
Action Project

Design and Refine Systems for Helping Students Learn

Annual Update: 2006-09-12

A. Describe the past year's accomplishments and the current status of this Action Project.

All 5 Common Student Learning Outcomes (CSLOs)—Learn, Think, Communicate, Integrate, and Act—have been incorporated in the catalog and every syllabus. During the academic year, the Assessment Committee meets once a month to work on systems for conducting and reporting assessment activities. Based on faculty recommendation, the committee selected the CSLO “Think” as the first outcome to assess as part of an “artifact” model. In February 2005, the Assessment Committee hosted a “What Do You Think” workshop to introduce the artifact idea. In spring 2005, the committee developed a “Think” rubric and, in fall 2005, they solicited “artifacts” from the faculty. In spring 2006, a committee cross-disciplinary sub-group of 6 faculty evaluated an ENGL 211 final portfolio (artifact) using the “Think” rubric. The pilot process and ensuing discussion were promising, with consistent results for that particular artifact. Discussions also revealed several issues that we must address as we implement the model, everything from involving faculty in identifying appropriate courses and projects (artifacts) to asking Institutional Research for help in identifying which students in those courses meet our criteria. While faculty and program directors continue to assess student learning and gather data for their own courses, this project has so far yielded no data.

Review (10-18-06):

This project demonstrates a solid response to how you determine your common student learning objectives (Question 1P1). You have a process that solicits input from many segments of the college community (Question 1P11). It was unclear how the “artifact” model was selected or defined. Was it derived from the same broad basis of input from across the college community? Your report notes that data is being gathered for specific courses but that no data has been gathered for the CSLO assessment. Developing correspondences between your CSLO rubrics and course assessment rubrics could facilitate greater efficiency in the use of your information and data to support student learning (Questions 7P1, 7P3). Once you are able to start collecting data related your CSLOs you will be in a good position to respond to questions about results for common student learning objectives and whether students have acquired the knowledge you have identified as being important (Questions 1R1, 1R2). Your pilot project appears to have been successful and should set the stage for advancing the project.

B. Describe how the institution involved people in work on this Action Project.

All faculty had the opportunity during School meetings to be involved in the selection and wording of the CSLOs. Faculty, in School meetings, also voted to begin the CSLO assessment process with “Think,” identifying critical thinking as a top priority common to all Schools. In Feb. 2005, 40 faculty attended a “What Do You Think?” workshop to learn more about assessment and the artifact model. A group of 6 faculty, 1 Dean, and 1 Administrator from the Assessment Committee attended the HLC Assessment Workshop (October 2005) and subsequently facilitated an Assessment Retreat, i.e. a professional development day for faculty. The Assessment Committee, a group of approximately 13 involved faculty and staff, meets regularly as a

committee, and welcomes any and all interested parties. School Deans have been supporting and encouraging faculty to identify those assignments (artifacts) that may demonstrate each of the CSLOs. The Dean of Humanities has developed a form for Outcome Assessment Reporting; faculty use this form to report annually on selected outcomes, artifacts, assessments, and curriculum modifications.

Review (10-18-06):

There is wide representation in the Action Project and committees involved. This will facilitate good communication of the efforts and outcomes across the institution (Question 5P5). The form developed by the Dean of Humanities can enhance consistency in data collection and use of information (Questions 7P1, 7P2, 7P3). It was unclear from the report whether the form had been endorsed by all levels of the project or campus. This wider review and endorsement could help overcome the faculty resistance identified below.

C. Describe your planned next steps for this Action Project.

In spring 2006, the Assessment Committee, with faculty help, will identify courses from which to sample artifacts. After spring break, the committee will contact faculty, ask for their participation, and provide the willing participants with a description of the artifact model and permission slips for students to sign. Review of the collected artifacts will take place either summer or fall 2006. Concurrently, the committee will work on developing the next CSLO rubric ("Communication" had received the second-place vote) and continue to educate faculty about the artifact model. The committee must also develop a reporting form and process so that data collected from artifact assessment can provide information and feedback to the entire faculty.

Review (10-18-06):

You have a solid plan laid out for the next steps. Is the committee planning to use the Dean of Humanities form, or a modified version, for the data collection and reporting of the Artifact review?

D. Describe any "effective practice(s)" that resulted from your work on this Action Project.

The best effective practice has been the collaboration and buy-in from across various disciplines to work towards assessing common learning outcomes for the college. Our work to date is useful to us, internally, but not yet applicable to other institutions.

Review (10-18-06):

Congratulations on your success in generating collaboration and buy in on the assessment of the CSLOs. This level of success will help in the ongoing development of a culture of continuous assessment. The challenge will be to extend these benefits beyond the committee and those immediately involved in the Action Project to the larger college community.

E. What challenges, if any, are you still facing in regards to this Action Project?

The artifact model of CSLO assessment is designed not to be intrusive for faculty but still provide the college with valuable information that can be used to improve student learning. However, we must still overcome faculty resistance to and misunderstanding of the whole notion of assessment. We will continue to pilot and implement the artifact model in stages, anticipating that it will take more than a year or two to refine a complete outcome assessment process. Progress is fairly slow for several reasons. First, we have very few "assessment" experts among the faculty and staff, so we are all learning this as we go. Second, it is very difficult to sustain voluntary committee-member involvement over the summer months. And, finally, there has been no release-time for the job of committee chair.

Review (10-18-06):

The challenges you have identified certainly may have contributed to the “fairly slow” pace at which the Action Project is being advanced. Overcoming the challenge of developing an unobtrusive assessment program will be helpful in overcoming faculty resistance. On the other hand, overcoming faculty resistance could reduce the level of unobtrusiveness needed. It is also possible that increased administrative support will help in resolving the issues of your second and third challenges and provide solid affirmative answers to questions about institutional support for the creation of a culture of continuous assessment (Question 8P6).

F. If you would like to discuss the possibility of AQIP providing you help to stimulate progress on this action project, explain your need(s) here and tell us who to contact and when?

Review (10-18-06):

Global Judgment – 3 Progress is slow. You have been able to identify some of the barriers which, when addressed, will facilitate completion of the project in a timely fashion.