

The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

Illinois Central College

Project Details			
Title	Improve & Organize College-wide Assessment of General Education Goals	Status	COMPLETED
Category	1-Helping Students Learn	Updated	09-14-2010
Timeline		Reviewed	10-13-2010
	Planned Project Kickoff 01-01-2007	Created	11-24-2009
	Actual Completion 11-01-2010	Version	4

1: Project Goal

A: The ultimate goal of this project is to have every course at the college, transfer and occupational, involved in assessing student attainment of the college's General Education Goals. The assessment activities will be integrated into the course content enabling the faculty to determine if the students are mastering the goals. Individual and college-wide reports will be prepared. Once the general education goals have been assessed within courses, the results will be examined holistically to gain a better understanding of how our curriculum promotes the mastery of the General Education Goals by students.

2: Reasons For Project

A: We selected Assessment of General Education Goals as an Action Project for several reasons. First, our College has stated that the accomplishment of the general education goals is an essential part of our educational program. Therefore, it is important that we determine the extent to which our students are accomplishing the ten goals established for General Education. Secondly, in 2002, we made a commitment to the Higher Learning Commission that we would systematically assess student achievement of the General Education Goals. Although we have made some progress toward that goal, we believe that by making this an AQIP action project, it will elevate this assessment project to a new level of importance.

3: Organizational Areas Affected

A: All academic departments and programs at the college are working on student assessment. Each department is responsible for developing expectations for the General Education Goals in each of its courses. The faculty assess, evaluate, improve, and report on student mastery. The Institutional Research Office as they help analyze and interpret the data. The Curriculum Committee will approve any curricula changes. The Transfer Center as it works with four-year institutions.

4: Key Organizational Process(es)

A: Each department will be involved in improving the following processes regarding the general education competencies on which it focuses: *Development and administration of student assessments *Interpretation of collected student assessment data *Application of interpreted data to the curriculum in order to promote learning *Reporting and sharing of the results of the assessment activities

5: Project Time Frame Rationale

A: The Action Project is a three-year period during which all of ICC's courses should have conducted an assessment project within each class. The following timeline was developed to begin assessing all transfer and occupational courses by fall 2007. **SPRING 2007** * Perform assessment activity for first third of transfer courses. * Develop General Education Goals assessment activity for an additional third of transfer courses. * Develop General Education Goals assessment activity for a third of occupational courses. * Report results to Assessment Coordinator and Deans. **FALL 2007** * Begin assessment activity for second group transfer courses. * Perform General Education Goals assessment activity in an additional third of occupational courses. * Assessment activity performed and results analyzed. * Continue assessment activities in first group of the transfer courses and report on follow-up activities. **SPRING 2008** * Implement changes indicated by assessment activities. * Develop General Education Goals assessment activity for final third of transfer courses and second group of occupational courses * Prepare reports for Assessment Coordinator and Associate Deans. **FALL 2008** * Begin assessment activities for final third of transfer courses and second group of occupational courses. * Analyze and

determine changes or improvements. * Prepare follow-up report on previous activities and submit current results to Assessment Coordinator and Associate Deans. SPRING 2009 * Implement changes. * Develop and plan activity for final third of occupational courses. * Prepare reports for Assessment Coordinator and Associate Deans. FALL 2009 * Implement final third of assessment activities for Occupational courses. * Analyze and determine any necessary changes and follow-up on all previous activities.

6: Project Success Monitoring

A: The Action Project will be monitored by the following activities: 1. The Assessment coordinator will request at the end of each semester reports from the Associate Deans detailing the general education goal assessment activities in their department. 2. Faculty will prepare a report at the end of each academic year that will detail the activities, changes, and successes for each course, which will be assessed. These reports will allow faculty to detail the knowledge they have learned and the changes that they have made as a result of the findings of the assessments. 3. After two years, an evaluation will be made of the extent to which course instruction changes have been implemented in response to assessment data. 4. An analysis of the number of faculty and courses involved in general education goals assessment will be done. 5. An analysis of the timeliness of completion of each assessment year will be conducted.

7: Project Outcome Measures

A: As a result of this project: 1. Every course at the college will be systematically assessed for student mastery of the General Education Goals of the college. Reports will be on file available for reference. 2. Data from the course assessment will be analyzed to determine if students are mastering the general education goals. 3. The college will have detailed tracking on file of changes and improvements made to increase student learning.

Project Update

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: Illinois Central College continues to assess its ten general education goals in courses taught at the college. Assessing these goals to meet the demands of student learning and engagement is a shared goal between faculty and administration. To meet this goal, the General Education Goals Assessment Action Project team held monthly one-hour meetings during the 2009-2010 academic year. This was the final year of the four-year project. During the 09-10 academic year, all of the courses (1614 courses) were to be assessed. Faculty submitted 1162 assessment reports. This is an increase from the 906 courses assessed during the 08-09 academic year. The 1162 courses which were assessed represented seventy-two percent of credit courses taught at the college. This faculty-driven project is led by a team of assessment advocates who represent each academic department. At the February 2010 HLC Assessment Workshop, a group from the College's assessment committee reviewed the prior years general education assessment results. The group determined that gen ed goals #1 (the student is able to read and think critically) and #2 (the student is able to communicate clearly and effectively) were assessed most frequently by faculty. The group developed and planned a gen ed assessment pilot project for implementation during the summer of 2010 using artifacts from spring 2010 courses. Following the group's return from the HLC Assessment Workshop, the College's Outcomes Assessment Committee, Curriculum Committee, and General Education Committee, in a joint meeting, embraced the pilot project and gave direction to the Vice President for Academic Affairs to move forward with the project. The pilot project involved the collection of written samples from courses across the curriculum. During the summer 2010 HLC Assessment Workshop another group from the College's assessment committee refined the pilot project process and examined rubrics to assess gen ed goals 1 and 2. The committee determined the AAC&U rubric for written communication was the best fit for assessing gen ed goal #2 and that the AAC&U rubric for critical thinking was the best fit for assessing gen ed goal #1. Eighty-eight artifacts were submitted by faculty. Eight faculty and six administrators participated in a two-day training session for norming, inter-rater reliability, and artifact examination. The project methodology was determined to be successful for written communication, with 95% of the 88 artifacts meeting the established minimum criteria for acceptable levels of written communication skills. The workshop participants felt that the critical thinking rubric was not usable for assessing the first gen ed goal due in part to variances in the operational definition of critical thinking. Hence, going forward, the committee agreed more research and discussion is needed across the institution to establish a common definition and understanding of the College's interpretation of critical thinking. During August 2010 Celebration of Learning (week prior to classes beginning when faculty are back to work), a faculty team reported a summary of the various assessment activities and results undertaken during the past four years. Faculty across the College participated in two half-day discussion sessions focused on the last four years data, assessment of student learning, and the College's general education goals.

The output of the aforementioned activities will be used to assist with the development of new AQIP action projects.

2: Institution Involvement

A: Throughout the 09-10 academic year, the assessment advocates worked to encourage faculty to complete gen ed assessments in their classes and submit a written report. Each academic department embraced the challenge to submit gen ed reports as well as artifacts for the pilot project. With the arrival of a new vice president for academic affairs in January 2010, a new momentum for assessing gen ed goals materialized. This renewed momentum resulted in sending two groups from the College's Outcomes Assessment Committee to HLC Assessment Workshops in February and July, the development of a pilot project for assessing the two most frequently assessed gen ed goals, sharing of the past four years assessment data and the pilot project results with all faculty at the August 2010 Celebration of Learning events, assessment of student learning discussions with faculty during Celebration of Learning, along with discussions of general education goals. The College's Outcomes Assessment Committee reviewed results of the pilot project at their August meeting, and determined that the pilot project will continue during the fall 2010 semester.

3: Next Steps

A: The current gen ed assessment project will be retired. The College's Outcomes Assessment Committee is continuing the gen ed assessment pilot project through the fall 2010 semester. The August 2010 Celebration of Learning faculty conversations have highlighted the need for a review of the College's general education goals. This review project will emerge as a new AQIP Action Project.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: Assessment of student learning is becoming a part of the College culture and is at the heart of what happens in the classroom. Faculty are: 1) thinking and talking about assessment; 2) critically looking at the College's ten general education goals; 3) developing assessment strategies within the classroom; 4) developing assessment strategies at the department and program levels; 5) examining the integrated relationships between student learning, course objectives, program goals, and the general education goals.

5: Project Challenges

A: This year the challenge was keeping faculty on track completing classroom assessment reports. To overcome this challenge, the assessment advocates, teaching chairs, program chairs, and faculty leaders actively reminded faculty to complete assessment reports. Similar to the 2009-10 year, the final challenge we faced was meeting our project goals. Although 1614 assessment reports seem like a large number, after analysis we found that this represented only 71 percent of all courses being assessed. Although AQIP noted in the prior project reviews that the Institution may have set a larger goal than necessary, this project team continued to work to involve all classes and all faculty.

We have no questions at this time, as this four year project is being retired. With the arrival of a new VPAA there has been a focused effort on broadening and expanding involvement in assessment college-wide. This effort will continue under the direction of the VPAA, newly appointed Associate VPAA (the FT director of accreditation and assessment position was rolled into the associate VPAA duties in August 2010), and the College's Outcomes Assessment Committee.

Update Review

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: This project is at the core of what institutions of higher education are about: helping students learn (AQIP Category 1). The goal of assessing all courses was a valiant effort, even if you were not able to achieve this target. Still, the year-to-year increase was remarkable and is worthy of celebration. The analysis of data related to the goals most frequently assessed demonstrates a commitment to planning continuous improvement (AQIP Category 8). The institution's enthusiasm to push the limits of the project through the development of the pilot over the summer is further evidence of this commitment. It appears that the institution is well on its way to collecting a wealth of data that will serve as valuable results for AQIP Category 1 in its next Systems Portfolio.

2: Institution Involvement

A: Given the focus of this project, it was imperative that faculty be involved in aspects of nearly every task. The institution was able to accomplish this through the Outcomes Assessment Committee, a team that attended the Assessment Workshops, the pilot project, and presentations to faculty. It is also important that the college celebrated project accomplishments, as this is an excellent way to recognize everyone's hard work and dedication (AQIP Category 4 Valuing People) while also keeping the project's momentum.

3: Next Steps

A: Congratulations on the completion of this project! As part of the continuous quality improvement cycle, it is important to evaluate the completed process. What went well? What did not go as smoothly as you would have liked? In hindsight, what would you have done differently? These are important elements to consider that can provide essential knowledge for the next action project.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: Implementing a systematic plan to assess student learning is a project that many institutions find to be difficult. Although there were likely many problems along the way, the college found ways to handle these challenges. Since peer institutions are facing many of the same challenges that you encountered throughout this project, institutional officials have a wealth of knowledge that could prove valuable to others. Do not hesitate to share your expertise with neighboring institutions, as they will benefit greatly from it.

5: Project Challenges

A: An important element in the life cycle of any action project is to ensure that a process is implemented to ensure the continuation of progress and activities achieved during the project after the institution begins work on other projects. The college has taken the necessary steps to make this happen. Great job!

Project Outcome

1: Reason for completion

A: The four year assessment project has ended.

2: Success Factors

A: Assessment of student learning is becoming a part of the College culture and is at the heart of what happens in the classroom. Faculty are: 1) thinking about assessment; 2) critically evaluating the current ten general education goals; 3) developing assessment strategies within the classroom; 4) developing assessment strategies at the department and program levels; and 5) examining the integrated relationships between student learning, course objectives, program goals, and the general education goals.

3: Unsuccessful Factors

A: Keeping faculty on track completing classroom assessment reports in order to meet project goals. Our goal was lofty: 100% of all courses offered would be assessed. This goal was not met, but every year the percentage of courses assessed increased, ending year four with 71% of all courses being assessed.