

The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

Joliet Junior College

Project Details			
Title	Participation in the HLC Assessment Academy	Status	COMPLETED
Category	1-Helping Students Learn	Updated	09-13-2010
Timeline		Reviewed	10-20-2010
	Planned Project Kickoff 06-01-2008	Created	11-24-2009
	Actual Completion 09-14-2011	Version	3

1: Project Goal

A: The project has three specific goals outlined in the application for the HLC Assessment Academy: • JJC's most pressing assessment need and goal is to complete a comprehensive general education assessment plan. • A second goal is alignment and assessment of developmental education in reading, writing, and mathematics with the occupational and transfer curricula. • The third goal is alignment and assessment of student learning support services.

2: Reasons For Project

A: We have lacked general education outcomes for our campus, and have struggled in the past with effective methods of assessment that are long-lasting. Some projects have been undertaken in one department with results not being distributed. There has not been much done with cross-department assessment of learning outcomes. Given that we are getting involved with CurricuNet, and have pressing needs to share our general education successes with departments, administration, HLC and other stakeholders, this project is very important to JJC.

3: Organizational Areas Affected

A: The faculty in academic departments offering the general education and developmental courses, including English and World Languages, Natural and Physical Sciences, Social and Behavioral Sciences, Mathematics, and Fine Arts. College-wide student learner support services fall under both the offices of Academic Affairs and Student Development. The office of Institutional Effectiveness will be assisting in the implementation and data collection in any assessment projects. The office of Academic Affairs will be involved in assisting faculty with the dissemination of information regarding projects.

4: Key Organizational Process(es)

A: First, this project should develop our statements of general education outcomes, which will not only affect assessment, but will also aid in the development of curriculum. Second, the alignment of developmental education will further support improved curriculum and assessment. Third, the learning support services will contribute more fully and systematically toward student success. We should more fully adopt a positive role for assessment in the teaching culture at JJC. With meaningful, thoughtful, and lasting assessment projects, we hope to foster better communication between departments, better attitudes to the assessment of student learning, and improvement in student learning.

5: Project Time Frame Rationale

A: Membership in the HLC Assessment Academy is a four-year project through the HLC with guided activities, conferences, and mentors.

6: Project Success Monitoring

A: We will have a schedule set forth by the Academy and a mentor to help us along the way. Also, we have a dedicated team who has committed to participating in a four-year project. Appropriate measures for successful student learning will be adopted as part of the project itself.

7: Project Outcome Measures

A: The successful implementation of a general education assessment plan and report will be one indicator. Adopting an appropriate system for measuring student learning will be another indicator. Some work has been completed to evaluate implementation of portfolios, standardized tests, and internal writing assessment with rubrics, but no measures have yet been adopted college-wide since the outcomes have not yet been defined. Using the report findings to continue with further assessments will be another, longer term indicator.

Project Update

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: Joliet Junior College is a participant in the HLC Assessment Academy. Our original project design called for:

- Creation of new general education outcomes and their connection to courses.
- Development of a plan to assess one of the outcomes (i.e. targeting what departments and faculty will participate, what data will be gathered, and how it will be measured).
- Implementation of the initial assessment and reporting findings.
- The use of the findings to drive improvements in subsequent years.

The final version of the general education student learning outcomes and an announcement regarding their upcoming assessment were presented to the community during the February 11, 2010 professional development day. The upcoming assessment was also announced through an article in the Student Learning Committee's spring 2010 newsletter (http://www.jjc.edu/about/committees/student-learning/Documents/SLC_New_sletter_Spring2010.pdf).

The general education outcomes were incorporated into CurricUNET, an online syllabus warehouse. Departments will identify the general education outcomes that apply to each course as program reviews are conducted. Department Chairs drafted preliminary curriculum maps in May 2010 linking the new outcomes to existing general education courses. The new outcomes were also incorporated into the fall 2010 course catalog for students.

The Assessment Academy team was re-built and met in early July and again at the HLC Assessment Workshop, July 21-23, 2010 to define the specifics of our approach to the development of a general education assessment. As a result, the team is conducting an inventory of current assessment practices and determining how they might be re-purposed for our general education assessment.

The Student Learning Committee (SLC), with support from the Assessment Coordinator, is leading the implementation of the inventory (fall semester 2010) and subsequently discerning appropriate elements for our general education assessment (spring semester 2011). One of our faculty members has experience in these two processes from a previous institution and is advising the SLC.

2: Institution Involvement

A: The chair and faculty members of the Student Learning Committee have been communicating assessment information to the SLC from departments and from the SLC to departments. Faculty from each academic area and counseling are represented on the SLC. The SLC chair also gave two presentations on the general education outcomes and upcoming assessment to fulltime and adjunct faculty. The newsletter, published each semester, addressed the general education assessment as well as other assessment activities.

The Vice President for Academic Affairs, Deans and some department chairs now include assessment on monthly meetings agendas. A full-time Assessment Coordinator was hired in January 2010 and has increased awareness, commitment and participation through her work with Deans, Directors, Department Chairs and faculty.

During the spring semester it became apparent that additional leadership would be beneficial for the project. In May 2010, the only original Assessment Academy committee member who remained was Joe Offerman, Institutional Research. The JJC Vice President for Academic Affairs left in September 2009. The team leader, Kristin LaTour, chair of JJC's Student Learning/Assessment Committee who had led the project team stepped down and the new chair would not officially begin until September 2010.

The new Vice President for Academic Affairs (hired June 2010) and the new Assessment Coordinator convened a new Academy team to ensure the general education assessment would achieve fruition. In addition to the VPAA and Assessment Coordinator, the

new team includes the Dean of Arts and Sciences, the Department Chair for English and World Languages (also our AQIP Liaison), the Director of Institutional Research, the Dean of Student Success and the new chair of the Student Learning Committee.

3: Next Steps

A: The Student Learning Committee is leading the implementation of the assessment inventory during the fall 2010 semester. The VPAA and Assessment Coordinator announced these initiatives during August professional development sessions. Deans and Department Chairs also provide communication to/from faculty. On September 30 the SLC will work with faculty to launch the inventory. Each department will continue to work with their SLC representative and the Assessment Coordinator to identify and document all forms of assessment.

During the spring semester and specifically on February 10 and March 31 (designated assessment days) the SLC and faculty will discern appropriate elements for our general education assessment (Spring 2011). If gaps are present the SLC and faculty will identify appropriate remedies.

The Assessment Coordinator is working with Information Technology, Institutional Research and the business office to identify a suitable assessment software package that coordinates assessment and alignment of program review, strategic planning and financial monitoring. Academic leaders and faculty have participated in software demonstrations and will continue to be involved in selection and implementation of an assessment system that integrates seamlessly with the new portal system being rolled out to faculty during spring semester 2011.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: Members of the Student Learning Committee have expanded their understanding of assessment through participation in a number of assessment conferences over the past several years. They have also socialized the concept and interest in assessment by referencing it as "improving student learning." Faculty have also begun sharing their classroom assessment practices by giving presentations at the Illinois community college assessment conference.

In seeking out effective practices and benchmarks for our project, the Assessment Coordinator contacted other community colleges and catalyzed an emergent network of community college assessment professionals who now regularly share ideas and information. The Assessment Coordinator created and maintains the Web site for The Assessment Group (<http://theassessmentgroup.weebly.com/index.html>) as well as JJC's Student Learning Committee.

5: Project Challenges

A: The past year has been one of dynamic change in leadership at JJC. With this change has come the opportunity to assess current structures and practices. As new leaders with diverse perspectives have come on board we have experienced renewed vigor and expanded our assessment expertise. The development of the general education assessment has served as an authentic opportunity for this new team to coalesce and subsequently drive improvement across all levels of the organization.

We do not need assistance at this time. We submitted a project update to the HLC Assessment Academy in April 2010 and requested suggestions regarding: 1. the engagement/orientation of new committee members; 2. effective general education assessment processes at larger institutions; 3. facilitation of our general education assessment.

We received very useful feedback from Robert Mundhenk in May and convened a new Academy leadership team and attended the Assessment Academy.

Update Review

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: Utilizing the HLC Assessment Academy is a great way to get hands-on assistance with all

assessment activities on your campus. Other sources of assessment and improvement-related materials can be accessed through the Innovations Exchange (<http://www.aqip.org/InnovationExchange/>) or the HLC Resources for Institutions (<http://www.hlcommission.org/information-for-institutions/resources-for-institutions.html>).

It appears as if you were disappointed by the lack of persistence with the members of the Assessment Academy Team, but the Agility that you have shown in regaining your Focus amidst a changing Leadership shows that you have several of the Principles of a High Performance Organization.

It would help this reviewer to have more information on the community's reception of the student learning outcomes following the 2/11 announcement and the subsequent Spring newsletter. I commend you on taking the initiative toward communicating the results (AQIP Category 5) which shows that you value the people who surround you (AQIP Category 4). Additionally, mapping the curriculum will help you reach your goals. But without having this portion complete, it is difficult to assess where you are in the overall scope of this project.

2: Institution Involvement

A: The new representatives on the Student Learning/Assessment Committee [SLC] have a difficult task ahead, namely picking up from where others left the process. The continuity of having one original person (Institutional Research) will be invaluable. Make sure that this institutional researcher is able to quickly get new teammates up-to-speed in the process. Consider having a retreat for the SLC dedicated to team building, goal setting, and action planning. You may find that the original plan of action is not sustainable with this new group. Agility is a Principle of High Performance Organizations, but so is Integrity. This new group may be agile enough to continue the former process, but the integrity of the project may be compromised. Make sure to review the original goals of the project to determine the feasibility of carrying them through to completion.

3: Next Steps

A: It appeared as if the progress on the project had stopped, but the plans for revitalizing the project show promise for the future. As you look to implement a suitable assessment software package, you may want to wander around the booths at the 2011 HLC Annual Meeting to see what is available. Talking with other members of the Assessment Academy or joining an organization such as the Chicago Area Assessment Group (<http://www.luc.edu/faculty/cscheil/caag/>) may help you to solicit feedback, create an open dialogue, and find best practices in the field.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: Joining the Assessment Group of Illinois Community Colleges will go a long way toward ensuring the success of this action project. It also displays JJC's intention to Build Collaborative Relationships (AQIP Category 9). The fact that some faculty members have begun to present at the assessment conference shows that the initiatives are becoming embedded in the fabric of the college. With the leadership drain that occurred in the past year, this is an impressive accomplishment that should be celebrated and commended.

5: Project Challenges

A: Continuing in the midst of large changes (especially leadership changes) is never an easy task. Nevertheless, you have been able to persist. The difficulties that you faced in the last year caused your progress to be too slow or leisurely, but the new leadership and focused plans for the next year should help you to get back on track toward creating the continuous quality improvement culture at

Project Outcome

1: Reason for completion

A: We have reached the three-year point as an AQIP project and are closing the project for review. The project will continue for an additional two years as a new AQIP Action Project on General Education Assessment.

2: Success Factors

A: New general education student learning outcomes were written with input from faculty and staff across the college. The outcomes were incorporated into JJC's revised course syllabus template in CurricUNET, an online syllabus repository. An assessment inventory was conducted with support from Deans, Department Chairs and Program Coordinators and revealed the extent to which the outcomes were imbedded in courses across the college.

A task force was created to design the gen ed assessments through participation in a pilot workshop presented by AQI (with Steven Spangehl from HLC co-presenting.) With input from full and part-time faculty, administrators and student services, the task force confirmed the intent to measure the gen ed outcomes and then developed and piloted measurable indicators and rubrics for three outcomes. Online communication and surveys with opportunities for input and feedback were effective tools for informing and engaging the entire institution in a timely manner.

A schedule to take us from pilot to full implementation was developed with opportunities to assess students at the beginning, middle and end of their program at JJC.

3: Unsuccessful Factors

A: The project team experienced a significant change in both leadership and membership during the second year of the project which temporarily hampered progress.