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

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- **PROJECT**
- **UPDATE**
- **REVIEW**

Create New Version

Create a new version of this Action Project.

### VERSIONS

#### **VERSION 1.0**

**REVIEWED** 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	09-14-2010
Timeline		Reviewed	10-20-2010
Planned Project Kickoff		Created	03-26-2010
05-01-2010			
Target Completion		Last Modified	10-20-2010
06-30-2013			

1:

#### Project Accomplishments and Status

A:

- CMC has determined and specified our intended student learning outcomes and we have committed resources to measuring, assessing, and documenting students' achievement of these outcomes
- Empowered the college-wide assessment committee to create one set of institutional general education student learning outcomes
  - i. Through collaboration of faculty and staff, created the CMC Signature Learning Outcomes and definitions
  - ii. The CCLA (Community College Learning Assessment), a nationally standardized exam that assesses critical thinking, analytic reasoning, problem solving, and written communication is used by CMC to assess these general education outcomes
- Hired, part-time assessment coordinator and TaskStream trainer

- Search and screen fully underway for a fulltime Director of Assessment that would lead college-wide assessment efforts
- Entered into a contract with TaskStream Corporation for an assessment accountability management system (AMS) to launch pilot project using technology to document assessment, July 2009
- Initiated pilot program of assessment using TaskStream AMS that included Arts & Sciences, Career and Technical Education, and Student Affairs
  - i. Results from the pilot project used to revise curriculum and improve student services
  - ii. Action plans from three student affairs program reviews in admissions, counseling and disability services were enacted
- Provided college-wide assessment training to faculty and student affairs at all seven campuses
- Two faculty in-service days focused on assessment
  - i. One of these was a 2-day mandatory workshop (May 6 & 7) for faculty and student affairs professional staff titled, "Improving Undergraduate Learning Through Assessment of Student Outcomes"
  - ii. May 2010, Linda Suskie, VP of Middle States Commission on Higher Education, delivered presentation on "Using Assessment Results Effectively and Appropriately" to faculty and student affairs professional staff
- Created CMC Assessment Newsletter that comes out monthly
- Campus CEOs trained on TaskStream report capabilities and how the AMS can support continuous improvement
- Faculty and student affairs professional staff receive and use the same assessment resources college-wide:
  - i. Assessment Reconsidered: Institutional Effectiveness for Student Success by Richard Keeling, et al.
  - ii. A Faculty and Staff Guide to Creating Learning Outcomes produced by the National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience & Students in Transition with the University of South Carolina
- Math learning communities created based on barrier course data and new assessments will drive future course development
- Student affairs launched two assessment projects with student learning outcomes and then expanded to 6 new projects with college-wide support

• R:

The level of focus that you employed to finish all of these aspects in just a few months is laudable and down-right impressive! Not only were you focused, but you involved college leadership collaboratively to inform them of the current and next steps. These are several of the principles of high performance organizations, and you should be proud of your accomplishments.

Of special notice is the cross-representation of both faculty and administration. You have shown your institution to fully Value People (AQIP Category 4), Support Institutional Operations (AQIP Category 6), and Measure Effectiveness (AQIP Category 7). All of this is in addition to your original goal of Helping Students Learn (AQIP Category 1)—which will come with the successful implementation of your strategies.

Now is the time to ensure that no one gives up on the process. It shows signs of promise. Yet, it will not succeed without the continued support of each constituent (faculty, staff, etc.). Congratulations on the strong start, but make sure not to relax as the marathon continues.

• 2:

#### **Institution Involvement**

• A:

- President Stan Jensen addressed faculty and student affairs professional staff at in-services about the importance of assessment
- President Jensen sends letter to faculty and student affairs professional staff on requiring attendance at 2-day workshop fully dedicated to assessment
- Developed college-wide KPIs for the Balanced Scorecard used by President Jensen, senior staff, and the CMC board for decision-making
- Assessment articles were highlighted in CMC e-news on the website
- Pilot assessment project using TaskStream included arts & science disciplines, Career & Technical Education (CTE) disciplines, and 5 student affairs projects
- Created new chapter on assessment in the Curriculum & Instruction Manual and trained all instructional supervisors college-wide
- Job description for CMC Discipline Coordinators was changed to include leadership roles in assessment after it was previously eliminated. Discipline Coordinators oversee the direction and quality of assessment efforts
- Faculty promotion in-rank criteria and scoring was changed to include faculty work on assessment projects
- College leadership team focused on assessment when creating the 2009-11 Strategic Plan – 6 new objectives focused on assessment
- Assessment projects posted on the IR website/portal
- Assessment teams composed of faculty, staff and student affairs professional staff sent to San Diego, CA and Lisle, IL for assessment conferences and training
- Assessment Coordinator, the AVP of CTE programs, the AVP for Arts & Sciences, and the AVP of Student Affairs made multiple visits to all seven campuses to train faculty/staff on TaskStream AMS and assessment best practices
- Faculty provided updates on their program/discipline areas from the previous academic year and created action plans for the next academic year.

• R:

The best part of this entire update was seeing how the “College leadership team focused on assessment when creating the 2009-11 Strategic Plan.” Weaving your assessment strategies into the warp and woof of your organization will go a long way toward supporting the process and eventual completion of your action project.

One caution—if it can be called a caution—is to look for additional ways to help assessment become ingrained in the faculty. There appeared to be a few times where faculty were involved in the process, but it was mostly “bestowed upon

them” rather than “desiring their input.” Perhaps looking into the exploits of other colleges will help. Some suggested resources to see other colleges in action include the Innovations Exchange (<http://www.aqip.org/InnovationExchange/>) and the HLC Resources for Institutions (<http://www.hlcommission.org/information-for-institutions/resources-for-institutions.html>).

• 3:

**Next Steps**

• A:

- All discipline groups within the college have assessment workspaces in TaskStream as of August 2010
- Student Affairs professional staff have their own assessment workspaces for assessment projects, now 6 projects and expanding to 13 projects in the coming year
- Student Affairs created demo training workspaces in TaskStream for all 7 campuses
- Specialized workspaces in TaskStream: learning communities, English as a Second Language (ESL), and GED programs
- Created quality review rubric to provide feedback to TaskStream participants on the quality of assessment activities
- Aug 20. 2010 faculty in-service focused on assessment and next steps
  - HLC workshop update on student learning outcomes
  - CCSSE data updates to faculty
  - Targeted training on TaskStream rubric building
  - Presentation of Career Math (Math 107) assessment project
  - Faculty will develop their college-wide assessment measures for the next academic year.
- Student Affairs analyze project results and create action plans
- Faculty pilot project leads analyze project results and create action plans
- Follow-up training for CMC reviewers using new quality rubric
- Create team to explore ways to assess CMC Signature Learning Outcomes beyond the CCLA assessment currently in use
- New proposed bachelor's degree incorporates new capstone experience based on CMC Signature Learning Outcomes
- College-wide common reader project will embed assessment activities that will be posted online
- Assessment on every agenda for Student Affairs Council, Instructional Leadership Team (ILT), and the Joint Leadership Team (JLT)
- Student Affairs looking to include assessment projects for advising staff, residential life, financial aid, counselors, and disability services
- Analyze CCLA data from previous years with most current results and make recommendations for improvement on general education outcomes

• R:

There is one potential problem—doing too many things decently and not enough things fantastically. If you can accomplish everything in your next steps, then go for it. With this many activities in the next year, those involved may become

fatigued and/or lethargic. Consider attempting fewer steps to ensure that everyone is involved and active in the process. For example, attempting to have the Student Affairs staff work on 13 projects may be less effective than having them work collaboratively on 4-5 projects in the coming year.

• 4:

#### Resulting Effective Practices

• A:

- Continue common professional training for Academic Affairs and Student Affairs on assessment
- Use common assessment language, templates, and resources college-wide
- TaskStream accountability management system available 24/7 to faculty and staff working on assessment
- Common set of CMC Signature Learning Outcomes (Gen Ed standards)
- Holistic development of students through joint assessment efforts by Academic Affairs and Student Affairs
- Conscientious college-wide effort to expose faculty and staff to quality standards, student outcomes language, and accessible resources
- Presentations given at the League for Innovation on the importance of collaboration and close working relationship between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs (VPAA and VPSA)
- Improved college-wide morale due to sense of unity of purpose with regards to assessment
  - Common purpose of learning shared vision
  - Singularity of purpose
- TaskStream accountability system is a web-hosted solution monitored at Central Services equals central oversight of college-wide assessment cycle
- College-wide assessment plan created with new assessment cycle embedded
- Process of choosing and implementing TaskStream shared with other institutions of higher education
- Inclusion and greater partnership with all Career and Technical Education programs
- Ten new CTE program reviews set for 2010/11
- Student Affairs also conducts systematic program reviews

• R:

The exciting piece that you included in your effective practices was noting the Collaboration, Involvement by all People—including Leadership, Information sharing, and overall Focus of the College. These are several Principles of High Performance Organizations, and the depth of information pointing toward these principles is overwhelming.

Thank you for taking time to present your findings and use of TaskStream to other institutions of higher education. You may want to look at presenting your process at the next Higher Learning Commission annual meeting. Other institutions could learn from the processes and procedures that you have described in this document.

• 5:

## Project Challenges

• A:

- While being data driven in decision-making, don't overlook the human factor and its importance in building positive relationships between faculty and students
- Structured reflection and dialogue allows assessment data to be transformed into meaningful information
- Creating a shared vision/plan for the future
- Financial resources and budgeting for multi-year commitment to use TaskStream as our preferred assessment accountability management system
- Other institutional priorities compete for financial resources but assessment tied directly to the strategic plan and accreditation
- Changing organizational structure and fluctuating reporting relationships may affect decision-making capabilities
- Leadership void sometimes exists in Academic Affairs due to retirement of VPAA in June 2010 and the new Senior VPAA position is still in the process of being hired
- Keep momentum of assessment based decision-making through college-wide efforts
- Reassure and continue to train faculty and staff (this is not the soup d'jour but how CMC will conduct assessment in the future)
- Embed assessment in all new associate degree and certificate completion programs
- Embed assessment in new bachelor's degree programs as they are developed
- Consistently embed assessment in developmental math, English, and reading courses
- Continue professional research and development on learning strategies to improve pedagogical basis for improving teaching and learning strategies
- Bring students involvement directly into learning process and assessment activities
- Inform stakeholders of all college-wide assessment results from nationally standardized instruments (communication) and develop action plans
- Inclusion of all adjunct faculty in the assessment of student learning outcomes (communication)
- Data supported decisions concerning student success oriented programs requires a consideration of "meaningful improvement" and may require balancing all or most of the following:
  - Statistically significant improvement in target measures
  - Reflection on the "human impact"
  - Economic efficiency in relationship to difficulty of the task at hand
  - A consideration of perception as it relates to benefit versus cost

• R:

All of these are valid challenges, but each one can be tackled through the next year. Leadership voids can be filled (which will be more attractive to quality

leaders due to the processes in place), and people can be trained to continue the efforts. If you are truly able to embed assessment in your new degree programs, your accreditation efforts will be rewarded, and your institution will flourish. Keep up the fantastic work, and know that there are resources and people ready to help you if you get stuck. Well done!