 **The Harvard Assessment Seminars**, by Richard J. Light, is the published account of a highly enlightened approach to assessment in higher education. The Harvard assessment project was *not* a series of subjective tests and compilation of meaningless statistics done to satisfy the demands of some external body. Rather, it was a genuine, vital attempt to look carefully and meaningfully at the process of undergraduate education at Harvard. Some of the areas examined may be surprising, but I found them extremely refreshing. The five main topics assessed were: 1) gender differences in the college experience; 2) congruence be-

tween how alumni and undergraduates evaluate their college experience; 3) common characteristics of highly respected courses; 4) how faculty learn new ways of teaching; and 5) connections between academic performance and nonacademic factors.

It is interesting to note that the study succeeded in debunking a persistent myth at Harvard which held that senior faculty were inaccessible to undergraduates. In fact, those professors are hungry for contact with students—even freshmen—and schedule appropriate office hours. The students, perhaps intimidated, simply do not avail themselves of opportunities to talk privately

with senior faculty. Another interesting finding was the fact that the use of such low-tech devices as small study groups proved of great value in enhancing student's learning.

In a day when governing boards and state legislatures seem all too willing to answer the public's cry for "accountability" by mandating additional objective tests, Harvard's approach seems very appealing, civilized, and genuinely useful. Colleges would be wise to adopt, proactively, this type of assessment, rather than to wait until it is necessary to react to a very unpalatable form of externally imposed assessment.

REACHING THROUGH TEACHING

Please share with us your ideas about teaching and the exciting strategies you use for making your classrooms successful. Our next **deadline for submissions is January 18, 1991**. Please send all articles, typed double-spaced, to Don Forrester in THE CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AND LEARNING (CETL).

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Kennesaw State College, a senior college of the University System of Georgia, is an affirmative action/equal educational and employment opportunity institution.

 **Stand and Deliver.** When you reach that point at which you seem to be running out of steam in the classroom (and all of us do from time to time), pay a visit to your local video store and rent this inspiring movie about the trials and triumphs of math teacher, Jaime Escalante. Edward James Olmos plays the successfully eccentric Escalante, who leads a class of ne'er-do-well Los Angeles barrio students to the point where they are able to pass the Advance Placement test in calculus.

As Hollywood is wont to do, some very complex issues are made, perhaps, a bit too simplistic. Still, the strong messages come through: good teaching pays rich dividends, and love of students, love of subject, and the development of one's own unique style are key ingredients of this most exciting and vital human enterprises.

Jaime Escalante is portrayed, accurately I think, as a hero. And while most of us would outwardly claim no such aspirations, inwardly we know our students need heroism from all of us who "stand and deliver." 

Editor's Note: All printed materials reviewed in this publication are available from the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, Room 472 in the Library.