

The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

San Juan College: San Juan College Assessment Academy Action Plan

Project Details	
Title	San Juan College Assessment Academy Action Plan
Category	1-Helping Students Learn
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1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: The College closed out its HLC Assessment Academy participation by presenting a Showcase session at the Results Forum in June, 2011. The presentation focused on the evolution of the institutional-level assessment process at San Juan College. Throughout our Academy participation, the Assessment Committee (recently renamed Assessment Team) led efforts to refine the CSLO statements, rubrics, the methodology by which courses are selected to participate in artifact collection cycles, and review of individual student performance artifacts to ensure that they appropriately demonstrate the characteristics of the CSLO being assessed.

During the summer of 2011, a faculty-led task force was convened to examine the framework, content, and assessment of general education at SJC. This process included the examination and mapping of the College's general education curriculum to the general education core competencies developed by the New Mexico Higher Education Department (NMHED), as well as the alignment of the general education curriculum with the broader, institutional-level CSLO's (**CSLO's are a measure of overall student learning that encompass general education, program requirements, and electives**). The task force was also charged to recommend an appropriate assessment methodology for the general education curriculum, as well as revisions to the CSLO assessment process, if necessary.

At the conclusion of their work, the task force recommended that SJC officially adopt the NMHED general education competencies, as a minimum expectation, giving the College the flexibility to include additional competencies in any of the five core areas. Further, it was the recommendation of the task force to adopt the artifact model currently utilized to assess the CSLO's for use in general education assessment as well. In effect, it is the task force's recommendation that general education assessment be embedded within the institutional-level assessment process at San Juan College. The task force also recommended changes to the CSLO rubrics for consideration by the Assessment Team; these revisions served to increase the focus on quantitative literacy, information literacy, and cultural and/or historical perspectives. Changes to the CSLO titles from single verbs to phrases add clarity to the intent of each area, and other rubric revisions strengthen the alignment with the NMHED general education core competencies by using consistent language. Finally, the task force recommended a change in the Likert scale used on the CSLO rubrics. The Assessment Team is currently reviewing the task force recommendations and will consider implementing these changes in the next assessment cycle. The task force recommendations were presented to the campus community during fall Convocation, and are also being shared with faculty and staff in School meetings.

During the spring and summer 2011 semesters, Program Directors were asked to review their program-level outcomes for currency and measurability. Program Assessment Plans were also updated during this time; results of program-level assessment for the 2011-12 AY will be stored in WEAVEOnline (a web-based assessment management system purchased by the College in July, 2011).

No significant changes were made to the course-level assessment process; faculty were reminded to focus their course-level assessment activities around a specific student learning outcome that they wish to measure. Deans are asked to create a School Plan for course-level assessment based upon their discussions with individual faculty and the work they had identified for the year.

A budget has been established for the first time for the Assessment Team for AY 2011-12. This budget is used to pay for members of the Assessment Team to attend conferences, such as the HLC Annual Meeting and the IUPUI Assessment Conference, as well as stipends for faculty who participate in artifact readings in the summer. The College also invested in WEAVEOnline and the iStrategy data management system to make learning outcomes and student performance results more accessible to inform program improvement efforts.

R: The College has made a significant investment into this important Action Project and has made a lot of progress in the project since their last update. This year, the College has also added a budget to support the continued human and technological involvement. This Action Project is focused on Category 1: Helping Students Learn but also supports Category 3: Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs through its change in curriculum based on student performance, Category 4: Valuing People through its faculty development piece, Category 5: Leading and Communicating through its plan to communicate assessment plans and data, and Category 7: Measuring Effectiveness.

The Task Force was responsive to general education core competencies developed by NMHED and has recommended a blending of these outcomes with their newly-developed model of assessing student artifacts while maintaining flexibility with the ability to add additional outcomes; the SLO and rubric language were changed to better align with the state's competencies. This is an excellent way to be responsive to external accountability pressures while maintaining local control. Having faculty lead the the Task Force and allowing faculty-controlled course-level assessments are good ways to get more buy in from faculty to help the assessment project have the desired effect of improving learning and teaching. Communicating assessment processes and changes through convocations, school meetings, and data management systems are excellent ways to keep the college community informed and will hopefully increase use of the processes and data.

2: Institution Involvement

A: Beginning in July 2011, the Assessment Team moved from a single faculty Chair to a Co-Chair leadership structure, with both faculty Co-Chairs receiving release time for their work on the committee. The Assessment Team membership is comprised of 1 to 2 faculty representatives from each of the Schools, the Co-Chairs, and a Dean. The AVP for Learning is an ex-officio member, and is the liaison between the assessment committee and the Learning Leadership Team (LLT).

The General Education Task Force convened this summer was also faculty-led and included faculty representatives from each of the Schools. Collaboration between Learning administrators, the LLT, and faculty committees and work teams greatly advanced the quality and rate of improvement in both outcomes and assessment methods for general education and the CSLO's.

The College continues to support the professional development of Deans and faculty in the area of assessment by sponsoring attendance at conferences (HLC annual meeting and IUPUI) and workshops offered at the Center for Teaching Excellence. The Assessment Team routinely presents at both the fall and spring Convocation.

R:

The Assessment Team has wide faculty involvement and support from the institution. Clearly identifying co-chairs and supporting their involvement will help this process. Ensuring that a leader from the Center for Teaching Excellence is a part of this Team will help align efforts with faculty development. Including student services staff could also help expand assessment to co-curricular activities.

3: Next Steps

A: As discussed above, the Assessment Team is currently reviewing the general education task force recommendations and will consider implementing these changes in the next assessment cycle. The team will utilize the recently updated CSLO assessment rubrics.

The Assessment Team is also considering moving to a staggered collection process for CSLO artifacts (2 CSLO's each semester) to increase participation and reduce the time commitment of readers.

The College will continue to roll-out the implementation of WEAVEOnline (a web-based assessment management system purchased by the College in July, 2011) to all academic programs and disciplines. As part of this process, curriculum maps will be created for each program.

The Learning Leadership Team will seek to expand institutional resource allocations for assessment in AY 2012-13, including reassign time for Faculty Assessment Coordinators in each School, administrative support, and dedicated office space in the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTX). The Assessment Team is considering the establishment of a Distinguished Teaching Chair through the SJC Foundation and CTX, which will recognize and support best practices in assessment on campus.

In addition, the LLT will seek to significantly expand participation of all faculty in all Schools in assessment activities, and to refine assessment activities in academic support programs. Some anticipated approaches include (1) building assessment into the Personnel Evaluation Report (PER) process as an expectation of all faculty, supported by language in the revised Faculty Handbook and an expanded on-boarding program; (2) building assessment planning into Curriculum Committee forms and processes, including Course Bank Action Sheets and Program Action Sheets; and (3) assigning each School to serve as a "champion" for a specific CSLO.

R: Staggering the assessment process can help it be more sustainable for faculty and readers. Since assessment data are most useful when they are analyzed to make improvements, implementing a process for staggering assessments and then using those data (while other CSLOs are the focus) may prove useful. Including assessment in faculty evaluation and curriculum processes are excellent ways to embed assessment into the culture of the College; including assessment in program reviews is an additional way to do this. Some faculty are hesitant to participate in assessment for fear they will be penalized for the results; having an assessment model that focuses on how the data are used to make improvements may help alleviate these fears.

Since faculty are passionate about improving learning and teaching, focusing on how assessment can improve these will help with buy in. Faculty also enjoy having the time and space to have learning and teaching conversations and projects within and across disciplines, so using convocations and faculty development activities to create these opportunities might also be helpful. Also, allowing faculty to implement assessments that are meaningful to their classes and where they think their courses need improvement can also increase faculty satisfaction. Collecting data to measure stakeholder (especially faculty and student) satisfaction will help improve this process in the future and will provide data for the AQIP Systems Portfolio.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: The faculty have reviewed and revised all program outcomes and program-level Assessment Plans; regular review will occur as part of annual assessment activities and, to a greater extent, the comprehensive program review process.

A faculty-led review of the College's general education curriculum and institution-level outcomes was conducted and led to refinement of outcomes and measures in these areas. Refinement of the CSLO rubrics accommodates the diversity of SJC's program offerings through the use of core and optional characteristics.

Implementation of WEAVEOnline will support the process for reporting, analyzing, and acting upon student learning results.

R: Since many colleges and universities are actively working to develop, implement, and refine assessment processes, sharing this work at conferences could be of value to others and provide feedback for future improvements at SJC. SJC has made major advances in the development of an assessment process, and sharing what worked and did not work could help other institutions. Schools are also struggling with internal vs. external assessment pressures, so sharing the process of aligning SJC's assessments with NMHED's general education outcomes could be of value to others, especially other schools in New Mexico.

5: Project Challenges

A: Challenges still include refining communication and processes that will better guide and reinforce full and broad participation across all Schools and departments. Administrative support for assessment is strong and increasingly visible, and several strategies for addressing this challenge have been outlined in the response to item (C) above.

R: Creating a culture of assessment and data-driven decision making can help to increase participation. Having broad input on committees and task forces can help to make changes that resonate with the most stakeholders and can also help with communication.