The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

Columbus State Community College

Project Details			
Title	Transforming Learning Through Assessment: General education outcomes attainment across curriculum	**Status**	COMPLETED
Category	1-Helping Students Learn	**Updated**	09-11-2008
Timeline		**Reviewed**	09-30-2008
	Planned Project Kickoff 06-01-2007	**Created**	11-24-2009
	Actual Completion	**Version**	1

1: Project Goal

A: The goal of this project is to discover what and where students are learning (general education outcomes) by reviewing the Formative and Summative Assessment Charts of all academic programs to verify that courses relate to the college's general education outcomes and that our courses are facilitating learning outcomes attainment across programs and disciplines. This project is the first step of a four-phase process that will verify that general education outcomes are being assessed systematically across the institution's curriculum.

2: Reasons For Project

A: The General Education Committee revised and updated the general education outcomes, effective Autumn 2006. This action project will take us to the next level of assessment by identifying gaps in the measurement of these outcomes in current curricular offerings across the academic curriculum.

3: Organizational Areas Affected

A: Academic departments, Library, Assessment and Curriculum (Management and Committees), Knowledge, Resources, & Planning, and Information Technology

4: Key Organizational Process(es)

A: The key organizational processes that will change or improve are the College's validation, assessment (program review and validation), and curriculum processes; institutional planning, data entry, retrieval, and reporting processes; and budget processes.

5: Project Time Frame Rationale

A: The college has 53 academic programs that will need to be reviewed. A database will need to be developed to store and track findings from the review.

6: Project Success Monitoring

A: The Implementation Team for this project will meet regularly to update progress. The Team will document findings. Percentage of courses showing documentation of general education goals, learning outcomes, and assessment measures. Findings reported for needs analyses of curriculum development and outcomes assessment to inform curriculum decisions and program review. Team will report monthly to the AQIP Steering Committee updates on the progress of this action project. Regular reports will also be given to the Shared Governance Councils.

7: Project Outcome Measures

A: All F&S Charts for all academic programs will be reviewed. All courses that reference general education outcomes will be identified. A database for the recording of general education assessment data will be determined.

8:	Other Information
A:	Sponsors: Faculty, staff, Instructional and Instructional Support Councils, Director of Assessment, Curriculum Management Administrator, Knowledge, Resource, and Planning, and IT.

Project Update

1:	Project Accomplishments and Status
A:	This team has had at least 25 meetings the past year to gather, analyze, and discuss data from 100 courses of 100-level (entry-level) and 200-level (capstone) courses for every program and department. Course outline cover sheets and course unit outlines were analyzed to determine if general education goals and outcomes were addressed and to what extent. The review revealed the need to place more relevant tools into the hands of those who create and update course outline cover sheets and unit outlines. The information that is required for the course cover sheets and outlines is found on two different foundation documents, the Methods Matrix and the Formative and Summative (F/S) chart. There were best examples identified that will be used as "best practice" for others to emulate. All of the data gathered is recorded in an Access database where the ability to query specific information and create reports is feasible for review to substantiate the proposed improvements. A number of gaps were found in the first Action Plan of this project. The team is currently preparing recommendations to improve/build on the curriculum development process to include the relevant sequence of documents to "make learning visible" with evidence of outcomes, methods, and measurements. Work sessions are scheduled to provide hands-on training for faculty and department chairs in developing Methods Matrices, Formative & Summative Charts, Cover Sheets and Course Outlines. The recommendations and summary reports will be presented to the Columbus State AQIP Steering Committee Autumn Quarter 2008.

2:	Institution Involvement
A:	The Community site on BlackBoard is up to date with announcements, reading materials, charter, notifications, minutes, reports, and plans. As sponsor of the team, I scheduled our meetings in the Teaching & Learning Innovation Center to provide a resourceful, bright, pleasant place to work with plenty of work room and needed technology. The deans were kept informed of the review and noted observations. The project as related to AQIP was discussed at (not limited to) assessment governance meetings, division assessment committee meetings, Inservice Day, and the annual Celebration of Teaching & Learning event. Specific duties were adopted by committee members to insure ownership by all.

3:	Next Steps
A:	Produce reports from the database to compile aggregate data showing the level of inclusion of the General Education Goals. Conclude the action project and report to the Steering Committee Autumn 2008.

4:	Resulting Effective Practices
A:	Always take the opportunity to visit the charter and the intended outcomes at the beginning of each meeting to be certain that the team members stay focused on the project at hand. Keep a list of "discoveries" and other issues that need to be addressed at a later date, offered as recommendations, or work for another team action project.

5:	Project Challenges
A:	The team has worked well together and has stayed energetic, expanding inquiry and discovery for innovation and improvement of processes for more intentional and purposeful student learning. An identified challenge was the discovery of disconnect in the course/program development process. The goal is to remain focused on improving learning and providing better tools for faculty and department chairs. Our strategy is to offer enhanced foundation materials in one comprehensive toolbox. Offering these tools and templates together will emphasize the inner-connectivity of the course/program development process.

6:	AQIP Involvement
A:	

Update Review

1:	Project Accomplishments and Status
A:	Congratulations to the institution for making tangible and substantive progress in the direction of its stated Action Project goals and objectives. The specificity included in the update description offers evidence of regular and on-going communication and work focused on the Action Project. The institution's update also reinforces the notion that sometimes those reviewing and assessing programs and courses do not have the information they need because the process is not designed to systematically ask for all of the relevant and specific information when courses and programs are in development. The Access database described should help the team manage the data they have collected and use those data to identify gaps in the program and course development processes. However, perhaps the change that holds the most promise for improving the course and program development processes is the development of a "relevant sequence of documents to 'make learning visible' with evidence of outcomes, methods, and measurements." That initiative, in tandem with the faculty work sessions described in the Action Project update, should help the institution make good progress related to their project goals.

2:	Institution Involvement
A:	The update describes vehicles and strategies used to communicate with a variety of stakeholders. These include a BlackBoard site, discussion at a variety of meetings, and keeping deans in the loop. Although this section is silent on the topic of involving people in the work related to the Action Project, in Section A, the institution indicates that the Action Project team held a number ("at least 25") of meetings that focused on this initiative.

3:	Next Steps
A:	The update suggests that the first phase of what is described as a four-phase project is nearing completion. Reviews of all courses to conduct a gap analysis to determine which general education goals are not sufficiently addressed have been completed. Once the results of that analysis are summarized and disseminated, the institution will be positioned to move on to Phase 2. This section of the update would have benefitted from the inclusion of more detail related to next steps.

4:	Resulting Effective Practices
A:	The update describes a simple but critical effective practice that the team used to fix and maintain their focus on the intended outcomes of their Action Project. Revisiting the charge or charter can help teams stay on course, and setting important but unrelated issues aside to be addressed at a later date in appropriate venues can help teams avoid distracting themselves from the tasks at hand.

5:	Project Challenges
A:	As noted previously, in the process of reviewing courses, the team uncovered a disconnect between the information they needed to conduct a viable gap analysis and the information that the course/program development process provided in a systematic and easily accessible and retrievable manner. The notion of a comprehensive toolbox sounds like a promising possibility for improving the course/program development process.

6:	AQIP Involvement
A:	Global judgment: The institution is making reasonable progress.