Innovation and Inquiry for Student Learning:
A Community and Technical College Consortium

RECOMMENDATIONS TO TWO-YEAR INSTITUTIONS ON INNOVATION AND INQUIRY FOR STUDENT LEARNING

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Introduction

During the summer 2008 IISL Consortium meeting, we, as representatives of the above consortium institutions, devoted an afternoon to formulating, in small groups, recommendations we would have for other two-year schools based on what we have learned in the course of the project and in our own institutions. This document serves to compile the written products from each of our small group discussions without modification, except for minor grammatical editing, etc. In addition, many of us took advantage of the opportunity during the meeting to review the set of recommendations, and offer our written or spoken responses. The addendum that follows the recommendations is a synthesis of these responses prepared by Tim Riordan of Alverno College.

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Process for Developing Recommendations

Context

Consortium members were sent a request to consider the following in preparation for the June 2008 consortium meeting:

If you were to serve as consultants to other two-year institutions, which topic would you consider yourself most qualified to address, based on both the work of your institution and your individual expertise?

       TOPIC/ISSUE/PROBLEM
- *Articulating institution-wide student learning outcomes*
- *Building institution-wide learning outcomes into the curriculum*
- *Implementing assessment of institution-wide student learning outcomes for individual student learning*
- *Implementing program outcomes*
- *Sustaining learning-centered assessment*
- *Meeting external accountability demands while making assessment integral to how faculty think about teaching at all levels: individual student, program, institutional*
- *Other…*

Task-Oriented Problem-Solving Interest Sessions (Tuesday, June 17, 2008, 1:30–4:30 p.m.)

Session Task and Product

For the afternoon's session groups were arranged according to the above issues so that consortium members could work together to articulate recommendation(s) and examples of practice to implement each recommendation(s). By the end of this session each group had created a document that included the following:

- Recommendation(s) that the group would make to other institutions in addressing this issue, including a rationale for the recommendation(s)
- Examples of strategies that worked from consortium member institutions to illustrate how institutions can act on the recommendation(s)
- Supports and barriers that consortium institutions have encountered in implementing the recommendation(s)
- Examples of practice from consortium institutions that illustrate how institutions can address the supports and barriers

Audience: Lumina Foundation Institutions, and other 2-year institutions

As the earlier request suggested, we asked participants to be of assistance to other two-year institutions as they address similar issues. Consortium member contributions will be printed in the final report and distributed via the IISL website. Assume that two-year institutions can benefit from recommendations that emerge from focused collaboration across institutions.

Process for Session

Each group approached the task a little differently, but the process roughly followed this timeframe:

➢ Spend about 45 minutes or so discussing the issue that is the focus for your group. You may find the following questions helpful for the discussion:

1. What topic/issue/problem are you discussing?
2. What led up to it in your setting? How did it get identified?
3. Who was involved?
4. What did you/the group working on the problem actually do—what set of strategies did you use—to address the problem?
5. What was the result of using these strategies? What worked and didn't work and why? What supported these strategies?
6. What kinds of experiences did other members of Founding or New Institutions have in relation to this topic/issue/problem? What additional strategies/supports might work?

➢ Spend about an hour formulating recommendations including rationale, and examples of strategies that worked. Identify supports and barriers, and examples of addressing them.

➢ Word-process a document using the template provided.

Recommendations

Topic/Issue/Problem:
Articulating institution-wide student learning outcomes

Participants in Discussion:
Kurt Ewen, Valencia Community College
Karen Borglum, Valencia Community College
Richard Edwards, Tunxis Community College
Richard McCrary, Dallas County Community College District
Elise Martin, Middlesex Community College
Ellen Nichols, Middlesex Community College
Bev Dow, McHenry County College
Kathy Chamberlain, McHenry County College
Lee Anne Burrough, Prairie State College
Jim McGraw, Tarrant County College District
Bobbi Stringer, Tarrant County College District

Recommendation that our group would make to other institutions in addressing this issue, including a rationale for our recommendation:

We recommend that the process of articulating institution-wide student learning outcomes should be inclusive and reflective of the institutional culture.

Examples of strategies that worked from our institutions to illustrate how institutions can act on the recommendation:

Institution needs to support the effort with time and money. Board and administration need to be supportive and give appropriate input. Need to balance decision making between faculty and administrators.

Recognize that the impetus for articulating student learning outcomes may differ from institution to institution. This impetus can give you leverage to move forward.

Get faculty, staff, administrators and students involved in the process. Separate input from decision making.

- Get input from students, staff and community stakeholders
- Faculty, ideally, should make final decisions. Assessment must be faculty driven and faculty owned. The process must include faculty buy-in.
- Document every step of the process. Surveys can be very useful and provide quantitative data of involvement of specific groups. Make process transparent to everyone.

Invite representatives from the accrediting agencies to explain the process and expectations.

Once outcomes are in place, students need to be aware of the outcomes and how they relate to program requirements. Bookmarks and posters can help students. Outcomes can be included in syllabi.

Creating college-wide representation to the process of developing student learning outcomes is not always achieved by volunteers. Ask for volunteers and supplement with invitations from deans so all areas were represented.

***Supports and barriers that we have encountered in implementing the recommendation*:**

Faculty attitudes: Faculty resent being told what to do. Faculty need to know how these outcomes are going to be used. They need to know outcomes are not to evaluate the faculty members. Mutual mistrust and fear among faculty and administration may exist along with faculty resistance and desire for autonomy.

Lack of resources for leadership, consultants, reassigned time, and institutional infrastructure.

Lack of common language.

***Examples of practice from our institutions that illustrate how institutions can address the supports and barriers*:**

Transparency and faculty buy-in (see Strategy).

Bringing in a consultant at the appropriate time can help overcome barriers. Consultant brings a fresh perspective. Institution needs to do as much as it can first. When problem areas have been identified, a consultant can be brought in to help with those aspects.

Establish common language; clearly define terms. Develop glossary or manual for assessment. Allowing flexibility in language nationwide is not helpful. Institution can define terms consistently with accrediting body (where possible) to facilitate accreditation process.

Make assessment work part of service to the college as included in the contract.

Grants are available to help with funding.

Use faculty for professional development of other faculty.

Regular means of communication, such as newsletters.

Recommendation that our group would make to other institutions in addressing this issue, including a rationale for our recommendation:

We recommend the outcomes should be embedded in the larger process of continuous improvement of teaching and learning. Assessment is the means to the end, not the end itself.

***Examples of strategies that worked from our institutions to illustrate how institutions can act on the recommendation*:**

Specify process in advance by which the learning outcomes will be developed and approved.

Assessment also serves as summative evidence of student achievement. It is the accountability of the institution.

Learning outcomes need to be revisited on a regular basis. Faculty need to understand that the process is cyclical.

Create a timeline so project doesn't go on forever. A timeline is very important for keeping everyone on track. As part of the timeline, articulate discreet steps in the process for final approval so everyone knows when documents become "official."

Supports and barriers that we have encountered in implementing the recommendation:

Faculty, staff and administrators who don't see the continuous aspect of assessment tend to think they can do this once and be done with it.

***Examples of practice from our institutions that illustrate how institutions can address the supports and barriers*:**

The continuous aspect can facilitate decision making because the decisions can and should be revised later. Don't be afraid to try and fail. Piloting will lead to improvement.

Continuous improvement needs to become part of the culture of the institution. Everyone in the institution needs to be educated about continuous improvement.

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Topic/Issue/Problem:
Building institution-wide learning outcomes into the curriculum (1)

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Participants in Discussion:
Alexis Hopkins, Butler Community College
Sue Justis, Flathead Valley Community College
David Scott, Flathead Valley Community College
Janis Thompson, Lorain County Community College
Teresa Prosser, Sinclair Community College
Lori Zakel, Sinclair Community College

Recommendation that our group would make to other institutions in addressing this issue, including a rationale for our recommendation:

- We recommend that Institution-wide Outcomes need to be well-defined and easily interpreted by all stakeholder constituents.
- We also recommend that these Institution-wide Outcomes be linked to learning outcomes for each course and that there is standardization within all sections of that course.
- In addition, these Institution-wide Outcomes need to be mapped to the specific courses within a program of study.
- The final recommendation is that these Institution-wide Outcomes are visible to all stakeholders.

Examples of strategies that worked from our institutions to illustrate how institutions can act on the recommendation:

1. Focus groups were convened that involved all stakeholders (students, faculty, administration, and community) in the development of Institution-wide Outcomes. Outcomes were built to reflect skills that were identified as important to all constituents. This improved acceptance. Discipline faculty determined which Institution-wide Outcomes were linked to the course learning outcomes and standardized this for all sections. Institution-wide Outcomes were then tracked to demonstrate that all of these outcomes were represented in the courses within a program. Evaluation and updating of Institution-wide Outcomes will be done on a five-year basis.
2. Funding was provided for faculty to develop rubrics to assess the Institution-wide Outcomes. The college developed Curriculum Management Tool (CMT) software to map the Institution-wide Outcomes to the course learning outcomes. Faculty liaisons were assigned to each division to help ensure that faculty understood the assessment process and to assist with the initial input of data into the CMT. Course information is updated on a two-year cycle.
3. Focus groups were convened that involved all stakeholders (students, faculty, administration, and community) in the development of Institution-wide Outcomes and rubrics. Speakers were brought in regularly to discuss assessment topics during development days and help train faculty. Assessment team assisted faculty with developing outcomes and assessment tasks. Institution then developed standardized outlines and syllabus templates for each course and rubrics to assess the Institution-wide Outcomes. Deans tracked compliance with curriculum development and assessment. Revision of courses is done on a three-year cycle.

4. Institution-wide Outcomes were developed and defined using small groups during In-service Day. Funding was provided for on-going participation in faculty "councils" to identify the components and criteria to be assessed for each outcome and begin development of rubrics. Faculty were encouraged to assess the identified outcomes.

Supports and barriers that we have encountered in implementing the recommendation:

- Some faculty are resistant to participate in assessment.
- There is often a lack of commitment from administration in the process.
- Information must be disseminated to all constituents.
- Making the Institution-wide Outcomes and assessment process visible and relevant to the students.

Examples of practice from our institutions that illustrate how institutions can address the supports and barriers:

1. Many of our institutions have incorporated an expectation of participation into the faculty job descriptions/contracts and faculty evaluation process. In addition, the institution needs to demonstrate how assessment is useful and relevant to other aspects of the institution (e.g. program review and state reporting). Training and faculty development opportunities occur regularly to help raise confidence in doing assessment. Faculty involvement early on in the process will help.
2. Assessment committees should include both faculty and administration representatives. Administration will become more involved when the assessment piece is linked to the accreditation process.
3. Having materials available on the website, in the course catalog, in faculty reference guides, brochures/flyers, and even posted in the hallways helps to disseminate the information to everyone. Discussions of assessment in "freshman orientation" classes helps get students involved from the start of their education.

<p style="text-align:center">Topic/Issue/Problem:</p>

Building institution-wide learning outcomes into the curriculum (2)

Participants in Discussion:
Don Ransford, Edison College
Allatia Harris, Dallas County Community College District
David England, Tunxis Community College
Maureen Pettitt, Skagit Valley College
Colleen Wagner, Milwaukee Area Technical College

Recommendation that our group would make to other institutions in addressing this issue, including a rationale for our recommendation:

We recommend that the process for building institution wide-learning outcomes into the curriculum involve the faculty stakeholders as soon as possible and that institutional supports are in place to build capacity in the development of the process.

The process should include plans for initial and continuing faculty development (including attention to the adjunct faculty) and a collaborative approach in setting commitments/deadlines for the deployment of the initiative. Institutional support should include development of a budget to support the initiative, initial plans for data collection and analysis (to reduce false starts), good alignment with the strategic plan of the college and integration into the planning cycle of the college.

Examples of strategies which worked in our institutions included:

- Create a 5-year plan to review the curriculum and have faculty members decide which learning outcomes will be incorporated into which courses. Faculty members determine the assignments and assessments for the outcomes. Develop a matrix to see which abilities were measured in which course.
- In several colleges, the State sent out the list of outcomes. The faculty were encouraged to determine how this could be accomplished at the program and course level.
- Plan for contingencies: Some of the outcomes will be measured extensively while others will not be measured at all. One college has a state-mandated core course in statistics specifically designed to measure the outcomes not covered in other courses.
- External consultants (such as Alverno) can generate enthusiasm at the inception of the project. The most effective seminars/workshops were determined to be those which had an application portion to jump start the measurements ("Develop a rubric for critical thinking in your course"). However, it is important to grow your own experts from these initial meetings to continue development with new faculty and adjunct faculty. These faculty members can also become "process coaches" throughout the college. Ongoing staff development can include purchasing resources for the faculty; one college purchased Angelo & Cross, *Classroom Assessment Techniques,* for each full-time faculty member. Subsequent development days included faculty members sharing the assessment techniques that had worked for them.
- A plan for data collection and analysis (technology such as e-Lumen or other platforms) can assist in setting the type of data which must be collected for institutional goals. This can provide a viable framework for faculty who are struggling with the assessment component. It can also prevent too much development at the micro level (one college

experienced the division of 10 outcomes into 72 different criteria to be assessed in a 2 year curriculum).

- Faculty and administration should jointly set out benchmarks and timelines. Administrative support at this level is critical for compliance with the outcomes development and reporting. One college posts all outcome measurements on a web site in order to "persuade" less compliant departments to report the measurement data. One college uses different committees to create the institutional framework; the "abilities committees" review which outcomes are being reviewed, which are not, which need to be negotiated with what departments and assist in the development of rubrics for assessment.

Supports and barriers that we have encountered in implementing the recommendation:

Some of the barriers encountered in implementation included faculty burnout/lack of support; a lack of resources (particularly budget for release time or faculty development); and faculty development in content areas only (not pedagogy).

Examples of practice from our institutions that illustrate how institutions can address the supports and barriers:

Faculty burnout or lack of support can be addressed by release time to accomplish new objectives and opportunities to collaborate with other faculty. Provide compensation for time spent in faculty development or provide online resources to reduce travel costs.

The budget should include technology, faculty (particularly part-time faculty pay) and release time for champions or mentors to shepherd the process.

Faculty development requires thoughtful development of faculty-led professional development activities with a task (process) focus to assist faculty in development of outcome assessment tools.

Topic/Issue/Problem:
Implementing assessment of institution-wide student learning outcomes for individual student learning (1)

Participants in Discussion:
Kathy DeDeyn, Inver Hills Community College
Heidi Shepherd, Lake Washington Technical College
Paul Folger, Heartland Community College
Keely Austin, Heartland Community College
Lauren Dick, Hocking College
Bonnie Allen Smith, Hocking College
Meg Hunter, Gateway Technical College
Nancy Chapko, Gateway Technical College

Recommendation that our group would make to other institutions in addressing this issue, including a rationale for our recommendation:

We recommend that the process for implementing assessment of institution-wide student learning outcomes for individual student learning be approached through an incremental process, embedded in course content, driven by faculty, and supported by administration. Assessment is the faculty's responsibility, and without meaningful participation of the majority of the faculty, successful implementation of assessment cannot happen.

Examples of strategies that worked from our institutions to illustrate how institutions can act on the recommendation:

1. Recruit volunteer faculty to identify where institution-wide learning outcomes are already present in the current programs. The next step is for faculty to select existing assignments that reflect institutional learning outcomes. For those learning outcomes that are not reflected in existing assignments, the team suggests that individual faculty create assignments to use in individual courses.
2. Create cross-disciplinary teams to design rubrics for the institution-wide student learning outcomes. Recruit volunteer faculty to pilot the use of rubrics, providing appropriate incentives.
3. Faculty will use the course evaluation process to create assessment data that will be aggregated and utilized for institution-wide student learning outcome analysis. The classroom assessments should be formative in nature for the students but summative for the institution.

Supports and barriers that we have encountered in implementing the recommendation:

There are several measures our institutions have used to support the process of learning outcome implementation:

1. Professional development
2. Faculty compensation for assessment activities
3. Increase student knowledge of institution-wide learning outcomes

There are several barriers that our institutions have encountered when implementing the institution-wide student learning outcomes. These include:

1. Lack of common language across programs/perceived silos of instruction
2. Lack of admin support
3. Lack of faculty support
4. Lack of training in assessment techniques
5. Consistency of assessments (reliability/validity)
6. Data collection and aggregation (platform/software issues)

Examples of practice from our institutions that illustrate how institutions can address the supports and barriers:

1. Faculty members share their best practices integrating the institution-wide learning outcomes once a year at an assessment fair.
2. Provide an 11-week professional development assessment class for faculty during which faculty will learn assignment identification, development of rubrics, tallying of rubrics, and analysis of results to improve their assessment techniques and student learning.
3. Students are introduced to the institutional-wide assessment learning outcomes during a first-year experience orientation class.
4. Provide time during Professional Development days for interdisciplinary discussions on assessment of student learning outcomes – sharing best practices and problems.

<p style="text-align:center">Topic/Issue/Problem:</p>

Implementing assessment of institution-wide student learning outcomes for individual student learning (2)

Participants in Discussion:
Barb Thompson, Columbus State Community College
Liane Dolezar Waukesha County Technical College
KateLynn Hibbard, Minneapolis Community and Technical College
Susan Oleson, Central Piedmont Community College
Libby Daugherty, Columbus State Community College
Debbie Bouton, Central Piedmont Community College
Michael Seward, Minneapolis Community and Technical College

Recommendation that our group would make to other institutions in addressing this issue, including a rationale for our recommendation:

Provide profound and ongoing institutional support for assessment endeavors that are faculty led, designed and owned.

Examples of strategies that worked from our institutions to illustrate how institutions can act on the recommendation:

- Significant release time for one or more faculty members to coordinate assessment efforts.
- Stipends for faculty involved in assessment efforts.
- Connections between assessment efforts and faculty/professional development.
- Duty days devoted specifically to assessment.
- Support, materials and resources available to assist faculty in implementing assessment strategies.

Supports and barriers that we have encountered in implementing the recommendation:

Supports:
- Administrative leaders who are knowledgeable and committed—who understand, promote and provide **financial resources**.
- Intentional and publicly stated responsibility for assessment efforts created with clearly defined positions with precise job descriptions for assessment duties: administration, coordinators, and faculty (who understand that assessment is expected in what they do day-to-day).
- Deep links between assessment efforts and faculty/professional development (Centers for Teaching and Learning): sharing of best practices happening in-house.
- A curriculum development process that requires of instructors clear and measurable assessments of general education, course, and program outcomes.
- Institutionalized recognitions and rewards for exemplary examples of assessment efforts.

Barriers:
- Turn-over/Loss of key individuals—especially a problem if assessment efforts are linked to one effective person who leaves.
- Adjunct faculty who struggle to find support they need in terms of time and scheduling.

- Lack of documentation—without it there is no continuity
- Lack of time and money to implement assessment efforts.
- Lack of understanding of best assessment practices.
- Faculty mistrust, resistance and doubt.

Examples of practice from our institutions that illustrate how institutions can address the supports and barriers:

- One school has two faculty assessment coordinators who receive 50% release time each.
- One school provides a $500 stipend to individual faculty members to receive training and participate in efforts to assess General Education outcomes within one or more of their courses.
- One school has a full-time administrative position in charge of assessment.
- Several schools incorporate assessment efforts into (a) curriculum development and (b) program review.
- One school held a best-practices fair to showcase best assessment practices occurring in-house.

Recommendation that our group would make to other institutions in addressing this issue, including a rationale for our recommendation:

Establish intentional, institutionalized mechanisms/avenues for effectively involving the myriad diverse stakeholders in the process of creating and implementing assessment efforts: students, faculty, prospective employers and transfer institutions, administrators, staff.

Examples of strategies that worked from our institutions to illustrate how institutions can act on the recommendation:

- Institution-wide outcomes listed in every course syllabus.
- General Education Outcome faculty caucuses.
- Assessment Days/Workshops.
- Student panel before all faculty and staff on when and where they'd covered outcomes in the course of their studies.
- Focus groups of students and faculty.
- A physical place to meet: Center for Teaching and Learning.

Supports and barriers that we have encountered in implementing the recommendation:

Supports:
- Common time available to faculty to meet and discuss.
- Common place to meet.
- Clear communication.
- Intentionally designed processes and agendas to achieve specific goals.
- Developing shared understandings and vocabulary.
- Articulating to students the benefits of effective assessment practices.

Barriers:
- Faculty who are overworked and do not have time—heavy-teaching load.
- Student demographics.

- Disparity in interest in assessment: accreditation or student learning, institutional effectiveness or improved teaching and learning.
- Lack of trust and understanding.
- Perceptions around assessment: integral or add-on, whose work is this?

Examples of practice from our institutions that illustrate how institutions can address the supports and barriers:

- One school held "Learning Dialogues" with in-house trained facilitators who led discussions on Core Competencies.
- One school held a student panel called "Learners Lead and Leaders Learn."
- One school made a priority of establishing a culture of trust and understanding in the first two years of its assessment initiative.
- One school intentionally linked assessment efforts with faculty development sessions.
- One school holds two assessment days each year: one on general education, one on program assessment.
- One school holds a "Celebrating Teaching and Learning" workshop.
- Several schools have faculty support centers.

Recommendation that our group would make to other institutions in addressing this issue, including a rationale for our recommendation:

Be intentional as you plan and develop assessment efforts: move slowly—no need to do everything all the time: less is more!

Examples of strategies that worked from our institutions to illustrate how institutions can act on the recommendation:

- Curriculum maps that link institution-wide outcomes, program outcomes and courses.
- Focus efforts—examine only one or two outcomes at a time.
- Articulate expectations: communicate that perfection is not expected, rather that faculty simply engage the process of collecting data—not that the data reflect "good" or "correct" results but that you have some.
- Take time to develop definitions and common understandings.
- Develop assessment efforts organically within the culture of own institution to promote cultural consistency.
- Build on past successes.

Supports and barriers that we have encountered in implementing the recommendation:

Supports:
- Clear processes that promote and document institutional history.
- Purposeful and intentional institutional processes and bodies that hold responsibility for and implement assessment tasks.
- Administrative understanding of the complexity of assessment, as well as support for processes that may not yield "results" for a few years.
- Key faculty who receive support to review effective models at other institutions—no need to reinvent the wheel.

- A realistic understanding that assessment is an iterative process—it need not be perfect in its initial form.

Barriers:
- An attitude that assessment is "just one more fad."
- A belief that one day assessment will be done.
- Misunderstanding of assessment: "We already do this!" Misunderstanding the differences among assessment, evaluation and grading.
- Perceived pressure from accrediting bodies to "assess everything."
- Only concentrated efforts immediately prior to accreditation visit vs. ongoing efforts.
- Fear on part of faculty that assessment will be linked to performance evaluation.

Examples of practice from our institutions that illustrate how institutions can address the supports and barriers:

- One school provided release time for a faculty coordinator and did not expect "data" for three years.
- Several schools provided funds for opportunities for faculty to attend conferences to learn about best assessment practices.
- The job description of one school's assessment coordinator included the conducting of repeated conversations with faculty (individual and group) around the nature of assessment both to promote understanding of assessment as well as to allay their fears.
- Several schools included faculty in the creation of assessment processes to discover what should be assessed and how.
- Several schools encouraged a diversity of approaches and models for the collection of data: within their fields, faculty were allowed to define how the institution-wide outcomes manifested themselves within their courses.

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Topic/Issue/Problem:
Implementing Program Outcomes

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Participants in Discussion:
George Pillainayagam, Lorain County Community College
Richard Little, St. Philip's College
Gail Tracey, Edison College
Ted Wadley, Georgia Perimeter College
Anthony Collins, Inver Hills Community College
O. Brian Kaufman, Quinebaug Valley Community College

Recommendation that our group would make to other institutions in addressing this issue, including a rationale for our recommendation:

We recommend that program goals and objectives be developed in alignment with college/institutional mission and values. Program goals are set to what graduates will do in employment two years after graduation. Engage faculty to develop measurable program outcomes, abilities that students acquire as knowledge and skills they are able to apply on completion of the program.

Examples of strategies that worked from our institutions to illustrate how institutions can act on the recommendation:

- Connect Program Learning Outcomes to General Education Outcomes
- Involve Faculty in Professional Development (learning about assessment requirements regarding accreditation and for other needs)
- Engage/Invite Faculty to Develop Assessment Plan for Program Outcomes
- Foster ongoing conversations among ad-hoc committees to educate faculty
- Involve adjunct faculty in the process; include in discussion and train in development of syllabi and lesson plans
- Involve students in the process; informed of course outcomes how that relates to program outcomes

Supports and barriers that we have encountered in implementing the recommendation:

Supports: Dedicated personnel involved in helping faculty develop program outcomes and student learning outcomes; Course release or overload reimbursement for lead faculty; clerical support; Dedicated software to track the data; institutional leadership

Barriers: Emphasis on enrollment and online development rather than education
Lack of support and resources in terms of funds, staff, administrative assistance
Connection to mission is not clear (not spelled out by institutional leaders)
Timeline constraints
Lack of coordination of funding and opportunities for funding
Lack of training on an ongoing basis

Examples of practice from our institutions that illustrate how institutions can address the supports and barriers: (Based on Lorain County Community College Program Assessment)

- Academic division deans and program faculty develop program goals and objectives that are aligned with college mission and values. Applied program goals are set to achieve what each program graduate will do and effectively contribute in employment up to two years after graduation.
- Program faculty group develop measurable program outcomes that all major students should be able to demonstrate measurable knowledge and practical application skills at the time of graduation. These program outcomes may be aligned with the accreditation requirements.
- Each program curriculum consists of basic, general, technical support/elective, and major courses with identified measurable course outcomes that are assessed and documented by instructors on Course Assessment Record (CAR) form.
- Program faculties identify related course outcomes from relevant courses in the curriculum that cumulatively contribute to achieve each program outcome including embedded general education outcomes.
- Each program has a lead faculty- program coordinator – responsible to record implementation of program outcomes with data extracted from course outcomes assessment record, including incremental improvements achieved in each course outcomes continuously over a period of five year period on a Program Assessment Record (PAR).
- Strategies recommended:
  - Program coordinators receive reassigned time or overload pay for additional responsibilities performed.
  - Biannual graduate survey and employer survey provides feed-back information for improvement in program outcomes and related course outcomes.
  - Program outcomes and implementation strategies should be explained to students who identified their program majors, support course faculty including adjuncts.
  - All faculty including adjuncts accepted and complied with above implementation processes.
- Barriers encountered:
  - Funding to implement changes in equipment and software to improve learning outcomes may not be made available.
  - Engaging all program faculties to react to and implement recommended changes for continuous improvement needs persuasion.

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Topic/Issue/Problem:
Sustaining Learning-Centered Assessment

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Participants in Discussion:
Jo Nelson, Lake Washington Technical College
Catherine Crain, Cascadia Community College
Joanne Munroe, Olympic College
Jen Osborne, St. Philips College
Paulos Yohannes, Georgia Perimeter College
Jeremiah Councill, Isothermal Community College
Robin Jeffers, Bellevue Community College

Definition of Learning-Centered Assessment
- Outcomes have been articulated
- Outcomes determine the assessment:
- Assessment for learning
- Formative for students, faculty and administrators

Assessment is transparent for students
- Giving the students the rubrics and allowing them/including them in the evaluation process.
- The teaching of the general education outcome is explicit, not implicit--articulated. "This is what critical thinking looks like in this discipline/profession."
- Students receive feedback and have opportunity to improve performance

Recommendation that our group would make to other institutions in addressing this issue, including a rationale for our recommendation:

In order to sustain learning centered assessment, an institution needs
- Support: for innovation, time and dollars to get the work done
- A shared vision:
  - Learner model that carries through from the bottom to the top and top to the bottom—a culture of inquiry, organizational learning.
  - Everyone sees the relation of what they're doing to the larger mission.

Examples of strategies that worked from our institutions to illustrate how institutions can act on the recommendation:

A college that has bought into a portfolio assessment that documents student achievement of student learning outcomes over time
A college in which core learning abilities are integrated into distribution areas and degree requirements
A Center for Teaching and Learning that empowers faculty in innovative teaching, organizes faculty development days, organizes retreats, brings new teaching and learning ideas, integrates online teaching with the curriculum
Within a department, norming sessions that keep faculty engaged in the assessment process

Meetings in which departments and administrators share how they define assessment and make it useful.

Faculty know the way the data are used at different levels of the institution and what kinds of action are likely to be taken: my course—my own areas to address; the program—what we all need to work on with our students; the institution—resource allocation, institutional focus, facilitation of/support of . . .

Supports and barriers that we have encountered in implementing the recommendation:

1. Timing of faculty training sessions—the time trainer is available is not time faculty are available. Also multiple campuses and travel time to get to a single location.

    Suggestions:
    Dedicated college hour one day a week that could be used for professional development activities.
    Technology-mediated meetings

2. Not having a sense of where we're trying to get to—what is the outcome we're looking for, and how will we know that we're making progress?

    Suggestion: Systems thinking, both top down and bottom up. If you have only bottom up, you may get pockets of innovation, but no overall culture. If you only have top down, you get faculty resistance. The portfolio might be a concept around which the college coalesces around.

3. Lack of training, understanding of assessments that produce properly sampled, reliable data with content validity to be used at the program and institutional level
    Suggestion: professional development and communities of practice

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Topic/Issue/Problem:

Meeting external accountability demands while making assessment integral to how faculty think about teaching at all levels

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Participants in Discussion:
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Recommendation that our group would make to other institutions in addressing this issue, including a rationale for our recommendation:

Most colleges feel a deep tension between meeting external accountability demands and making assessment integral to how faculty think. We recommend that colleges see the work of assessment as building a bridge between external demands for proof that a certain level of learning has taken place and an authentic and detailed accounting of growth in each student's learning. The bridge has to originate from the learning environment. Students and faculty need to own, develop, and revise the outcomes, collection of data, and analysis of data, and they need to be supported in the collection and use of data. But, our experience also suggests that this work has to be informed by a) an institutional understanding of the expectations of external stakeholders and b) appropriate communication of these expectations to faculty and students. The bridge also needs to be as efficient as possible (possibly electronic), so that the data about assessment is readily available to all interested parties.

Examples of strategies that worked from our institutions to illustrate how institutions can act on the recommendation:

1. One institutional research office developed a matrix to demonstrate the range of external expectations and their alignments and disconnects. This matrix was adapted for different stakeholder groups.
2. All consortium colleges have processes for developing and revising outcomes from within the learning environment. These processes are faculty-led, driven and owned. They are developed with attention to the needs of various external stakeholders (accreditors, employers and others, including local four-year schools, professional organizations, and legislatures). A number of consortium colleges are developing handbooks and other resources that document these processes as well the tools for developing and implementing learning outcomes.
3. Some consortium members have established processes for data collection and analysis that were developed in collaborations between faculty and institutional researchers. There appears to be a common approach:
   a. Data are collected from activities embedded in the learning environment.
   b. Data are then made available to faculty, faculty leaders, administrators, and external stakeholders.

      c. Data are processed either by faculty or by teams that include faculty; different colleges take different approaches to selection of data and analysis and aggregation. All are aware of the limitations of the process of collection and analysis.

      d. There is consensus that the most difficult (and perhaps most important) step is to feed information back into the learning environment to make changes. Some colleges have established ways to reward faculty for using this analysis to guide the improvement of the learning environment such as financial rewards, recognition, awards, etc.

4. Several colleges have integrated the work of assessment with professional development.

Supports and barriers that we have encountered in implementing the recommendation:

Barriers:

1. Resolving this tension in a simplistic way can lead to impoverished teaching.

2. When faculty see the work of assessment as a task that is different from the work of teaching and learning or as an imposition, then they will likely resist joining in the building of this bridge.

3. A failure to do this work efficiently, using appropriate technologies, and provide adequate support to do this work will make the work seem to be, or actually be, overwhelming.

Supports:

1. When faculty see both the needs of external stakeholders and the desire to support each student's learning, then bridging between these two needs optimizes each student's learning and the institution.

2. When faculty see learning documented, then they begin to imagine new ways to approach learning and the learning environment.

Examples of practice from our institutions that illustrate how institutions can address the supports and barriers:

1. professional development that supports doing assessment
2. financial support as incentive to be involved in the work of assessment
3. infrastructure to support the participation in the work of assessment

Addendum

Tim Riordan (Alverno College, IISL Planning Team)

The recommendations above are your direct product as IISL representatives from the two-year institutions as you prepared them in your working groups last summer. During the meeting, we, as an IISL planning team, also asked you to review the recommendations from the various groups and to offer your written or spoken responses. Your responses ranged from affirmation of important points to questions about aspects of some recommendations. What follows here is a synthesis of your responses based on what you wrote or said.

Responses to Recommendations

- Several people commented on the role of faculty in creating and sustaining a commitment to teaching and assessment of student learning outcomes. Faculty will be engaged insofar as they see this work as central to what they do as teachers to help students learn and as something that is recognized and rewarded by the institution. Some of you did caution us, however, that institutions can't "wait for faculty buy-in" before moving forward with student learning agendas.

- A related point stressed by many is that, although we need to take accountability concerns seriously, we should do what we can to move toward "learning excellence" as the prime mover in teaching and assessment of student learning outcomes. Part of this is making assessment an integral part of teaching, not just a response to a call for data.

- Many of you pointed to the need for making sure that data gathering is focused on "questions that really matter," that there needs to be a concerted effort to "use" data to make significant changes, and that there should be systematic ways of "showcasing results" so people see progress.

- Some of you reminded us of how important it is to integrate student learning outcomes into as many experiences of the student and faculty as possible (e.g. Syllabi, orientations, student self-reflections, etc.) and that one significant measure of whether student learning outcomes are a vital reality is how conscious students and faculty are of them as central to the learning process.

- Not surprisingly, you reinforced recommendations that focused on structures and processes that foster collaborative inquiry among faculty around issues of teaching, learning, and assessment. There are quite a few suggestions in the recommendations themselves about what institutions might do to accomplish this.

- In this last meeting we talked again about how to create a common language in higher education about teaching, learning, and assessment. There is not complete agreement on how far we can go with this, although there is agreement that we do need to be clear with each other about what we mean by the language we are using. This is one agenda that a few people expressed interest in pursuing as an extension of this project.

- Finally, there is a kind of irony that some emphasized that faculty don't want to feel that this work "needs to go on forever"; while others made it clear that this work does need to go on forever. The key here seems to be that people need to feel that they are getting somewhere, but that they also need to recognize that this is not just a temporary initiative, but an ongoing transformation of the way we think out our roles as educators and institutions.