

The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

Northeast Iowa Community College

Project Details		
Title	Measuring Student Learning Outcomes	Status COMPLETED
Category	1-Helping Students Learn	Updated 09-23-2015
Timeline		Reviewed 10-11-2015
	Planned Project Kickoff 01-01-2014	Created 11-14-2013
	Actual Completion 08-01-2015	Version 2

1: PROJECT SUMMARY

A: Develop a framework for assessing the College's revised student learning outcomes (SLOs), including identified assessments, program matrix identifying where SLOs are assessed, tracking tool, and process for reviewing assessment data, using the groundwork laid from the *Written Communication* project as a springboard and model pilot.

2: PROJECT RATIONALE

A: Northeast Iowa Community College (NICC) revised its student learning outcomes in Fall 2013. This change was made after 2010 portfolio feedback and subsequent work at the AQIP strategy forum in 2011 revealed that the College's previous 12 learning outcomes were overly broad and difficult or even impossible to measure. This was a key area for improvement in 1P17 and 1P18 of the 2012 Portfolio. As a result, NICC has already shifted to four student learning outcomes and successfully piloted one college-wide assessment for Communicating Effectively (documented in earlier versions of this AQIP Project, formerly called *Written Communication*). This new action project will move the College forward in the development of assessments of student learning that can be measured and tracked internally for its new student learning outcomes. It is high among our priorities as NICC recognizes in this era of accountability the need to identify student learning outcomes that are clearly measurable to evaluate the progress of our students. NICC has also been regarded as weak in the assessment of common learning outcomes in previous AQIP portfolio appraisals.

3: PROJECT GOALS AND DELIVERABLES

A:

- Goal 1: All courses must identify student learning outcome on course syllabi
*Milestone: Completion.
Date: completed May 2014
- Goal 2: Deans will develop a program matrix with faculty identifying where student learning outcomes are addressed
*Milestone: Completion
Date: completed May 2014
- Goal 3: Faculty will be engaged in professional development on best practices of assessment of learning outcomes through identification of current practices in place
*Milestone: Four student learning outcome assessment teams are currently tasked with identifying standardized and non-standardized assessments currently employed by each program for evaluation of effectiveness and sharing of best practices.
Date: Completion January 2015 (convocation)
- Goal 4: Develop a baseline measurement of assessments, and ensuring an effective tool is in place to capture and report student learning outcomes assessments.
*Milestone: Assessment team makes recommendations for student learning assessments that will be archived for each program to demonstrate student learning achievement; currently evaluating third-party course evaluations (IDEA project) that will provide information on student and instructor perception of achievement of outcomes
Date: Recommendations due to Vice President of Academic Affairs in May 2015

4: INSTITUTIONAL INVOLVEMENT

A: The project will be led by the Vice President of Academic Affairs, with support from Institutional Effectiveness, six program deans, a distance learning director, and the high school partnerships director. In July 2014, responsibility for incorporating opportunities for all students to achieve the student learning outcomes moved to four Student Learning Outcome assessment teams co-led by two academic deans with broad college membership. Institutional Effectiveness will assist in plans for the warehousing of data and determining best practices in collaboration with lead deans. Students will also play a larger role as SLO assessments are collected and archived. Faculty (and personnel from a variety of auxiliary department)s will be involved in implementing this project and carrying out the processes established by the project leads.

5: PROJECT CONTROL

A: This project will be carried forward by academic deans who meet 2-3 times a month. This will be a regular agenda item with assignments between meetings related to key tasks. The Executive Director of Institutional Effectiveness will assist in developing a framework for data collection to capture outcomes assessment data. Success will be measured by accomplishment of program matrix identifying where SLOs are assessed (completed), tracking tool identification, and piloted process for reviewing assessment data. Goals will be measured according to completion by timeline above.

6: ANTICIPATED CHALLENGES TO PROJECT SUCCESS

A: Challenges include determining how to warehouse data and assessments determined from the matrix, engaging faculty to report the identified assessments in a timely manner, connecting non-academic assessments that demonstrate student learning to the process, and arriving at quantitative data to demonstrate student learning while respecting academic freedom of instructors to use varying assessments.

7: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

A: This action project will be a success when NICC can reliably access and report a baseline measure(s) of how well its students are meeting the four student learning outcome, including full integration and trend data. A bigger picture outcome will be when faculty, students, and employers report a satisfaction with SLO skills in accordance to the level of expectation for the workforce or academic skill set.

Project Update

1: CURRENT PROJECT STATUS SUMMARY

A: General Project Status: Completed In-progress Suspended Reopened
Original Project Start Date: _1_ / _1_ / _2014
Originally Projected End Date: _8_ / _1_ / _2015_

This action project is nearing completion. Four student learning outcome committees are operationalized and focusing on disseminating best practice assessment examples to assist the College community in the co-curricular and curricular measurement of the four student learning outcomes (SLOs). Representatives from the four SLO committees recently attended the HLC assessment workshop, and this workshop validated the progress and need to close this action project, and assisted the teams in formulating the steps for the next SLO action project (to be opened as a new Action Project)

This project was a priority after review of the most recent Systems Portfolio Appraisal in 2010. Previously, the College had identified 12 SLOs, many of which were multifactorial, subjective, and therefore difficult to measure. The need to identify what SLOs should be assessed for every student became a priority for the foundation of assessing effective student learning. A SLO action project will be an ongoing priority in the College as we move forward. Significant improvements in this strategic challenge are detailed in the 2015 AQIP Portfolio.

2: ORIGINAL PROJECT GOALS AND DELIVERABLES

A: Goal 1: All courses must identify student learning outcome on course syllabi

Metric: # of courses completed by May 2014

Goal 2: Deans will develop a program matrix with faculty identifying where student learning outcomes are addressed

Metric: # of program matrices completed by May 2014

Goal 3: Faculty will be engaged in professional development on best practices of assessment of learning outcomes through identification of current practices in place

Metric: Sharing of best practices to College community by January 2015 (convocation) and ongoing

Goal 4: Develop a baseline measurement of assessments, and ensure an effective tool is in place to capture and report student learning outcomes assessments.

Metric: Assessment team to make recommendations for student learning assessments that will be archived for each program to demonstrate student learning achievements to Vice President of Academic Affairs in May 2015

3: ACCOMPLISHMENTS OVER THE PAST YEAR

A: Goal 1: All courses must identify student learning outcome on course syllabi

Metric: # of courses completed by May 2014

Accomplishment: Over the past year, all 846 course guides were reviewed and now evidence the primary SLO goal that is measured. In addition, program faculty have reviewed all course guides to ensure the four SLO's are measured for each student in every program.

Goal 2: Deans will develop a program matrix with faculty identifying where student learning outcomes are addressed

Metric: # of program matrices completed by May 2014

Accomplishments: A program matrix was completed for each program to identify where each SLO is measured. There are 85 program matrices.

Goal 3: Faculty will be engaged in professional development on best practices of assessment of learning outcomes through identification of current practices in place

Metric: Sharing of best practices to College community by January 2015 (convocation) and ongoing

Accomplishments: The four SLO teams, chaired by faculty deans, have completed their research on best practices for the identified SLO measurements and are working to compile and/or create tools for SLO measurement. Two of the four SLO groups ("Apply Knowledge and Skills to Life" and "Value Self and Others") have moved away from a uniform "rubric" type measurement. All SLO teams are working to provide examples of measurement for curricular and co-curricular student opportunities.

Goal 4: Develop a baseline measurement of assessments, and ensure an effective tool is in place to capture and report student learning outcomes assessments.

Metric: Assessment team to make recommendations for student learning assessments that will be archived for each program to demonstrate student learning achievements to Vice President of Academic Affairs in May 2015

Accomplishments: Members of each SLO team participated in the HLC assessment workshop in summer 2015. This group was able to identify a process for SLO team review/tracking and archival of "model" SLO example and validated that each area of the College would be responsible to retain the SLO information rather than a centralized system. The knowledge gained from that experience validated the SLO work that has been accomplished and provided clarity for the teams as they move forward.

4: INSTITUTIONAL INVOLVEMENT

A: Each SLO team at NICC is composed of six to eight members and includes administrators, faculty, and staff. To provide initial direction and ensure the teams were moving forward, two administrative co-leaders facilitated the team for the initial year with the intent to have the leadership assumed by faculty and staff members moving forward. A review of each SLO team membership is in process to strengthen membership of co-curricular, non-credit and student members. This was identified as a need at the July, 2015 HLC Assessment Workshop. The input from the co-curricular SLO team members has provided valuable insight in the need to strengthen the SLO learning opportunities for all College members in the next action project.

5: EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

A: This action project re-defined the institutional student learning outcomes and committees. The grass roots process of working to obtain consensus across all departments of the College and identifying a core SLO team is an outcome that was shared at the recent HLC Assessment Academy as a good practice.

6: ANTICIPATED CHALLENGES TO PROJECT SUCCESS

A: As the college moves forward, there is the challenge to transfer SLO team leadership from the administrators to the faculty and staff team members. The process of this transfer began in discussions at the HLC Assessment workshop. A second challenge will be to have all faculty and staff embrace the measurement of student learning.

7: PLANNED NEXT STEPS AND TIMELINE

A: The outcomes of this action project have been met. This action project will be closed this month with the creation of a new action project that will outline the steps moving forward.

8: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, QUESTIONS, OR CONCERNS

A: This project will be transitioned to a new Action Project and the team plans to join the HLC Assessment Academy to guide its work.

Update Review

1: CURRENT PROJECT STATUS SUMMARY

A: The institution is to be commended for its many achievements with this project. It is clear student learning is at the core of its mission given the focus it has placed on this action project (AQIP Category 1: Helping Students Learn). The institution recognized an opportunity for improvement, identified why it was not working as intended, implemented changes, and then opened itself up for critique and review to ensure it was on the right track. This gets at the heart of what AQIP is all about, so it is great the institution is truly living the essence of the continuous quality improvement process. Furthermore, the institution is already planning for the next action project in this process to further the work established here. Great job!

2: ORIGINAL PROJECT GOALS AND DELIVERABLES

A: The goals listed here seem appropriate given the intent of the project. The key will be continuing to track these long-term to demonstrate the importance of this work to student success.

3: ACCOMPLISHMENTS OVER THE PAST YEAR

A: The institution should be proud of the work described here. It is clear there is deep institutional commitment at all levels to ensuring both the project is a success and that student learning is a primary focus of the institution moving forward. Reviewing all course guides is no small task but is a necessary step in this process. The institution will want to continue monitoring these metrics moving forward to ensure full compliance, as well as to be sure new courses meet these goals.

4: INSTITUTIONAL INVOLVEMENT

A: The composition of the original SLO teams looked to have a strong makeup of people from across the institution. However, by revising this to ensure involvement from additional areas shows an even deeper commitment to valuing the input each individual has (AQIP Category 3: Valuing Employees, Principles of High Performing Organizations: Respect for People). This institution is to be commended for this – and this practice should be held as an exemplar for other institutions doing this work.

5: EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

A: As noted above the willingness of the institution to revisit the institutional student learning outcomes is wonderful to see. However, having this process occur as a grass roots effort provides an additional strength to the process and demonstrates true institutional commitment. Great job!

6: ANTICIPATED CHALLENGES TO PROJECT SUCCESS

A: The challenges described here are genuine concerns. Given the institutional commitment and buy-in that is described here it appears

the institution has established a solid foundation for this transition of leadership. There very well may be bumps along the way. These are the times when it is important to bring everyone together to discuss the challenges so they can be worked through in a collegial fashion where everyone arrives at a common conclusion.

7: PLANNED NEXT STEPS AND TIME LINE

A: Congratulations on concluding this project! Don't forget to celebrate the wonderful achievements of this project before moving on to the next one. That will provide additional momentum to help with the next phase of this important work.

8: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, QUESTIONS, OR CONCERNS

A: It is a great idea to join the HLC Assessment Academy. The institution will no doubt gain valuable knowledge from this experience it can use for future assessment work.

Project Outcome

1: REASON FOR COMPLETION

A: The primary reason for closing this project is the fact that the project was designed to identify the revised student learning outcomes, establish Student Learning teams who would then research and identify best practices for SLO measurement. The process of identifying SLO measurement in each course and program was done with a representative SLO group participating in the HLC Assessment workshop "Creating a Culture of Assessment". The College is now ready to close this project and move assessment forward through the creation of a new action project.

2: SUCCESS FACTORS

A: All aspects of the project have been successful thus far. A solid foundation has begun to be laid for assessment.

3: UNSUCCESSFUL FACTORS

A: There are no unsuccessful aspects. Rather, the challenge as the College moves forward is to continue to generate enthusiasm regarding the measurement of student learning, and foster leadership representative leadership among the SLO teams.