Action Project

Institution:	Colorado Mountain College		
Submitted:	2007-03-30	**Contact:**	Dr. Meeta Goel
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Timeline:
Planned project kickoff date: 01-01-2006
Target completion date: 09-01-2007
Actual completion date: --

A. Give this Action Project a short title in 10 words or fewer:

Learning Outcomes Assessment Project

B. Describe this Action Project's goal in 100 words or fewer:

-Define course learning outcomes, competencies and skills, and assess whether or not students can demonstrate learning outcomes. Measurable course outcomes will be established for top 60 FTE generating courses by June, 2007. -Evaluate Assessment Data -Develop Learning Strategies Based on Data and alter curriculum and instruction as necessary based on assessment data -Reassess Outcomes, Competencies and Skills

C. Identify the single AQIP Category which the Action Project will most affect or impact:

Primary Category: Helping Students Learn

D. Describe briefly your institution's reasons for taking on this Action Project now -- why the project and its goals are high among your current priorities:

As a learning centered college, CMC is focused on how we know that student learning has occurred, and how the college can support students becoming more responsible for their own learning; in addition, the focus on student learning and measurable course outcomes helps ensure consistency across the curriculum and instruction regarding what students know and are able to do. Finally, a central college focus on student learning helps ensure the eventual alignment and clarity of the college vision, mission and goals.

E. List the organizational areas - -institutional departments, programs, divisions, or units -- most affected by or involved in this Action Project:

Instruction (faculty and staff) Institutional Research Students Discipline Coordinators

F. Name and describe briefly the key organizational process(es) that you expect this Action Project to change or improve:

Instructional Processes Course Preparation Curriculum Design Instructional Supervision Processes Involving Assessment Plan and Practices Budget and Planning Processes Related to Faculty and Staff Allocation Budget Processes Related to Time and Materials that Will Support the Implementation of the Action Project

G. Explain the rationale for the length of time planned for this Action Project (from kickoff to target completion):

As the faculty and staff examine the college's internal processes related to the success of the Action Project, the following is noted:  Faculty have planned and facilitated workshops regarding writing measurable course outcomes.  Faculty attended assessment trainings and conferences.  The spring 2005 and fall 2005 faculty in-services had classroom assessment as a central theme.  During the summer of 2006 assessment trainings were conducted to "train the trainer". Ten CMC faculty became Assessment leaders. Their mission is to work with, train and assist other assessment writers to continue the completion of the goal to assess all courses in the college.  The Senior Faculty met in December of 2006 to revisit the General Education Goals. These goals were amended and re-titled as the "Faculty Declaration of Educational Intent". A process for assessing these goals is currently being discussed and planned.  During the summer of 2006 faculty evaluated 44 courses to determine their learning outcomes, competencies, skills and assessment tool. Another thirty courses are being reviewed during the Spring 2007 semester. Plans are underway to complete the assessment process for all courses.  Program mapping is complete for three of the college's Career and Technical Education programs. Plans are underway to complete this process with other Career and Technical Education programs.  Fall and spring deadlines have been met regarding measurable outcomes development, assessing students based on the outcomes, gathering student assessment data, providing faculty with data regarding student success, and supporting and assisting faculty in revising and implementing learning strategies that will improve student learning.  The faculty Discipline Coordinator position continues to be re-evaluated and refocused to provide full-time and adjunct faculty with more support and peer assistance regarding assessment; the number of Discipline Coordinators will increase as needed.  Both full-time and adjunct faculty will receive additional professional development through recently purchased web-based resources (assessment and measurement materials, LENS), and through attendance at selected conferences, including Indiana University-Purdue University, Indianapolis 2005 Assessment Institute, HLC's fall workshop on assessment, and various state workshops focused on assessment.  A three year course review cycle has been developed.

H. Describe how you plan to monitor how successfully your efforts on this Action Project are progressing:

Faculty will define course outcomes. Students will be assessed regarding their achievement of course outcomes. Based on the assessment data, faculty will revise curriculum and instruction as necessary and implement new learning strategies. Student learning will be assessed again to determine "what is working."

I. Describe the overall "outcome" measures or indicators that will tell you whether this Action Project has been a success or failure in achieving its goals:

Phase One: August-December 2005---Establish measurable course outcomes in selected courses. --Measurable outcomes were established in the selected courses. Phase Two: January-May 2006---Assess student learning using instruments designed to measure the redefined outcomes; also, select additional courses where measurable course outcomes will be established and begin establishing those outcomes. --Measurement instruments were developed/selected for all courses in Phase One. Additional courses in selected and new prefixes (e.g., HUM, LIT, PSY, AST, BIO, SPA, etc.) were identified for outcomes/measurement instrument development from June to August. Phase Three: May-June 2007---Gather data and have faculty analyze regarding possible changes in curriculum and classroom learning strategies. --Data in selected courses is currently being gathered and analyzed by faculty. Phase Four: May-July 2007---Faculty will analyze data to determine student achievement of selected general education outcomes and plan strategies for expanding and continuing the assessment of general education learning goals. --Faculty will determine student success based upon the analysis of the outcomes data; if necessary, changes in curriculum and classroom learning strategies will follow, as well. Next Steps: During fall 2007 and spring/summer 2008, faculty will train other faculty to develop measurable student outcomes in an every growing number of courses. By summer 2007, the sixty courses that reflect the highest student enrollments should have outcomes completed, measurements selected, and timelines for student measurement/data analysis/curriculum

changes established. An implementation plan has been developed to evaluate the remaining courses. Completion of the Assessment for all courses is slated for the summer of 2010.

J. Other information (e.g., publicity, sponsor or champion, etc.):

Because student learning is a central focus at Colorado Mountain College, it will be referred to and emphasized college wide through our strategic planning, goals and processes. In addition, both fiscal and human resources will be dedicated to ensuring continuous assessment of student learning. To further reinforce the importance of student learning at CMC, emphasis on the learning college philosophy, college wide, will continue. The focus of this emphasis will place primary importance on faculty and staff understanding their role in the measurement of student learning and success.

K. Project Leader and contact person:

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Annual Update: 2009-09-14

A. Describe the past year's accomplishments and the current status of this Action Project.

Colorado Mountain College made significant progress on AQIP goals related to assessment this year. The new Dean of Arts and Sciences assumed leadership of assessment efforts college-wide with the assistance of the Dean of Career and Technical Education, and the Dean of Students. An Assessment Committee was formed in September 2008 to begin the process of reviewing assessment plans and faculty/staff training needs across the college. Although many faculty were actively engaged in forming student learning outcomes and measurements, pulling information together was an important goal for the year. President Jensen at the faculty fall in-service in October 2008 set the stage for college-wide assessment in his opening remarks saying, “assessment is vital to the continued success of CMC and its goal to be student’s first choice in learning.” Rebuilding a college-wide vision and how to implement important changes became the work of the Assessment Team that attended the HLC Chicago workshop, “Making a Difference in Student Learning: Assessment as a Core Strategy” in February 2009. At the workshop, CMC administrators and faculty developed an assessment statement which highlighted both our shortcomings and need for an integrated college-wide assessment plan that provided synergy for the dispersed efforts of faculty at the seven main CMC locations. The team developed three major steps we thought would lead us down the right path, 1) Prepare the College Environment; 2) Gather Data for the Student Learning Inventory; and 3) Assess College Learning Outcomes. The HLC workshop was invaluable to the team as it provided information on new trends in assessment, excellent resources that were used for college-wide training, and it led to a new sense of motivation as we realized that CMC wasn’t necessarily behind but could be headed in the right direction with developing a common set of institutional level student learning outcomes. Other important questions the Assessment Team addressed included: Are students learning outside the classroom? How do co-curricular activities contribute to the college outcomes? Are we assessing it? The college has a vibrant student life program, first-year experience program, and wellness program. The units that lead these activities have made commitments to a program review cycle for continuous improvement but we wanted to bring together academic affairs and student affairs in a closer working relationship with regard to assessment. Assessment became a major focus area for the college and many initiatives were launched this past academic year. A budget proposal was submitted and approved for $16,500 to do a pilot project implementing an accountability management system for assessment titled TaskStream. It is a well known national support system for colleges and universities in meeting accreditation standards. It was felt that having a central, easily accessible program to put assessment plans, student learning outcomes, curriculum maps, the measurements, assessment findings, annual

reports, and continuous improvement plans would push the college to greater accountability and make assessment more visible to internal and external constituents. This project was jointly sponsored by Academic Affairs and Student Affairs so that assessment would occur in student support units as well. Volunteers for the TaskStream project were sought amongst academic transfer faculty, career and technical education (CTE) faculty, and student services. The programs that agreed to participate in pilot project included: the business and economics department, the communications department, the humanities and foreign language department, the math department, the information technology CTE program, the resort management and hospitality CTE program, the ski and snowboard business CTE program, counseling services, and student life. Over the summer, three administrative leaders built the program with TaskStream technical support and then the lead team trained faculty and staff in August. Throughout the 2009/10 academic year the participants will go through the entire assessment cycle and then provide an end of year report to college leadership. The results will be evaluated by the lead team and the Assessment Committee. The plan is to implement TaskStream usage college-wide in the next 2-3 years as more faculty and staff are trained on its use. Faculty and staff are encouraged to attend monthly webinars produced by TaskStream to become familiar with the program's capabilities. The overall goal is to align assessment efforts across the college to the strategic plan.

Review *(09-27-09):*

Following the resignation of the project lead in 2008, it appears that progress on this important Action Plan had slowed. The Assessment Committee (and the institution) is to be commended on its ability to refocus and "rebuild a college-wide vision" around assessment that has led to significant gains over the past year (AQIP Category 1, Helping Students Learn; Category 5, Leading and Communicating). The collaboration of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs on this project contributes to and reinforces a culture of inclusion (Category 9, Building Collaborative Relationships). Keep up the great work! You may want to look for ways to expand the participation of faculty in a leadership capacity in this work (Category 4, Valuing People); this may help the institution move more swiftly towards the development and sustainment of a culture of assessment and continuous improvement.

B. Describe how the institution involved people in work on this Action Project.

At both the fall and spring college-wide faculty in-service meetings, assessment became the central focus for building consensus and formulating plans. At the fall faculty in-service at our Timberline campus, training was conducted on assessing critical thinking in the classroom. Other campuses chose other vital assessment topics and provided resources to faculty. At the spring college-wide faculty in-service, a survey was conducted of all fulltime faculty as well as some adjunct faculty that sought to document baseline data on faculty commitment and specific methods of assessment used at the course and program levels. All but two of the 45 respondents said that they had written methods of assessment for measuring student learning in their courses and programs. The other two stated they had performance measures of assessment. Assessment activities included a wide variety of both formative and summative assessments. The faculty that participated in the survey demonstrated a very strong commitment to using classroom assessments to improve student learning while constantly evaluating the assessments for accuracy, validity, correlation to outcomes, and student response. Faculty provide direct feedback to students through the use of rubrics attached to assignment and grading sheets, they provide written comments on written work, and many hold conferences with students to discuss progress and ways to improve. For the first time, we have documented evidence that CMC faculty know and understand the importance of student learning outcomes assessment and most importantly can articulate exactly how they are achieving their goals in the classroom. The survey results were summarized and sent to institutional research. Self reporting through assessment surveys is one way to engage the college in important conversations on improving academic rigor, how students learn best, and what we can do to improve retention and

success rates.

Review *(09-27-09):*

Surveying the faculty provided the institution with important information relative to the current level of faculty involvement in assessment activities; be certain to use this information to fully engage the campus community and stimulate the important conversations around student learning and assessment, success rates and retention (Category 1, Helping Students Learn; Category 5, Leading and Communicating; Category 7, Measuring Effectiveness). Oversight of this project still appears to be concentrated at the level of division Dean. Use every opportunity to consider how faculty and staff can be empowered to participate in a leadership capacity (Category 4, Valuing People). Remember that AQIP encourages broad-based faculty, staff, and administrative involvement, one of the principles of high performance organizations that support continuous improvement efforts. Are faculty routinely involved in planning and delivering in-service meetings and other professional development activities related to assessment?

C. Describe your planned next steps for this Action Project.

Dr Sunny Schmitt attended the College Board meeting in Denver titled "Understanding the Accreditation Standards and the Higher Learning Outcome for Higher Education Institutions" where the apparent emphasis placed by the HLC was on implementation of institutional, general education, and program level assessment. At the meeting, it was stated that many previous methods of assessment didn't achieve what the institutions wanted to know about what students have learned throughout their college experience. Thus the CMC assessment committee met each month to continue to work on the CMC institutional level outcomes with the goal to have these ready for the next catalog. It was decided at the September 2009 meeting that our outcomes would be organized in four major categories, 1) Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World; 2) Intellectual and Practical Skills (Inquiry and Analysis, Critical and Creative Thinking, Written and Oral Communication, Quantitative Literacy, Information Literacy, and Teamwork and Problem Solving); 3) Personal and Social Responsibility (Civic Knowledge and Engagement, Intercultural Knowledge and Competence, Ethical Reasoning and Action, Foundations and Skills for Lifelong Learning, and Interconnectedness of the Human, Physical, and Natural Worlds); and 4) Integrative and Applied Learning. The four broad categories allow for the development of new outcomes as they become relevant to our college and students. The next step is for the committee to get these institutional outcomes approved by key committees including the College Leadership Team. Once approved, CMC will select a number of these to be assessed college-wide each year. With the implementation of TaskStream, these student learning outcomes selected for college-wide assessment can be shared across campuses and student affairs mission elements. Everyone at the college will be asked to creatively implement ways to incorporate those values in their teaching and develop ways to assess that learning. In the realm of professional development, the Vice President of Academic Affairs, Dr Ann Harris, supported all summer projects that were related to assessment activities. Discipline groups such as Communications and Math met to discuss their common student learning outcomes, a business faculty member worked on building upon the program map for Entrepreneurship by conducting research on building specific student learning outcomes, competencies, and skills, a humanities faculty member created an assessment plan for several core courses, and many hours were devoted to preparing for TaskStream training and implementation. Presentations on assessment were given at many campus faculty in-service days this fall. New innovative teaching and learning methods were also supported. Valencia Community College came to CMC and provided an excellent workshop on their successful model for learning communities. As a result a new pilot project involving a developmental math learning community is currently underway. It will be evaluated and if evidence exists for greater student retention and success rates, the model will be expanded in the future.

Review *(09-27-09):*

It appears that the scope of the original Action Plan has been expanded relative to the development and assessment of institutional outcomes. How will this work impact the timeline for completion of the Action Plan? Initially, assessment for all courses was to be completed by the summer of 2010. Is that timetable still realistic? Had you considered creating a separate Action Plan for the development and assessment of institutional outcomes? Apart from general education outcomes and course outcomes, it is unclear how program outcomes are being evaluated and how the program mapping work is currently being utilized. In other words, how are all the levels of student learning experiences being assessed at the institution?

D. Describe any "effective practice(s)" that resulted from your work on this Action Project.

So what has changed? Assessment became a strategic focus for the college in the CMC 2009-2011 Strategic Plan. We now have alignment with mission, vision, values, goals, degrees, and students. We can better provide data and information on student learning and documenting what and how well students learn. Human and monetary resources were put towards implementing a college-wide assessment plan. New leadership was put in place to lead the effort including an Assessment Committee made up of faculty, academic services, and for the first time student services. CMC leaders spent all year developing a new Dashboard score card to report on key success indicators. Institutional data is now being collected on four priority focus areas: Learners, Leadership, Partnerships, and Financial Health. CMC built a positive partnership with a nationally known assessment software company, TaskStream, to provide tools to our faculty and staff to report what they are doing and where they will make continuous improvements. We engaged faculty and staff in key conversations around assessment. Assessment was an agenda item at nearly every important college meeting last year in one form or another. We scheduled Elluminate, Blackboard, and face-to-face training throughout the academic year to make assessing meaningful and useful to the people involved. Sample topics include “Letting Them Show What They Know,” “Measuring What Matters: Formative and Summative Assessment Techniques,” and “How to Build an Effective Rubric.” One of the most effective practices we implemented this year was to make our Discipline Coordinators responsible for overseeing assessment activities as part of their job description. Much like Department Chairs, Discipline Coordinators review curriculum and make recommendations on new programs or courses. They also work closely with faculty at the campuses to ensure quality programming. Thus, it was seen as an important step to give these leaders responsibilities to ensure we embed assessment all the way from course design, syllabus construction, building formative and summative assessments, rubric building, evaluation, and feedback. Discipline Coordinators will have direct access to TaskStream workspaces so they can work closely with colleagues on improving their assessment practices. We have replaced compliance with greater commitment and stakeholder involvement. We have a commitment to build our capacity through assessment. Most importantly, assessment is becoming part of the culture of our institution through a concerted effort of key leaders and faculty/staff throughout the institution.

Review *(09-27-09):*

Institutional support for this work is evident from the investment in TaskStream, conference and workshop attendance, internal professional development activities, and expansion of the role of Discipline Coordinators related to assessment (Category 5, Leading and Communicating; Category 8, Planning Continuous Improvement). The latter may be a model that would benefit other institutions as they develop/refine the infrastructure to support their assessment work. Continue to build upon these foundations as you nurture a culture of assessment and quality improvement! Be certain to take advantage of opportunities to recognize the important strides that individuals/programs/departments are making as their assessment work progresses (Category 4, Valuing People; Category 5, Leading and Communicating). As stated earlier, this may help the

institution move more swiftly towards the development and sustainment of a culture of assessment and continuous improvement.

E. What challenges, if any, are you still facing in regards to this Action Project?

CMC continues to implement "best practices" in an effort to achieve consistency across all seven campuses plus our emerging/growing virtual campus. Providing appropriate incentives such as release time, professional development, and supplemental pay to encourage faculty to continue improving on assessment will be a challenge. Having a commitment to build our capacity must be matched with resources, time, and energy. Now that we have the assessment train moving and tools in place, we must ensure that we don't get off track. In an effort to do that, the college leadership team approved a half-time position for a Director of Assessment. Hopefully, the budget will allow for a permanent fulltime position sometime in the future. A dedicated assessment lead person with more time to dedicate towards training, evaluation, and continuous improvement would be a real asset. Institutions with a permanent structure dedicated to assessment seem to keep the momentum going year to year.

Review *(09-27-09):*

The approval of a half-time position for a Director of Assessment is another indicator of the institution's support for this work. If this person were a faculty member, and a member of the current Assessment Committee, it would likely hasten efforts to expand and sustain faculty support for assessment.

F. If you would like to discuss the possibility of AQIP providing you help to stimulate progress on this action project, explain your need(s) here and tell us who to contact and when?

CMC sent a team to the HLC Workshop last year and it proved to be a catalyst for reinventing our assessment program, getting assessment embedded into our strategic plan, and making strides towards building a set of college-wide institutional student learning outcomes that embody the values we hold high. We will continue to attend key workshops and conferences to keep abreast of new developments in the areas of continuous quality improvement. TaskStream will help CMC with accountability and visibility in our assessment efforts. We don't need specific AQIP help this next year except recognition that we have pulled out all the stops in trying to improve our assessment efforts. Encouragement from the cheering section might really keep our star players motivated to meet and exceed our goals. Should you have additional questions, please contact Dr. Schmidt at: (800) 621-8559.

Review *(09-27-09):*

9946 The institution has indeed made significant progress over the past year, and is now making reasonable progress toward completion of the project. The scope of the project, however, has expanded and evolved since the initial Action Plan was developed and now encompasses the development and assessment of course outcomes, general education outcomes, and institutional outcomes. (It is unclear how program outcomes are being addressed.) The institution has demonstrated their support of this project through appropriate resource allocations, which should enable them to complete the project in a timely manner.