The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

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

PROJECT	UPDATE	**REVIEW**

REVIEWED

📄 **VERSION 3.0**

Create a new version of this Action Project.

Project Details

Title	Creating an Effective Assessment Accountability System for Institutional, Program, and Course Level Assessment.	**Status**	REVIEWED
Category	1-Helping Students Learn	**Updated**	09-28-2012
Timeline		**Reviewed**	10-07-2012
Planned Project Kickoff	05-01-2010	**Created**	03-26-2010
Target Completion	06-30-2013	**Last Modified**	10-07-2012

VERSIONS

- **VERSION 3.0**
- VERSION 2.0
- VERSION 1.0

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A:

1. Full-time Director of Assessment for the college continuing the work of the Office of Assessment with responsibility for designing, planning, implementing, assessing, and revising the CMC Institutional Assessment Plan
2. TaskStream Assessment Management System (AMS) still the software of choice, continuing to acquire and document all areas in Arts & Sciences and Career and Technical Education Programs
3. All academic areas as well as any newly created academic areas are asked to select two courses and two student learning outcomes to assess in 2012/13 academic year
4. Since piloting assessment for 20 courses during 2009-10 school year, faculty increased assessed courses from 58 courses in 2011-12 to 86 courses for 2012-13 across the curriculum (60 courses from 2-year or certificate programs and 26 courses from 4-year programs).
5. Use of the standardized assessment reporting tool continues to improve the quality of the year-end report by all who utilize it
6. Use of the CMC Taskstream rubric for workspace review with key elements of mission, SLO, Curriculum Map, Assessment Plan, and Assessment Findings provides feedback to faculty on their assessment progress through the Assessment Subcommittee
7. Individual and group assessment training continues throughout the college to faculty and staff at all campuses
8. The college-wide Assessment website was created and is accessible to all faculty, students and staff
9. Posted Academic Assessment and How it Fits in with the

Strategic Plan to the Assessment website

10. 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) with an increase from 9 courses assessed in 2011-12 to 26 courses assessed in fall 2012

11. Student Affairs professional staff continued their assessment projects by planning for "closing the loop" and engrafting improvements in student support services e.g.Common Reader; Orientation; Learning Communities; Disability services; Residence life; Student Affairs leadership team performance; Counseling services; Student Support Services; Upward Bound. Resident Assistant training; New student registration and Mental health services

12. CMC's Common Reader Program continues to incorporate a variety of direct and indirect assessment measures for students, faculty and staff and the resulting data are used to improve future Common Reader initiatives

13. 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. Embedded course evaluations for comparable learning experiences and ongoing federal reporting required for the TAACCCT grant will provide assessment data useful for strengthening CMC courses, educational programs and student access overall, but most notably within the college's developmental education arena.

14. CMC's faculty based Curriculum Advisory Committee's suggestions made it possible to house the college-wide Assessment Committee within the racks of this organization as a sub-committee, change-out long standing membership to more faculty participants and provided a critical and closer link to faculty commitment to assessment

15. 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, 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. CMC will again administer the CCLA during fall 2012 and spring 2013 and address any deficiencies.

16. Changed the focus of the assessment project to institution level General Education assessment and embedding assessment in new four-year degree programs

R: Nine months out from its projected completion date, Colorado Mountain College's (CMC) action project, *Creating an Effective Assessment Accountability System for Institutional, Program, and Course Level Assessment*, continues to make progress and move forward. Most of the reported accomplishments of the past year speak directly to continuing work from last years' update. Two new items reported directly document the continued commitment of CMC to improve assessment. CMC is clearly working towards a culture of valuing assessment, which is demonstrated directly in the continued increase in courses assessed versus pervious years. By making assessment such a high priority CMC is distinguishing itself as a high performing organization.

2:   Institution Involvement

A:
1. The college President emphasizes the importance of assessment at all CMC convocations of faculty and academic leadership
2. AQIP Project "Creating a Systematic College Wide General Education Assessment Process" presented by the AQIP Action Team to the College Leadership Team (CLT) in March 2012 which changed the emphasis of our assessment project
3. 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.
4. 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 also 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. This budgeted amount has increased almost 100%, from $ 4600 in summer of 2010 to $ 9000 in summer of 2012.
5. We conducted a "Course Elements" workshop for Faculty teaching in both bachelor Degree programs at the spring faculty in-service in May 2012. As we rolled out these new courses, evidenced by their assessment marks on common project objectives, students did well.
6. CMC faculty continue to drive assessment efforts with 40 faculty discipline coordinators or "faculty leads" working for their specific disciplines.

7. Student Affairs Leadership Team (SALT) takes the lead on co-curricular assessment efforts to integrate learning outcomes into all Student Services initiatives
8. Institutional Research publicized assessment efforts college wide such as the CCLA (fall 2012, spring 2013), SENSE (fall 2012) and the CCSSE (Spring 2012)-information posted on the IR Web pages and in the IR portal. Assessment Matters, the monthly assessment newsletter, continues to be published and attached to the Assessment Website in the archive files.
9. Sustainability Workshop on June 29, 2011 provided assessment training and TaskStream demonstrations to college wide sustainability faculty.

R: The entire college community participated in this project from faculty and staff to students and administrators. The project had the added assistance of being backed strongly by the college President and the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs. The backing was not just in policy but in financing, again demonstrating the commitment at all levels of CMC to improve assessment. The continued increase in the number of faculty participating in the work and the number of courses being evaluated each year indicate that CMC will see further positive results as with the student successes seen as a result of changes thus far.

3: Next Steps

A:

1. New faculty continue to receive training in the college-wide assessment plan and how to document their course level assessment work in TaskStream at the New Faculty Orientation held at the beginning of each semester
2. Discipline Coordinators and Lead Faculty began getting more organized listings of which faculty taught their course for assessment at which delivery site, an organizational strategy designed to help them communicate better and keep their eyes on the goal with site administration/faculty over our very large service area.
3. We began the process of revising the CMC Signature Learning Outcomes to be more user-friendly/memorable by developing a contest announced during our Fall In-service, August 2011 to rename our outcomes. We welcomed all faculty and staff to develop an acronym that is easily identifiable and memorable and ran the contest until December of 2011. We took the nine entries that we received to the faculty who voted on a winner. Our 'Winners Choice' for a new acronym is CMC SPIRIT (**C**-reative Thinkers **M**-asters of practical and intellectual skills **C**-ulturally aware **S**-tewards of the world **P**-roblem solvers **I**-innovators applying knowledge to new situations **R**-esponsible socially and personally **I**-nclusive team players **T**-omorrow's leaders). We incentivized the contest by awarding the winner a $50 gift card.
4. Provide TaskStream workspace feedback to faculty leads-continuous improvement plan

5. We revitalized the General Education Assessment Committee and developed a plan to assess five of our CMC Signature Learning Outcomes that matched what the State of Colorado assesses as well for General Education Assessment. Our initial plan involved discovery and collection of two semesters of existing assessment data. This is the second semester of this discovery and collection process.
6. 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
7. Utilizing data from the Community College Learning Assessment (CCLA) and Individual Development and Educational Assessment (IDEA) Student Rating of Instruction Survey, we hope to improve student learning in courses, programs and institutionally by focusing on at least one of three areas each year.
8. All new academic programs proposed through the new program process including baccalaureate programs shall have an assessment plan prior to being approved through the Curriculum Advisory Committee (CAC)
9. Participate in seeking grants funding such as Title III that would help further student success
10. Student Affairs professional staff have selected CMC Signature Learning Outcomes to assess and are also exploring the incorporation of "sustainability" as a core value

R: The team reported several next steps for moving forward as they approach their project's target deadline. Given everything that the project team still wants to see accomplished, it's recommended that a calendar or timeline be developed to assist with meeting the target deadline. It was not noted as to whether priority was given to any of the items listed, prioritizing the next steps would also be beneficial. Again, the support of leadership at CMC has already been noteworthy and it expected to continue. This will also contribute to the project meeting the target deadline.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A:
1. Assessment is embedded in the 2013-15 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. A common template has been created for the annual assessment report submitted by faculty to ensure consistency
4. We continue to work on instilling the "culture of assessment" at CMC where everyone "owns" a piece of the assessment picture
5. We continued incorporating assessment work in the faculty promotion criteria
6. Continue to budget for and 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 and through increased use of recorded information on the Assessment Website
9. Partnerships and collaboration between Student Affairs and Academic Affairs on assessment and the creation of an optimal environment for student learning & success
10. The large goal of the General Education AQIP Project is to look at and determine the usefulness of all of our collected data as we work to improve student learning.

R: Several effective practices have come about at CMC due to the work done on this project. It is clear that one of the greatest is the embedding of assessment into the Strategic Plan. It is no surprise that this has happened with the support of assessment by the college leadership. CMC rightly sees the continuing shift to value assessment as part of the college culture as another effective practice. The "ownership" afforded to participants in the process has no doubt been a strong contributing factor for the changes seen since the start of this project. Additionally, making assessment funding a priority will aid in keeping the efforts moving forward.

5: **Project Challenges**

A:
1. We have involved adjunct faculty in more assessment efforts college wide with the creation of a new position to promote communication of a more positive nature, Assistant Vice President for Adjunct Affairs, and the initiation of the A-Train, which involved creation of a new website for adjunct faculty where all things "adjunct" reside. Additionally, the more detailed assessment spreadsheets that Discipline Coordinators and Faculty Leads now have access to, serve to coordinate assessment in a more organized way for all faculty. However, we need to improve communication methods with adjunct faculty since they continue to resist using the CMC email system to communicate. We hope the increased assessment organization will allow the site Instructional Chairs to meet with their faculty regularly, incentivizing their participation.
2. The change of our AQIP project focus to General Education has

helped us take stock of the large quantity of assessment data that the college currently collects. The culmination of our project will be to identify which data are beneficial for bench marking in defining continuous improvement. Faculty will be instrumental in the process and will be encouraged to up-grade their assessment process skills.

3. We began a continuous training plan for the use of TASKSTREAM-AMS that includes the embedding of recorded training videos onto our Assessment Website, a calendar of face-to-face visits to all campuses and increased contact with all new faculty during orientation and in-services.

4. The new BA Sustainability Degree and the BS in Business Administration continue to be very popular and course offering are growing. Last fall semester nine courses taught while this fall semester we offered 77 courses, representing a substantial increase. Our challenge here is to closely monitor all new course proposals to safeguard the continued use of applicable and appropriately written student learning outcomes.

5. Embedding assessment in developmental education courses continues to be a challenge due to smaller resource availability.

6. We have begun talking about how student involvement in the assessment process can become a reality but as yet have not achieved this goal.

7. ZBB Budget Process cut resources across the college including assessment again for this year

8. Getting all programs to participate in assessment – while a few folks are still dragging their feet, we see the beginning of change taking hold.

9. Greater consistency in the use of assessment data and reporting

R: The project team has noted specific challenges in their efforts to further improve assessment practices across the campus. They are not alone in the challenges they face with regard to adjunct faculty participation. Many institutions are in the same boat of trying to communicate with a "displaced" (for lack of a better word) constituent. Perhaps some inquiries with other institutions with high adjunct faculty numbers could offer some insight on improving communication with this group. Although funding for all areas is not available at this time as for developmental courses, perhaps some work can be done to modify existing practices from other courses so that the practices can be used in assessment for courses without a specific assessment plan/program/process.