In College



ERIC GORSKI : 01/18/11 07:14 PM : **Ap**



Amazing

Inspiring

Funny

Scary

Hot

Crazy

Important

Weird

**Read More:** [Academically Adrift](#), [Academically Adrift: Limited Learning On College Campuses](#), [College](#), [College Learning](#), [College Students](#), [College Students Not Learning Much](#), [Collegiate Learning Assessment](#), [How Much Do Students Learn In College](#), [Josipa Roksa](#), [Richard Arum](#), [College News](#)

*“With a large sample of 2,300 students, we observe no statistically significant gains in critical thinking, complex reasoning, and writing skills for at least 45% of the students in our study” - page 36*

# *What have we found in the Wabash Study?*

## *Wabash Study*

- 49 institutions
- 17,000 students
- Longitudinal
- Purpose - identify practices and conditions that promote liberal education

## *Wabash Study Outcome Measures*

Academic Motivation Scale

ACT Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency Critical Thinking Test

Contribution to the Arts and Humanities Scale

Contribution to the Sciences Scale

Defining Issues Test of Moral Reasoning (Version 2)

Miville-Guzman Universality-Diversity Scale (Short Form)

Need for Cognition Scale

Openness to Diversity and Challenge Scale

Political and Social Involvement Scale

Positive Attitude toward Literacy Scale

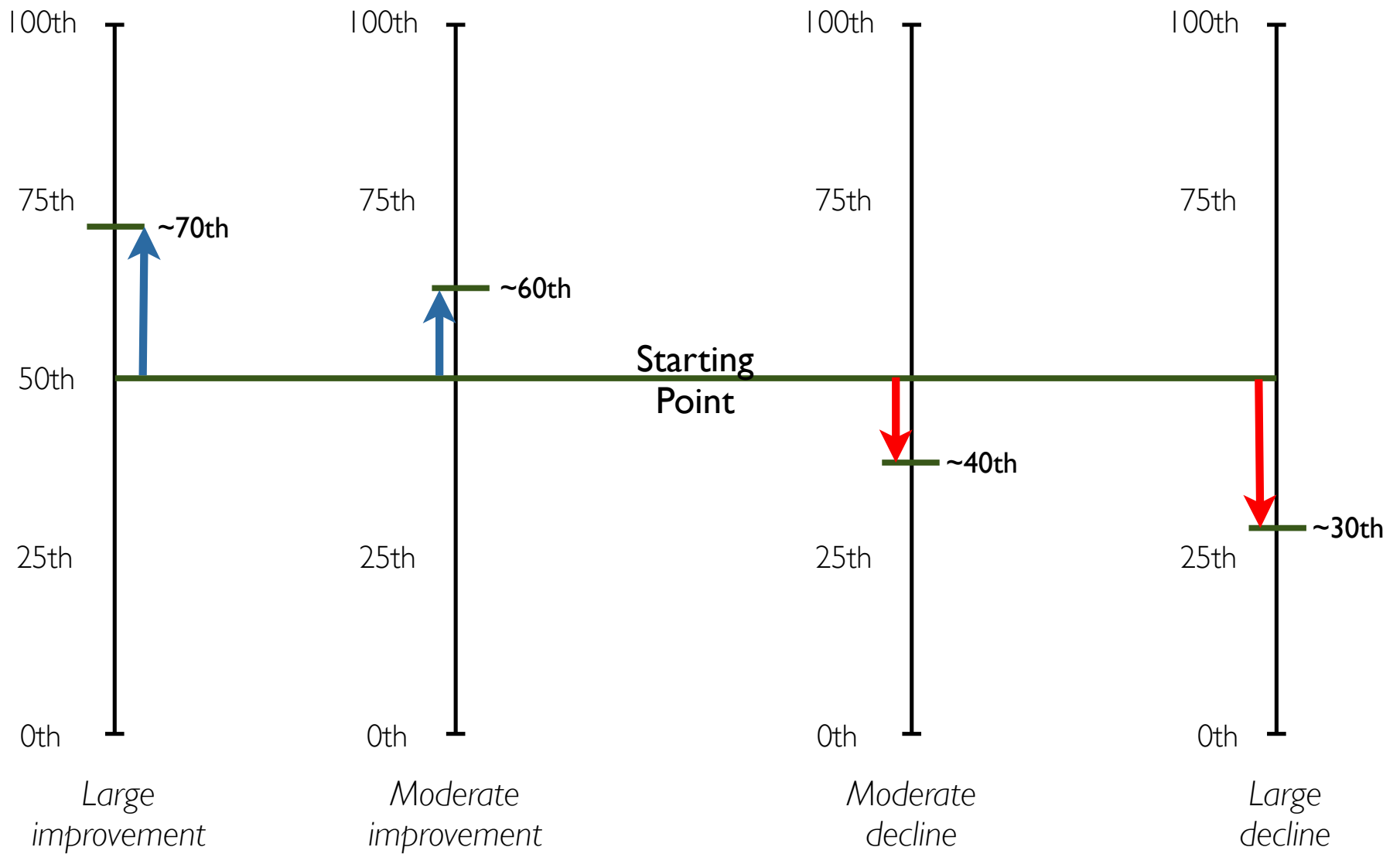
Ryff Scales of Psychological Well-Being

Socially Responsible Leadership Scale (Revision 2)

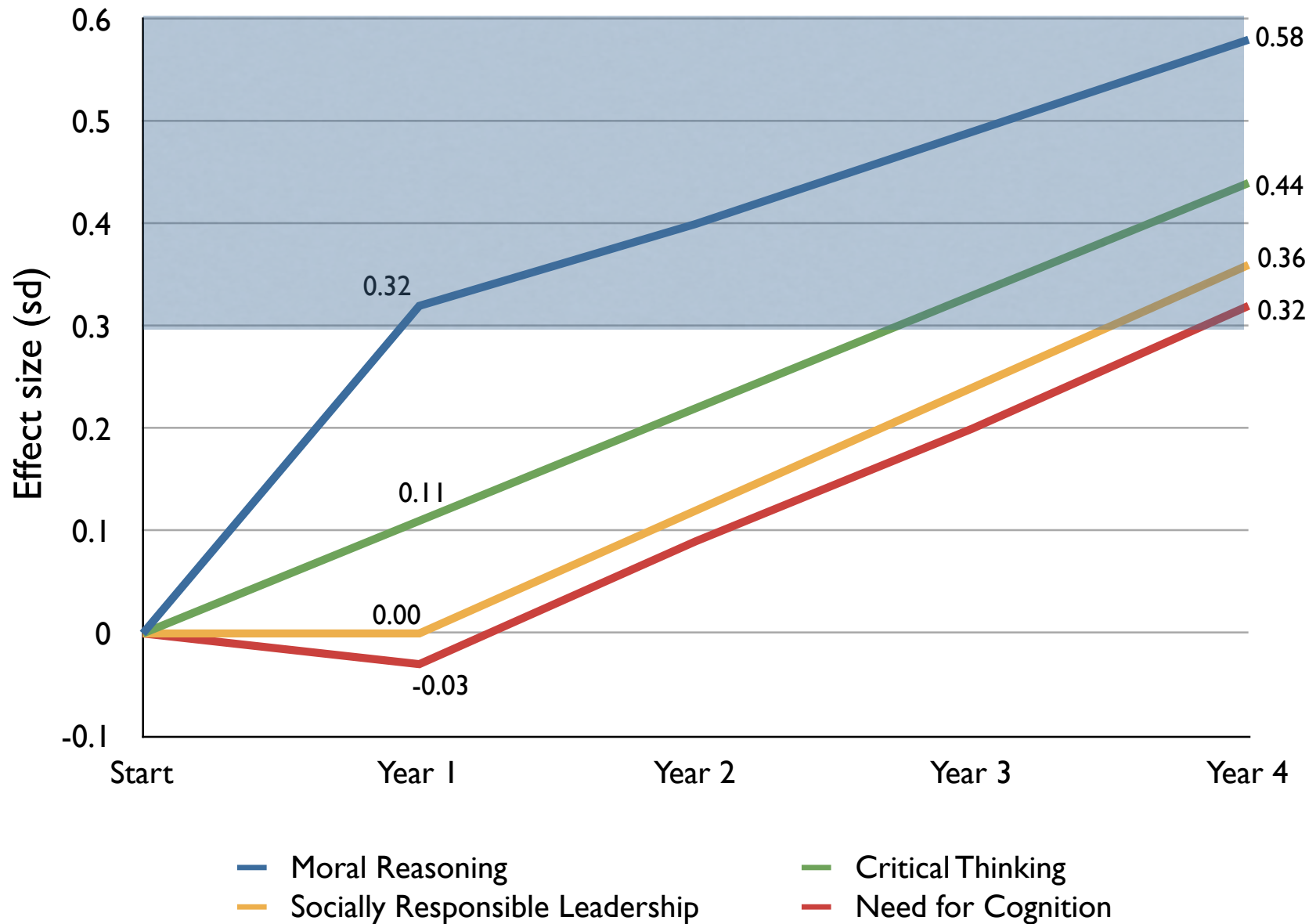


*How much do students grow over four years?*

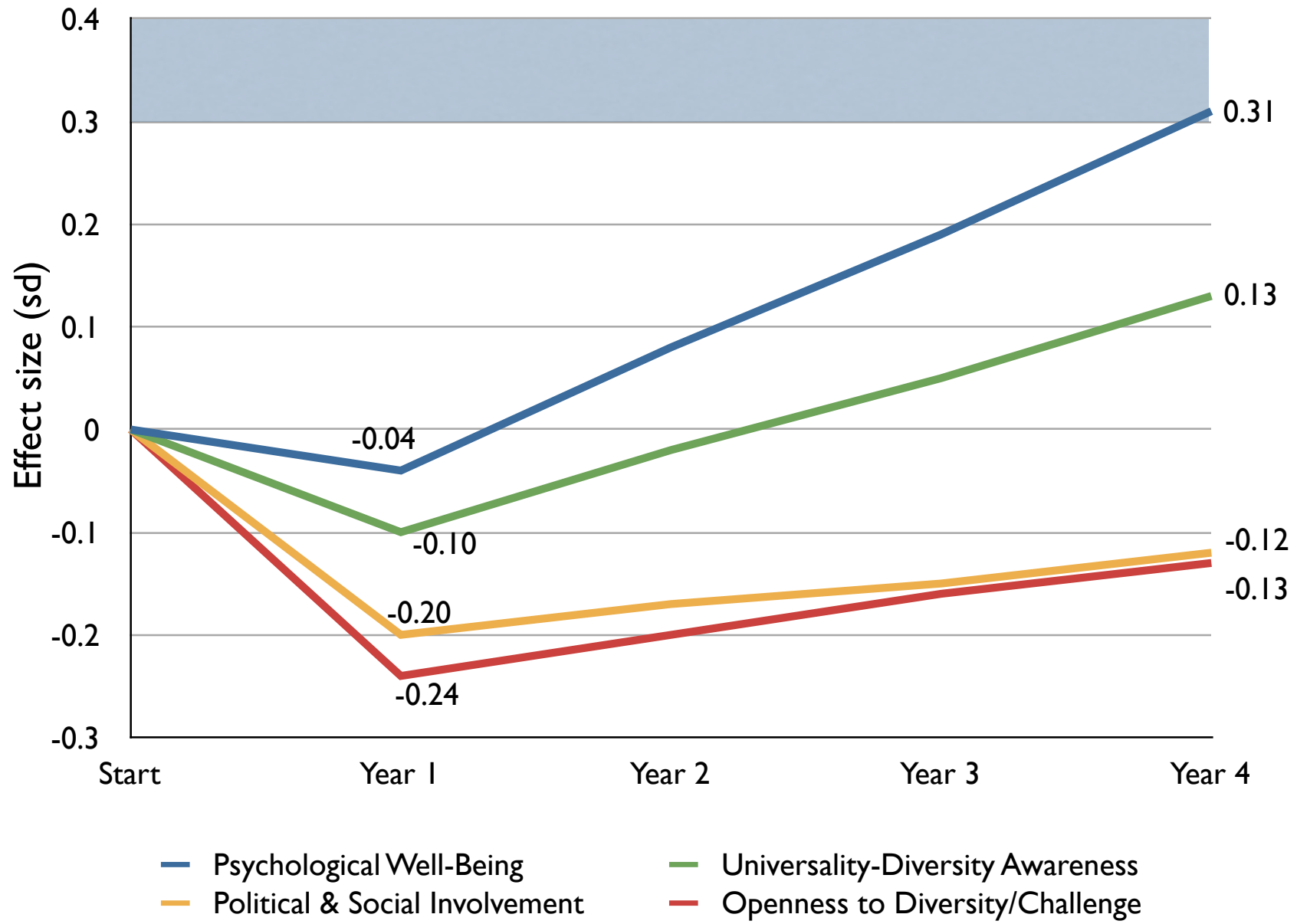
*What's your definition of “grow?”*



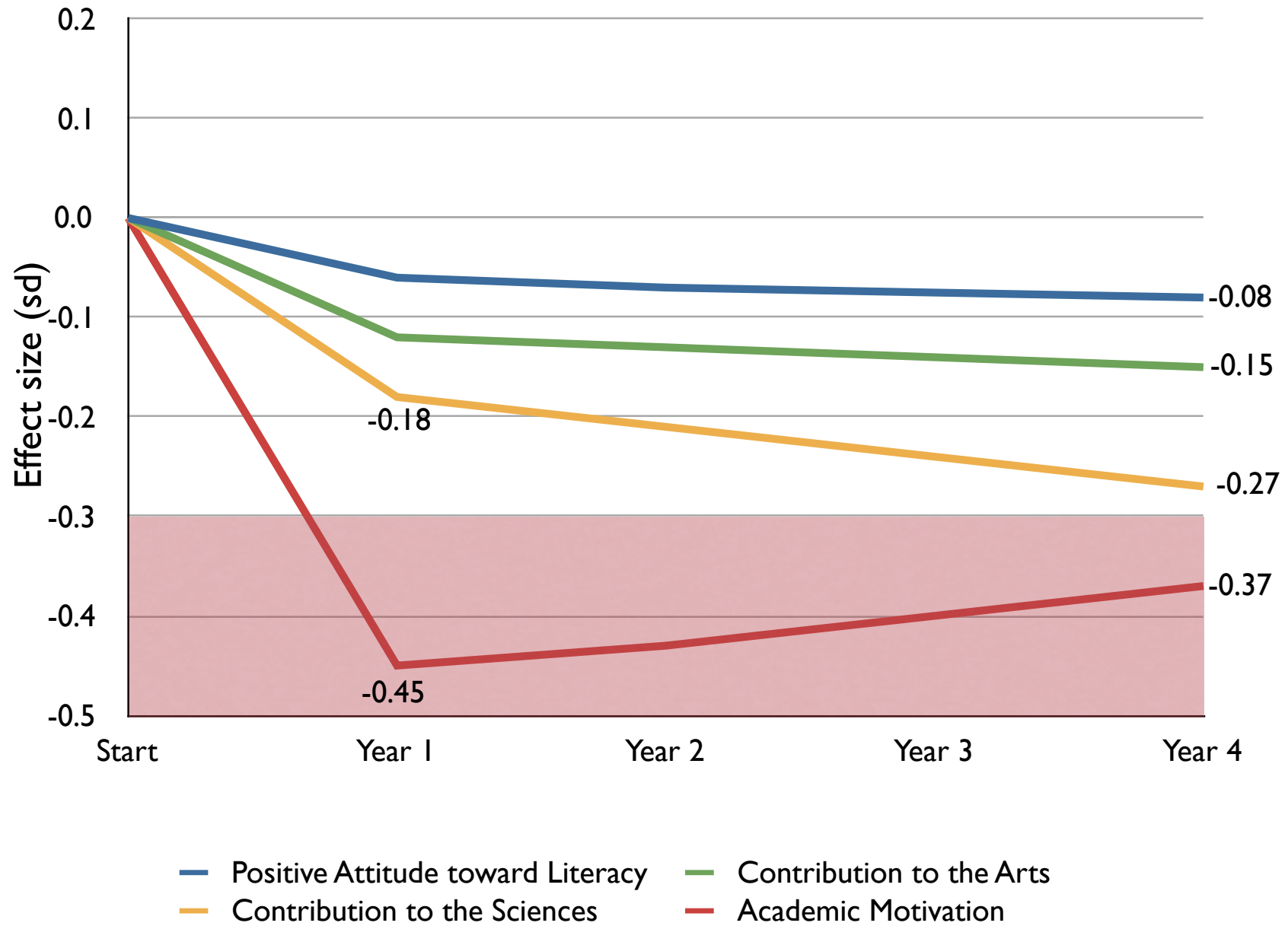
## Four-Year Change

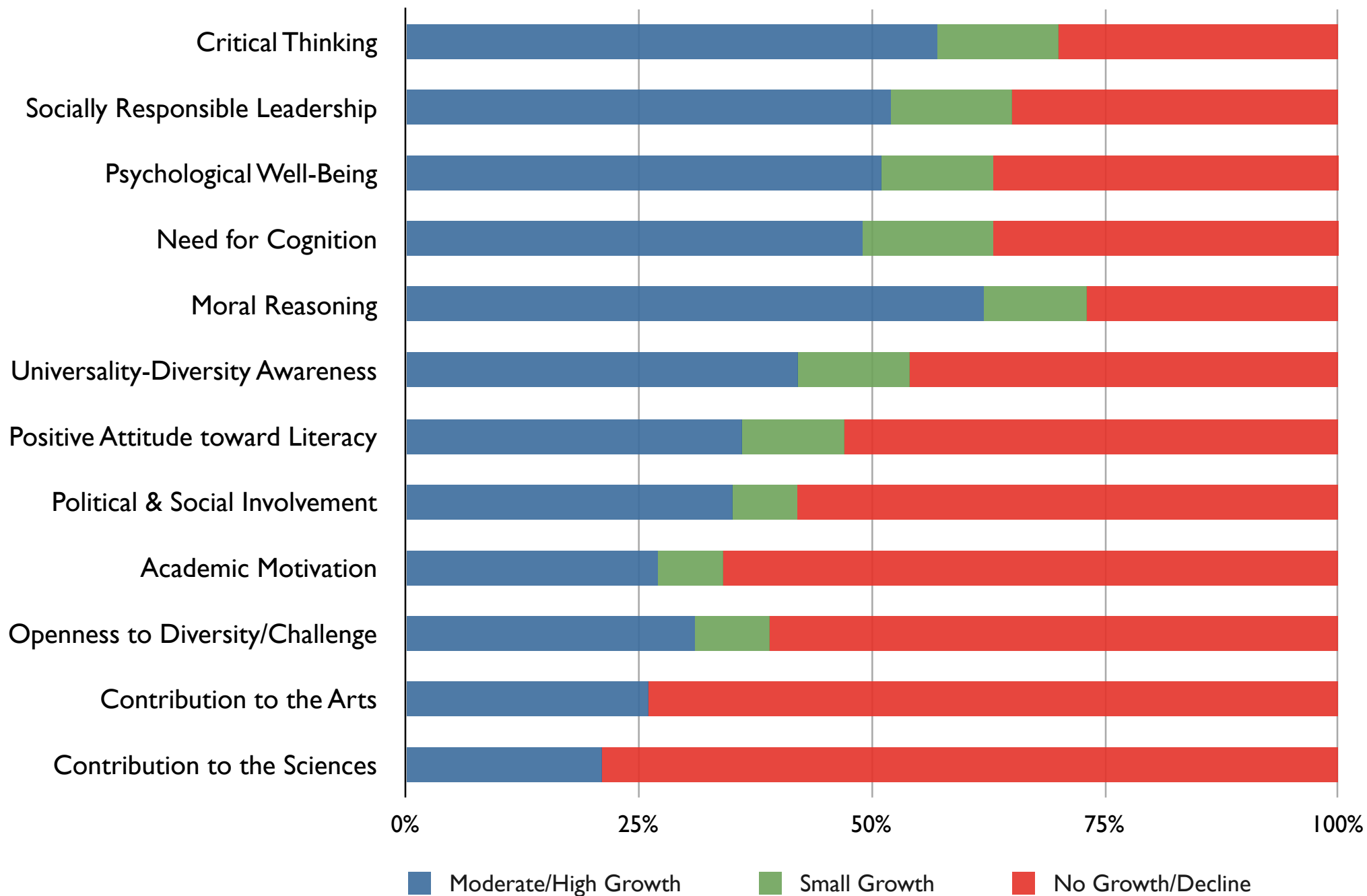


## Four-Year Change



## Four-Year Change





*What about good practices?*



# *What practices promote growth on multiple outcomes?*



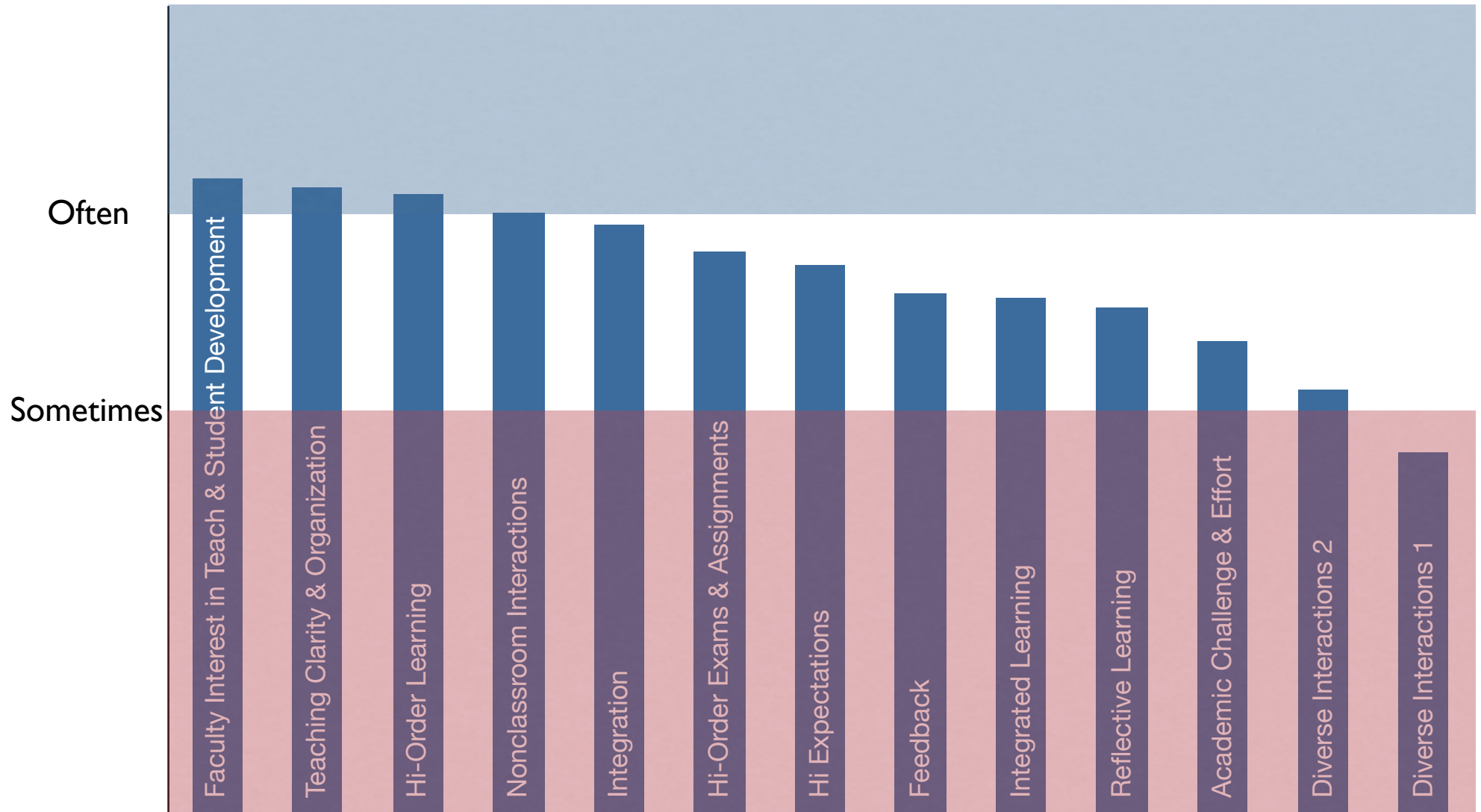
## *Good practices*

- Faculty interest in teaching and student development
- Prompt feedback
- Teaching clarity and organization
- High-quality nonclassroom interactions with faculty/staff
- High expectations
- Academic challenge and effort
- Higher-order, integrated, reflective learning
- Higher-order exams and assignments
- Diverse interactions

*How often did your faculty give clear explanations?*

1. Never
2. Rarely
3. Sometimes
4. Often
5. Very Often

## *Fourth-year Good Practices*



## *What do we make of this?*

- **Reasons not to overreact**
  - These measures are *far* from perfect
  - We are not measuring content knowledge
- **Reasons not to dismiss the findings**
  - Different studies, same results
  - Data are consistent with student conversations
- **It should lead us to inquire further about what our students are learning *overall* as a result of attending our institutions**

# *Lessons about using evidence to improve student learning*

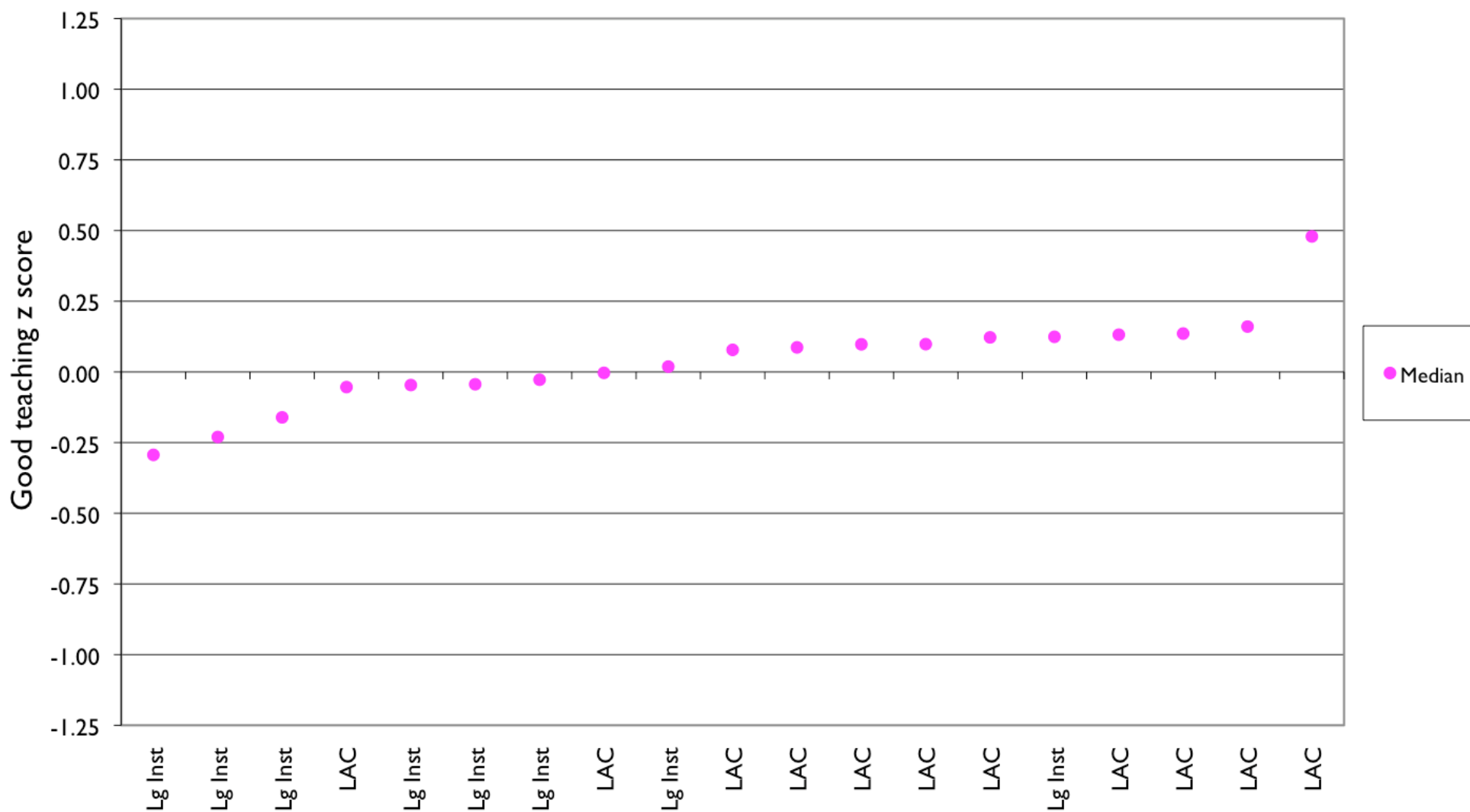
*Lesson I - Effective assessment is based on making sense of evidence about student learning in community*

*(and “community” includes students and staff)*

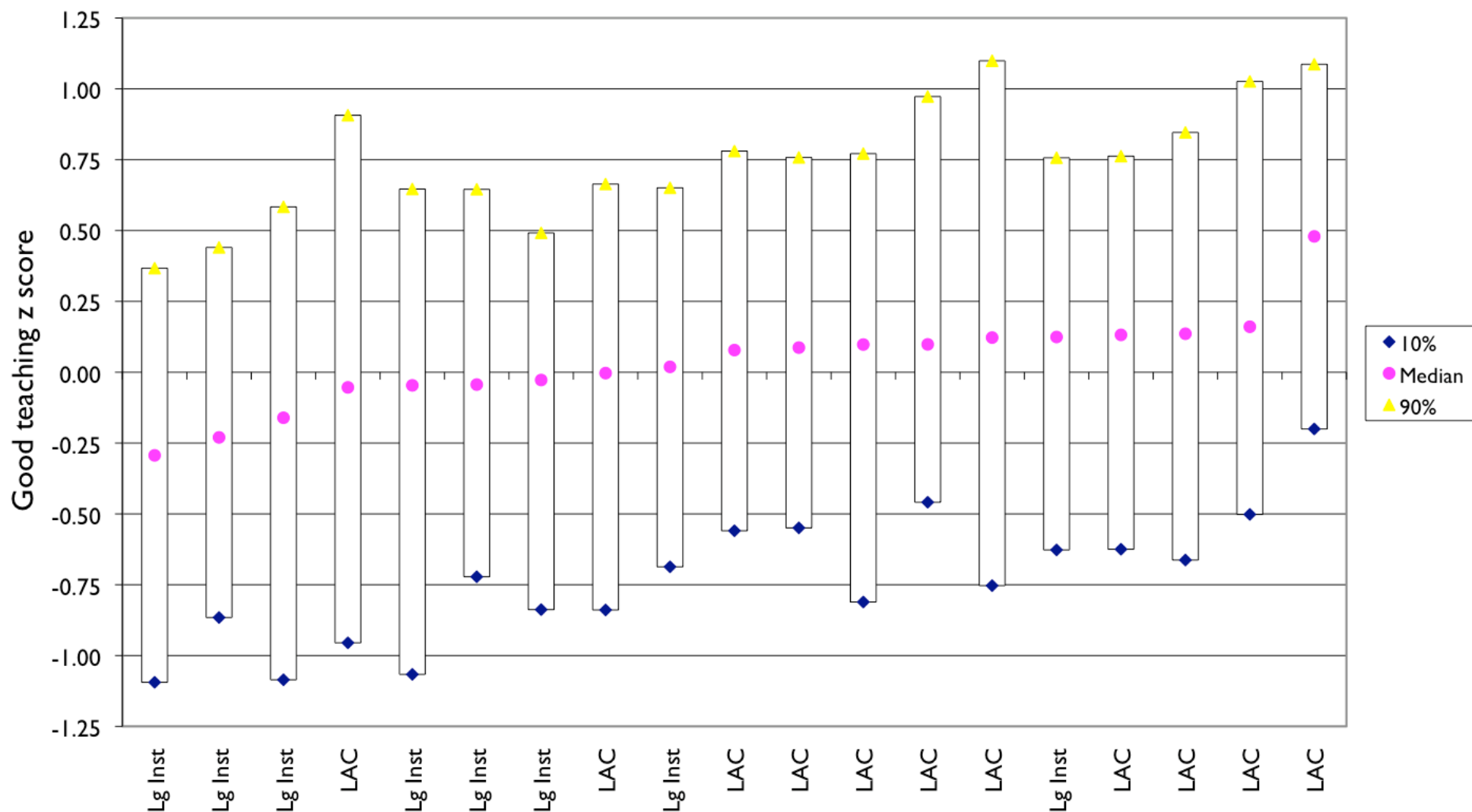
## *Lesson 2 - Look within your institution*



## Good Teaching and High Quality Interactions with Faculty



## Good Teaching and High Quality Interactions with Faculty



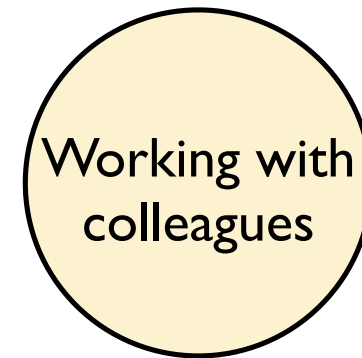
*Lesson 3: Before you collect new evidence, take  
advantage of what you already have*

## *Lesson 4: Web sites and reports on their own don't create action*

*Lesson 5: Be practical scholars who are  
willing to experiment despite uncertainty*

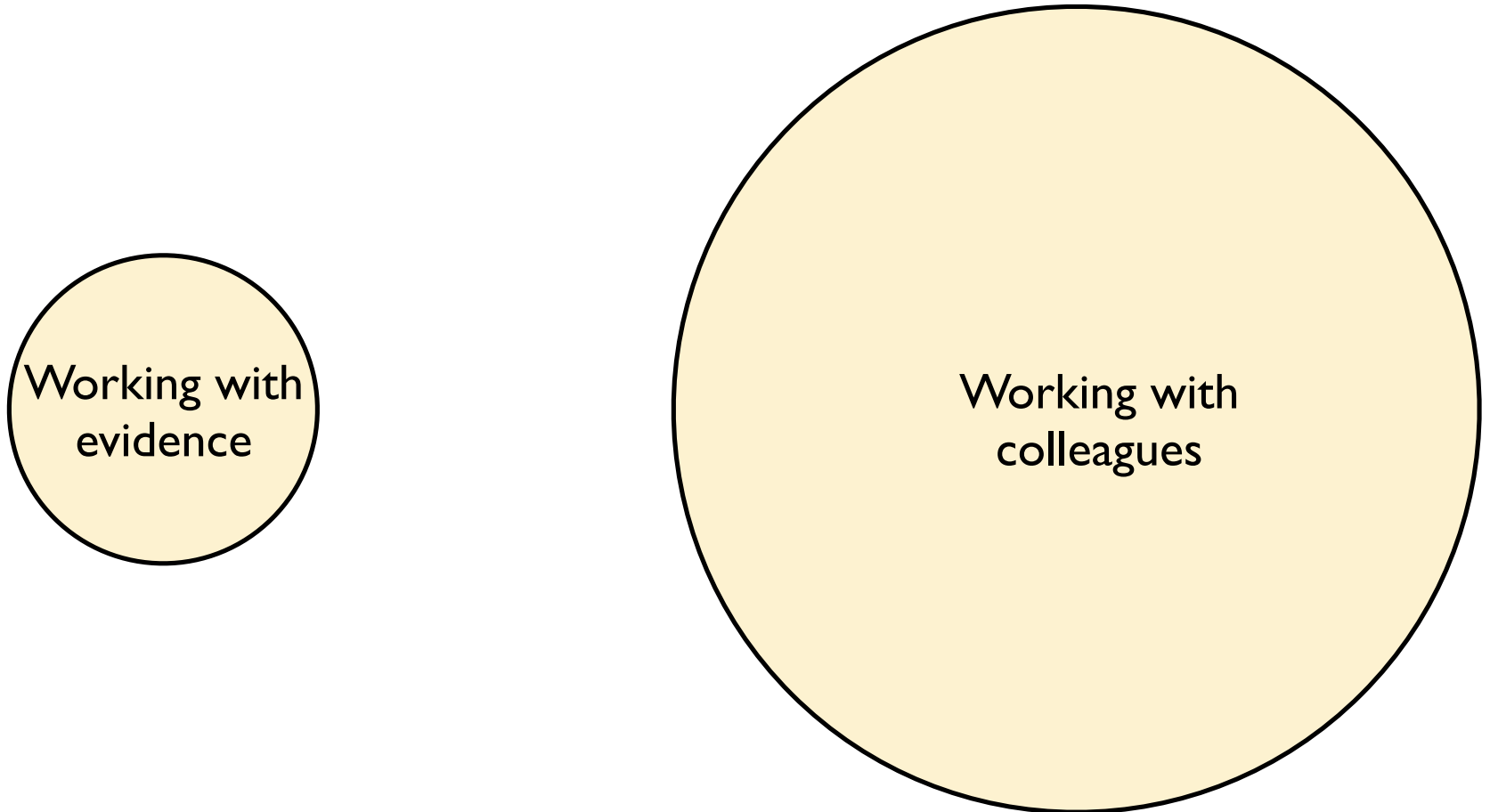
*Question – Can we work together  
to improve student learning?*

*Where does your effort go?*



*Classroom Assessment*

*Where does your effort go?*



*Institutional Assessment*



## *More information*

- **About the Wabash Study**
  - <http://www.centerofinquiry.org>
- **About the Good Practices**
  - <http://www.centerofinquiry.org/study-research/>
- **About the Teagle Assessment Scholar Program**
  - <http://www.centerofinquiry.org/assessment-scholars/>
- **About the Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium**
  - [www.hedsconsortium.org](http://www.hedsconsortium.org)