

Student Learning Outcomes Assessment A Brief Timeline of Progress Since 2002

(August 21, 2009)

November 2002 – Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Comprehensive Evaluation visit and request for assessment monitoring report due October 2006.

Much discussion, hard work, and focus on student learning outcomes assessment.

October 2006 - Monitoring report submitted on time.

February 2007 - Return message from HLC listed four major concerns below and requested another assessment monitoring report due October 2007

- Assessment was agonizingly slow at LLCC
- Faculty had a diminished role in assessment
- The integration of assessment into budgeting and planning was lacking
- Our philosophy of general education was lacking

Much discussion followed.

May 2007 – LLCC applied to the Higher Learning Commission’s Assessment Academy, a four-year, guided process to improve assessment efforts at the college. We would not know the disposition of our application for several months and decided to push ahead.

July 2007 – Core group from Assessment Committee attended an HLC Assessment Workshop and began the general education outcomes assessment project called “Tagging.” “Tagging” is a process used to assess general education outcomes using the course management system BlackBoard. This customized approach allows faculty to align their course level existing assessments or assignments (could be tests, projects, or individual assignments) with the general education learning outcomes.

August 2007 - College was notified that it was accepted into the HLC Assessment Academy with the understanding that another monitoring report on assessment would be due in January 2008 (we negotiated a report due date three months later than the earlier due date of October 2007).

October 2007 – LLCC’s Assessment Academy team attended the required Assessment Academy roundtable and identified the “Tagging” project (in its very early stages at that time) as the **first year project** for the Academy. However, at that roundtable meeting, it quickly became apparent that several foundational issues needed to be addressed in order to support not only the “Tagging” project, but the three levels of student outcomes assessment that needed to be occurring at the college: (1) general education, (2) program level, and (3) course level assessment. Please refer to the last page of this document for an overview of the three levels of student outcomes assessment. Therefore, the following “spin off” projects were also launched during our **first year** of Assessment Academy participation:

- Faculty developed and approved a statement of philosophy of general education. These outcome statements apply to all degree seeking students at LLCC.
- Faculty simplified the existing general education student learning outcomes from fourteen (with numerous subparts) to six statements using measurable verbs.
- Began the process of reviewing all course and program outcomes for adherence to Bloom's Taxonomy theory and vocabulary (needed to be observable, measurable, and done by the learners -- the ultimate test being that the action could be assessed).
- Developed course and program assessment feedback forms for use not only with the "Tagging" project, but for other course and program level assessments.
- Began process to electronically link assessment feedback forms into annual and five-year program review.
- Enhanced the existing Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) to a stand-alone unit staffed by a full-time faculty member. The unit focused on outcomes assessment, professional development and mentoring.
- Created Departmental Assessment Coordinators for each of the five instructional departments.

January 2008 - The follow-up assessment monitoring report was submitted to the HLC on time.

February 2008 - The HLC informed the college that they had accepted our monitoring report on assessment and that no follow-up reports were required. ☺

August 2008 – The following **second year** projects for the HLC Assessment Academy were identified and accomplished:

- Continued to review and revise program and course outcomes (in tandem with implementing the new curriculum management software, CurricUNET, which by itself has been a very time-consuming project).
- Formed faculty groups to develop the rubrics for the six general education outcomes.
- Continued with Tagging General Education Outcomes project, aggregating data.
- Continued with course/program feedback forms and working behind the scenes on a system that links program assessment to program review, planning and budgeting.
- Researched and piloted the use of standardized testing for assessing general education and program outcomes (which was carried out in April 2009 with the administration of the critical thinking, mathematics, and reading portions of the CAAP test to a sample of students).
- Evaluated the further usage of electronic portfolios by examining the acquired results from the current pilot users.

- *Created* the Assessment Data Review team. This team will be responsible for facilitating the discussions that need to occur in reviewing aggregated student learning outcomes assessment data and ensuring that assessment results are an essential component of institutional effectiveness measures and improvements.

April 2009 - Our HLC Assessment Academy mentor, Laurie Pemberton, posted the following update on our progress after almost two years in the Academy:

“Discussions during a teleconference call in 2009 were informative. LLCC appears to be on a good course and making good progress. Previous mentor questions were addressed. LLCC has their next comprehensive visit 2012-2013. They will complete their involvement with the Assessment Academy before that visit. They will want to be sure that their ongoing assessment efforts include not just general education learning outcomes, but also course and program level assessment.”

August 2009 – We will focus on the following projects and activities during our **third year** of participation in the HLC Assessment Academy:

- Emphasize the establishment of routine assessment cycles -- general education assessment via “Tagging” will be emphasized in the fall semester; standardized testing for general education and program assessment will be emphasized in the spring semester; and program/course assessment activities will be emphasized in the spring semester.
- *Implement* the Assessment Data Review team (this team was *created* during the second year of the Academy). This team will be responsible for facilitating the discussions that need to occur in reviewing aggregated student learning outcomes assessment data and ensuring that assessment results are an essential component of institutional effectiveness measures and improvements.
- Finish the six General Education Outcomes rubrics and implement a new project called GEAR (General Education Assessment by Rubrics).
- Continue assessment work with electronic portfolios.
- Add the program assessment summary report to the existing annual program review process. This will formally link program assessment to program planning and budgeting.

The 2010 - 2011 Academic Year will be our fourth and final year of participation in the HLC Assessment Academy. Our challenge will be to continue the three levels of student outcomes assessment without the built-in guidance that comes from participation in the Assessment Academy.

THREE LEVELS OF STUDENT OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT

General Education Outcomes Assessment

At the heart of General Education Outcomes Assessment is the institutional philosophy for general education and the six general education outcome statements. At this point in time, a three-prong approach is used to measure general education outcomes: (1) "Tagging," (2) standardized testing and surveys, and (3) electronic portfolio or other general education rubrics-based methods.

Program Level Assessment

The various programs and disciplines within the instructional departments develop program outcomes which they expect the students to master by the end of the program. It is recommended that program outcomes be limited to four to five in number and based on the hierarchical levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. Where appropriate, program outcomes are tied to general education outcomes and to courses. A complete cycle of program level assessment should occur within three years (ideally) and absolutely within the five-year program review cycle for that program.

Program level assessment methodology and cycles will vary from program to program, and it is expected that documentation of program level assessments will be deposited into the student learning outcomes assessment data repository that is linked to annual instructional program review.

Course Level Assessment

Course level assessment is driven by course student learning outcomes and should occur each time that course is taught. Evidence of student performance on the course level is collected by the faculty and is linked to program level and where appropriate, general education assessments. Different methods of course assessment include, but are not limited to:

- Projects
- Portfolios
- Standardized tests
- Instructor-made tests
- Publisher-made tests
- Essays, papers, research reports
- Student self-reports
- Other creative methods such as Team L projects