

The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville

Project Details		
Title	Assessment When Learning Matters Most: General Education Assessment Design	Status REVIEWED
Category	1-Helping Students Learn	Updated 10-10-2013
Timeline		Reviewed 10-14-2013
	Planned Project Kickoff 12-04-2012	Created 11-29-2012
	Target Completion 12-20-2014	Version 1

1: Project Goal

- A:**
1. This action project will form a committee that will collaboratively develop a comprehensive assessment plan for the new general education program (the Lincoln Plan). Reporting to the Provost and the Faculty Senate, the committee will 1) review institutional processes related to general education assessment, 2) develop a comprehensive general education assessment plan to measure specific learning outcomes associated with the SIUE objectives for the baccalaureate degree, 3) establish procedures for continuous review of the general education plan and use of the general education data for the purpose of curricular improvement, 4) openly document the progress and goals of the committee.

2: Reasons For Project

- A:**
1. In 2003, SIUE initially embarked on the challenging path to reforming general education in order to ensure greater coherence and relevance. Importantly, this process involved faculty in meaningful ways and supported faculty ownership of the new Lincoln Program. While SIUE has been long recognized as a leader in assessment and our Senior Assignment experiences, we have significant opportunities to apply these same principles of continuous improvement to general education. The original Bridge Committee's Final Report in 2008 recommending the Lincoln Program, and the 2009 Implementation Plan, reinforces the need for a comprehensive and thoughtful general education assessment plan. In response to SIUE faculty's call for the development of a systematic, integrated approach to assessment of general education, the Office of the Provost and Faculty Senate have initiated an AQIP Action Project to form a General Education Assessment Committee that will strategically develop a comprehensive plan for general education that contributes to our shared goals of improving student learning and outcomes. As we are poised to develop a comprehensive assessment plan for SIUE that reflects our institutional identity, commitment to excellence and awareness of best practices in the field, the committee will undertake the process of developing an authentic assessment measure that will build upon the culture of assessment and recognize the university's commitment to student learning.

3: Organizational Areas Affected

- A:**
1. Since the general education program is required of all students, all academic Programs, Departments, and Schools/Colleges will be affected. Enrollment Management, Academic Advising, Instructional Services, and units associated with Academic Affairs will also be influenced by this Action Project.

4: Key Organizational Process(es)

- A:**
1. The general education assessment process and cogency of the new general education program are the central processes that will be improved.

5: Project Time Frame Rationale

- A:**
1. Implementing this new assessment program may require re-organization and modifications of a large number of general education courses. The new assessment program will be implemented in phases spread out over two years.

6: Project Success Monitoring

A: General education assessment and student learning outcomes are monitored by the University's internal processes through the General Education Committee of Faculty Senate. The process may also be incorporated into the strategic planning process that is currently underway. The processes will be monitored by the Faculty Senate, the Provost's Office, and the University Quality Council to ensure quality and effectiveness.

7: Project Outcome Measures

A: The outcome measures associated with this project are directly related to the committee charge from the Faculty Senate and the Provost's Office. The project will result in: 1) the formation of a general education committee with broad campus representation, 2) the development of a comprehensive general education assessment plan to measure specific learning outcomes associated with the SIUE objectives for the baccalaureate degree, and 3) the establishment of procedures for continuous review of the general education plan and use of the general education data for the purpose of curricular improvement.

Project Update

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: This project received a joint charge from SIUE's University Quality Council and the Faculty Senate. The project is led by a broad-based committee with significant faculty representation. The charge includes: 1) reviewing institutional processes related to general education assessment, 2) developing a comprehensive general education assessment plan to measure specific learning outcomes associated with the SIUE objectives for the baccalaureate degree, 3) establishing procedures for continuous review of the general education plan and use of the general education data for the purpose of curricular improvement, 4) openly documenting the progress and goals of the committee. The university has made significant progress thus far. Major accomplishments include:

- In Spring 2013, the Office of Academic Innovation and Effectiveness hosted the Continuous Improvement Conference that provided an opportunity for faculty and staff to review institutional data and think proactively about how to use these to inform our improvement efforts.
- A review of current university practices related to general education assessment and past assessment efforts
- A review of previous work developed by various ad hoc committees regarding general education assessment
- Engaged discussions of possible options, best practices, and relevant literature.
- Committee members conducted gathered systematic feedback from faculty members who routinely contribute to general education. Through qualitative interviewing and surveys, committee members developed a clearer picture of the kinds of practices that would build on the work that faculty members are already doing and be viewed as the most useful and authentic evidence of learning. In doing so, the committee also identified ways to better support faculty members teaching in New Freshman Seminars and Interdisciplinary Studies courses.
- A sub-group from this committee attended an HLC Assessment Workshop in St. Charles, IL this summer. Through this intensive experience and with the help of a mentor, we outlined a plan for general education assessment.
- The plan outline has been shared with various constituencies for feedback and improvement. Groups with whom we have shared the outlined plan include the full general education assessment committee, the Committee on Assessment, the Curriculum Council of the Faculty Senate, and other senior leaders. We will continue to take this plan to various constituencies for feedback to improve and further develop the model.
- We are now implementing a pilot study to assess the first objectives designated in the review cycle.

2: Institution Involvement

A: As noted above, the committee has a joint charge from Faculty Senate and the University Quality Council. This model has been successful for engendering communication and campus support in previous Action Projects on our campus. The Assistant Provost for Academic Innovation and Effectiveness, Director of General Education, and out-going (long-time) chair of the Committee on Assessment, have organized and coordinated a broad-based committee with faculty, academic support staff, administrators, and a student. Importantly, there is wide representation of perspectives and disciplines. Likewise, the committee also includes the Director of Institutional Research and Studies and the Director of Retention. Additionally, the committee members expressed willingness to meet regularly throughout the summer in order to move our efforts forward. They did so even though they were not obligated to do so. The team took on the challenge of conducting surveys and/or qualitative interviews with faculty members who routinely teach in our general education program. Their work this summer in soliciting critical feedback from faculty throughout campus was instrumental in

the design of the proposed plan and will be critical to campus acceptance.

In Spring 2013, our university hosted a Continuous Improvement Conference and part of the discussion focused on student learning outcomes related to the objectives for the baccalaureate degree. This event offered faculty and staff opportunities to hear and review relevant NSSE data that indirectly measure learning related to our general education objectives, to discuss these outcomes, and begin to reflect on how we could use these results for improvement. This kind of event has also encouraged engagement and motivation.

3: Next Steps

- A:
- The committee is currently finalizing and improving the plan based on the feedback we receive from the various constituencies.
 - In Fall 2013, we are collecting artifacts from a sample of New Freshman Seminar (NFS) faculty and Interdisciplinary Studies (IS) Faculty.
 - Based on feedback from NFS and IS faculty, our faculty development coordinator is developing resources for these groups and developing a structure to support learning communities for these groups. The success of learning communities will rest, in part, on the commitment of participants. Nevertheless, the feedback from this summer jumpstarted this effort, and we are hopeful that our response will provide the support and resources they need over time.
 - The committee has shared drafts of rubrics for the outcomes that were selected for this year's review. These have been shared with groups who have specific content expertise. They will offer suggestions for finalizing the rubrics.
 - In this year's annual reporting cycle, we asked programs to share results of the program's capstone experience, our Senior Assignment, to more clearly relate to the general education outcomes. Those reports are due October 2013. We are also finalizing a crowd-sourcing invitation to solicit ideas to further develop our plans for future years.
 - In Spring 2014, we will train faculty members to rate the artifacts secured from 2013-2014. We will test and calibrate the rubrics.
 - We will analyze data from the Senior Assignment, NFS/IS Artifacts, and NSSE items. We will develop a model for sharing these with the campus community for listening sessions and to support quality improvement initiatives throughout the general education curriculum and in co-curricular activities.
 - We will continue finalizing a plan for consideration by the Committee on Assessment, Faculty Senate and the UQC.
 - We anticipate that any plan will yield significant opportunities for stakeholders to contribute, learn from the evidence, and integrate appropriate feedback/planning loops for quality improvement.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

- A:
- An effective practice that we hope will emerge is a model for building on the strengths of the curriculum, engaging faculty/staff/students in developing ways to understand and support student learning outcomes. The principles we employ to engage major stakeholders and share information would be applicable and effective at other campuses. We are particularly interested in whether our crowd-sourcing invitation will lead to creative or innovative ways to assess general education. Even if it does not, it will be another example of how our community worked to engage all stakeholders in a meaningful way. When it comes to assessment, that kind of transparency and openness can be critical to the success of future efforts.

5: Project Challenges

- A:
- The challenge that we face will be in creating routine practices for faculty members teaching general education and ensuring that they have opportunities to make sense of and use the data. We must develop structure and enhance our culture to support faculty engagement with general education assessment. In the immediate term, we will work on strengthening our infrastructure to support collecting, organizing, scoring, and sharing the outcomes of general education. It is critical that we do this in a way that honors the feedback we have received but also yields useful data for continuous quality improvement. We must develop structures to promote feedback loops so that faculty, staff, and administrators will use the results to inform practice.

Update Review

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: The University is commended on the Action Project accomplishments. Achievement of these appears to be due, in part, to the organization of the work to be accomplished demonstrated by designating persons to lead the project, assigning sub-groups to focus on key areas, and the development of the plan outline. The Action Project is supportive of AQIP Categories 1 Helping Students Learn and 3 Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs. The reviews that have occurred are reflective of the Principles of High Performing Organizations Learning-oriented, the foresight to Plan Proactively, and Fact-based Information Gathering. The University is making excellent progress on the first year of this Action Project. Based on the stated target completion date and the identified next steps, the project will continue for another year.

2: Institution Involvement

A: The University demonstrates a commitment to the Principle of High Performing Organizations Broad-based Involvement through the inclusion of faculty, academic support staff, administrators, and a student, representing various offices and departments. It is important that Institutional Research be involved since the project involves data and qualitative interviews and surveys. With the focus of the Action Project on General Education Assessment, has the University considered including more than one student for a broader student perspective? Overall, this broad-based representation is appropriate for the Action Project.

3: Next Steps

A: The identified next steps are appropriate for year two of this continuing Action Project. The University is commended for establishing dates for completion on the timeline. The stated order seems appropriate for accomplishing the goals of the project. Are you including goals for inter-rater agreement on the assessment of artifacts? Evaluation of each step or phase appears to be included with that item. Have you planned an evaluation for the Action Project as a whole? The Principle of High Performing Organizations Focus on Stakeholders is demonstrated by the initiatives of "crowd-sourcing" and "listening sessions." The outlined steps reflect HLC Criterion 5 Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: It is appropriate to look forward and anticipate what might be an effective practice that can be emulated not only on campus, but by other institutions. As this project develops, speak to the effective practices in future annual updates so that other institutions may benefit from your experience through the Action Project Directory.

5: Project Challenges

A: The stated challenges appear to be a result of a reflection back over the course of this past year, as well as forward in light of the personalities involved. The persons or department that will present the data will want to utilize established best practices for presenting data for the receiving audience. It is helpful for the success of the Action Project that you acknowledge the need to strengthen your infrastructure to support the outcomes. Consult with other institutions that have faced similar challenges by reviewing the Action Project Directory. The open and honest reflection shown in the identification of the challenges will serve the University well in accomplishing the goals of this Action Project.