The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

Northern New Mexico College

Project Details			
Title	Strengthening Student Learning Assessment	**Status**	ACTIVE
Category	1 - Helping Students Learn	**Updated**	
Timeline		**Reviewed**	
Planned Project Kickoff	12-05-2014	**Created**	12-02-2014
Target Completion	12-31-2015	**Version**	1

1: PROJECT SUMMARY

A: At the 2014 AQIP Strategy Forum, NNMC conceptualized this action project. One area needing strengthening is data mining for academic assessment. AQIP feedback from our systems appraisal and our Improving Assessment action project also identified this as an opportunity for further improvement. This project will result in developing a culture and willingness to discuss college wide performance and help us to better inform decision making. The benefits are improved communication and engagement, e.g. administration, faculty, etc. Risks include micro-management by the administration to direct lukewarm efforts by departments, faculty not "buying into it", and inhibited collaboration with the project's leadership.

2: PROJECT RATIONALE

A: The Strategy Forum team created this action project in order to further address identified areas in need of further improvement. This is necessary in order to formalize and promote sustained assessment and data based decision making. The project is responsive to identified institutional goals for enhanced faculty involvement, increased reliance on data analysis and informed decision making. The action project will be an ongoing effort. The Strategy Forum team identified the approach and organization of the project as follows:

- The Provost has revamped the SLAC (Student Learning Assessment Committee) and created the CLASS (Committee for Learning Assessment of StudentS). The new Dean of Education will chair the committee and oversee its efforts as well as the activities of this project.
- Maximize existing governance structures
- Address Academic Planning committee recommendations regarding assessment
- Build upon what has been accomplished so far (Institutional Assessment Plan, etc.)
- Identify, implement and assess college-wide common student learning outcomes
- Provide a series of ½ day Faculty Retreats that are responsive to identified faculty professional development, e.g., identifying suitable classroom-based assessment, using rubrics, rubric creation and utilizing data for program improvement

3: PROJECT GOALS AND DELIVERABLES

A: The Strategy Forum Team identified the Project Vision and Goals as follows:

- Identify and assess college-wide Common Student Learning Outcomes
- Create a common vision that is supported by a strong, cyclical and effective assessment plan
- Validate instructional efforts and program completion for students and provide robust evidence that identify learning outcomes have been achieved.
- Secure necessary evidence that is responsive to institutional accountability to external and internal stakeholders
- Empower campus community to become actively engaged in the assessment process and active users of aggregated data
- Achieve greater student satisfaction
- Accomplish better prioritization of budget

In the Fall 2014 this action project was initiated and it has reached the following milestones:

- The SLAC committee was charged with identifying and recommending college wide common Student Learning Outcomes to the Provost
- The SLAC committee reviewed previously (faculty senate approved in 2010) General Education common student learning outcomes and developed a number of college-wide student learning outcomes

- The SLAC recommended focusing on four (4) college-wide student learning outcomes for initial assessment efforts the Provost
- The SLAC committee was renamed the CLASS committee to more closely reflect its charge
- The first ½ day Faculty Retreat was offered to faculty introducing the new college wide student learning outcomes and providing training for syllabi review to address college wide outcomes. Also provided information resources
- Workshop evaluations and a needs assessment for future retreats was conducted and analyzed
- The second ½ day Faculty Retreat was offered in response to needs assessment. Three (3) of our Academic Deans (who are actively involved in program accreditation) presented a series of workshops focusing on curriculum mapping, rubric development and best assessment practices
- Workshop evaluations were conducted
- Start of assessment pilot – it consists of adoption of classroom based assessments in two general education courses, developing and review of a scoring rubric aligned with college-wide student learning outcomes and collection of scores for students enrolled in selected courses, i.e., English 111 (essay) and Speech 130 (oral presentation) .

In the Spring 2015 anticipated milestones:

- The CLASS will analyze the workshop evaluations and initiate planning for next series of ½ day faculty retreats
- Develop and deliver faculty retreats that are responsible to faculty professional development needs
- Continuation of assessment pilot – collect scoring rubrics from identified initial courses, conduct data aggregation and analysis. Review findings in terms of extent to which student learning outcomes are being met.
- Identify two additional courses for implementation of part II of pilot assessment project
- Review scoring rubrics as needed
- At end of term, collected data on student performance will be disaggregated in terms of the 4 learning outcomes selected. Findings will be analyzed and distributed to faculty and administrators to inform program review and decision making
- The CLASS committee will also examine and respond to the most recent Systems Appraisal of Category 1

4: INSTITUTIONAL INVOLVEMENT

A: Academic affairs, faculty senate, students, and staff (student services, curriculum committee) will review collected and analyzed data on student performance with regard to college wide outcomes. Evaluation of effectiveness of present piloted assessment will be used to make recommendations for improvement, retention, or switch to other assessments. Initial dissemination will take place in August at the start of classes. The collected data will be available for programmatic revision refinement of student learning outcomes for decision making. Data will also be made available for our decision makers and other external constituents (donors, business leaders, community) for accountability purposes. Data will be shared with our Board of Regents and legislators for discussion, examination and consideration. Feedback will be taken into account in determine extent to which our goals are being met.

5: PROJECT CONTROL

A: The project scope, targeted by the by the Strategy Forum Team, is predicated on the validation that the college wide outcomes. These have been incorporated into the instructional strategies and a rigorous assessment will validate that outcomes have been achieved. This approach will provide the needed evidence that the institution is accountable to its internal and external stakeholders. The following has been identified and the building blocks that will provide guidance to Northern's evaluation efforts

- Reestablishment of a data management system
- Classroom-based assessments
- Periodic reporting
- Mandatory participation
- Incentives for gathering assessment
- Use our national survey results
- Sharing findings thought website development
- Continuous Assessment training
- Workshops that have proven to be effective from other college partners
- Identify multiple data sources

Timeline:

- Collect and provide adequate evidence that we are meeting (or making progress towards) our goals by November 2015 for CQR

- Gauge progress every four months utilizing our slogan: "Are we there yet?"
- Progress will be monitored by Institutional Research, CLASS, Faculty Senate, and Academic Affairs (administration, faculty and staff)
- Will review and consider recommendations
- Four (4) classroom based assessments (pilot 1): Two will be evaluated start of spring. The second two will be evaluated during summer
- Recommendations will be made for future assessment, and data collection
- Utilized assessments will be revised and realigned as needed

6: ANTICIPATED CHALLENGES TO PROJECT SUCCESS

A: Constraints and assumptions include budget constraints for implementation (allocation of resources, institutional fiscal health, state budget, etc.), limited staff, effectiveness of selected data management technology, and needed training of new faculty. Time constraints are a challenge as well, such as viable speed of analysis completion prior to fall visit versus other institutional demands. Critical success factors and risks include not being distracted by crisis, need to cultivate a more proactive culture of planning, improve follow-up and increase communication.

7: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

A: In 2007-2008, acting on recommendations by members of the Student Learning Achievement Committee (SLAC) and presented in budget hearings the year before, the College instituted a number of changes that shape, and have been shaped by, our institutional assessment plan (IAP) project. The college subscribed to a web-based assessment-management system (WEAVEonline) beginning in May. NNMC established an Office of Assessment in July, 2007. The college hired an Assessment Director in August, 2007. This office identified 45 academic programs (including all bachelors' programs and those that feed into them) as priority targets for WEAVEonline support in Fall 2007. The office began to host an annual Assessment Day for faculty to receive professional development and training in student learning assessment.

The IAP outlines assessment roles and responsibilities for students, faculty, staff, administration, department chairs and deans, provost, president, and board of regents. It includes a rubric for guiding and evaluating curriculum and assessment planning, data gathering, analysis, and action steps for program improvement. The plan was adopted by our SLAC and formally presented to the entire College, in 2009.

In 2011, the college declared an action project related to Improving Assessment. It was declared as an effort to respond to the recommendations of the Fall 2011 Focus Visit Team. The recommendations were: 1.Break project into discreet steps 2.Set deadlines for completing targets 3.Continue creating institutional calendar to outline dates and expected activities 4.For the multiple year trend report, use key performance indicators to use as the baseline for assessing learning outcomes. These include: grade success, persistence, drop rates, program completion, graduation rates, and GPA 5.Update and train existing and new faculty in utilizing WeaveOnline. The IAP was revised and updated as well.

In 2012 the office of Assessment and Accreditation was vacated. Budgetary constraints and lack of applicants made the position difficult to fill. A faculty member with experience in student learning assessment willingly oversaw the efforts of the office and supported other faculty in their data collection and analysis. This individual also oversaw the SLAC and this action project. In the fall of 2012, this individual was no longer able to oversee the functions of this office and the Assessment and Accreditation office was absorbed by the Office of Institutional Research. The IR office provided support in navigating WEAVEonline, support for developing Category 1 of the 2013 Systems Portfolio, oversaw the development of the 2013 Systems Portfolio, ensured review of the systems appraisal, reporting of all action projects, supported faculty in program review, chaired the SLAC, and provided additional data support when needed. Student Learning Outcomes Assessment continued to be maintained by faculty within programs and departments but became stagnant in others. This became evident in the spring of 2014. A need for this effort to be revamped was confirmed with the recommendations of the colleges Academic Planning Taskforce recommendations to the president and her advisory council. In the summer of 2014 a new provost was hired and he immediately recognized the need for common college wide student learning outcomes. These recommendations and feedback were acknowledged and taken to the Strategy Forum. In September 2014 the new initiative, Strengthening Student Learning Assessment, was identified.