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Colorado Mountain College: Creating an Effective Assessment Accountability System for Institutional, Program, and Course Level Assessment.

PROJECT

UPDATE

REVIEW

REVIEWED



VERSION 2.0

Create a new version of this Action Project.

VERSIONS

[VERSION 2.0](#)

[VERSION 1.0](#)

Project Details

Title Creating an Effective Assessment Accountability System for Institutional, Program, and Course Level Assessment.		Status REVIEWED
Category 1-Helping Students Learn		Updated 09-29-2011
Timeline		Reviewed 10-16-2011
Planned Project Kickoff 05-01-2010		Created 03-26-2010
Target Completion 06-30-2013		Last Modified 10-16-2011

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

- A:
1. Hired full-time Director of Assessment for the college and created the Office of Assessment with responsibility for designing, planning, implementing, assessing, and revising the CMC Institutional Assessment Plan
 2. Expanded use of TaskStream Assessment Accountability System (AMS) from 10 pilot programs to all academic areas in Arts & Sciences and Career and Technical Education Programs
 3. Each academic discipline was asked to select two courses and two student learning outcomes to assess in 2010/11 academic year
 4. Since piloting assessment for several courses during 2009-10, by 2010-11 faculty chose 42 courses to assess and in 2011-12 faculty have chosen 58 courses for embedding assessment across the curriculum (49 courses from 2-year or certificate programs and 9 courses from 4-year programs).
 5. Created a CMC Taskstream rubric for workspace review with key elements of mission, SLO, Curriculum Map, Assessment Plan, and Assessment Findings to provide feedback to faculty on their assessment progress
 6. To standardize assessment reporting and improve the quality of the year-end report, a template was created for use by all faculty
 7. Conducted individual and group assessment training to faculty and staff at all campuses
 8. Sent faculty and staff to assessment training sponsored by the HLC in Chicago
 9. Formed the General Education Assessment Committee to begin discussions of how to assess general education student learning outcomes college wide
 10. Established an Assessment college wide website

- 11. Posted Academic Assessment and How it Fits in with the Strategic Plan
- 12. Assessment incorporated as part of the new bachelor degree programs: a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (BSBA) and a Bachelor of Arts in Sustainability Studies (BASS)
- 13. Student Affairs professional staff continued their assessment projects by planning for “closing the loop” and engrafting improvements in student support services
- 14. Briefed the Higher Learning Commission on assessment plans and goals for both our Associate Degree and Bachelor Degree programs, received positive feedback in February 2011 and approval to offer these programs starting fall 2011
- 15. CMC’s Common Reader Program incorporated a variety of direct and indirect assessment measures
- 16. CMC collaborated with state colleges and numerous employer partners on a grant for the targeted work force development and our joint TAA Energy grant proposal, “Colorado Online Energy Training Consortium,” was just accepted by the Department of Labor, making it the largest single grant awarded. The premise of the grant is that no matter where students live, they will have access to high-demand, high-wage training opportunities along with the necessary support services that will enable them to complete the program and enter employment in a reduced time frame. The project will enhance training capacity for employment in the energy sector, strengthen the relationship between community colleges and the workforce system, and provide systemic reforms to the statewide delivery of developmental education.
- 17. Brought Trudy Banta, assessment writer and researcher, to CMC for faculty in-service professional development in May 2011
- 18. The college wide Assessment Committee continued in 2010/11 to meet monthly
- 19. CMC students took the CCLA (Community College Learning Assessment), a nationally standardized exam that assesses critical thinking, analytic reasoning, problem solving, and written communication during fall 2010 (freshmen) & spring 2011 (sophomores). CMC sophomores scored higher than freshmen, suggesting that this difference may be attributed to the learning environment created by the college. When compared with scores at comparison colleges, however, CMC freshmen and sophomores tended to score a little lower, suggesting the need for the continued improvement of that learning environment.
- 20. Student Affairs professional staff continued their five assessment projects

R: Colorado Mountain College's project, *Creating an Effective Assessment Accountability System for Institutional, Program, and Course Level Assessment*, is an expansive and comprehensive project focused on linking the strategic plan goals to school goals, to program goals, to course objectives and ultimately to student learning outcomes. This is a very complex project in that it is a systemic approach to using data and linking the curriculum to student outcomes, investing in training across the institution, and committing resources to see the project through to a desired level of institutional practice. By doing so, the institution will support e the process as part of the institutional culture-- the process becomes part of the way things are done. This is a huge step on the

part of the institution in that there is direct link to teaching and learning. The institution has embraced the project as evidenced by the commitment to training, to assessment, use of data, and the involvement of personnel from various departments.

2: Institution Involvement

- A:
1. The college President emphasizes the importance of assessment at all CMC convocations of faculty and academic leadership
 2. Our Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs was hired in January 2011 and has a strong relationship and belief in assessment from previous training and work at the community college level
 3. Senior level faculty prepared and presented "Baccalaureate Degrees and Assessment @ Colorado Mountain College" and other personnel also presented on key processes related to the development and implementation of the bachelor's degrees during the HLC visit on Feb 23 and 24, 2011
 4. AQIP Project "Creating a Systematic College Wide Assessment Process" presented by the AQIP Action Team to the College Leadership Team (CLT) in December 2010
 5. The Assessment Committee is a standing committee composed of faculty, administration, and staff members chaired by the Director of Assessment and the Assistant Vice-President of Academic Affairs. The committee coordinates with Student and Academic Affairs, the Department of Institutional Research, the AQIP Action Team and the Joint Leadership Team.
 6. The Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs financially supported faculty doing summer projects related to the bachelor degree program development, roll-out and assessment. Projects included a Business discipline assessment project, Early Childhood Education assessment project, GIS curriculum and assessment project, SKB curriculum and assessment project, Communications Department Assessment Summit, Math Department Assessment Summit, Creating SLOs for Heritage Spanish courses, and ESL plans to create a mission, vision, and student learning outcomes.
 7. Conducted a "Course Elements" Workshop for Faculty teaching in both bachelor Degree programs at the spring faculty in-service in May 2011
 8. 40 faculty discipline coordinators or "faculty leads" drive assessment efforts for their specific disciplines college wide.
 9. Student Affairs Leadership Team (SALT) takes the lead on co-curricular assessment efforts to integrate learning outcomes into all Student Services initiatives
 10. Institutional Research publicized assessment efforts college wide such as the CCLA (fall 2010, spring 2011), SENSE (fall 2012) and the CCSSE (Spring 2012)-information posted on the IR Web pages and in the IR portal.
 11. Sustainability Workshop on June 29, 2011 provided assessment training and TaskStream demonstrations.
 12. At the fall 2011 faculty in-service, brought full-time and adjunct faculty together to have several sessions on assessment and the use of TaskStream

R: The plan is rich with detail and provides evidence that all aspects of institutional effectiveness are part of the plan. The level of information provided demonstrates a focus that is specific and yet provides information that can be utilized for improvement both horizontally as well as vertically across the institution.

Recommendation

1. Consider adding some information as to how student learning outcomes and assessments are used both in theory and in practice for improvement. This information would be useful to other institutions as they develop similar types of plans for institutional effectiveness.

3: Next Steps

- A:**
1. Train newly hired baccalaureate faculty on the college wide assessment plan and how to document their course level assessment work in TaskStream
 2. Gather assessment results on all funded summer assessment projects
 3. Revise the CMC Signature Learning Outcomes to be more user-friendly – develop an acronym that is easily identifiable and memorable
 4. Provide TaskStream workspace feedback to faculty leads-continuous improvement plan
 5. Revitalize the General Education Assessment Committee and develop a plan to assess one or more CMC Signature Learning Outcomes
 6. Continue with the publication of the monthly “Assessment Matters” newsletter
 7. Continue to train faculty and staff on using “direct” assessment measures and then to use data to revise or improve student learning outcomes and measurements
 8. Analyze and use data from the Community College Learning Assessment (CCLA) to improve student learning
 9. Increase the use college wide of program curriculum maps to ensure that SLOs are being met
 10. Ensure that all “faculty leads” provide their annual report of assessment activities and results
 11. All new academic programs proposed through the new program process including baccalaureate programs shall have an assessment plan
 12. Participate in seeking grants funding such as Title III that would help further student success
 13. Student Affairs professional staff have selected three CMC Signature Learning Outcomes to assess during the 2011/12 academic year and are also exploring the incorporation of “sustainability” as a core value
 14. Changing the focus of the assessment project to Institution level General Education assessment and embedding assessment in new four-year degree programs

R: The next phase of development and implementation will add more depth

to the plan. The plan will continue to expand in both level of implementation and level of detail. The resources both internal and external should be balanced against time and expertise. A college wide program that requires a huge investment on the part of the college has to be married against what is achievable in reality. As you work through the various components and areas listed, consider efficiency and effectiveness and be willing to adapt and revise as needed.

Recommendation

1. Consider how all the components and departments fit into the plan in such a way that utility of the plan remains a priority. It is easy to get too far down in the details and lose sight of the goal.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

- A:
1. Assessment embedded in the CMC Strategic Plan
 2. Assessment continuously remains an AQIP project with only a change in focus (keep the momentum going for the institution and faculty)
 3. Create a common template for the annual assessment report submitted by faculty (consistency is needed)
 4. Assessment is “owned” by everyone in the institution
 5. Incorporated assessment work in the faculty promotion criteria
 6. Utilize a variety of institutional effectiveness measures/reports such as the following to further improve student learning:
 - The Community College Survey of Engagement (CCSSE)
 - The Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE)
 - Community College Learning Assessment (CCLA)
 - Individual Development and Educational Assessment (IDEA)
 - Student Learning Outcomes Assessment (TASKSTREAM)
 - College Wide Balanced Scorecard & accompanying Student Progress Report
 - Graduate Survey
 - Student Progress Report
 - IPEDS
 - National Community College Benchmark Project (NCCBP) data
 - Add relevant measures specifically for four-year degrees e.g. National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA), etc.
 7. Inform faculty of the annual assessment cycle at key points in the academic year
 8. Train, train, train through faculty professional development opportunities
 9. Partnerships and collaboration between Student Affairs and Academic Affairs on assessment and the creation of an optimal environment for student learning & success

- R:
- The institution has to be commended for this project. Collecting and evaluating data against benchmarks and standards is a priority in higher education. Continuous training of faculty and staff is ongoing and will require some time consideration for actual implementation and to become a part of the teaching and learning routine practice.

Recommendation

1. Take into account all of the data that is being collected balanced

with how the data are used for improvement and evidence of student success. If the data are not clearly identified as being useful then consider other strategies.

5: Project Challenges

- A:
- a. Involving adjunct faculty in assessment efforts college wide
 - b. Analysis of assessment data for continuous improvement – need more training
 - c. Some new and older faculty lack knowledge of assessment processes
 - d. Use of TASKSTREAM AMS requires continuous training plan
 - e. Assessment of CMC’s Signature Learning Outcomes needs improvement
 - f. Embedding assessment well into new BA Sustainability Degree and the BS in Business Administration at the program and course levels
 - g. More consistently embed assessment in developmental education courses
 - h. Student involvement in the assessment process
 - i. ZBB Budget Process cut resources across the college including assessment
 - j. Getting all programs to participate in assessment – a few folks still dragging their feet
 - k. Greater consistency in the use of assessment data and reporting

R: The level of assessment and continuous training is part of the changing landscape of higher education to be held accountable for learning outcomes. The strategy is to align curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices in such a manner that a focus is evident. The institution has developed a project that is systemic in nature, focused on changing practice, using data to drive the changes, and linked to student outcomes. An excellent example that could be shared with others as a process and journey.